“It’s Gotta Be In Ya:” Heroic Individualism and the Roadside Concrete Sculpture Garden of the American Midwest, 1910-1960

By

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Abstract

"It's Gotta be in Ya:" Heroic Individualism and the Roadside Concrete Sculpture Garden, 1910-1960" examines the ways in which Midwestern concrete art environment artists interpreted and expressed the era's variant of heroic individualism – a term related to the American mythology models of grit, self-reliance, exceptionality, and pioneerism – as it relates to creativity, labor, and home improvement, carving out space for their own ambitions, attitudes, and ideals. It begins by surveying how the artists, historians, columnists, and the public have positioned the artists and artwork according to heroic arcs, revealing specific cultural values expressed through the aesthetics of the artwork. Then, it examines how artists expressed, reimagined, and personalized the values of heroic individualism - such as hard work, individuality, and civic responsibility - through their choices of material, scale, space, and subject matter. The works juggled ideals of grandiosity and simplicity in the same way that the artists juggled the ideal of themselves as visionaries as well as ordinary people. Their personal location, monumental forms and materials, and heroic subjects illustrate what the artists and viewers articulated as achievements of cultural and personal heroics.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to each of the art environment caretakers, volunteers, managers, historians and gardeners that shared countless memories and provided countless archival documents. This includes Marilyn and Richard Rolfsmeyer of the Pecatonica Educational Charitable Foundation and stewards of Nick Engelbert's *Grandview;* Erika Nelson, the Cultural Resources Director of the Friends of S.P. Dinsmoor's *Garden of Eden*; and Kris Willfahrt, caretaker of the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave.* Volunteers like Arlene Schultz of the *Dickeyville Grotto* also contributed to this research by sharing memories of the gardens. I also visited many sites as an anonymous tourist and am grateful to each location's welcoming staff. These include *Chateau Laroche, The Grotto of the Redemption,* and the *Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden.*

Curator Lisa Stone, an Emerita Board Member of SPACES and preservationist with Preservation Services, Inc., shared her time and research on Ernst Hupeden's *The Painted Forest* and the Wisconsin Art Environment Consortium. Likewise, Kevin Rose, Historian & Director of Revitalization of the Turner Foundation, provided Hartman family photos and information he had learned about Ben Hartman's interest in gardening. Pam Retzlaff, director of the Friends of Fred Smith, walked through the park with me, describing the works, community involvement, and the exciting updates underway to bring the Rock Garden Tavern into working order. She shared an entire archive of materials including photographs, interviews, and newspapers that contributed to this research.

This research was also made possible by the support of the Kohler Foundation and its then-director Terri Yoho and preservation staff Dan Smith and Susan Kelly. The Kohler team provided preservation reports detailing the materials the artists used and any changes made to the gardens in recent years, such as missing or relocated sculptures. Recently, the Kohler team

invited me to visit their most recent project, the *Christensen Rock Garden,* while conservators were on site. During the visit, preservationists Ruth Rolfsmeyer and Ben Caguioa described the project and gave me a tour of the garden.

I would like to acknowledge my committee members and the faculty of the Department of Art History. From the time this research was a wisp of an idea through various iterations and drafts, Nancy Rose Marshall and Anna Andrzejewski contributed their insightful feedback and inspiring conversation. I am especially grateful to my primary advisor, Ann Smart Martin, who spent hours in conversation with me talking through the conceptual challenges of this complex and expansive art form.

Finally, this research was a great joy to share with my husband and travel companion. We spent many summer days togther exploring sites throughout the Midwest. Together, this research became an opportunity for us to hit the road in pursuit of the concrete sculpture garden as many have done for decades before us.

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Introduction

Over the course of the early twentieth century, the era of good roads made the United States more mobile and interconnected than ever before. Beginning with the infrastructure demanded from the advent of bicycles in the late nineteenth century, the Good Roads Movement gained momentum with the invention and popularization of motor vehicles in the twentieth, ushering the establishment of the National Highway System in 1926.[1] The following fifty years of highway development and improvement coincided wars, a depression, and a changing national identity tied to the expansion of physical mobility and the "flattening" effects of mass media.[2] Encouraged by the nation-wide "See America First" campaigns adopted by automobile, highway, and tourism industries, Americans sought a common history and heritage in the American landscape and along American roads.[3]

A variety of *pique-assiette* (or mosaic) artwork, roadside concrete sculpture gardens blossomed along countless concrete- and asphalt-paved roads across the United States between 1910 and 1960.[4] Set outdoors, each garden is composed of multiple individual sculptures that are monumental in scale or number of parts. The sculptures are made of concrete with differing

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[1] Ballard Campbell, "The Good Roads Movement in Wisconsin, 1880-1911," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* (Summer 1966): 276; John P. Hallihan, "The National Highway System," *The Military Engineer* (July-August 2018): 339.

[2] Frederic L. Paxson, "The Highway Movement, 1916-1935," *The American Historical Review* (January 1946): 236-253.

[3] Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

[4] Bud Goldstone and Arloa Paquin Goldstone, *The Los Angeles Watts Towers* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Conservation Institute, 1997), 56.

surface embellishments and the subject matter varies according to the artist's interests and beliefs.

In the region stretching between the Dakotas and Michigan, Wisconsin and Kansas, the weather seasonally swings between extreme temperatures and the durability of materials is of utmost importance, concrete proved to be a broadly useful medium for construction, design, and even art for both professionals and homeowners. The increasing availability, affordability and advertising of concrete supported the artistic efforts of roadside concrete sculpture garden artists, whose efforts popular culture publications validated by promoting creative home improvements in the garden.[5] Concrete, being affordable, durable, and plastic, could comprise all manner of garden borders, fences, sculptures, birdbaths, ponds, and benches.

As artists expanded their work from modest garden accoutrements to monumental assemblages, they garnered the interest of a growing number of tourists. Improvements in highways and motor vehicle technologies contributed to this growing tourist market. In the state of Wisconsin, for example, tourism and resort towns multiplied between 1900 and 1950, meeting the demands of an increasingly mobile public seeking respite from crowded urban, industrial cities such as Chicago.[6]

Along the routes that carried travelers between Chicago and Wisconsin's North Woods, Door County, and LaCrosse, homeowners like Fred Smith (1886 – 1976) created roadside

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[5] "Latest Home Vogues Stress Rock Garden," *The Piqua Daily Call* (Wednesday, April 23, 1930): 20.

[6] Aaron Shapiro, "Up North on Vacation: Tourism and Resorts in Wisconsin's North Woods 1900-1945," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* (Summer 2006): 2-13.

sculpture gardens where they hosted travelers, providing refreshments and entertainment.[7] For instance, Smith constructed dozens of concrete men and deer that form a welcoming party facing Highway 13 from behind an overhead banner with the words "Wisconsin Concrete Park" painted in capital letters (Figure i.i). Built between 1948 and 1964, this sculpture garden encompasses at least 237 individual encrusted concrete sculptures of subjects such as Native Americans, lumberjacks, and farmers.

Smith was not alone in his endeavors. In the Midwest, artists such as Madeline Buol (1902 – 1986) of Dubuque, IA; John Christiansen (d. 1939) of Albert Lea, MN; Philip Wagner (1882 – 1959) of Rudolph, WI; and H. G. "Ben" Hartman (1883 – 1944) of Springfield, OH built gardens of their own.[8] Whereas Smith created from the popular imagination with sculptures of Paul Bunyan and Sacagawea (Figures i.ii & i.iii), others like Buol and Wagner created reinforced concrete sculptures and structures inspired by their religion. Buol created miniature shrines and grottos in her backyard signaling her devotion to Catholicism. Her garden was a somewhat personal space, where Buol embedded mementos she had collected from loved ones and other materials like rocks and shells that she found during road trips with her husband. Working on a larger scale with the help of parishioners and other community members, Wagner built the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* (1927—1983) on the garden grounds of St Philips Church in Rudolph, WI, where he served as priest. Wagner's sprawling garden boasts the

[7] Leslie Umberger and Erika Doss, *Sublime Spaces and Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists* (Sheboygan, WI: John Michael Kohler Arts Center, 2007).

[8] See Appendix for list of documented concrete sculpture gardens in the Midwestern states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

world's largest manmade above ground cave, modeled after European catacombs.[9] Filled with religious vignettes, the concrete and stone structure is one of numerous sculptures and grottos. Alternatively, at the *Hartman Rock Garden* (1932—1944), Hartman used concrete and stone to sculpt symbols of national devotion such as a miniature Liberty Bell and White House. Beginning with small-scale garden projects including a miniature pond and garden borders, Hartman expanded his sculpture garden additively over the course of more than a decade, transforming his private property into a destination for travelers, gardening enthusiasts, and curious passersby.[10]

Considered together, the quantity of sites and consistency of their execution suggest that the works constitute an artistic movement shaped by developments in technology, accessibility to materials, and attitudes toward home and creativity. It is important to recognize their work as an artistic movement because the categorization demands an entirely different research method that draws closer to the reality – as opposed to the fantasy – of these works of art. The fantasy is that the artists were individual artist visionaries whose art stemmed from an innate source. The reality is that they each were doing the same thing – expressing what they identified as their individuality, but what was actually a shared national identity rooted in the ideals of heroic individualism. This shared identity was ultimately one of a Christian-Catholic, middle-class, and culturally white experience.

When we do not recognize the fundamental characteristics of this body of work, it is easy to fall into individualist narratives that fail to grasp its broad reach. All of these artists tested

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[9] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 11, 1953): 8.
[10] Clark County, "The Hartman Gardens," *A Bicentennial Reflection provided by the Community Beautification Committee of Springfield, Ohio* (Clark County, Ohio: Clark County, 1998).

concrete for creative purposes, acting in a way that was experimental, entrepreneurial, and self-expressive. Furthermore, they demonstrated awareness of other sculpture gardens, at times even sharing their methods with one another.

This dissertation examines how Midwestern concrete art environment artists interpreted the era's variant of heroic individualism as it relates to creativity, labor, and home improvement, carving out space for their own ambitions, attitudes, and ideals. It begins by surveying how the artists, historians, columnists, and the public positioned the artists and artwork according to heroic arcs, revealing specific cultural values expressed through the aesthetics of the artwork. Then, it examines how artists expressed, reimagined, and personalized the values of heroic individualism - such as hard work, individuality, and civic responsibility - through their choices of material, space, and subject matter.

My approach deviates from previous ways of interpreting the works as "outsider" or "visionary" art, which overlook how the artists made persuasive self-promotional arguments for their artwork and ambitions. Owing to the variety of subjects and styles the artists employed, each garden presents sculptures that relate to other sculptures in ways that are contradictory, multi-meaning, and allegorical. One interpretive approach stems from the tendency of artists to symbolize varying national and religious identities through their sculpture gardens. For instance, Buol was Catholic and followed the religious grotto-making tradition, whereas Smith was a retired lumberjack who referenced local lumbering history and mythology in his sculptures.[11]

[11] Madeline Buol, interview, 1945, John Michael Kohler Arts Center archive; Smith's background is documented in Umberger and Doss, *Sublime Spaces,* 167-188.

The biographical associations between the artist and their work sparked writers and historians to focus on the artworks as personal expressions through case studies.[12]

Often discussing concrete sculpture gardens in terms of individual artist monographs, the literature is relatively small and it primarily documents the artist's biography, artistic practice, artwork, and art preservation. Since the artworks are outdoor sculptures that are prone to damage, such writings represent a strong focus on preservation. The artworks also feature in encyclopedias of art environments, as well as texts of outsider art, and folk art.[13] When interpreting the artworks, authors frequently discuss the artists' process as being visionary, singular, urgent, and intuitive, describing their "inner need to express themselves in visual form."[14]

Published in 2007, *Sublime Spaces and Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists* coincided a conference on art environments and their preservation called *Taking the Road Less Traveled*, hosted by the John Michael Kohler Arts Center and the Kohler

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[12] Daniel Franklin Ward, *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984).

[13] Sara M Patterson, *Middle Of Nowhere: Religion, Art, and Pop Culture at Salvation Mountain* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016); John Michael Kohler Arts Center, *Eugene Von Bruenchenhein, Obsessive Visionary*. (Sheboygan, WI: John Michael Kohler Arts Center, 1988); Norman Girardot, *Envisioning Howard Finster: The religion and art of a stranger from another world* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015); Margaret Day Allen, *When The Spirit Speaks: Self-Taught Art of the South* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 2014); Barbara Brackman and Cathy Dwigans, eds., *Backyard Visionaries: Grassroots Art in the Midwest* (Lawrence Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1999); Annie Carlano, *Vernacular Visionaries: International Outsider Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 2003).

[14] Anton Rajer and Christin Style, *Public Sculpture in Wisconsin: An atlas of outdoor monuments, memorials, and masterpieces in the Badger State* (Madison, WI: SOS! Wisconsin, Save Outdoor Sculpture and Fine Arts Conservation Services, 1999), 29.

Foundation in Sheboygan, WI.[15] The chapters are monographic, showcasing artists representing the John Michael Kohler Arts Center collection. The volume documents the work of art environments including Midwestern concrete sculpture garden artists such as Fred Smith, James Tellen (1880 – 1957), Nick Engelbert (1881 – 1962), and Carl Peterson (1869 – 1969). Each chapter demonstrates how the artists personalized their surroundings according to their beliefs, experiences, imaginations, and identities.

Similarly organized into monographic chapters, *Backyard Visionaries* and *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments* is preservation-centric.[16] During the 1990s, preservation organizations like the Kohler Foundation expressed the urgent need to save art environments from natural or planned demolition. Promoting the same sense of urgency, publications were biographical in order to levy support to preserve sites and to discuss specific cases of preservation interventions.

Breaking from the monographic format, John Beardsley organized *Gardens of Revelation: Environments by Visionary Artists* thematically by topics that include God and country, shrines, and gardens.[17] Beardsley situated the artworks within aesthetic traditions of folk art, religious architecture, and garden design, connecting the work with the cultural landscape.

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[15] The conference papers are recorded in the unpublished document John Michael Kohler Arts Center and Kohler Foundation Inc. *Taking the Road Less Traveled: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists: An International Conference, September 27-30, 2007* (Sheboygan, Wisconsin: John Michael Kohler Arts Center, 2007).

[16] Brackman and Dwigans, *Backyard Visionaries*; David Franklin Ward, *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984).

[17] John Beardsley, *Gardens of Revelation: Environments by Visionary Artists* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2003).

The text includes artworks from around the world, including Nek Chand's *Chandigarh Rock Garden* (1957 – 1976) and Samuel P. Dinsmoor's (1843 – 1932) *Garden of Eden* (1907 – 1928) located in Lucas, Kansas.

While I rely on biographical evidence such as artist interviews and writings in my work, I use them to clarify the motivations that drove such large-scale projects and to determine how they defined their work. I also use their oral and written statements to determine timeline and technique. The primary distinction of my research is in how I frame the content. Rather than going from the artist's statements to the artwork and drawing a boundary around it, I contextualize the work as part of a broad-reaching art movement and identify trends between artists and trends between artworks of a variety of scales. In doing so, I provide a better sense of the artist's description of their work, life, and process as symbols of shared values, specifically those associated with heroic individualism.

In recent years, scholars have begun to delve into cultural and historical interpretations of art environments, focusing on issues of community and spatiality. In Luisa Del Giudice's *Sabato Rodia's Towers in Watts: Art, Migrations, Development* contributing authors interpret the work as the product of a specific community as opposed to a singular artist.[18] Alternatively, Soumyen Bandyopadhyay's exhibition catalog *The Collection, the Ruin and the Theatre: Architecture, Sculpture and Landscape in Nek Chand's Rock Garden, Chandigarh* prioritizes landscape in its interpretation of the artwork, whose form is a labyrinth of gardens and mosaic sculptures that

[18] Luisa Del Giudice, ed., *Sabato Rodia's Towers in Watts: Art, Migrations, Development* (New York, New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

contrast the strict organization of the city of Chandigarh.[19] Similarly, I present historical evidence that the artists created work rooted in the resources, trends, and values shared by local and national communities. This stands apart from approaches that might frame the artists as outsider, reclusive, or naïve.

Although a growing number of art historians are devoting critical research to art environments broadly, we are only beginning to grasp the field's topography and its ability to test our art historical methods, theories, and assumptions. Building on the foundations set by these art historians, curators, and preservationists, my research seeks to expand scholarship on art environments in the Midwest. With the groundwork laid identifying individual artist's biography and method, it is possible to begin asking why and how so many individuals developed the same life-defining vision or impulse to create in concrete.

The artworks have significant shared attributes – time, media, style, spatiality, and subject matter – that constitute an art movement and point to a number of common underlying cultural-historical values including the ideal of heroic individualism. Heroic individualism encompasses the ideals of the American mythology including grit, self-reliance, exceptionality, and pioneerism. The artists described in this text had similar ways in which they related such American ideals to creativity, labor, and home improvement. The works' personal location, monumental forms and materials, and heroic subjects illustrate what the artists and viewers articulated as achievements of cultural and personal heroics. The works juggled ideals of grandiosity and simplicity in the same way that the artists juggled the ideal of themselves as visionaries as well as ordinary people. This relates to and reinforces the notion that Americans

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[19] Soumyen Bandyopadhyay, *The Collection, the Ruin and the Theatre: Architecture, Sculpture and Landscape in Nek Chand's Rock Garden, Chandigarh* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007)*;* Lucienne Peiry*, Nek Chand's Outsider Art: the Rock Garden of Chandigarh* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006).

frame their lives as heirs to a history of heroism, even when historical research counters the American myth.[20]

Heroic Individualism

Heroic individualism is a term that philosophers and historians such as Leslie Paul Thiele and Josef Früchtl have begun to use in recent decades.[21] In general, it gestures to the way in which one narrates one's individual life story – regardless of how ordinary or extraordinary – as a protagonist, a hero. The narrative, in this case, relies on a series of values and personality traits associated with American identity, specifically white male identity, and the pursuit of the American dream.[22] The characteristics of heroic individualism belong to the role of outsider or cowboy and include self-reliance, self-actualization, loyalty, hard work, and honesty.[23] Essentially, it means "pulling oneself up by the bootstraps" and actualizing one's innate potential by the grit of one's character.

Broadly, *individualism* describes socio-cultural values of individuality, self-reliance, and self-actualization. While it may seem apparent that the artists described in this text exercised individuality by constructing artworks that represented their beliefs, heritage, and interests, their

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[20] Diane Britton, "Public History and Public Memory," *The Public Historian* (Summer 1997): 14.

[21] Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzshe and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Josef Früchtl, *The Impertinent Self: A Heroic History of Modernity,* trans. Sarah L. Kirkby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[22] Susan Stanford Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice," *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader,* eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 75. Susan Stanford Friedman has argued that individualism in America has traditionally been the privilege of white men while individuals of other groups are reduced to collective identities. That said, she also acknowledges that there are many instances of resistance and reclamation of individualism within all identity groups.

[23] Sharman Russell, *Kill the Cowboy: A Battle of Mythology in the New West* (Reading Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1993).

work – its materiality, scale, subject matter, and the way the artists and viewers characterized it – specifically gestures to the heroic variant of individualism. The belief in their individuality made them heroic, as did the very scale of their work.

Their work presents the opportunity to pose a number of questions concerning heroic individualism as it relates to home and creativity. This research pursues questions such as, "where do the artists' descriptions of their artistic individuality overlap with the hallmarks of heroism?" Do the artists and viewers follow the formulaic cultural heroic arcs akin to the stories told about creative genius and innate ability? How do the artworks' magnitude suggest heroic character according to established expectations of monuments and monumentality? How do the subjects relate heroism on a number of cultural levels including spirituality, nationality, and popular culture? How do the works, being personal places constructed as public monuments indicate the artist as a sort of cultural hero? Finally, how does this interpretation of their work relate to ubiquitous ideals of heroism perpetuated through the history of art and American identity?

Heroism is hardly a new concept to the field of art. From the heroic bronze sculptures of ancient Greece to the heroic laborer of the industrial United States,[24] artists have chosen heroic imagery for endless political, cultural, and social reasons. In a similar way, critics, philosophers, writers, and artists have considered the artist as a heroic cultural figure.[25] This tradition called the

[24] Ian Jenkins and Victoria Turner, *The Greek Body* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009); Erika Doss, "Looking at Labor: Images of Work in 1930s American Art," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (2002): 230-257.

[25] Griselda Pollock, "Whiter Art History," *The Art Bulletin* (March 2014): 9-23.

"cult of the artist" follows a lineage dating as far back to Vasari's sixteenth-century text titled *The Lives of the Artists*.[26]

Culminating during the expressive era of Modernism, artist biography was entrenched in a tradition where writers and cultural tastemakers described artists in heroic terms, foregrounding ideas concerning purity of vision, grand accomplishments, and creative genius. Ernst Kris described the almost formulaic way in which artist biographies constructed heroes. Kris was particularly interested in how biographies set up the artist's heroism by identifying a foundational moment from their youth followed by examples of trials they encountered on the path to artistic success. According to Kris, biographies first recognized that the artist demonstrated a certain predisposition. Then, the narrative described the artist acting on that predisposition by overcoming an obstacle.[27] Their born "genius" matched with examples of tenacity or grit distinguished the heroes from ordinary people. In other words, heroism depended on the presence of trials that tested the artist's ability and character. This narrative plays out in stories published about the history of artists who made concrete sculpture gardens. In periodicals, newspapers, and autobiographies, the narrative follows that the artist had an innate ability that they expressed despite the challenges associated with their monumental task and long-term commitment to it. Finally, the arc closes, noting that the artists achieved a great legacy through their monumental gardens.

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[26] Giorgio Vasari, Betty Burroughs and Jonathan Foster, *Vasari's Lives of the Artists: Biographies of the Most Eminent Architects, Painters, and Sculptors of Italy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946); Frank M. Turner, "The Cult of the Artist," in *European Intellectual History from Rousseau to Nietzsche,* ed. Richard A. Lofthouse (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 136-154.

[27] Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 30-31.

Alternatively, theorizing on the autonomous nature of the nineteenth-century French avant-garde, Pierre Bourdieu called the era the heroic age, arguing that the artists' autonomy from the traditions and resources of the salons paired with their lasting impact on the trajectory of the field earning them the title of cultural hero.[28] Essentially, he associated artists' heroism with their character as rebels and pioneers. In other words, they were heroes for resisting set traditions in favor of pursuing individual vision. This manner of describing artworks spilled into and permeated texts on art environments – especially in instances when the works are associated with outsider and folk art.

In a similar vein, Paul Lopes argued for the American heroic age as a "consolidation of subfields of autonomous art" following the influx of European avant-garde artists in the 1940s.[29] Lopes argued that what constituted a heroic artist was experimentation, the act of knowingly positioning oneself in opposition to existing institutions that hold the most power, and thereby changing the topography of the field. Characterized by their intuitive artistic practice and unconventional education, concrete sculpture garden artists held the position of outsiders to the mainstream. One might say they were functioning autonomously and experimentally, making them candidates for the qualification of cultural hero, according to Lopes and Bourdieu.

The heroic age described by Lopes and Bourdieu relied on socio-cultural values central to heroic individualism, a term philosophers have used to describe Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophies on the individual. According to philosopher Leslie Paul Thiele, Nietzsche

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[28] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Bridget Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997).

[29] Paul Lopes, "The Heroic Age of American avant-garde art," *Theory and Society* (May 2015): 230.

concluded that realizing one's individuality was a form of modern heroism, which on a very fundamental level relates to the ideal of artistic genius as a sort of self-realization and individuation.[30] However, Nietzsche's individualism involved an extreme rejection of all social customs and morals in the pursuit of realizing one's individual freedom.

Considered together, their work prompts the question, "can individuality exist without a community or a dominant norm?" Similarly, can individuality remain an identifying ideal even if it is not an actuality? Wilfred McClay described it well, writing "American life in the twentieth century has in fact become more corporate, more organized, more standardized. But Americans' self-conception has never quite followed suit."[31] One has to ask, does American individualism mainly exist in the imagination?

Part of defining whether these artworks are or are not individualistic involves noting when they are the same and at when they deviate from one another. On a broad scale, the gardens share a time (1910 – 1960), a medium (concrete), and a location (outdoors), but close looking shows variations in surface handling, subjects, and form. By making these differentiating choices, the artists individualized themselves and their work.

Writing on "The Great Community," early twentieth-century American philosopher John Dewey presented an alternative to Nietzsche's heroic individualism, arguing that community and individuality were in fact compatible under the right conditions of social organization.[32] Others

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[30] Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[31] Wilfred M. McClay, "Individualism and its Discontents," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* (Summer 2001): 398.

[32] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry*, ed. Melvin L. Rogers (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2012). Accessed June 23, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/j.ctt7v1gh.

disagreed altogether that individuality was the strongest organizing principle in American culture. Historian Barry Alan Shain, for instance, argued that the dominant American culture's organizing principle was actually Reformed Protestantism, which operated in a constrained and community-centric way that was inhospitable for individualism.[33]

The ideals of heroic individualism continue to play a role in twenty-first century American life and scholars have investigated its impact on twenty-first-century popular culture. Regarding the 2015 Broadway musical *Hamilton*, critics discussed how the storyline illuminated how heroic individualism, rugged masculinity, and poetic self-invention underwrite narratives of the nation's birth and arguably help generate its present. They compared the self-actualization of the American narrative to the self-actualization of Hip Hop, reinforcing beliefs in the American dream through rags-to-riches stories. [34] In other words, the ideals of heroic individualism continue to shape American identity and while it is easy to identify these ideals in a cast of politicians and other national leaders, it is also possible to observe variations of the same patterns in all manner of places including the concrete sculpture garden and the history of American Art.

When considering heroic individualism during this period, I take into account how individuals, institutions, and even historians since the end of World War II have retroactively described civic responsibility in terms of heroics of the World War era. Elizabeth Anker traced the rhetoric about World War II and civic responsibility, noticing how it changed over the years. She examined speeches when political leaders used description of the war to motivate Americans

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[33] Barry Alan Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[34] Loren Kajikawa, "Young, Scrappy, and Hungry:" Hamilton, Hip Hop, and Race," *American Music* (Winter 2018): 472.

facing challenges such as recessions and 9/11. She observed a gradually increasing melodramatic rhetoric that encouraged listeners and readers to perceive themselves as facing a challenge akin to World War II, extolling them to action through a sort of heroic self-reliance. For instance, she observed that in speeches, Reagan called Americans heroes because of their intensified drive to work in the face of their adversary, a recession. Thus, he drew all Americans under the umbrella of heroic individualism.[35] Anker argued that the rhetoric of heroic individualism increased Americans' individual responsibility for their own economic success.[36] Anker argued that America re-visited this relationship to heroic individualism during 9/11, when rhetoric returned to a hero / victim self-identity. Politicians and other leaders compared 9/11 to Pearl Harbor despite their extensive differences, characterizing Americans' response to Pearl Harbor in terms of the twenty-first century version of heroic individualism with its heightened drama.

Anker's work showed that history and reflections thereon often serve the present. Furthermore, these examples indicate an ongoing negotiation between the American identification with heroic individualism and how Americans use it to narrate their personal and collective histories and present. In this examination of heroic individualism and the roadside concrete sculpture garden, it is important to avoid presenting national myths and ideologies as historical truths so that we might better grasp the complexity of the works, the artists, and the times they occupied.

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[35] Robert C. Rowland and John M. Jones, "Reagan's Farewell Address: Redefining the American Dream," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* (Winter 2017): 654.

[36] Elisabeth Anker, "The Melodramatic Style of American Politics," in *Melodrama After the Tears: New Perspectives on the Politics of Victimhood*, eds. Scott Loren and Jörg Metelmann (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 219-245.

Heroic individualism adjusts to the demands of the historical moment. At one extreme, it lives within imperialist frontier tales of conquest that are laden with racial, environmental, and patriarchal violence. [37] At its most ordinary, it motivates ideals in hard work and individuality. At both ends, it affects the social ordering of people and of priorities.

After reviewing the artists' oral histories and reading documentation of public reception over time, it is clear that artists, art critics, curators and visitors positioned the artists as protagonists of a heroic arc in which the work functioned as evidence of their cultural heroics. The narrative is subtle, first pointing out the artist's predisposition or born talent, then highlighting their struggle in personal and professional terms such as their education or the obstacles they encountered while building their garden, and finally boasting that their vision and endurance led to their artistic accomplishment.

To contemporary audiences, the scale and quality of the artwork along with the amount of time the artist committed to making the work proved the narrative by validating the artists' individuality, ingenuity, achievement, predisposition, and tenacity. These characteristics are central to heroic individualism as it positions the pursuit of individuality and individual achievement as an idea. Both viewers and artists spoke of the works in terms of heroic individualism. Reading the historical record alongside careful visual and material analysis produces insight into how the works reinforced and reinvented the era's ideal of heroic individualism. Examining how the artwork, artist, and viewer conveyed the ideals of individuality, ingenuity, and tenacity is one of the primary aims of this research.

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[37] Mark Sturges, "Legends of the Susquehanna: Frontier Narratives and the Folkloric Sense of Place," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* (2015): 489-515.

Heroic individualism is not limited to the subject of concrete sculpture gardens or even self-taught artists. Western art history traditionally frames visual artists as heroic individuals.[38] While this tradition has influenced artists from a number of backgrounds and ambitions, we can argue that grassroots artists contributed a different dimension of cultural heroics from the likes of Phidias and Michelangelo of art historical mythology. Their work follows a tradition set forth by American poets and artists who modeled grit, pioneerism, and hard work among other ideals as manifestations of heroism.

During the early twentieth century, at the same time homeowners made concrete sculpture gardens, American artists explored subject matter that modeled a democratizing form of individualism. They frequently depicted the anonymous worker with heroic stylization, making Greek gods of machinists and farmers. In the broadest terms, propagandistic works like Seymour Fogel's *The Wealth of the Nation* (1938) dignified labor, reinforcing hard work as akin to greatness.[39] Historically contextualized by the New Deal Federal Art Project—which hired artists, photographers, printmakers, and architects to create works and places of public and national interest during the 1930s—and the democratization of artistic labor, the artworks are the product of an emboldened creative population asserting their ambition for recognition as artistic individuals.

The interest in arts of the people flourished at the same time as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Federal Art Project (1935 – 1943). These initiatives contributed to the popular view of the artist as a worker. In *America Today: A Book of 100 Prints,* etcher and

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[38] Frank M. Turner and Richard A Lofthouse, *European Intellectual History from Rousseau to Nietzsche* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

[39] Doss, "Looking at Labor," 230-257.

Iowan Ralph Pearson called the modern printmaker "a workman among workers."[40] He equated the labor of carving and etching a plate, rolling ink, and turning the press wheels to a working class activity, attempting to connect the elite art world with the experiences of laboring Americans. Instead of identifying the artist as a remote figure, Pearson described artistic heroics according to the sweat of one's brow. His juxtaposition of elite art and working-class labor resonates with the ideals of heroic individualism evident in the concrete sculpture garden.

Over time, discourse has reiterated the ideals of individuality and predisposition to categorize roadside concrete sculpture garden artists as outsiders and visionaries, but by labeling them in such a way, we miss the opportunity to understand their complicated relationship with their artistic identity. At the same time that they took on projects that seemed accessible to anyone, they distinguished themselves as uniquely qualified. By the magnitude of their projects, they established new standards for artistic ambition, while maintaining a firm grip on their multitudinous identities as workers, citizens, and homeowners. Likewise, they negotiated opposing poles in their artwork, mixing war monuments with figures of fauna and casting colossal structures against modest homes. When Fred Smith made a concrete copy of the *Mary Todd and Abraham* statue by Chicago artist Frederick C. Hibbard (1943) on his home property, he transformed the public monument into something private, something newly associated to himself, his home, and his community (Figure 4.10). He made the artwork accessible to neighbors who might not otherwise be able to view the bronze, and showed the usefulness of concrete to form cultural monuments for little cost. In turn, the work challenges far off notions of individual artistic greatness, making it local, personal, and accessible.

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[40] Ralph Pearson, quoted in *America Today: A Book of 100 Prints* (New York: American Artists' Congress, 1936), 10.

Concrete Sculpture Gardens

This dissertation focuses on Midwest concrete sculpture gardens, which form part of a longer tradition. Primarily attributed to the first half of the twentieth century, concrete sculpture gardens are a type of art environment. Art environments are artworks that are monumental in scale and are site specific. Many art historians specializing in folk and outsider art also define them by the tendency for the artists to construct the artworks intuitively, meaning they create them additively over time and without structured plans.[41] Art environments span the globe and occur in a variety of permutations.

Roadside concrete sculpture gardens exist throughout the United States and include Sabato Rodia's (1878 – 1965) *Watts Towers* (1921 – 1954) in Los Angeles, Laura Pope Forester's (d. 1953) *Mrs. Pope's Museum and Garden* (early- to mid-1900s) in Ochlocknee, GA, and Emile Brunel's (1874 – 1944) *Brunel's Sculpture Garden* (1921 – 1941) in Boiceville, New York. The concrete artworks vary in surface handling, format, and subject matter. The surfaces range from smooth and painted, as with the dyed surfaces of Forester's sculptures, to heavily encrusted, as in the surfaces of the *Watts Towers.* They vary in form from architectural structures to collections of individual sculptures. Rodia's towers are architectural and monumental. Forester mixed architectural structures with figural sculptures. Brunel primarily worked with figural sculptures and concrete relief. The subject matter of the artworks also shares many similarities to the subjects represented in the Midwest. For instance, Forester created a Garden of Eden scene as was common in concrete sculpture gardens like S.P. Dinsmoor's *Garden of Eden*

[41] The word "intuitively" is meant to indicate that the artists often worked bit by bit, meaning they often had a sense of what they wanted to create, but did not use formal plans. Some added individual works to their garden over time. Many artists within and out of the art market work in this manner, but for art environments, it has become a definitive methodology.

and Cassius "Doc." M. Hettinger's (d. 1955) *Garden of Eden* (1919 – 1955) once located in Toledo, OH. It is difficult to distinguish a concrete sculpture garden in the Midwest from gardens in other regions.

In the Midwest, local influences such as popular culture, religion, and ethnic background affected the appearance of concrete sculpture gardens. For instance, artists in the Midwest tended to create highly encrusted surfaces, like those modeled by the then-famous *Grotto of the Redemption* in West Bend, IA. Artists also frequently included popular figures related to the region, such as Paul Bunyan and Abraham Lincoln, and included symbols related to the area's immigrant population.[42] Alternatively, Forester included sculptures related to the south, such as Scarlett O'Hara and Brunel referenced the Moon Haw region of the Catskills where he lived through his sculpture called *Moon Haw.*[43]

It is possible to examine this art movement on a number of scales. Concrete sculpture gardens are present throughout the world and include the earlier mentioned *Chandigarh Rock Garden.* Therefore, it is possible to treat the artworks as a global phenomenon. It is also possible to examine the works on a national scale, taking into consideration artworks located everywhere from the Northeast to the Southwest. While it is important to recognize that this form of artwork is wide reaching, examining the work on a national or international scale can be quite challenging because each roadside concrete sculpture garden includes many, sometimes more than one hundred, distinct works of art.

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[42] James Tellen, *Woodland Sculpture Garden*, Black River WI, 1942-1957; Fred Smith (1886-1976), *Wisconsin Concrete Park*, Philips WI, 1948-1964; Nick Engelbert (1881-1962), *Grandview*, Hollandale WI, c. 1930-1960.

[43] Unpublished document "Description of *Pope's Museum,*" SPACES Archives.

I focus on the Midwest because its scale is small enough to observe collective trends while still providing the opportunity to examine individual gardens and artworks. The region is also limited enough to identify and track connections between the artists and their influences on one another. Records on concrete sculpture gardens favor artworks of especially large scale produced primarily by white, male homeowners. However, this region includes artworks that represent a variety of religious and political identities, genders, geographical locations, styles and cultural traditions.

Furthermore, the stable quality and quantity of art sites and archival resources in the Midwest make it an ideal region for this type of research. The Wisconsin-based Kohler Foundation's initiative to identify and conserve art environments fostered the Midwest's robust art environment quantity of preserved artworks and archives. This research represents a number of works from the state of Wisconsin due to the cooperative conservation efforts made by the Kohler Foundation and Wisconsin Tourism. Specifically, the two organizations founded the Wisconsin Art Environment Consortium, which has served to promote artworks to the general public and supports a network for site custodians to share resources concerning the maintenance of the works.

The artworks I discuss in this research are located in the states of Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. They include architectural religious grottos such as Matthias Wernerus's (1873 – 1931) *Dickeyville Grotto* (1920 – 1930) as well as miniature tableaus such as Harry George "Ben" Hartman's (1883 – 1944) *Hartman Rock Garden* (1932 – 1944). Now part of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center collection, Madeline Buol's work represents women artists who also frequently created concrete sculpture gardens. Other artists discussed include Samuel P. Dinsmoor, James Tellen, Fred Smith, and Philip Wagner. This

research does not replace monographs already written on each of the artists and their artworks, so I will provide a brief summary of each site addressed throughout this text.

From 1907 until 1928, Samuel P. Dinsmoor transformed his corner-lot into the *Garden of Eden.* Dinsmoor started with his *Log Cabin Home,* made of limestone logs and concrete. He marketed his home as an attraction, pointing out that every window and doorway was a different size. After building the house, the artist, aged around 67 at the time, began working on a sculptural installation wrapping the periphery of the property. The 150 concrete sculptures include 40-foot-tall trees, scenes from the Bible story of Cain and Abel, a Civil War soldier, a grape arbor and flowerbeds, a pool, and an assemblage of sculptures called *Labor Crucified.* Located nearby a train station in Lucas, Kansas, the house and its theatrical sculptures attracted the attention of travelers. Dinsmoor lit his installation with 48 electric lights and built an outdoor dining structure for visitors.[44]

Located on the Holy Ghost Parish grounds, the *Dickeyville Grotto* is a popular attraction along the route between Madison, WI and Dubuque, IA. Built by Father Matthias Wernerus between 1925 and 1930, the sculpture garden boasts a monumental *Blessed Virgin* grotto flanked by the papal flag on one side and the American flag on the opposite side. The garden also includes a shrine to patriotism with sculptures of Christopher Columbus and Abraham Lincoln as well as a model Liberty Bell and bald eagle. The surface of the sculptures are heavily encrusted with shells, geodes, stones, and ceramics.

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[44] Samuel P. Dinsmoor, *Pictorial History of the Cabin Home in Garden of Eden, Lucas Kansas* (Lucas, KS: Garden of Eden, Inc., 2002).

Madeline Buol created the *Madeline Buol Grotto* at her home in Dubuque, IA between 1943 and 1957. Influenced by the *Dickeyville Grotto* and the *Grotto of the Redemption,*[45] Buol's thirteen-piece sculpture garden includes a miniature shrine to god and country called the *Blessed Virgin Grotto,* a replica of *St. Peter's Basilica,* a rock garden along the house, *Mary Virgin* sculpture, *Sacred Heart of Jesus* grotto, *Stations of the Cross, Star,* and two pedestals.[46] Measuring under 78 inches in height, her sculptures are concrete encrusted with shells, marbles, rocks, and ceramics.

Harry George "Ben" Hartman built his *Hartman Rock Garden* in his home garden from 1932 to 1944. The garden features miniatures of the White House and Betsy Ross house, scenes from the Bible including the Nativity, and popular culture symbols such as the Maxwell House coffee cup. He covered most of the sculptures with small stones and glass ornamental details. The site has more than fifty concrete structures though the actual number is unknown because Hartman also made small models of figures that have been lost through the years.

Fred Smith began working on the *Wisconsin Concrete Park* in 1948, only stopping after suffering a stroke that left him unable to work in 1964. The park of 237 concrete sculptures features figures of Paul Bunyan and Sacajawea among countless other figures drinking beer, tending animals, and waving toward the road. Smith encrusted the life-size or larger-than-life figures with broken glass, auto reflectors, and mirrors among other found objects.

James Tellen created the *Woodland Sculpture Garden* at his summer home in Black River, WI between 1942 and 1957. The wooded exhibit includes thirty sculptures that are life

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[45] Father Paul Dobberstein (1872-1954), *Grotto of the Redemption*, West Bend IA, 1912-1954.

[46] Unpublished manuscript "Buol Autobiography,*"* by Madeline Buol, May 16, 1960, SPACES Archives.

size and miniature. The concrete sculptures of Abraham Lincoln, St. Peter, Native Americans, and bears are highly textural, with markings to indicate fur, for example. However, Tellen did not add mosaic details to his work, preferring the concrete bare or painted, as in the painted concrete deer on the property.

Lastly, Father Philip Wagner created the *Rudolph Grotto and Wonder Cave* (1927 – 1983) on the property of St Philip's Church in Rudolph, WI. Working with Edmond Rybicki, who continued to work on the garden after Wagner died, Wagner constructed an aboveground cave, which houses a *Garden of Olives* tableau at the center, a sunken garden with pond, and more than twenty grottos for the *Stations of the Cross* and the *Seven Sorrow of Mary.* The garden also contains a monument to patriotism and war memorials.

Sculptural concrete structures in the home and garden occurred on a spectrum from garden ornaments like pots and borders to large-scale assemblages like the *Wisconsin Concrete Park*. While I concentrate on art environments that were monumental in size or number of parts, smaller scale projects are important to provide context to these larger projects. Therefore, I situate the artworks in relationship to smaller-scale garden projects promoted through popular culture.

Because of the works' additive construction in relation to their place and available materials, they emerge from local vernaculars while often possessing self-awareness within grotto-making and other artistic traditions. Their blend of personal and public iconographies pave the way to explore attitudes about home and self-expression, the resonance of historical and political imagery, and grassroots manufacturing of artistic destinations along leisure drive circuits. These and other important historical points all find expression at the hand of Midwestern concrete artists, but most remarkable is the fluidity with which they approach their

subjects, blending patriotism with religious devotion, devotion with fraternity, fraternity with egalitarianism. Considered together, the works are expressions of pride, pointing us directly toward personally felt cultural priorities.

In my examination of these artworks, I reference artist interviews, drawings, photographs, newspaper articles, magazines, and unpublished autobiographies. A number of institutions manage records on art environments including the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, SPACES, the Kohler Foundation, and the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. Records include photographs of sites at various points in their development, interviews with the artist and their family members, drawings and other works of art by the artists, autobiographies, letters by the artist or site custodian, site plans, and preservation records.

While these sources are an integral part of my research, the most important sources are the artworks themselves. After the first chapter sets up the tension between heroic individuality as a way of characterizing oneself versus individuality as an actual achievement, the following chapters draw the artworks into the conversation, identifying how artists expressed heroic individuality through the works' scale and medium. The second chapter considers the influences of popular gardening on concrete sculpture gardens. The artists participated in and expanded upon popular rock gardening trends of the 1930s and 1940s, drawing the attention of tourists and garden enthusiasts. The large scale of concrete sculpture gardens signaled the artists' grit and vision, turning their popular pastime into an indicator of heroic individualism. The third chapter examines this movement's defining material: concrete. I contextualize the work within the history of concrete, which promised infrastructural and creative uses associated with heroic individualism.

The John Michael Kohler Arts Center (JMKAC) has collected works by Fred Smith, Madeline Buol, James Tellen, and Nick Engelbert. Their records include recorded interviews and drawings by Fred Smith, drawings by James Tellen, and awards for paintings by Nick Engelbert, among other documents and recorded interviews with the artists' family and community members. The Kohler Foundation, an organization that preserves and then contributes art works to collections throughout the United States, provided many of the JMKAC archives.

Through its preservation efforts, the Kohler Foundation has conserved the *Wisconsin Concrete Park, James Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden, Grandview,* the *Garden of Eden, Madeline Buol's Sculpture Garden,* the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave,* and the *Hartman Rock Garden.* They maintain records of the preservation efforts, identifying and recording individual works of art along with details of the works' manufacture and materials. The documents record any recommendations for conservation treatment and care. In addition to preservation records on each of the sites, the Kohler Foundation archives periodicals, press releases, site plans, and photo documentation of the artworks.

SPACES is an archive and organization dedicated to the preservation of art environments and has an extensive archive including letters, photographs, drawings, and other documents related to Fred Smith, Madeline Buol, James Tellen, Nick Engelbert, Philip Wagner, Matthias Wernerus, Samuel P. Dinsmoor, and Ben Hartman. Photographer Seymour Rosen founded SPACES in 1978. After a multi-year transition, the Kohler Foundation began managing the organization and the SPACES archives physically relocated to Kohler, WI from Aptos, CA in 2017.

The last major archive on these works is the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, which is a repository for the Herbert Waide Hemphill papers and the Willem Volkersz

interviews. A contemporary artist, Willem Volkersz interviewed a number of art environment artists, donating the records to the Archives of American Art in 1989. Herbert Waide Hemphill was a collector of folk art and left a significant archive of photographs, recordings, letters, and notes on American folk artists. This collection includes records on Fred Smith and Samuel P. Dinsmoor.

State and local historical societies also keep records on the artworks. I reference documents from the Minnesota Historical Society, State Historical Society of Missouri, Indiana Historical Society, State Historical Society of Iowa, and the Wisconsin Historical Society. Historical society records often include details on state and national registers, letters in support of the applications, bibliographies, and site photographs. State historical society records also contain photographs and site details about sculpture and rock gardens that no longer exist.

Each roadside concrete sculpture garden has a local manager that also retains documentation on the artist and their work. The managers are typically individuals from supporting organizations like the Pecatonica Educational Charitable (PEC) Foundation, Inc., which owns and operates programming for Nick Engelbert's *Grandview* or the Turner Foundation, which manages the *Hartman Rock Garden.* Other caretakers include churches, such as St Philip's Church, which owns the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave*. The managers of supporting organization were exceedingly helpful, sharing their historical memory of the sites and the sites' history of community and tourist activities. Managers also shared countless records of interviews, photographs, newspaper articles, family scrapbooks, postcards, autobiographies, and preservation records.

Finally, the artists' subjects form the last body of evidence and focus of the final chapter. It is important to address representation when considering these artworks and heroic

individualism. It may prove to be true that exercising heroic individualism at this time was primarily the privilege of white male artists. Individuality has strongly remained the domain of the white and male, while collective identities have been attributed according to skin color and sex, leading Susan Stanford Friedman to criticize the denial of heroic individualism to women and minorities the "illusion of individualism."[47] Certainly, male artists dominate the literature, but many women, such as Madeline Buol and Florence Deeble made concrete sculpture gardens and still more were involved in the gardening and tourist business of the concrete sculpture garden. For instance, Mary Hartman of the *Hartman Rock Garden* grew and sold plants and seeds out of her greenhouse to garden visitors.[48] The carefully curated plantings by wives such as Hartman receive little attention as part of the artwork. Mary Hartman herself has noted that she kept the garden going in memory of her husband, not acknowledging her own creative contribution to the making of the artwork.[49] Certainly, the *Hartman Rock Garden* was first a flower and vegetable garden and only later expanded into a sculptural assemblage arranged to complement the garden plantings.

This research addresses two primary representational gaps in the art historical literature: region and class. By focusing on artworks from the American Midwest, this work seeks to increase representation of the diversity of artistic work throughout the United States. Compared to artists working in the coastal artistic centers of New York and Los Angeles, artists and artistic

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[47] Susan Stanford Friedman, "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice," *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader,* eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 75.

[48] Clark County, "The Hartman Gardens," *A Bicentennial Reflection provided by the Community Beautification Committee of Springfield, Ohio* (Clark County, Ohio: Clark County, 1998).

[49] Ruth Peters, "Labor of Love: Stone Replicas of Famed Scenes, Buildings are Garden Attractions," *Fairborn Daily Herald* (Wednesday, September 15, 1982): 8.

movements of the Midwest receive significantly less attention. Similarly, it increases representation of artists from working-class backgrounds, who were farmers, lumberjacks, teachers, and machinists.

While conducting this research, I contemplated the absence of diversity in the scholarship and preservation of art environments. Though evidence abounds for white male and female homeowners creating gardens of this scale, there is little in terms of artists from other racial backgrounds creating this type of work in the Midwest. This could be due to the nature of the artwork, often being rural and located on private properties. It would follow that only individuals who could afford to be a homeowner could create this type of art. Additionally, a number of artists followed the Catholic grotto tradition, which had a strong influence on European immigrants like Matthias Wernerus of the *Dickeyville Grotto*.

This suggests that art environments represent white identity and white experience in America, at least in the Midwestern United States. Artists used their gardens to shore up nationalistic ideals based on the white American narrative. Even when the artists were immigrants from European countries, they used American myths to prove their legitimacy as American citizens. An example is the *Dickeyville Grotto*, whose *Patriotic Shrine* features the mythologized first Catholic American, Christopher Columbus.

It may prove worthwhile to examine the idea of heroic individualism among black artists. Black artists have created a variety of types of art environments and it would be interesting to contextualize their work in light of Civil Rights Movement leaders such as James Meredith who argued for policies that supported individualistic ideals that would enable communities of color

to achieve independence from whites.[50] His reference to self-reliance and independence resonates with the ideals of heroic individualism visible in concrete sculpture gardens. SPACES archive has documented a number of concrete sculpture gardens made by African American artists including Vernon Burwell (1916 – 1990) of Rocky Mount, North Carolina and Eldren M. Bailey (1903 – 1987) of Atlanta, Georgia. These artists prove that there is still a great deal of work to do in terms of race and gender as it relates to artistic assemblages throughout the United States.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1: *Heroizing the Intuitive* argues that describing the artist according to heroic arcs is a byproduct of historically specific attitudes about individualism as it relates to art, class, and creativity. Over the course of the chapter, I deconstruct the phrase "It's gotta be in ya," gesturing to outsider and folk art's preference for a heroic narrative arc articulated by predisposition, challenge / disadvantage, and accomplishment. In sum, by saying "it's gotta be in ya," artists actively participated in constructing their work according to the heroic narrative arc by positioning themselves as uniquely [un]qualified and their work as expressively authentic.

Chapter 2: *Extraordinary Feats of Rockery* primarily focuses on the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* made by Father Philip Wagner and a crew of community members from Rudolph, Wisconsin. The story is one of heroics, ingenuity, and brawn, demonstrating the significance the artists and viewers paid to materiality, especially as it related to scale. At a time when rock gardens were in vogue, the artists produced them on a monumental scale,

[50] James H. Watkins, "Returning to Mississippi by Choice: Autobiographical Self-Location and the Performance of Black Masculinity in James Meredith*'s Three Years in Mississippi," The Mississippi Quarterly* (Spring 2016): 261.

transforming a popular pastime into a heroic feat that drew the attention of growing numbers of motoring tourists.

Chapter 3: *Cementing an American Medium* shows how the concrete culture of the first half of the twentieth century paved the way for the concrete sculpture garden movement, enabling Americans to express the values of heroic individualism on a number of levels. Drivers could play the role of the pioneer along stretches of highway, but they could also play the pioneer in their experimentation with concrete. The concrete sculpture garden designs set them apart and reinforced their sense of individuality while the strong material expressed grit and determination. By choosing concrete, the artists participated in a nationwide campaign to promote concrete as a vital American medium.

Chapter 4: *Heroic Analogues* surveys the artist's favorite heroic subjects: Christ, soldiers, and Abraham Lincoln. The artists chose religious, popular, and political heroes for their gardens, but consistently found ways of localizing the larger-than-life subjects. I focus on three examples:

1. James Tellen's full-size *Lincoln* sculpture presented as a working-man chopping wood with rolled sleeves and boots in the woodland outside Tellen's cabin.
2. Matthias Wernerus's sculpture of the *Sacred Heart* and his monument to local World War I soldiers that died in service. A central pathway bisecting the church cemetery spatially connects the two monuments, related in terms of sacrifice and the hope of eternal life.
3. Samuel Dinsmoor's *Cain and Abel* and *Crucifixion of Labor,* which mix metaphors that relate to Dinsmoor's worldview and Populism.

While the artists created war monuments and sculptures of famous historic and religious heroes, they also created as many sculptures of deer, people they knew, and miniature structures.

Causing larger-than-life and ordinary figures to occupy the same space has a democratizing effect. The artists' combination of fictional and historical characters with cultural and religious symbols, represents their ideals, interests, and identities, leaving evidence for us today of their complex and at times ambivalent relationship to art, resisting some traditional artistic models while embracing others.

Figures

Figure i.1: Fred Smith, *Wisconsin Concrete Park,* Phillips, Wisconsin, 1948-1964. Photograph by George Anderson, unknown date.

Figure i.2: Madeline Buol, *Madeline Buol Grotto*, *Madeline Buol Grotto,* Dubuque, Iowa, 1943-1957. Photo courtesy of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Figure i.3: John Christensen, *Christensen's Rock Garden (Itasca Rock Garden)*, Albert Lea MN, 1925-1938.

Chapter 1: Heroizing the "Intuitive"

During an undocumented interview, Fred Smith (1886 – 1976) allegedly answered a question about his creative inspiration with the phrase "it's gotta be in ya to do it," suggesting that his motivation and ideas were innate, inexplicable, and essential (Figure 1.1).[51] The phrase resonates with cultural ideals that have long colored the way we think about artists and artworks. We might immediately think of the terms "artistic genius" or "masterpiece," which suggest that artistic success requires something undefinable and unteachable, only accessible to a predisposed few. Most importantly, it stems from the ideal of the artist as a cultural hero based in a history in which writers establish the artist's accomplishment according to the obstacles they overcame, including those that may have been technological, medical, cultural, financial, or psychological. The best-known popular example in the west is that of Vincent Van Gogh, whose supposedly innate genius, personal and professional obstacles, and unwavering commitment all contributed to his legacy as a cultural hero.[52]

Fred Smith's statement serves as the principal anchoring point for this chapter, which examines how the artist described themselves in terms of cultural heroics and heroic individualism. The chapter shows that other artists such as Herman Rusch (1885 – 1985) repeated similar statements, which validated the idea that the artist's work was innate and unadulterated. Deconstructing the phrase alongside records and scholarship that reinforced the construction of such artists as cultural heroes, I offer a counter argument showing how Smith,

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[51] Fred Smith, "Fred Smith Interviewed," by William Bohne, 1970, typescript, John Michael Kohler Arts Center Artist Archives.

[52] Johannes A. Gaertner, "Myth and Pattern in Lives of Artists," *Art Journal* (Autumn 1970): 27-30.

Rusch, and their contemporaries promoted their individuality according to the idea of heroic individualism at the time.

Writers and historians often refer to the configuration of cultural heroes as the cult of the artist.[53] While this way of narrating the history of art has come under scrutiny over the last fifty years, it is important to understand its influence on self-taught artists who were in part responsible for shaping their own legacy according to these ideals. For instance, when Smith made the statement "it's gotta be in ya," he enshrined himself and his work within the ideals broadcast by the cult of the artist. In doing so, he positioned himself as a member of a long lineage of cultural heroes.

Today, his memorable quote headlines nearly every *Wisconsin Concrete Park* (1948-1964) newsletter and pamphlet, functioning as the artwork's motto (Figure 1.2).[54] Art historical surveys and newspaper articles repeat the phrase to the degree that it is difficult to find a mention of Smith without the quote trailing close behind.[55] Using the artist's words without considering them as expressions of historically specific attitudes can create a number of problems. By accepting and repeating the self-assessment, "it's gotta be in ya," without critical examination, historians and writers of all backgrounds prepare their readers to assume the existence of artistic

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[53] Frank M. Turner, "The Cult of the Artist," in *European Intellectual History from Rousseau to Nietzsche,* ed. Richard A. Lofthouse (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 136-154; Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 30-31; Paul Barolsky, "Dante and the Modern Cult of the Artist," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 12, no. 2 (2004): 1–15. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20163967.

[54] Friends of Fred Smith newsletter, "For the Friends of Fred Smith," Winter 2005, page 9, Friends of Fred Smith, Phillips, WI.

[55] Amy Levek, "Road Trip Reveals Delights of 'Eccentric America," *The Telluride Watch* (Friday, November 27, 2002): B12; Tony Rajer, "Concrete Picasso of the North Country," *Wisconsin River Valley Journal* (March 1993): 10; Don and Sharron Howlett, "Folk Heroes Cast in Concrete," *Historic Preservation* (June 1979): 36.

exceptionalism and individuality as constitutive of the artist's life and work. Artists, contemporary writers, curators and art historians have all participated in reproducing this cultural attitude about art and artists to promote them, but this attitude also seems to limit the works' broad integration into today's art historical literature, theory and practice.

At the same time, writers, historians, curators and all other champions of art environments have worked to improve accessibility, inclusivity, and diversity of audience, artist, and artwork. As Katherine Jentlesen has argued, in certain ways, self-taught artists have led the way toward a more equitable art world because no other category of art possesses equal diversity of representation.[56] Now that many institutions acknowledge, collect, and exhibit self-taught artists and their work, the field is primed for a new stage in its development, which examines the potentially problematic, even quasi-historical, consequences of the efforts made to get there.

Reflecting on how the artists and members of the art world described concrete sculpture gardens and their makers, I propose that heroizing the so-called "intuitive" or "naïve" artist is a byproduct of historically specific attitudes about art, class, creativity and individualism.[57] I argue that heroic individualism does not exist *per se*, but is instead a set of socio-cultural values engaged through the language narrating stories about roadside concrete sculpture gardens. To a

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[56] Katherine Jentlesen, *Gatecrashers: The Rise of the Self-taught Artist in America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020).

[57] Writers often use the term *naïve* in reference to artists without institutional art training. Examples of the term being used to reference concrete sculpture gardens along with artists working in noninstitutionalized methods include Martin Friedman, ed., *Naives and Visionaries* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974) and Oto Bihalji-Merin, *Masters of Naive Art: a History and Worldwide Survey* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971). The term intuitive refers to the artist's process as unplanned or occurring instinctively. The institution, INTUIT refers to this way of describing self-taught or outsider artists. INTUIT's mission is to collect, exhibit, and raise awareness of artists working in unconventional ways. The institution has long published a periodical titled *The Outsider*. See Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art. *Intuit, the Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art: the First Ten Years.* (Chicago: The Center, 2001).

degree, these values motivated the artist's work, shaped their conception of self, and reinforced an individualistic approach to the art historical interpretation of their work.

"It's gotta be in ya" captures the essentials of the heroic arc. It gestures toward cultural expectations of creative visionaries, affirming the expectations of innate ability, individuality, dedication, and achievement in a simple and catchy manner. However, is it historically useful or correct to use story-telling arcs in artistic analysis?

"It's gotta be in ya" also gestures to the role of education and class in the self-taught artist's heroic arc. The literature frequently qualifies the artist's individuality and accomplishments against their class, occupation, and education. Meaning, the artist's heroism relies on economic and educational disadvantage. After all, struggle is a necessary ingredient in the heroic arc. However, when we accept the artist's words and works as records of ideals rather than actualities, we are freed to explore the less-than glamorous realities: that the artists were a product of their time rather than visionaries, that many of them lived and died with little material wealth, and that their art was part of a campaign of self-promotion.

In an interview with artist Herman Rusch, Willem Volkersz (1939 –) recorded Rusch echoing Smith's words (Figure 1.3). "You gotta have it in you, you know," Rusch explained unprompted.[58] The previous conversation had focused on when Rusch started working on his sculpture garden. Volkersz tried to ascertain why Rusch began sculpting in concrete, to which Rusch initially responded that his wife did not approve of his hobby and he did not have a plan

[58] Herman Rusch, "Tape-recorded interview with Herman Rusch at the artist's home in Cochrane, Wisconsin" interviewed by Willem Volkersz, May 17, 1975, Volkersz Folk Art Interviews, Archives of American Art.

for how the garden would eventually look. After some "sures" and what we might imagine could have been a head nod or two, Rusch interjected the all too familiar phrase.

Traveling today's highways from Rusch's *Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden* (c. 1959-1974) to the *Wisconsin Concrete Park* is a short three-hour drive. Their close proximity meant that Rusch was able to visit the *Wisconsin Concrete Park* on at least two occasions. Rusch made a conscious decision to travel to other sites in Wisconsin and he was familiar with a number of other concrete artists across the country including Sabato Rodia (1879 –1965) of the *Watts Towers* (1921 – 1954) and assemblage artists such as Howard Finster (1916 – 2001) of the *Paradise Garden* (1976 – 2001).[59] Each artist created roadside artworks positioned to draw public attention. Each created works cumulatively over the course of years. Each garnered public recognition or fame for their artistic contribution, even when it manifested as fascination with an oddity rather than reverential admiration.[60]

At the beginning of the Volkersz interview, the transcriptionist Toni Reineke from the Archives of American Art first categorized Rusch's work as "naïve / visionary," setting up the reader with a very specific set of expectations. Reineke proceeded to explain the artist's mannerism and mode of speech as though he was an unfamiliar ethnographic subject. She

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[59] Herman Rusch, "Tape-recorded interview with Herman Rusch at the artist's home in Cochrane, Wisconsin" interviewed by Willem Volkersz, May 17, 1975, Volkersz Folk Art Interviews, Archives of American Art.

[60] The Wisconsin Concrete Park, for example, features in books about oddities and roadside attractions: Linda S Godfrey, Richard D. Hendricks, and Mark Moran, *Weird Wisconsin: Your Travel Guide to Wisconsin's Legends and Best Kept Secrets* (New York: Sterling Publishing Company, 2005); Eric Dregni, *Midwest Marvels: Roadside Attractions Across Iowa, Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Wisconsin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Jerome Phlen, *Oddball Wisconsin: A Guide to 400 Really Strange Places* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013); Michael Feldman and Diana Cook, *Wisconsin Curiosities: Quirky Characters, Roadside Oddities & Other Offbeat Stuff* (Guilford, CT : Globe Pequot, 2009).

notified her reader that the artist had "unique verbal mannerisms, many of which are difficult or impossible to transcribe accurately into written form," but tried to describe them, nonetheless. When the artist replaced "those" with "them" or said "gotta" or "theirselves," the editor chose to transcribe the words as spoken. On the other hand, if Rusch said "cause," "fore," or "yo," the editor transcribed the words "because," "before," and "your."[61] The Reineke reasoned that some words required correction for the sake of clarity, while others maintained the artist's unedited grammar. While their attempts to be respectful are apparent, the editor's justification for transcribing grammar mistakes throws a spotlight on the artist's social position. It socially distinguishes the artist from the interviewer, delineating differences of education, class, and locality that were inevitably elitist.

Reineke's explanation prepares the reader to interpret the artist as an outsider, signaling a series of expectations concerning socially and culturally constructed outsiders with a history stretching back to the *original* outsiders, the avant-garde of one hundred years prior. While contemporary art discourse – particularly that influenced by Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author*[62] – engaged in self-reflective critique on the nature of art and role of the artist, the preference for cultural heroics, along with the idea of having "it" in you, thrived in the realm of outsiders. Accordingly, outsider discourse collectively embraced the fetish for artistic purity and untrained expression, allegedly lost through modernization and mechanization.

"It's gotta be in ya" expresses a historical priority for individualism, embodying the ideals of vision, disinterest, and authenticity. By suggesting that their artwork stemmed from a

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[61] Rusch, interview.

[62] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image / Music / Text,* trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-7.

personal predisposition, Smith and Rusch claimed to possess an individual ability that differentiated themselves from others. They were special. They had the vision, the will, and the talent.

The quote "it's gotta be in ya" represents a set of motivating ideals that were real and are expressed through the artwork and the viewer's relationship to it. However, over the course of this project, we find that history provides evidence against the actuality of exceptionalism, suggesting that this was a popular form of artwork with clear historic precedents. They were not isolated events but exist within a specific set of historical primers. For now, I will consider the phrase "it's gotta be in ya" and how it represents a series of attitudes central to the construction of heroic individualism and the concrete sculpture garden.

A Doggone Old Fanatic Idea

When Volkersz and Rusch discussed the 1974 Walker Art Center exhibition *Naives and Visionaries*, which featured Rusch, he mimicked the way the exhibition and other art world stakeholders described roadside concrete sculpture gardens and art environments broadly. He said, "It started in with them doggone old fanatic idea, you know, and then—what they think up themselves, you know. They didn't learn it or anything." The exhibition of visionaries reinforced very specific values in the artist's work. Those values were not lost on Rusch himself. The catalog pressed the point that the artist had a unique vision or idea with notably exaggerated language, writing, "Eccentrics… are also seers whose radically reformed surroundings are their life works."[63] Instinctively echoing the curator's description of him and his peers as "seers,"

[63] Rusch, interview.

Rusch assigned the value of his and his peer's work to their "doggone old fanatic idea," or rather their unique vision.

The exhibition taught Rusch to think of himself and his peers as visionaries, but more importantly, it taught him that a "fanatic idea" could earn institutional affirmation.[64] Rusch did not talk about style, subject matter, or medium. He talked about the art world's endorsement of himself and his ideas. For the exhibition, it was critical that Rusch and his peers did not learn their art from anyone else, but that they created it entirely on their own and that their work was "altogether unique" even though that is practically and theoretically impossible. [65]

Surely, any traveler having stumbled upon a roadside concrete sculpture garden may have been surprised or curious by the unexpected work of art, thinking of it as "altogether unique." However, it is more likely that someone would unexpectedly encounter the work today than at the time the artist began the project. Later chapters will show that gardens, grottos, and roadside concrete sculpture gardens were well-known and well-attended destinations for picnics, Sunday drives, and travelers in general.

If we entertained the claim that artists had a unique vision, it must be possible to describe their vision. However, what constituted their *unique vision* varied from one artist to the next. Some had an idea in their mind of a finished product, such as Father Matthias Wernerus' (1873 – 1931) *Dickeyville Grotto* (1920 – 1930). Others may have had a loose idea, a trajectory, of their work developing additively, as in Smith's *Wisconsin Concrete Park*. Others seem to have had

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[64] Herman Rusch quoted in Martin Friedman, ed., *Naives and Visionaries* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974).

[65] Rusch, interview.

little-to-no preconception of what their work would become. For instance, Rusch admitted that he never had a vision for his work's progress, much less a vision of it as complete. "I didn't know myself that it would look like this," he said "that's a fact!"[66] Similarly, Smith explained, "nobody knows why I made them, not even me. This work just came to me naturally. I started one day in 1948 and have been doing a few a year ever since."[67] Like Rusch, most artists did not have an end goal. They did not spend their time inching toward a completed vision already worked out in their minds. So, how do we define a *fanatic idea* when it seems there was none at all?

Even more problematic to the idea of a unique vision is that it is essentially impossible to determine what constitutes the complete artwork. Is it complete when the artist stops working on it? What about the other ideas they may have thought to add, but never had the chance to create? Are the artworks in their assemblage state today what the artist envisioned as their complete work, or did they envision their work as a collection of discrete individual works assembled over time? Ultimately, death or illness typically marked the conclusion of their artistic labors as opposed to the artist reaching some final vision, making it virtually impossible to answer these questions.

When we operate under the assumption of a unique vision, we have to reconstruct what that vision constituted or we have to assume that the artwork as it stands was the manifestation of the artist's vision. We cannot know this for every artist, but for most, their additive methodology

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[66] Rusch, interview.

[67] Fred Smith quoted in Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi, *The Art of Fred Smith: The Wisconsin Concrete Park: A Brief History and Self-guided Tour* (Phillips, WI: Friends of Fred Smith, Inc., 1991), 2.

would suggest that their unique vision was more an impulse to make something than a fully formed vision of what that something would become.

Describing art environment artists broadly, Erika Nelson, caretaker for Samuel P. Dinsmoor's (1843 – 1932) *Garden of Eden* (1907 – 1928) in Lucas, KS, wrote in similar terms: "Driven by an internal creative force, they aren't worried about completing something by a certain date; they're worried about running out of time to do what they want to do."[68] Her description explicitly reinforced the assumption that the artist had an inexplicable and internal force driving their work. The phrase "internal creative force" suggests something the artist was born into, divinely ordained, or in more pathological terms, a sort of obsessive impulse that they have little control over. According to these sorts of interpretations, the artist's life and work are secondary to the ongoing articulation of an internal impulse.

Nelson continued with the idea that the artist worked over a long period of time with an ambivalent relationship to completing their artwork. She suggests they did not have a timeline, but saw their work stretching out before them, concerned they may run out of time. This, of course, assumes that the artist's intuitive impulses had an objective, an idea of what the finished product might be, or at the very least ambitions toward growing the project. The problem with assuming they had an end goal is that we cannot know what that goal was because the artists rarely kept records or sketches of their plans. Instead, researchers have to look to the work in its terminal and monumental state, assuming that the artist's impulse drove them toward this preconceived vision.

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[68] Erika Nelson, "Self-Made Worlds," *Public Art Review* (Spring/Summer 2014): 39.

Ultimately, it is virtually impossible to prove a unique vision existed, much less what their unique vision was. Furthermore, it begs the question, how does one come by a unique vision? For many, the answer to that question relates to the artist's educational influences, or alleged lack thereof.

[Un]Qualified

Introducing its featured artists, *Naïves and Visionaries* accentuated that the artists lacked a technical artistic education including a general familiarity with the history of art. For instance, the authors explained that the artists' visual sources were likely magazines rather than drawing subjects and styles from in-person experience and professional training. They write, "Their formal educations were practically non-existent and most were raised and lived their entire lives in the same region, relatively unaware of the world outside. They had no art training..."[69] Lacking formal art training – or education generally speaking – served as evidence of the artist's expressive authenticity and innate ability. At the same time, it disrupted the audience's expectation that an artist have formal training in order to be successful and so emphasizing the artist's lack of education serves to elicit wonder or surprise.

The fascination with artists lacking formal artistic training has a long history in outsider art, naïve art, and art brut. To a certain degree, it traces back to the work of German psychiatrist and historian Hans Prinzhorn (1886 – 1933). He argued that social or physical confinement from education benefited the creative impulse, writing: "We know today that most children possess an original configurative urge which develops freely in a suitable environment, but which disappears rapidly as the rationalism of schooling turns as instinctual, playful creature into a

[69] Herman Rusch quoted in Martin Friedman, ed., *Naives and Visionaries* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1974), 9.

knowing and purposeful one."[70] According to Prinzhorn, creative authenticity or purity directly related to the person's exposure to rationalization produced by formal training. Confinement of the mentally ill and the assessment of their work as pure and expressionistic was the predecessor for the valuation of self-taught art as somehow devoid of rational interventions.

By using the pattern of genius and exceptionality to describe mentally ill artists such as Vincent Van Gogh in his 1930 article "Genius and Madness," Prinzhorn worked toward a more inclusive art world.[71] Known as an originator of the concept of outsider art, Prinzhorn argued that mentally ill patients were as capable of producing unremarkable and remarkable works of art in the same way that the otherwise mentally healthy were capable. In the article, Prinzhorn used Van Gogh—and the fact that the public has a strong familiarity with Van Gogh's work—to show that in moments of psychosis Van Gogh produced works of art of varying qualities, some quite good and others not as good. Likewise, he produced works of varying qualities when he was mentally well. By drawing equations between art of the mentally ill and mentally healthy, Prinzhorn addressed negative assumptions about the capabilities of people with mental illnesses. However, authors continued to frame artists deemed culturally or socially atypical as innate geniuses even when the majority of scholarship began to frown upon such an approach. As a result, scholarship perpetuated the binary between art produced by art world insiders and art world outsiders.

Artists like Rusch promoted their work using the same language used by art world institutions. Parroting the language used in the exhibition catalog of *Naives and Visionaries*,

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[70] Hans Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1995), 269.
[71] Hans Prinzhorn, "Genius and Madness," *Parnassus* 2, no. 1 (1930): 19-44.

Rusch learned to value his own self-taught status. "They [the featured artists] didn't learn it or anything," he explained.[72] He believed the artists independently envisioned or designed their artwork, or at least perceived the advantage of playing the role of the naïve. At the same time, the art world, or more specifically the Walker Art Center, signaled to Rusch that being untrained was valuable and he, possibly absorbing their affirmation, claimed it as his own.

What does this mean in terms of heroic individualism? The formula requires a subject, specifically an individual lacking formal education or training, and an object, an artwork made from every-day or industrial materials and built over the course of years. What stands between the subjects and object is an obstacle. In many cases, writers marked that obstacle as education. The preoccupation with an artist's training – or lack thereof – assumes that training is integral to an artist's development. Thus, to lack training puts the artist at a disadvantage. By overcoming the disadvantage, naïves and visionaries proved their innate vision and ability.

By that same logic we might ask, do trained artists lack an innate ability? Alternatively, is it impossible to evaluate an artist's natural ability because there are too many known variables that might have shaped their so-called vision or ability? When we take account of the influences experienced by a trained artist, we might come up with resources, studio training, and education on art criticism. Do these factors endanger or pollute artistic work?

Let us consider the formally trained artist, having worked in studios with other artists, studied in a variety of media, and even familiarized themselves with contemporary art criticism. According to the arguments concerning the intuitive artist, these experiences pollute an artist's ability to achieve purity of expression because cultural input allegedly influences artists in some

[72] Rusch, interview.

way. In other words, an artist did not live in a vacuum in which only their own imagination could be determined responsible for their artistic output. To put it another way, an artist's experiences provided too many variables to pinpoint the exact source of their inspiration and the extent of their innate ability.

Though articles point out that Fred Smith lacked a formal education,[73] the art and popular culture of the day strongly influenced his work. For instance, Smith modeled his *Angora Cat* and *Tiger* after a painting of the same name by Morris Hirshfield.[74] The Chicago-based artist Robert Amft went to visit Smith on a number of occasions to photograph the *Wisconsin Concrete Park.* During one visit, he brought Smith a copy of Sidney Janis's *They Taught Themselves,* which included three works by Hirshfield including the *Angora Cat* (1937 – 1939) and *Tiger* (1940). When Amft returned to the *Wisconsin Concrete Park* months later, Smith had sculpted his own version of the cat, bragging that he was as good as Hirshfield.[75] Among other things, this incident demonstrates that education and cultural awareness occurs in many different settings and not only in the classroom.

Yet, it would follow that some have interpreted educational disadvantage as a vacuum to prove the naïve or visionary artist's innate vision and ability. However, this assumes that formal education and its often class-based experiences are the only form of education and experience

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[73] Jerry and Dolores Powers, "The Northwoods Traveler," *Bottom Line News & Views* (September 15, 2015): 21.

[74] Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi, *The Art of Fred Smith: The Wisconsin Concrete Park, A Self-Guided Tour* (1991; repr., Ashland, WI.: Friends of Fred Smith, 2005): 11. Morris Hirshfield, *Angora Cat,* 1937-39.

[75] Friends of Fred Smith, "History of the Park," (n.d.) accessed Sept 1, 2020. https://wisconsinconcretepark.org/the-park/. Details are also available in Friends of Fred Smith, "Friends of Fred Smith Conservation Committee: Wisconsin Concrete Park Conservation Project Synopsis, August 2002," (unpublished report, Friends of Fred Smith, Phillips, WI, August 2002): 1.

that count. There is no way around it. The assumption is impossible. It assumes that artists without training lack cultural engagement, which is a value judgement about what cultural circles count and what circles do not count.

More specifically, the issue of educational disadvantage is also an issue of class. *Naïves and Visionaries* mostly featured working-class artists such as Dinsmoor, Rodia, and Smith. Respectively, these men were farmers, rail workers, and lumberjacks. Promoting their lack of formal training as indicative of their innate ability was compatible with prejudices about art and class. Rather than confronting the artist's disadvantage and advocating for the artist to have greater access to resources in order to nurture their talent, writers, collectors and institutions used the admiration of disadvantage to maintain disadvantage, whether or not they knew it. Furthermore, when institutions like the Walker assigned cultural value to economic disadvantage, they taught the artists to participate in their own disenfranchisement.

While categorizing and evaluating artists' works according to their education is a strategy many writers use to cultivate spectacle and awe and to support the innate drive argument, it led to romanticizing the effects of economic disadvantage. One of the greatest struggles of educationally disadvantaged individuals is illiteracy. Illiteracy makes it difficult to make purchases, review contracts, read the news, follow safety instructions, or even help children with schoolwork. Yet, writers and historians of grassroots art find value in illiteracy, at least in the artist's success despite it.

The informality of "it's gotta be in ya" adds dimension to popular histories on Smith, which talk about him as illiterate. Periodical features like "Cast in Concrete" from *Our Wisconsin,* notes at the start that Smith "had no formal education in art—or much else—as he

couldn't read or write."[76] At times, writers point out evidence of illiteracy in his artworks. For instance, a newspaper article detailed how Smith included written explanations for his sculptures, which he dictated to a friend, Marge Kirschbaum, "as he could neither read nor write."[77] Likewise, when writing about Smith's *Iwo Jima* monument, authors note that Smith could not read or write as evidenced by the title text (Figure 1.4).[78] The text on the monument blends together with Smith failing to add the appropriate spaces between words.[79] In all caps, the title reads,

MARINESRAISEOLD
GLO RYONIWOJIMA

It takes a moment to decipher the title sans spaces, but the iconic image proves unmistakable. When people talk or write about the *Iwo Jima Monument*, they typically begin with the anecdote about how Smith wrote the text rather than its impressive scale, relief technique, or surface painting. The Friends of Fred Smith, an organization that supports the maintenance of the *Wisconsin Concrete Park*, begins their biography of Fred Smith in this way, "He had no formal schooling, and was illiterate. Later in his life, Smith answered an interviewer asking if Smith's inability to read or write had been a hindrance. Smith replied, 'Hell no, I can do things other

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[76] Enid Cleaves, "Cast in Concrete: Folk artist's historic treasures still stand in Phillips," *Our Wisconsin* (April / May 2017): 69.

[77] "The Fred Smith Stone Park: A Dream of 'Something for Everyone'," *The Park Falls Herald* (September 21, 1978).

[78] Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi, *Marines Raise Old Glory on Iwo Jima: Fred Smith's Wisconsin Concrete Park* (Phillips, WI: Friends of Friend Smith, 2009), 4; Interview with Marjory Brzeskiewicz, director of the *Wisconsin Concrete Park,* by the author, July 26, 2019; Kristin G. Congdon and Kara Kelley Hallmark, *American Folk Art: A Regional Reference Volume 1* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012): 446.

[79] Stone and Zanzi, *Marines Raise Old Glory*, 4.

people can't do!"[80] Public and academic interest in the artist's illiteracy and the ways that it effected his work represents a fixation with education as an obstacle in the heroic arc of the artist's life.

Thinking back to Rusch's interview with Volkersz, the transcriptionist pointed out that the transcript included "unique verbal mannerisms" that were "difficult or impossible to transcribe." In one instance, Volkersz spoke with Rusch about his fruit and vegetable garden and transcribed Rusch saying "there's all kinds of wild asparagus" with the translators note: "charmingly pronounces it as-par-a-grass."[81] The note reveals attitudes that interpreters brought to the sites and indicates their role in shaping reception. Such comments transformed speech idiosyncrasies associated with class and education into markers of difference and desire.

Ultimately, the interpreter's goal was not to demean or infantilize the artist. The artist and documentarian Volkersz and his transcriptionist sought to promote and to advocate for self-taught artists' success.[82] The conveyed to their reader that ordinary men like Smith and Rusch succeeded in sculpting complex works of art despite financial and educational challenges. In a sense, this way of presenting the artist portrays their lives according to the American dream, demonstrating that anyone can accomplish their goals as long as they have the creativity, tenacity, and will. At the same time, these stories threaten to reduce the artists to a cliché rather than deal directly with the negative effects of poverty and its obstructions to opportunity.

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[80] Friends of Fred Smith, "Biography," *Wisconsin Concrete Park,* accessed June 10, 2021 at wisconsinconcretepark.org/the-artist/.
[81]Rusch, interview.

[82] Other artists through the years have photographed and documented art environment sites. Examples include Fred Scruton, Seymour Rosen, and Robert Amft.

For many of the roadside sculpture gardens, caretakers today use the artist's stories to teach the public that anyone can be an artist. At Nick Engelbert's (1881 – 1962) *Grandview* (c. 1930 – 1960), the Pecatonica Educational Charitable Foundation hosts arts programming in partnership with the local schools and adult classes during the summer. The instructors leverage the artist's story as a source of inspiration. They propose that if a farmer from southwest Wisconsin could become an artist, then anyone can become an artist.[83]

While *Grandview* explained that the artworks represented the ubiquity and accessibility of creativity, statements by Fred Smith suggest the opposite. In another interview, Smith repeated the sentiment "it's gotta be in ya" in more detail. Responding to a question about his method, Smith stated:

> Well, it's in a person, or you can't never do it. Never. Can't teach it. There have been so many people who want to stay with me two years and learned to make 'em; they wanted to live in Milwaukee and start a little shop making statues. They can work with me for ten years and then go to Milwaukee and start a shop and they still wouldn't know which end to start on.[84]

Smith communicated the belief that his skill was not something that someone learned by traditional methods. By telling the journalist that his skill was not something he could teach, Smith reinforced the idea that he was gifted and had some innate ability. When he said, "they still wouldn't know which end to start on," he was arguing for his own authority by virtue of something innate. In part, Smith achieved his personal legacy by proving that he was special. An

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[83] Interview with Richard Rolfsmeyer, caretaker of *Nick Engelbert's Grandview* by Cortney Anderson Kramer, June 24, 2019, Hollandale, WI.

[84] Smith, "Fred Smith Interviewed."

imaginary apprentice could never succeed, unless they already had the ability, in which case they would not need his help after all.

Smith's statement about his innate ability distinguished himself from accomplishment by way of education. By discrediting the ability to learn his trade, Smith reinforced the belief in his own individual exceptionalism. Occupying the role of a certain kind of artistic genius, he participated in the creation of his public persona as an artist with a unique vision, a visionary.

Disinterest

In the same quote, Smith gestured toward the market. In the interview, Smith described an unidentified artist from Milwaukee that approached Smith, asking that Smith teach him the craft of working with concrete sculptures. Smith described the inquirer as someone who wanted "to live in Milwaukee and start a little shop making statues." [85] The aspiring student must have recognized that there was a market for such work if he or she thought they could open a business selling concrete statues. Yet, Smith rejected the proposition. He argued that the artist would fail because they did not have it in them. However, Smith may have had other motivations to reject the young admirer. Perhaps he did not want competition or he wanted to preserve his singularity.

Smith did not sell his work and so the potential for a financial competitor was unlikely. A creative competitor, though, was not outside the realm of possibility. For artists that built their artworks up around themselves, drawing attention to themselves, it is completely reasonable that to take on an apprentice of sorts would destroy the guise of exceptionality.

By not selling his work, Smith acted out a degree of disinterestedness. As it relates to art and art criticism, the term disinterestedness originated with Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the*

[85] Smith, "Fred Smith Interviewed."

Power of Judgment in which he argued that disinterestedness was taking pleasure in an artwork without the presence of desire.[86] As a result, disinterestedness was a pure form of artistic enjoyment. What motivates desire as it relates to a work of art? The viewer's knowledge that a particularly noteworthy artist made a work of art could motivate desire for the artwork, independent of the work's quality. In this instance, desire impedes the viewer from taking pleasure in the work according to the object's merit alone.

In recent years, historians have used the idea of disinterestedness to explain tendencies in the outsider and folk art fields.[87] In this context, disinterestedness refers to artists who make their work simply for the pleasure of making it rather than with the intent to sell for personal benefit. Part of the popular appeal of outsider art is the notion that the artist made the work with a purity of intent. The desire to make money did not motivate their art practice. However, as sociologist and art historian Julie Ardery described, disinterestedness produces a number of problems for outsider artists including the necessity that they remain disinterested even after their work enters into the market, thereby denying the artist powers of negotiation or financial advocacy.[88]

Though roadside concrete sculpture gardens do not neatly fit within the category of outsider art, it often follows the same theme of disinterestedness. For instance, the common anecdote that Smith refused to sell any of his works appeals to disinterestedness because some

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[86]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment (Kritik der Urteilskraft*), trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1790 & 2000), 90–96, 42–50.

[87] Jennifer C. Lena, *Entitled: Discriminating Tastes and the Expansion of the Arts* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019); Julia Ardery, "Loser Wins: Outsider Art and the Salvaging of Disinterestedness." *Poetics* 24 (1997): 329-346.; Oliver Hahl, Ezra Zuckerman, and Minjae Kim, "Why Elites Love Authentic Lowbrow Culture: Overcoming High-status Denigration with Outsider Art," *American Sociological Review* (August 2017): 828-856.

[88] Ardery, "Loser Wins," 329-346.

might interpret that it demonstrates that Smith created his work without monetary objectives. Longtime conservators, advocates and historians of the *Wisconsin Concrete Park,* Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi reported that when asked to sell a sculpture, Smith refused, saying that if he sold his art only the owner would be able to enjoy it.[89] Smith said that he made the park for the American people, including a little something for everyone in his work.[90] Smith created works that would appeal to a variety of audiences including a statue of the Lone Ranger's horse Silver for kids and a Sun Yat Sen for those interested in history.[91] The claim that Smith made his art for everyone and never sold it aligns with the idea of altruistic creative work. By making art for everyone and not taking advantage of opportunities for his own financial gain, Smith made a sacrifice of sorts associated with his creative labor.

Occasionally, artists made concrete pots and small items for neighbors, but it was not common for them to sell works from their roadside concrete sculpture gardens. Ben Hartman, for example sold birdbaths and flowerpots to finance the costs of building and maintaining his sculpture garden.[92] A letter from a birdbath owner to the Kohler Foundation confirms the purchase.[93] In addition to this letter, there are few records verifying instances where artists like Smith sold their sculptures or accepted commissions.

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[89] Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi, *The Art of Fred Smith: The Wisconsin Concrete Park: A Brief History and Self-guided Tour* (Phillips, WI: Friends of Fred Smith, Inc., 1991), 2.

[90] Ben Burroughs, "Sketches," *The Gettysburg Times* (Mon, October 16, 1978): 12.

[91] "The Fred Smith Stone Park: A Dream of "Something for Everyone," *The Park Falls-Herald* (September 21, 1978).

[92] Community Beautification Committee, "The Hartman Gardens," *The Bicentennial of Clark County, 1997-2001* (Springfield, OH: Clark County, 2001).

[93] Letter from Marianne L. Nave to Terri Yoho, August 7, 2009, Kohler Foundation. Letter describes a birdbath that Marianne's parents bought from Ben Hartman.

The artworks' quintessential characteristics including their concrete composition and monumental scale make them difficult to sell. The artworks are assemblages located in outdoor settings, predominantly gardens. They are often monumental in size, making relocation very difficult. Even life-size sculptures require the utmost care in relocating because of their heavy weight and volatility. For these practical reasons, roadside concrete sculpture gardens do not readily lend themselves to commodification in the art market, even with some – like Smith's anonymous inquirer – suggesting they offered a market opportunity. These incompatibilities with the market make it difficult to measure the disinterestedness of the sculpture garden artist.

Can an artist exhibit disinterestedness if their artwork exists independently from an incompatible art market? Does an artwork's relationship to the art market determine their disinterestedness? Disinterestedness relative to the market privileges monetary exchange in the definition of interestedness. However, the artist's relationship to the market may be one of access and not of desire. Rural artists like Smith and Rusch had limited access to the art market by virtue of their geographic location and the immobility of their artwork. If accessibility played a part in obstructing artists from selling their work, did the artists demonstrate self-interest in other ways that worked around this limitation? Did artists benefit financially or otherwise from their artwork by not selling it?

Though Smith did not sell his artworks, that does not mean he lacked interest in the financial prospects of his artwork. The *Wisconsin Concrete Park*, like many concrete gardens, has figures and signs facing the highways, inviting visitors into the space, indicating that what might usually register as a private property, is accessible to the public. Smith's concrete garden speckled the property on which he built his pub and home. When he said that he kept the work

there for all to enjoy, he marked the *Wisconsin Concrete Park*, his home and place of business, as a public space.

By opening their homes to the public, these artists reframed their property as a public space and, in exchange, they solicited visitors to contribute to the care and development of the artwork. Once on the property, whether it be the *Wisconsin Concrete Park* or H. G. "Ben" Hartman's (1883 – 1944) *Harman Rock Garden* (1932 – 1944) in Springfield, Ohio, artists built donation solicitation boxes (Figure 1.5).[94] The choice to solicit donations suggests that the artists wanted to make money.

In an interview, Mary Hartman of the *Hartman Rock Garden* (Springfield, OH) described how her husband would use donations from visitors. She explained, "When they'd [viewers] leave, they'd give him a nickel or a dime, and he'd save 'em in his pocket til he got 50 cents – that's how much a bag of cement cost then. He'd come, he'd say, 'hone, get me another sack of cement."[95] The interviewer recorded Mary's words in the same way as the Volkersz interviews. The broken language and phonetic spellings of abbreviated words like "honey" and "until" make it difficult to read and foreground the informal dialogue between Mary and Ben Hartman.

According to his wife's statement, Hartman used solicited funds to finance his work. Similarly, in the case of the Minnesotan garden *Ak-Sar-Ben,* the brothers Hugo and Arnold Vogt charged ten cents for tourists, reportedly to cover the cost of repairs and maintenance of their

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[94] Ruth Peters, "Labor of love: Stone Replicas of Famed Scenes, Building are Garden Attractions," *Fairborn Daily Herald: Enon News* (Wednesday, September 15, 1982).

[95] Karen Kakas, "Harman's Historical Rock Garden," *Columbus Art* (1985), 5-6.

popular garden.[96] By using funds to pay for the expansion and maintenance of their gardens, artists asked visitors to participate in their artistic progress. Solicitations demonstrate that the artists recognized their work as possessing monetary value. Instead of the monetary exchange resulting in the transference of ownership (i.e. paying to purchase an artwork from an artist), the exchange granted access and experience.

Smith built the *Wisconsin Concrete Park* around his Rock Garden Tavern (Figure 1.6). Inside the tavern, Smith served Rhinelander Shorties—a Northwood's favorite seven-ounce beer produced by the nearby Rhinelander Brewing—and performed his fiddle for tourists and friends (Figure 1.7). N. R. Lacina recalled, "He'd pour out a shot of the closest bottle and then shuffle back to his special chair and tie sleigh bells on his legs. Then he'd pick up his fiddle and give an unforgettable version of "Turkey-in-the-Straw" (which he said he wrote) accompanied by the bells."[97] Outside the tavern, his concrete sculptures abounded, drawing attention to the otherwise inconspicuous roadside tavern.

It is difficult to avoid speculating about the relationship between the Rock Garden Tavern and the *Wisconsin Concrete Park.* The sculpture garden's novelty must have served the ambition of attracting customers. The garden and tavern complement one another. The garden serves as a space for travelers to stretch their legs, enjoy the scenery and the artwork, and perhaps socialize. The tavern provides them with refreshment. Nearly every concrete sculpture garden artist addressed in this text sold post cards or plants and most solicited donations.

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[96] Marjorie Rea, *The Story of Ak-Sar-Ben Rock Gardens* (Virginia, MN: W. A. Fisher Company, 194-?), 5.
[97] N.R. Lacina, "What's New in Price County," *The Daily Press—Ashland, Wis.* (Saturday, September 2, 1972): 3.

"It's gotta be in ya" communicates that artists like Smith were born with some deep-seated ability or vision to create this work of art, and their refusal to sell indicates a set of priorities in which art supersedes the ambition for monetary gain. Essentially, it tests and proves their virtue as all obstacles do in the construction of heroes. Scholars have investigated these ideologies in the development of the field of folk art in America during the Works Progress Administration. Writing about the discriminatory choices that shaped the field of folk art, Jennifer Lena writes:

> The myth that artists are born, not trained; that they are engaged in a "labor of love"; that they have a "calling," follow an "inner drive," or receive a "psychic income" that covers any financial deficit—all of these are part and parcel of an ideology that keeps wages and prestige low and attrition from the profession high. Each myth supports the romantic ideology of art we see manifest in the value of disinterestedness.[98]

The "psychic income" offered as a substitute for monetary gain is an ideal with deep roots extending from turn-of-the-century primitivism, influencing artistic movements from the modernist avant-garde. In the wake of post-modernism, artists and art critics have pushed the problematic assumption of expressionistic purity further and further from canon narratives. However, the idea of artistic purity found refuge in the foundations of outsider and folk art. Even now, as critics and scholars take up the same battle with primitivist narratives thriving in outsider rhetoric, the art environment, and the concrete sculpture garden specifically, demand the same critical reflection.

For decades, historians, art historians, critics, and even sociologists have pointed out the exploitative underpinnings of outsider and folk art.[99] Informed by Pierre Bourdieu's concept of

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[98] Lena, *Entitled*, 95.

[99] Julia Ardery, "The Temptation: Edgar Tolson and the Sociology of Twentieth Century Folk Art," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Kentucky, 1995); Eugene W. Metcalf, Jr., "From Domination to Desire: Insiders and Outsider Art," in *The Artist Outsider: Creativity and the Boundaries of Culture*, eds. Michael

disinterestedness,[100] Julie Ardery claims that to succeed as an outsider artist, artists have to maintain their outsider-ness, which means performing disinterestedness sometimes to the detriment of their own financial gain.[101] To be a successful outsider, to win, artists have to continue to perform that they are *losers*. They must continue to live in a state that qualifies them as outsiders, subjecting them to financial, social, or cultural exploitation.

Another way of considering disinterestedness is through research on authenticity. Sociologist Gary Alan Fine examined authenticity as an objective of consumer desire. In *Everyday Genius: Self-taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity*, Fine analyzed networks (including museums and curators, art dealers, critics, collectors, and art historians) that contribute to the development of hierarchical value. In what he describes as an ethnographic study, his work addresses notions that art, even outsider art, is impenetrable by the market.[102] Artwork can simultaneously be a commodity and a form of creative expression. For many, the desire for money on the market is incompatible with creative purity, causing some to evaluate the work based on the artist's relationship to the market. Ironically, the market determines the authenticity of an artwork based on the artist's uncorrupted intentions, in other words, they made the artwork for the love of making art rather than for the promise of financial gain. An artwork is

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Hall, Eugene Metcalf, and Roger Cardinal (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), 213-227; Beatrix T. Rumford, "Uncommon art of the common people: A review of trends in the collecting and exhibiting of American folk art," in *Perspectives on American folk art,* eds. Ian M.G. Quimby and Scott T. Swank (New York: Norton, 1980), 13-53.

[100] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature,* ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press 1993), 29-73.

[101] Ardery, "Loser Wins," 329-346.

[102] Gary Alan Fine, *Everyday Genius: Self-taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 2.

even more expressively authentic when the artist rejects financial gain when offered in exchange for their work. Thus, romantic biographical stories serve market desire because the artist rejects the market. For many now famous works of modern art, the work and its novelty preceded the legend of the artists. For outsiders, however, it is nearly impossible to assign monetary, or perhaps even cultural, value without the artist's biography. Fine argues that this distinguishing characteristic makes outsider art an identity art. The artwork functions as an artifact representing the actual object of desire: the artist and constructions of their creative purity and narratives of their eccentric or tragic life.[103]

According to Fine's definition of outsider art, we are not able to identify an outsider artist based on their artwork. In contrast, concrete sculpture garden artists were typically working-class individuals like many outsiders and so writers constructed their position in the art world according to their identity, marking them outsiders as well. Their biography determined their categorization. However, art environments such as the roadside concrete sculpture gardens constitute a distinct and characteristic art form that we can in fact define by the artwork itself.

The artworks are consistent in subject matter, media, integration of space and landscape, and use. Treating the artists as outsiders overlooks the overwhelming material and historical evidence supporting the common historical conditions that fostered this type of artwork and the degree of thoughtfulness, intentionality, and collaboration of the artists. Calling them outsiders and categorizing them as such communicates that the foremost qualifying feature of this artwork is that its artists exist outside of the art world in the United States.

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[103] Fine, *Everyday Genius*, 6.

The authenticating process of Prinzhorn's 1920s work with patients suffering from mental illness is just as prevalent in 2020.[104] Writing on an exhibition of self-taught artists, art historian and collector Arthur F. Jones writes that a self- taught artist "works boldly with confidence in their own inventiveness, without making attempts to follow the 'rules' of schooled art."[105] He describes an inverse relationship between artistic inventiveness and education, suggesting that the artist's vision is somehow more inventive because they did not have access to formal education. On the other hand, his statement suggests that education hinders trained artists and that they sacrifice their inventiveness in pursuit of a technical education. The idea that artists that have worked within and against the art institution somehow exchange their ability to envision impactful works of art is not provable and yet this standard is used as a tool to measure countless self-taught artist's worth as expressionistically superior.

Just as their disconnection from artistic education or education in general proved the artist's unique vision, the artist's and artwork's relationship to money proved their authenticity. By not selling their artwork, they provided tinder to the art world's pursuit of authenticity in response to its own discomfort with the art market. While many different members of the art world positioned the commodification of art as corrupting the fantasy of creative authenticity, specifically concerning the artist's motivation, they also positioned roadside concrete sculpture gardens as authentic because of their public function and incompatibility with the art market.

Site caretakers and writers have leveraged the idea of authenticity to attribute cultural importance to the artworks discussed in this project. Advocating for the *Dickeyville Grotto*'s

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[104] Hans Prinzhorn, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill.* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1995): 269.

[105] Arthur F. Jones quoted in Leila Raines, "Outsider Art Exhibition Empowers 'Unschooled' Aesthetes," *University Wire Carlsbad* (February 2020).

nomination for the State Historical Society register, professor of art and art history at Loras Collage Thomas Jewell-Vitale wrote a letter on behalf of the grotto:

> I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the authenticity, integrity, and imagination that motivates folk art. It is absolutely necessary in our culture not only to recognize folk art as an authentic form of artistic expression, but more importantly to revere and uphold the motivation from which it arises…most of what we call 'fine art' would do well to qualify for that status by learning from the authenticity and imagination which motivates its predecessor, folk art.[106]

In this letter, Jewell-Vitale requested official recognition of the *Dickeyville Grotto* by arguing that the work, which he identified as folk art, was an "authentic form of artistic expression." Such has been the work of many art historians, to identify a characteristic – often authenticity – that legitimizes the work as artistically important. It is difficult to avoid wondering what constitutes expressive authenticity. By prioritizing the artist's motivation as the source of the artwork's value, it is possible to overlook critical value.

Because of the efforts of advocates such as Professor Jewell-Vitale, the *Dickeyville Grotto* and many other grassroots environments received the financial support needed to preserve and protect the works of art. However, discourses centered on artistic authenticity threaten to essentialize artists who worked in novel ways. One way to combat this tendency is to consider roadside concrete sculpture gardens as an artistic movement. Framing them as a movement focuses on the shared historical conditions that inspired so many artists across the world to create artistic works of concrete in their personal gardens.

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[106] Letter from Thomas Jewell-Vitale to Ms. Wyatt, October 22, 1980, Dickeyville Grotto folder, Wisconsin Historical Society.

Promoting a Legacy

In this chapter, I have addressed a variety of myths perpetuated by the saying "it's gotta be in ya." The myths include inherent creative ability, motivation independent of monetary ambition, and ideas unencumbered by art world influence. Rather than dismiss these ideas, I am interested in how the artists propagated and reproduced them through the artwork.

"It's gotta be in ya" and its associated myths express the ideals of heroic individualism. Heroic individualism involves the realization of one's individuality, requiring the artists, in this case, to demonstrate their unique ability and to differentiate themselves from the mainstream. Reflecting on the art of Smith to a reporter, Ruth Kohler long-time director of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center and champion of art environments said, "These are truly raw, original expression, just coming out of an individual." Her words "just coming out" and "raw" described Smith's work as though it were an impulse or that there was a sense of urgency to his work. She went on, "He's not concerned about the art, styles, or any movements," suggesting that Smith was free from the influence of other movements and a possessed a degree of disinterest with creating according to art world trends. "It's a very individual, creative expression," she said, reiterating the ideal of individualism as a way of measuring the value—be it authenticity, purity, or individuality to measure the cultural worth—of the work of art.[107] Kohler was a trailblazer in the preservation, collection, and interpretation of concrete sculpture gardens and art environments broadly. Her words reveal that Smith's art communicated individuality to her and that individuality was of utmost importance.

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[107] Ruth Kohler quoted in Larry Van Goethem, "Fred Smith's legacy fashioned in concrete," *Milwaukee Sentinel* (Friday, June 18, 1982.): 1.

The way Kohler described Smith's work leads me to argue that individualism is a cultural value powerfully conveyed through the artist's work and promotional efforts. This is different from saying that the artwork or artist was exceptional or individualistic. Many artists created monumental concrete installations on their properties. They even share common methods, subjects, materials, and uses. Instead, I suggest that individualism is the very thing expressed and promoted.

Images like an undated photograph of Smith riding a horse-drawn carriage through town during a parade are evidence of his promotional efforts. In the cab of the carriage, he painted a sign that reads "Rock Garden Tavern or Bust," advertising his nearby pub (Figure 1.8). While images such as these are clear indications of Smith's promotional efforts, interviews with the artists are revealing.

Smith hinted at his personal motivation when an interviewer named William Bohne asked Smith why he began making sculptures. Smith replied, "I'll tell you one thing...They told me in Chicago they spent $150,000 on statues in a square. It put them on the map. That's worth something. I'll tell you that."[108] The Chicago sculpture garden put the square "on the map" and Smith thought that he could do the same thing, not unlike his attitude toward the *Angora Cat* that he could make just as well. Instead of putting a square "on the map," he was putting himself, his community, and his tavern "on the map." Although Smith admitted that he did not use his artwork to make money saying that he "wasn't smart enough" to charge admission,[109] he boasted about the fame of his work saying that there is nothing else like it. He explained, "tourists come

[108] Smith, "Fred Smith Interviewed," 2.

[109] Smith, "Fred Smith Interviewed," 4.

here from all over…They think the world of me…I'm known all over, ya know. All over the United States."[110] While Smith may not have sold his artwork, he certainly saw the personal benefit of it. When interviewing with curators of *Naïves and Visionaries,* he said, "Put my picture right in there and make a big thing out of it."[111] The exhibition was yet another way to draw visitors and potential admirers to the park.

Rather than vie for financial gain, he seems to have been more concerned with pursuing fame, admiration, and possibly even a legacy. Measuring his success by the geographic breadth of his admirers, Smith drew attention to the number of visitors that stopped by to observe his work. The interview itself was a form of self-promotion for Smith. Smith ended it by saying "I like talkin' to you, and anything you can do to put me on the map…I like that too."[112] The interviewer conducted the interview with Smith in an assisted living facility after Smith experienced a stroke. The stroke ultimately marked the end of his artistic endeavors and Smith died not long after. While facing his mortality, he emphasized his concern for the fame of his artwork. He wanted people to know about it.

The artists believed that their works would be their legacy. Remembering her husband in an interview, Mary Hartman described a time when she asked her husband, Ben Hartman, about all the people that were coming to see their garden, the *Hartman Rock Garden*. She says that he responded with "Aw, they ain't started to come yet," indicating that he envisioned his garden's

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[110] Smith, "Fred Smith Interviewed," 6.

[111] Fred Smith quoted in Martin Friedman, ed., *Naives and Visionaries* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc, 1974), 53.

[112] Smith, "Fred Smith Interviewed," 16.

audience would continue to grow over time. "When I leave this world…I'm going to leave something behind," Ben explained.[113] Surely, people believed that he had done just that.

A journalist from the *Springfield News-Sun* described Hartman as "a Springfielder who died two years ago in February, although a man of moderate means, also left public monuments to himself and his patience and skill."[114] Hartman's rock garden filled with miniature tableaus, pond, and figurines registered as a monument. Monuments do a number of things; they demarcate places of geographical importance as well as produce material presence to individuals that are no longer present. In the case of Hartman, who had passed away by that point, the garden registered as a memorial to the artist's work and presence. Comparing the garden to costly public monuments, they indicated a collectively held value in hard work and monumental accomplishments especially that of heroic scale.

Located along the Golden Belt Road connecting the east coast to Colorado, the *Garden of Eden* attracted tourists and became "a mecca for motorists."[115] In 1915, Dinsmoor attempted to market his *Garden of Eden* with a slide program titled "Lawrence Curtis Gilbreath Presents Samuel P. Dinsmoor, The Cement Wizard of the World."[116] Calling himself the Cement Wizard of the World did a couple things. It distinguished him on an international scale, even if he intended the program for a regional audience, and it associated his work with something of the supernatural. The nickname "wizard of cement" added commercial flare to Dinsmoor's work,

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[113] Catherine Durnesll, "A Garden of Small Delights," *Springfield News-Sun* (Sunday, September 12, 1982).

[114] "Stone Replicas Attract Attention," *Springfield News-Sun* (Sunday, September 22, 1946).

[115] "The Cement Artisan," *The Kansas City Star* (July 27, 1913).

[116] "The Cement Wizard," *The Sylvan Grove News* (Thursday, February 25, 1915): 5.

pointing out its theatricality and novelty. It also established Dinsmoor's promotion of himself as an artistic visionary. Surely, wizards are born and not made? While the performance had a disappointing turnout, Dinsmoor's efforts suggest that he was motivated to self-promote and drive tourism to his concrete sculpture garden.[117]

Self-promotion would hardly seem compatible with authentic disinterestedness. The garden offered artists like Dinsmoor, Hartman, and Smith an opportunity to use semi-public space for self-expressive and even self-promotional purposes. They signaled the values associated with heroic individualism. For the public, their art represented the artist's singularity and determination, pointing to their position as self-made artists having optimized their creative potential. As historians, we can look back and perceive the artworks as an artistic movement tied to these ideals of creativity and individuality monumentalized along the roadside frontiers of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that attitudes about individualism as it relates to art, class, and creativity contributed to the production of biographical narratives following heroic arcs. When the artists claimed innate ability and disinterestedness, they reinforced the idea of themselves as a cultural hero. To demonstrate how historians, writers, and curators participated in the promotion of the artists as cultural heroes, I deconstructed the phrase "It's gotta be in ya." The statement reinforces the heroic arc by communicating artistic predisposition, vision, tenacity, determination, and accomplishment. These characteristics constitute heroic individualism, which

[117] Interview with Mrs. Lawrence Gilbreath, July 1972, Cited in Bob Voth, "S. P. Dinsmoor and His Populist Garden of Eden" (unpublished paper, Garden of Eden archives, August 1972).

has played a central role in the evolution of art in America, especially art produced by self-taught artists.

Whether it be S. P. Dinsmoor of central Kansas or Fred Smith of central Wisconsin, the artists drew visitors to their gardens by leveraging the appeal of individuality. The artists acted in such a way that was self-promotional. Their promotional efforts were rooted in conveying that they were unique and had an innate ability. Considering the wide-reaching movement of concrete sculpture gardens and their appeal to individuality and cultural heroics, we can begin to examine how the works modeled self-reliance, self-actualization, loyalty, and hard work. Such definitive values of heroic individualism are visible in the artworks scale, material, and subject matter.

Figures

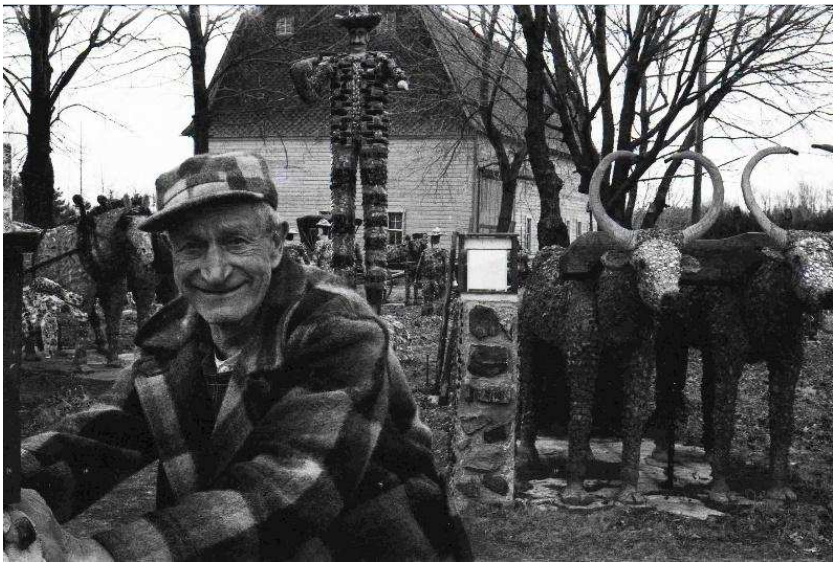

Figure 1.1: Robert Amft, photograph of Fred Smith at the *Wisconsin Concrete Park.* John Michael Kohler Arts Center Archive.

Figure 1.2: Clip from "Self-guided Tour" pamphlet, Phillips, WI: Wisconsin Concrete Park, n.d.

Figure 1.3: Photograph of Herman Rusch at *Prairie Moon Sculpture Garden.* Photo by Seymore Rosen, n.d. Courtesy of the SPACES archives.

Figure 1.4: Fred Smith, *Iwo Jima Monument*, *Wisconsin Concrete Park*, Philips WI, 1948-1964. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, July 2019.

Figure 1.5: Fred Smith, *Wisconsin Concrete Park* donation box, c. 1970s. Friends of Fred Smith archive.

Figure 1.6: *Rock Garden Tavern*, Friends of Fred Smith archive, photo by Robert Tripp, date unknown.

Figure 1.7: Photo of Fred Smith playing fiddle in the Rock Garden Tavern. Friends of Fred Smith archive, photo by Robert Amft, date unknown.

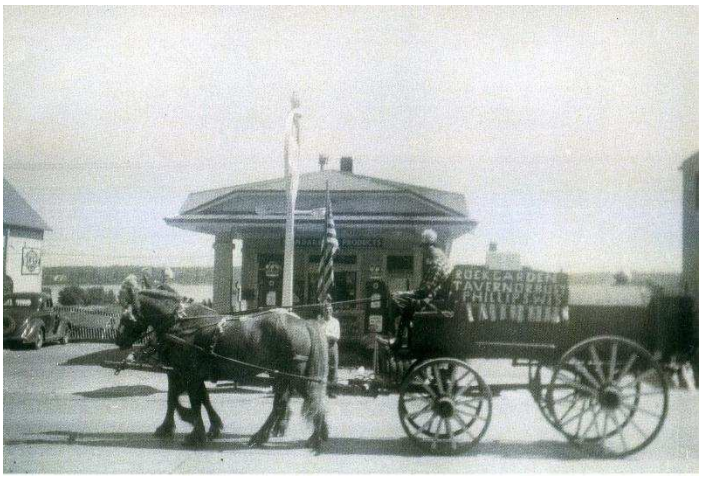

Figure 1.8: Fred Smith in Phillips parade, driving horse drawn carriage with sign advertising his Rock Garden Tavern. Friends of Fred Smith Archive, date unknown, photographer unknown.

Chapter 2: Extraordinary Feats of Rockery

In 1952, Father Philip Wagner (1882 – 1959) of St Philip's church in Rudolph, Wisconsin began the task of relocating and installing a seventy-five ton rock into the roughly five-acre rock garden he had spent the prior twenty-five years constructing (Figure 2.1).[118] While the garden featured a number of large rocks weighing around one ton, nothing came close to the impressive size of the monumental stone. Wagner propped the stone on gossan rocks and built a flat-faced shrine towering overhead with low relief carvings of soldiers and civilians. When finished in 1955, the installation was one of Wagner's last contributions to the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* (1927 – 1983),[119] signifying his strength of will and ingenuity over the course of the decades-long project.[120]

As in the story of Wagner's monumental rock, the scale of roadside concrete sculpture gardens was essential for the interpretation of the work as extraordinary and even visionary. Relocating and installing Wagner's monumental rock required thoughtful design, industrial resources, time, and even engineering. In a way, its large size suggests that the maker must have had a degree of steely determination in order to take on such a challenge. While twenty-first century texts explicitly communicate in terms of artistic vision and eccentricity, [121] contemporary writers suggested exceptionality by noting the scale of the work in terms of hours, number of

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[118] "Huge, 75-Ton Boulder Addition to Grotto," *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 11, 1953): 8.

[119] "Rev. P. J. Wagner, Shrine-Builder; Dies in Point," *Madison Wisconsin State Journal* (November 2, 1959): 15.

[120] *Father Philip J. Wagner and the Grotto Shrine, Rudolph, Wisconsin.* 1972. Booklet: 3.

[121] Michael Feldman and Diana Cook, *Wisconsin Curiosities: Quirky Characters, Roadside Oddities & Other Offbeat Stuff* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot, 2009), 89.

objects, dimensions, and weight.[122] Functioning as material evidence, scale quantified the amount of time and work the artist dedicated to the project, encouraging viewers, visitors, and art writers to interpret the artwork's monumentality as proof of the artist's heroic creativity.

The Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave serves as the primary example for this chapter. I begin the chapter summarizing contemporary accounts that documented the installation of the seventy-five ton rock. The story registers as a saga symbolizing the ingenuity of the artist and it affirms his work with examples of community buy-in through their donation of time and resources to Wagner's project.

Next, the chapter contextualizes this monumental example of rockery within popular gardening trends. I show how writers positioned gardening as an expressive form of home improvement that was available to anyone regardless of their gender, economic status, or geographic location, making the creative hobby egalitarian while placing the potential for success on the individual rather than their resources. Contemporary home improvement authors described the garden as a site for homeowners to make design choices that expressed individuality while adding to the curb appeal of their property. Instead of adding pigment to canvas, homeowners painted with flowers, built with trees and shrubs, and sculpted with concrete accessories.

I end the chapter explaining how the artists expanded these popular trends and ideas about domestic creativity to monumental degrees, transforming private gardens into tourist attractions. The exaggerated scale of the works promoted the ideals of individuality and grit already firmly associated with home improvement.

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[122] "Huge, 75-Ton Boulder Addition to Grotto," 8.

Wagner installed the monumental rock into the *Patriotic Shine* (1958), located just outside the church's All Souls Cemetery. Behind and above the rock, Wagner built two square grottos holding two plaques illustrated in low relief. Their titles are the *Pledge of Allegiance* and *On Wisconsin* (Figure 2.2). Respectively, they depict images of civilians and military saluting the American flag. By association, the rock evokes the heroism of patriotism as determined and unyielding, characteristics, one might argue, that describe Wagner's task of literally moving earth to create the expansive garden in Rudolph.

Having begun his tenure as priest for St. Philip's church (called St Philomena's at the time) in 1917, Wagner started to build the garden ten years later in 1927. In partnership with Edmond Rybicki, Wagner constructed five acres of gardens filled with concrete fixtures and grottos. The garden features the world's largest aboveground cave with a *Garden of Olives* tableau at the center, a sunken garden with pond and lighthouse, and meandering garden paths with concrete bridges creating the illusion of hills and tumbled rocks.

This site serves as an instructive case study because it is categorically flexible. It is at once a grotto, manufactured landscape, sculpture garden, and rock garden, making it a poignant example that concrete sculpture gardens are spatial and are simultaneously art, garden, personal, and public. Though Wagner covered most of his concrete structures with large rocks to give them the appearance that they had naturally fallen in place, he created a number of sculptural elements shared by many contemporary concrete sculpture gardens. He added concrete ornaments encrusted with colorful glass mosaics in the garden's *The Old Register, War Memorial, Annunciation of Mary Plaque, Sundial,* and untitled works like the birdbath. Like many other artists, Wagner started with smaller projects like the pillar planter, which is an elongated planter encrusted with glass and rock (Figure 2.3).

With the variety of sculptural approaches on view at the *Rudolph Grotto Garden,* it is important to note that writers of the time did not distinguish between rock gardening and concrete sculpture gardens. Descriptions of rock gardens published in periodicals ranged from designs with rocks and plants to more complex concrete structures and figures, and many variations in between. At the time, homeowners added encrusted concrete borders, ponds, miniature lighthouses, and flowerpots to their home gardens. However, the rock garden was particularly desirable with its mixture of rockery, water features, and sculptural elements.

The popular culture of the time significantly influenced concrete sculpture garden artists' methods and designs including the tendency that most of the artists began with small-scale projects consistent with prevailing home improvement trends. For instance, Wagner began what would become a monumental garden with something quite ordinary. Shortly after he arrived in Rudolph in 1917, he broke ground building a new church for parishioners in 1919 and thought about the grounds and his hopes to develop them. He began with a relatively modest rock garden and garden beds to beautify the property, which he built sometime between 1919 and 1927, when he started to build the grotto garden.[123]

The broad appeal of gardening at the time also contributed to the development of tourism around these monumental art gardens. Even as Wagner was actively building the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave*, it functioned as a tourist destination, attracting hundreds of thousands of pilgrims documented in newspaper announcements and grotto registries maintained since the

[123] "Rev. P. J. Wagner Shrine-Builder, Dies in Point," *Madison Wisconsin State Journal* (November 2, 1959): 15; Wagner's work on the property is outlined in *Father Philip J. Wagner and the Grotto Shrine, Rudolph, Wisconsin.* (Rudolph, WI: Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave, 1972). His work on the school grounds is documented in the church's archive.

1930s.[124] The exceptionality of Wagner's work attracted tourists by the busload.[125] Periodicals recorded that by 1943, more than 200,000 people had signed their names to the registry and they represented nearly every state in the country.[126] Because Wagner and his artistic contemporaries established their work as destinations, they galvanized their own artistic legacies.

An outgrowth of the same creative individualistic ideals that related to home and home improvement, the concrete sculpture garden movement tested the limits of garden media for expressive purposes. Artworks such as the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave*, not only signaled identity, values, and belief through religious and patriotic symbols, but the garden served as evidence for prioritizing home and community improvement. By investing time and resources into outdoor improvements, homeowners and, in *Rudolph's* case, a church participated in the overall development of their community because the beautification of front yards added aesthetic beauty to the entire neighborhood. In such a way, home improvement had the potential to be a civic activity at the same time that it served as a form of personal expression.

The scale of their projects and materials signified the democratic ideal of heroic individualism by being both humble and grand, natural and yet expressively altered. The seventy-five ton boulder is a naturally occurring material, but the encounter between man and the rock changed it into something cultural. The geological matter exerted its force through resistance to man's endeavors and thus man can frame his movement of the rock as a force of heroic strength and ingenuity.

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[124] *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* registry archives, c. 1912 – present, Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave, St. Philips Church, Rudolph, WI.

[125] "Final Plans Made for Grotto Visit*," Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (August 4, 1954): 10.

[126] *The Catholic Advance* (Friday, Nov 5, 1943): 2.

This examination of popular gardening trends of the first half of the twentieth century contextualizes the era's proliferation of concrete sculpture gardens, revealing a few important points related to heroic individualism. First, the scale of the artworks was evidence of the artist's character, indicating that the artists were dedicated, creative and possessed the grit demanded by heroic individualism. Secondly, writers positioned rock gardening as a means of personal expression and home improvement, which they explained in distinct terms of heroic individualism. While rock gardening was a way to show off one's individual tastes, values, and character, the product of improving one's home was also a way of contributing to the betterment of one's community. In other words, by pursuing one's individuality, one contributed to the improvement of one's society, making individuality heroic. Finally, the process of visiting the artworks allowed Americans to play out their roles as pioneers in pursuit of "the end of the road." In this case, the object of their pursuit was something extraordinary almost entirely because of its scale. Little more or less than the scale of the works set them apart from hundreds of other gardens, securing their position as monuments to heroic individualism.

A Seventy-Five Ton Rock

Located on the grounds of the St. Phillip Church, the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* is a religious concrete sculpture garden. The garden includes a number of grotto shrines, which are rounded shelters that house religious shrines such as statues of saints and mosaic scenes from the bible. Caretakers say that the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* provides "a spiritual setting where one can spend quiet moments contemplating the wonders of God and creation."[127] Contemporaries acknowledged the purposes of the garden as a "place for

[127] Jeff Stashek, *A Promise Fulfilled: Rudolph Grotto Gardens* (Rudolph, WI: Rudolph Garden Grotto and Wonder Cave, 2010), 7.

people to gather and receive spiritual inspiration."[128] For the Christian visitor, the garden represents divine creativity and the contemplation thereof.

Before Wagner began constructing his *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave*, the site was more-or-less a flat plot of land (Figure 2.4). During his tenure at the church between 1917 and 1959, he worked the land into a rolling woodland garden with dozens of concrete and rock sculptures. The artist carefully curated trees, shrubs, plantings and built pathways to mimic the appearance of a natural hillside. Unlike the nearby farmland and modest single-family homes on dutifully manicured lawns, the grotto garden boasted a towering rocky hill plunging toward a sunken garden replete with a pond and lighthouse (Figure 2.5). In essence, it imitated a *natural* aesthetic even though it was entirely manmade.

With *naturalness* as Wagner's goal, he chose to minimize the visual impact of his *unnatural* medium. While most concrete sculpture gardens highlighted the concrete with textural surface handling, glass embellishments, and even paint, Wagner made the aesthetic decision to hide the concrete scaffolding of his grottos. The grottos look like tumbled rocks that are broad at the base and grow narrow at the top. He shaped the formations with planters, which give the grottos a tiered effect and create the illusion of natural rock formations with plants growing out of crevices. Essentially, the boulders are an aesthetic veneer, hiding the steel and concrete structures beneath. The combination of concrete and rock provided Wagner with the means for creative expression while retaining the aesthetic of naturalness.

Approximately twenty-five years into his project, Wagner learned of a rock buried on the property of a nearby farmer named Richard Dobbs. Wagner often relied on local farmers to

[128] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 18, 1932): 10.

source his rocks. When farmers cleared a field, they needed to clear rocks, which Wagner retrieved for his concrete sculpture garden.[129] This rock, however, outweighed any other he had collected throughout the years. Relocating it would prove to be an immense challenge requiring the help of many community members.

The relocation was an event notable enough to feature in the locally paper: "A seventy-five ton rock specimen was hauled with great effort from Richard Dobbs' field three miles north of Rudolph. It was the latest and largest chunk addition of raw material of the famous Grotto Shine."[130] Though the shrine would take years to complete, the paper focused on the impressive feat of moving such an enormous chunk of raw material.

During the winter of 1952-53, Wagner and a small group of community members began the difficult task of installing a seventy-five-ton rock in the *Rudolph Grotto Garden*. Dobbs, who lived just three miles north of Rudolph on highway 13/34, discovered the rock poking out just six inches from the ground. Records indicate that Wagner went to Dobbs' farm to retrieve the rock, only to discover it was much larger than anticipated when he began the task of digging it up. While there is little information to help us gather that initial discussion between Dobbs and Wagner, it would seem Wagner, aged seventy at the time and twenty-five years into building his grotto, perceived the rock as the final major addition to his life's work, punctuating his years of collecting stones, glass, and shells.[131]

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[129] *Father Philip J. Wagner and the Grotto Shrine, Rudolph, Wisconsin.* (Rudolph, WI: Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave, 1972), 1.

[130] *Father Philip J. Wagner and the Grotto Shrine*, 3.

[131] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 11, 1953): 8.

Periodicals documented the rock's relocation as an extraordinary feat requiring heavy machinery that, at points, caved under the weight of the boulder. While George Gumz provided a bulldozer to dig out the rock, it was too big to lift out of the hole. Borrowing 7/8 inch (or fifty-ton) steel cable from the Wisconsin Rapids Foundry,[132] of which records suggest they snapped several, Rybicki and Wagner raised the rock out of the hole with the help of other movers.[133] Consolidated Paper Mills loaned Wagner two fifty-ton jacks while Joe Demski, a resident of Portage County, loaned Wagner a thirty-five ton lift and tackle boxes.[134]

Once extracted from the ground, the workers had to find a way to move it three miles south to the shrine. The county commissioner had promised to provide a tractor to move the rock if the grotto workers could get it out of the ground.[135] The fifty-ton trailer provided by Wood County was up to the task, but accounts boast that the trailer's I-beams permanently bowed under the weight of the rock. Once on site, they perched the boulder atop timbers, but as few as six months later, the timbers began to break under the weight requiring Wagner to reengineer a pedestal for the massive rock.[136]

Securely reinstalled atop a bed of smaller rocks, the monumental boulder continues to serve as a souvenir of the herculean efforts made by a number of community members and businesses. The story of the boulder is one of man negotiating the challenge of altering nature through technological advances. The boulder exerts its force on Rybicki and Wagner by resisting

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[132] Stashek *, A Promise Fulfilled,* 36.

[133] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 11, 1953): 8.

[134] *Father Philip J. Wagner and the Grotto Shrine,* 3.

[135] Stashek *, A Promise Fulfilled*, 36.

[136] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 11, 1953): 8.

their extraction efforts. Buried deep under the packed earth, it caused their equipment to give way under its enormous weight.

There are many of ways to interpret the rock, causing viewers to encounter heroics on a number of levels. First, the rock symbolizes Wagner's labor and grit, reminding viewers of the extraordinary might and ingenuity it took to relocate the rock. The story of the rock's relocation symbolically represents man's power or influence over nature, exaggerated by the struggle they faced nearing the limits of their tools. Trapped beneath the ground, human hands alone were no match for the stubbornness of the boulder, but human ingenuity and machinery eventually endured. The shrine to patriotism most intentionally associates heroism with dedication to nation. Though the boulder symbolizes heroism on distinct personal, spiritual, and political levels, they are each analogues to the other.

The *Rudolph Grotto Garden's* seventy-five ton rock epitomizes the tales accompanying most roadside concrete sculpture gardens. Contemporary accounts describe the projects in impressive quantitative terms, eliciting wonderment in the artist's accomplishment by describing the large-scale project in tallies of hours, dollars, resources, and visitors. As early as 1937, local periodicals spoke of the garden's appeal in quantitative terms. Titled, "Rudolph Church Grotto Visited by Thousands," the article says that the rock garden drew "thousands of visitors to the tiny village" during its first eight years.[137] Fifteen years later, an article published in the same paper reported that the garden had grown to attract more than 60,000 annual visitors. The same articles also documented the amount of money Wagner had invested in the sites. In 1937, he told reporters he had used over five thousand dollars-worth of materials in the garden, but by 1953,

[137] "Rudolph Church Grotto Visited by Thousands," *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (Saturday, October 23, 1937): 21.

that number had risen to more than one hundred thousand.[138] The journalists communicated the large scale of the projects to their readership, especially when contextualized by town of Rudolph, WI, which in 1940 had a population of approximately 1,000.[139] In part, the heroic element relied upon the expectations of what a small parish priest might accomplish and it is because of that accomplishment that people from across the United States made the pilgrimage to this small town.

Journalists also used lists to communicate the scale of the garden project to their readers. In 1937, a journalist created a list of Wagner's sources to illustrate the efforts that went into making the garden: "Sea shells were purchased from a dealer in Seattle, Washington, and mosaic glass was brought to this country from Venice, Italy. Colored glass obtained from the Opalescent Glass Company in Kokoma, Indiana…Agate marbles were secured in local stores."[140] Similarly, a 1932 article used a list accounting for the plantings in the garden to convey the scale of the project:

> A rock garden in which some of the rocks weigh over a ton and in which there are fifteen kinds of evergreen and ten kinds of other trees, eleven kinds of blooming shrubs, ten kinds of climbing roses and twelve kinds of other roses, a beautiful armor river hedge and over 100 kinds of annual and perennial flower plants is to be found on the grounds of St. Philip's Catholic school.[141]

These early accounts of the grotto hint at the variety of trees and flowers without specifically naming them, suggesting that the size of the project was more important than identifying the

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[138] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 11, 1953): 8.

[139] "1950 Census of Population: Volume 1 Number of Inhabitants," accessed July 1, 2021, https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-1/vol-01-52.pdf

[140] "Rudolph Church Grotto Visited by Thousands," *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (Saturday, October 23, 1937): 21.

[141] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 18, 1932): 10.

species of plants. It also provides the reader with a general idea of what the garden might look like in terms of variety.

This early record noted that some of the rocks in the garden weighed as much as one ton. Though the seventy-five-ton boulder installation would eventually dwarf the one-ton rocks, the weight implicates the amount of work involved. The description of one-ton boulders foreshadows the way in which writers framed the seventy-five ton rock as a heroic task.

Recognizing the impressive size of the rock, Wagner installed it as a monument meant to express the love of country in the *Patriotic Shrine.* At the time Wagner created this stacked boulder monument, rock gardens were in vogue. Homeowners across the country amassed their own collections of rocks, which they installed in their personal rock gardens. By considering their work, it becomes more apparent that Wagner's task was impressive, but not unusual, because it expanded upon popular trends in rock gardening to a monumental degree.

The Rock Garden Craze

Shortly after Wagner arrived in Rudolph in 1917, he began working on a relatively modest rock garden to beautify his parish and neighboring school grounds.[142] Rock gardens were very popular at the time. In fact, a mere one hundred miles away, Fred Smith took on a similar hobby.

Beginning in 1922, more than two decades before he began building his *Wisconsin Concrete Park*, Smith built a rock garden in the sun porch on the south side of his east-facing house. Afterwards, he extended the rock garden outdoors along the same side of his home (Figure 2.6). Visible along State Highway 13, the garden included a border of large rocks with

[142] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 18, 1932): 10.

ornamental flowers, punctuated with intermittent large stones to add structure. Years later, in 1936, when Smith hired local stonemasons the Raskie Brothers to build his tavern, he named it after the landscape he created, calling it the Rock Garden Tavern. The rock garden connected Smith's home to the tavern just south of the house and served to create aesthetic continuity between the home garden and the fieldstone tavern.[143] The rock garden features differed significantly from the sculptures he would design and build for his *Wisconsin Concrete Park*. Whereas the *Wisconsin Concrete Park* featured full-scale concrete figures modeled after local community members, Abraham Lincoln, and Sacagawea, Smith's rock garden adhered to national gardening trends.

During the first half of the century, rock gardens were a popular way to add curb appeal and to show off one's gardening and home design acumen. Photos, newspapers, and magazines indicate that rock gardens varied in scale, complexity, and in material. Some included concrete sculptural elements and some did not. Some intended their gardens to appear naturally occurring, and some meant them to look sculptural or ornamental.[144]

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[143] Cathy Peterson, "Rock garden in Concrete Park," *The-Bee* (June 29, 2000): 44.

[144] Historical references to these types of garden works did not differentiate between a rock garden and a concrete sculpture garden because they often coexisted. While Hartman encrusted his concrete surfaces with rocks and built a pond, calling the assemblage a rock garden, Fred Smith built a naturalistic rock garden long before he began building his concrete figures. Where does the rock garden end and the sculpture garden begin when they intertwine on so many levels?
While we might argue that a sculpture garden is completely different in terms of scale, scope, subject, and even material from a traditional rock garden, traditional gardening styles and ornaments were usually the starting points for the artists. They began by building garden borders, flowerpots, wishing wells, garden furnishings and ornaments long before tackling larger or more complex projects. Like Smith and his rock garden, Matthias Wernerus of the Dickeyville Grotto began with concrete flowerpots and Hartman began with concrete garden borders and a rock garden water feature. Over time, their ambitions and designs grew with experience, inspiration, and – perhaps most importantly – time.
Though each artist qualifies as a rock gardener to differing degrees, they share similar attitudes about curb appeal and utilizing affordable materials like rock and concrete. Naturalistic and sculptural rock gardens alike drew the attention of gardening organizations, Sunday drivers, and journalists. The rock garden craze, as it were, gripped enthusiastic gardeners from Oregon to New York, Florida to North Dakota. One

The wide variety of rock garden styles was no doubt a product of attitudes about the creative potential for rock gardening and garden design in general. Nationwide, local home improvement articles taught community members how to build rock gardens, plan them, prepare soil mixtures for them, and how to choose and arrange plantings. Complete with a figure illustrating the most common rock garden mistakes, and then providing instructions on how to design an ideal rock garden, the article "Rock Garden Mistakes" encouraged readers to think about naturalness in the garden and to think about how the rock garden relates to other garden features including trees and shrubs (Figure 2.7). The contributor carefully detailed how to create the ideal water feature and to consider how to mix small and large rocks for the optimal aesthetic effect. Yet within these guidelines, gardening columnists encouraged readers to exercise creativity. Authors thought of the garden, its structures, ornaments, and plantings, as an artistic medium and the gardener as a creative individual. While they often wrote about their preferences, they generally left the gardener with a sense of creative freedom to design their garden according to their space, resources and preferences.[145]

With its wide range of permutations, the term rock garden referred to naturalistic designs and sculpture gardens interchangeably. Records of gardens in the Midwest, especially in the state of Minnesota whose archive on rock gardens is quite extensive, provide a sense of the variety of garden styles under the umbrella *rock garden*. For instance, Fritz Adler's rock garden located at the Salvation Army camp at Lake Lucerne (1930-39) combined the aesthetic of a naturalistic rock garden with concrete sculptures (Figure 2.8). Located on a hill, horizontally oriented rocks

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gardening journalist named Mary Dickson documented the trends popularity: "Rock gardens are cropping up overnight like mushrooms in our vicinity as summer proceeds." Similarly, roadside concrete sculpture gardens entered into a season of proliferation during the early- to mid- twentieth century.

[145]Alfred C Hottes, "Rock Garden Mistakes," *The Capital Times* (Sunday, April 22, 1934): 8.

bolster a series of short retaining walls that climb up toward what appears to be a home with adjacent garage. At the bottom of the hill, Adler built a small pond with a miniature lighthouse, church, and at least one figure, possibly a gnome. The overall impression is that of a miniature rocky landscape sloping into a lake peppered with miniature buildings.

Similarly, Mrs. M. E. Nuntzman's rock garden in St. Paul, MN orients itself around a small pond. A photograph of the site suggests that she included a number of wooden miniature buildings around the pond (Figure 2.9). Nuntzman built her rock garden sometime around 1935, the same time as Adler and only one year before Fred Smith began to build his Rock Garden Tavern. Both Adler and Nuntzman approached their rock gardens as miniature tableaus, constructing small buildings and even figures to inhabit their gardens.

These examples show where rock gardens of the time were similar and where they varied. Many of the characteristics are the same from the gardeners' use of natural resources such as stone, water, and plantings. They served different purposes and thus the artists customized the gardens to the audience and use. The following examples of rock gardens in the Midwest varied from works that were religious and meant as an evangelistic tool to gardens that were decorative and functioned as a pastime.

Arthur Martin began building *Rockome Gardens* (Douglas County, IL) in 1939 as a hobby and his garden developed into a tourist attraction (Figure 2.10). The fence or garden borders are nearly identical to that of the *Dickeyville Grotto,* suggesting he may have been inspired by the Wisconsin site. In 1958 after he died, the new owners Mr. and Mrs. Elvan N. Yoder took up the task of maintaining the garden, which included a sunken gardens, a standing

concrete heart inlaid with rocks, elaborate rubble fences, a tower, and ornately embedded planters.[146]

In 1919, Cassius "Doc." M. Hettinger (d. 1955) began constructing his *Garden of Eden* out of concrete embedded with seashells gathered from nearby Reno Beach on his home property in Toledo, Ohio (Figure 2.11).[147] His garden has an evangelizing purpose and features biblical scenes: "The Last Supper," "The Flight into Egypt", "The Sacrifice of Isaac" and a small chapel – similar to the "Glass Church" made by Paul and Matilda Wegner of the *Wegner Grotto* (1929 – 1936) in Sparta, WI around the same time.[148] Hettinger advertised it as the smallest chapel in the world and many people made pilgrimages to see it.[149]

In New Hampton, IA, Martha Timm built a rock garden after she and her husband retired (Figure 2.12).[150] She created a birdbath, miniature chapel, pot stand, and other nonfunctional garden ornaments out of rocks from every state.[151] Following the *pique-assiette* style, she also covered her cement garden ornaments with multicolored broken bits of glass and ceramic.

Miniature sculptures of lighthouses, churches and schools were quite common, but few gardens boasted the quantity of sculptures as the *Hartman Rock Garden* (Figure 2.13). Although

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[146] Tony Holloway, "Rockome Gardens for Flower Lovers," *The Pantagraph* (August 4, 1964): 14.

[147] "Moulds Figures Portraying Bible," *The Border Cities Star* (September 29, 1927): 18.

[148] Umberger and Doss, *Sublime Spaces,* 412.

[149] William D. Speck, *Toledo: A History in Architecture: 1914 to Century's End* (Mount Pleasant, NC: Arcadia, 2003), 48.

[150] Jerome Pohlen, *Oddball Iowa: A Guide to Some Really Strange Places.* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2005), 93.

[151] Historical Marker, Mikkelson Park, 1013 E. Spring Street, New Hampton, IA, http://www.visitiowa.org/business/martha-timm-memorial-rock-garden.html

it was hundreds of miles away in Springfield, OH, his garden shared a similar format to Nuntzman's and Adler's gardens in Minnesota. Hartman created his rock garden out of concrete miniatures depicting buildings populated with national, biblical, and popular characters. Like Nuntzman and Adler, his garden also features a small concrete pond with miniatures propped along its edges as though to signify a placid lake retreat from a far-off landscape. Although his garden is almost exclusively concrete sculptures encrusted with small stones, Hartman called his garden a rock garden, indicating that even for this artist the distinction between naturalistic designs and sculptural designs was not worth noting, at least in name.[152]

While these gardeners likely inspired one another to create gardens, gardening organizations and programming like Missouri's Saint Louis Flower and Garden Show of 1935 influenced public taste concerning garden design, featuring full-scale, professionally-designed garden exhibits. For instance, Peter Seltzer's exhibit was similar in scale and assemblage to the concrete sculpture gardens of many Midwestern homes. (Figure 2.14) Photographs of the exhibit show that it featured a small reflective pond with a fountain, miniature figures, benches, and flowerpots, sculptural ornaments, and a decorative fence. His garden is busy with artistic features carefully coordinated with every shrub and flower.

Many of the installations at the garden shows featured marble and other hard surface statuary, flowerpots, trellises, and borders, making the commodities inaccessible for many homeowners by virtue of their expense.[153] With home improvement and curb appeal at higher demand with increased traffic, how might someone without the financial means to purchase

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[152] Kristin G. Congdon and Kara Kelley Hallmark, *American Folk Art: A Regional Reference Volume 1* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2021), 400.

[153] Photographs of the event are maintained by the Missouri Historical Society, Sievers Studio Collection, 1930-1939. https://mohistory.org/collections/item/P0403-S03

expensive sculptures reproduce their aesthetic in their own home? Rock gardens were certainly a part of the answer with concrete its affordable sister in tow.

Newspaper and magazine contributors help us understand why rock gardens were so popular, pointing out three primary factors. Firstly, they wrote that rock gardens were affordable, utilizing found rock and inexpensive concrete. Secondly, the gardens added aesthetic appeal along with other home garden features including garden sculptures, water features, borders, fences and ornamental pots and benches. Thirdly, they thought of rock gardens as a medium with limitless creative potential according to the designer's artistic imagination.

In accordance with taste at the time, excellence in rock garden design was a sign of artistic ability. Calling the rock garden one of the most "interesting forms of modern gardening" one writer considered the limits of the rock garden to be the limits of the designer's "artistic ability."[154] For them, the garden was a space to exercise creativity and to showcase the homeowner's artistic ability through the arrangement of rocks, soil, and plants.

Their assessment of the garden suggested that the garden was a space for personal expression. Published in the *Piqua Daily* in Ohio, one editorial praised the rock garden trend specifically for its artistic distinction, meaning its potential as a medium for individual expression. They wrote, "rock gardening has become the new vogue. It offers so many possibilities for individual treatment that it is really no wonder that everyone is eager to have the distinction of a rockery in their own garden." After providing some design advice focused on leveraging the natural topography of the rock garden site, the writer ended their article by restating that the garden is a medium for personal expression: "not only will you find rock work

[154] Mrs J. L. Murray, "The Rock Garden," *Illinois Farmer* (August 1, 1930): 434.

new and fascinating, but a modern means of expressing individuality, as well."[155] While providing the reader with instructions to consider the natural setting, they encouraged the reader to play within the parameters of the space in such a way as to express individuality. Furthermore, this suggestion implied that individual expression was valuable or even aspirational for the gardener.

While the anonymous contributor may have made it clear that the garden was a space for individual expression and that they prized individuality in the garden, they were less clear about how to measure individuality in the garden. The author left us at least one clue, writing of the garden's "many possibilities." The prospect of "many possibilities" suggested that the designer could arrange the space, ornaments, and plantings to their taste, choosing rocks and plants they found attractive or otherwise appealing. It would seem that by making these decisions, the gardener exercised their individuality. Although other journalists published suggestions for designing rock gardens along with photographs intended to illustrate their design preferences they still encouraged people to create from their own imaginations rather than from a specific plan.

Broadening Curb Appeal

Rock gardening was also a relatively inclusive form of creative expression, popular among both men and women in both urban and rural places. It presented makers of all backgrounds and experience levels with the opportunity to exercise creative decision-making since each plat of land is different, some sloping, some flat, some sunny, some shady. Each stone

[155] "Latest Home Vogues Stress Rock Garden." *The Piqua Daily Call* (Wednesday, April 23, 1930): 20.

has its own shape and size, facets and flaws. The process of building the garden relied on the gardener to make a series of aesthetic judgements based on countless variables.

Rock gardening was popular for both men and women. In fact, many columnists who wrote on rock gardens were female.[156] Writing about gender and rock gardening in a column for the *Times Union*, Mary Dickson argues that the quality of a rock garden had nothing to do with the gardener's gender. She wrote, "rock gardeners, as well as Mr. Free, the lady gardener in a blue smock, and owners of larger rock gardens on Long Island agree that the degree of excellence along these lines really does not depend upon whether the gardener is a man or woman, or whether the garden site be a square yard or a hillside, but upon how hard the 'bug' bites you."[157] The bug, being the enthusiasm for creating a rock garden, infected men and women alike and according the Dickson, once bitten, either sex was capable of creating something of excellence.

Similar to the *Piqua Daily* contributor who considered the rock garden potential in terms of individuality, Dickson thought rock gardening was a pursuit with potential only limited by the enthusiasm of the gardener. Hidden within this not-so-subtle exhortation on gender equality in the domestic garden, Dickson slips in the notion that anyone can be a rock gardener not limited by how much land they own. While gender was on the table, she was sure to note that whether a gardener has a small yard or an entire hillside, they could create something great. The statement alludes to class and geography. A small square yard might indicate less personal wealth or it

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[156] Like many early-twentieth century feminine creative activities, rock gardening was ephemeral. While we struggle to recoup histories about creative work meant to last years rather than centuries, we find the same challenge with creativity in the garden and needless to say, many rock gardeners were women.

[157] Mary K Dickson, "Alpine Flowers Flourish in Local Rock Gardens," *Times Union* (Sunday, July 29, 1934): 9A.

might suggest urban living. On the other hand, owning a hillside could suggest a great deal of personal wealth or rural living. Either way, her message is clear. The garden was a medium for personal expression accessible to anyone.

This historical record indicates that women often designed and built rock gardens with water features and miniatures rather than large-scale sculpture gardens. While their gardens were generally smaller than that of their male counterparts and it is more difficult to locate their collections and archives, many women participated in making rock gardens, grottos, and other ornaments both figural and functional for their gardens. For example, Madeline Buol (1902 – 1986) and Florence Deeble (1900 – 1999) are well-known female artists who created concrete sculpture gardens on their home properties. Buol followed a catholic grotto tradition, including shrines to the Virgin Mary in the *Buol Grotto* (1946 – 1960). [158] Deeble, on the other hand, fashioned miniature landscapes after national parks such as the Longs Peak of Rocky Mountain National Park in her backyard garden collectively called *Florence Deeble's Rock Garden* (1935 – 1999). Buol and Deeble took the creative lead on their home projects.[159].

Other women, like Nick Engelbert's wife Katherine Engelbert (d. 1960) of Hollandale, WI, collaborated with their husbands through the daily labor of designing and maintaining flower gardens and vegetable gardens. In fact, their husbands often built concrete structures in order to complement and display the plants. The sculptures were accessories to the flora, not the other way around.

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[158] Madeline Buol, interview, 1945, page 54-56, John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

[159] Betty-Carol Sellen, *Self-Taught, Outsider and Folk Art: A Guide to American Artists, Locations and Resources, 3rd ed.* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, Inc.: 2016), 147.

While it is not a rule, the roadside concrete sculpture gardens were often collaborative. For instance, Brothers Hugo (c. 1880 – 1956) and Arnold (c. 1885 – 1955) Vogt split the work at their summer home called *Ak-Sar-Ben* (1918 – 1930s) in Aitkin, MN. Arnold enjoyed working with the gardening while Hugo liked to build concrete sculptures throughout the garden. Even Wagner had a creative partner, Edmund Rybicki (1916 – 1991), who continued to add to the garden long after Wagner passed.

Whether the gardener be man, woman, or a collaboration between both, they typically intended their gardens to beautify their yards for their own enjoyment and for the enjoyment of passersby. This was not lost on garden commentators who encouraged rock gardening as a home improvement. Often, writers connected the importance of creative home improvements to civic responsibility.

Authors characterized the communal or public-serving role of gardens. For instance, an anonymous author for the *Daily Plainsman* out of Huron, North Dakota began by describing how positioning a rock garden so that it would be visible from the road added curb appeal: "Just imagine all the pleasure we could give to others by having a pretty rock garden," they wrote. At its surface, the statement acknowledges the public role of the garden space, providing aesthetic pleasure not only to the owner, but also to the public. Then, the author goes on to say, "If we have attractive gardens we may add a little sunshine to the travelers in our Sunshine state."[160] By signaling to readers that their gardens would provide enjoyment to visitors, he connects the dots between domestic, private property and communal, public property. To put it another way, a homeowner participates in the community's success, in this case in terms of tourism and its

[160] "Rock Garden May Be Made for Little Actual Money Plus Spare Time Work," *The Daily Plainsman* (Saturday, July 25, 1931): 7.

economic benefits, by the stewardship of their own property. In other words, service to one's community took place no further than the first step outside one's front door.

The public facing position of the garden signaled character and care, but it also signaled class and attainment of the American dream. Brent Ruben describes growing up in the 1950s and taking Sunday Drives with his family. He argues that the Sunday Drive played a formative role in defining the American dream. Even as a young boy, Sunday Drives taught him what it meant to be successful: "to live in the best neighborhoods with well-manicured yards and tree-lined streets; to own a large prestigious automobile."[161] Ruben's autobiographical reflection of reading a home and home garden as a symbol for socio-cultural status personalizes his semiotic exercise. The appeal of rock gardening did not begin and end with its aesthetic attractiveness. Having a rock garden signified pride in one's home and one's community to passersby. One anonymous contributor writing in 1931 explained, "Nearly everyone who passes a place with flowers and trees does see it and feels that is where someone lives who takes pride in his home and gives pleasure to the passer-by."[162]

Landscape architect Robert Riley reflected on the symbolic nature of the home garden in a 1988 essay for *Landscape Journal.* Riley observed the garden's way of communicating a number of social messages including those of prestige and success, which Ruben remembered from his Sunday Drives. The garden has the potential to convey a great deal about the homeowner, according to Riley, as gardens had long been "a symbol of power, with its

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[161] Brent Ruben, "Sunday Rides and the American Dream," *A Review of General Semantics* (Winter 1980): 337.

[162] "Rock Garden May Be Made for Little Actual Money Plus Spare Time Work," *The Daily Plainsman* (Saturday, July 25, 1931): 7.

corollaries of order, ownership, class, and status, and as a symbol of sexuality."[163] The size of the property, quality of materials, and overall design convey class and status. The management, tidiness, and scale of the garden conveys that the owner invested time and energy into their garden thereby conveying ownership and order. In terms of sexuality, the concrete sculpture gardens worked with and against sexual norms. On one hand, men and women alike created concrete sculpture gardens on their properties. Rock garden projects required strength from lifting heavy stones to installing concrete structures. It is not an easy task for anyone to undertake. For women to work on such projects in the publicly visible space of their garden was a motion that was at once feminine because of its closeness to home, but also equalizing in its laborious task. Some might argue the same for men who conveyed their masculinity through public displays of creativity, especially when located on their own properties.

While writers enforced the idea of rock gardening for everyone, there is no evidence that everyone participated. Photo archives of rock gardens suggest they were primarily the domain of the middle and working class with modest home properties. Home improvement articles appealed to homeowners responsible for the majority of the home improvement labor for their household.

Though people broadly consider gardening an important part of curb appeal that does not mean that concrete sculpture garden artists achieved curb appeal in their gardens. Many encountered resistance from family and neighbors while constructing their gardens. Building the garden on his parish grounds, even Wagner received resistance from parishioners who thought his endeavor was a waste of time and resources, saying, "Don't start something you are not

[163]Robert B. Riley, "From Sacred Grove to Disney World: The Search for Garden Meaning," *Landscape Journal* (Fall 1988): 138.

capable of finishing."[164] Undeterred, Wagner carried on with the support of many other community members. Regardless of whether or not the artist had support in their project and regardless of the projects' attractiveness does not negate the pursuit of aesthetic appeal, especially curb appeal as part of the artist's intent.

It might be argued that curb appeal involves individual expression. Curb appeal accounts for the attractiveness of the home for viewers positioned external to the home or property. There is an owner of the home and a viewer of the home. Likewise, individual expression requires a producer and a recipient of an expressive medium. As Rubens suggested, curb appeal is a form of expression that signs all manner of things about the owner or occupant including socio-cultural status, personal values, and even profession.

Rock gardening mediated private and public domestic spaces, making it an ideal venue for personal expression. Rock gardens had an audience and that audience was typically the public looking in on private or semi-private places, in most cases a person's home property. By building their gardens up with signs and registration tables, the artists recast their personal properties as public spaces. Gardeners like Wagner, Hartman, Buol, and Smith invited tourists, community members, local clubs, and complete strangers into their gardens, reproducing the economies of public gardens and museums by selling plants, postcards, and refreshments to visitors. They signaled to visitors that their personal property was publicly accessible to Sunday drivers, travelers, schoolchildren, and garden enthusiasts.

A combination of rock garden, sculpture garden, and flower garden, *Ak-Sar-Ben* serves as an excellent example of the intersections between public and private, aesthetic and expressive

[164] Stashek*, A Promise Fulfilled*, 7.

(Figure 2.15). In Aiken, Minnesota, brothers Arnold and Hugo Vogt bought land on what they renamed "Tame Fish Lake" after a fishing trip in 1918. The brothers, being from Omaha, called their summer retreat Nebraska spelled backwards. They began designing *Ak-Sar-Ben* with bridges and benches before adding more complicated and artistic forms like a castle on a hill, water features, Paul Bunyan's dinner bell, and grotto nymphs. They worked on the garden until the early 1940's when Hugo died.

Their summer lake house was anything but a solitary space. The brothers welcomed the public in, catering to them through entertaining features such as Hugo's wishing well connected by a tunnel to the house where Hugo installed a loud speaker to produce a "mysterious echo."[165] Beginning as a hobby in which Arnold enjoyed gardening and Hugo enjoyed building, the sprawling sculpture garden eventually drew as many as 40,000 annual visitors according to their 1939 logbook. They built signage along the street inviting travelers to visit their garden, at the same time they welcomed busloads of local schoolchildren and gardeners associations for day trips. After their busy 1939 year, the brothers began charging $0.10 for admission to their summer home gardens in order to pay for damage and maintenance from the high influx of traffic.[166]

While they supported visitors to their garden and created works for their delight, they maintained the priority of personal expression within the garden as well. Though their choice of garden features was quite popular and thus arguably less individually expressive, they communicated individuality through the materials they used. They, like many rock gardeners

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[165] Marjorie Rea, *The Story of Ak-Sar-Ben Rock Gardens* (Virginia, MN: W. A. Fisher Company, 1940s), 10.

[166] Rea, *The Story of Ak-Sar-Ben*, 5.

emphasized where the materials came from as a means to tell personal stories and to connect the garden with other places. For instance, the Vogt brothers boasted to visitors that they made their art from "car loads of rocks from Iron Range, pebbles from Lake Mille Lacs, and Italian Marble from Minneapolis."[167] In turn, the stories they told about their sources of material were also stories about themselves, their journeys, and their labor.

The Vogt brothers created a sculptural rock garden on a rather large scale, but many others in the Midwest took on smaller scale projects in their home gardens, mixing traditional garden ornaments with personal touches. In Thorp, WI, Joseph Sheblak built his backyard rock garden a mere hour and a half away from the *Rudolph Garden Grotto and Wonder Cave* (Figure 2.16). The garden included features that were popular at the time: a lighthouse, castle, planters, and animal statuary. Although it is difficult to confirm based on limited photographic evidence, it appears that Sheblak followed the format of many other grotto makers by using what appears to be rock encrusted concrete with painted details.

Landscaping a Destination

Concrete sculpture gardens developed into tourist destinations due, in part, to the impressive scale of their task. The artists also intentionally promoted their work as waysides and destinations, as evidenced by signs, registers, and postcards of home gardens.[168] For instance, Ben Hartman's daughter Ruth of the *Hartman Rock Garden* sold postcards of the artwork to

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[167] Rea, *The Story of Ak-Sar-Ben*, 12.

[168] Examples include Ak Sar Ben postcard, c. 1950, Identification Number 1759-A, Minnesota Historical Society; Munsinger Park Rock Garden postcard, c. 1945, Identification Number MS6.9 SC4 r35, Minnesota Historical Society; Ohio Federal Writers' Project, Midget City Rock Garden postcard, c. 1940, SA1039AV_B05F01A_014_1, Ohio State Archives; n.a., Photo of "Rock Garden, Waukegan, Ill.," Lake County History in Postcards, Illinois Digital Archives, http://www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/posttest/id/6163.

visitors for five cents. [169] By sharing or selling postcards of their gardens, rock gardeners reinforced the idea of their work as a destination.

Concrete sculpture gardens have long served as waysides and destinations for community members, travelers, and tourist groups. People visited them on Sunday drives, where they enjoyed a picnic outdoors with family members. They toured them in large groups of boy scouts, Sunday school groups and gardening clubs. Still others discovered the gardens while driving along the highway and stopped to stretch their legs. Seeking novelty on the modern trail, travelers visited concrete sculpture gardens like Wagner's *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave*.

Wagner's seventy-five ton rock was the capstone to decades of work that continued long after his death by other inspired parishioners and priests. In sum, the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* includes more than 40 structures, shrines, and monuments placed along winding paths of a more than five-acre garden. Wagner began his rock garden around 1926 after building the school and landscaping it with some flowerbeds. He gathered rocks for the rock garden mostly from the surrounding farms, arranging them in such a way as to evoke naturally occurring rocky landscapes.[170] Replete with the rubble wishing well, birdbaths, fishpond and planters, the garden expands upon the popular format of rock gardens.

Planted with ferns, grapevines, hostas, and assorted annuals donated by the nearby nursery, the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* was primarily a garden with catholic shrines for visitor's spiritual reflection. Wagner meant the garden to look naturalistic with slopes

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[169] Kristin G. Congdon and Kara Kelley Hallmark, *American Folk Art: A Regional Reference Volume 1* (Santa Barbard, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2021), 400.
[170] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 18, 1932): 10.

and meandering paths under a canopy of trees, but upon closer inspection, the design betrays his imprint on the land. The garden is ultimately a carefully orchestrated and manmade landscape that is as much a testament to man's creative power over nature as it is to the idea of god's originative power.

Unlike most domestic rock gardens, the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* resides on parish grounds at the St Philip Catholic Church, connecting it with the European grotto tradition. Complicating the treacherous definitions of a rock garden and sculpture garden, it adds another layer of complication because it exhibits influences from religious traditions as well. Most contemporary references call it "the grotto and rock garden."[171] The garden has a number of grottos, defined as a "shade or sheltered place that is like a cave," as well as shrines, which are places "held in honor because of someone or something important connected with it."[172] The shrines throughout the garden come in a variety of formats including arrangements of marble statues and stone and glass encrusted sculptures such as the *Wayside Shrine* displaying the crucifixion. The grottos, by contrast are large semi-circular, domed pedestals with scenes of the cross in mosaic or sculpted religious figures (Figure 2.17).

Wagner followed a consistent style when making his grottos. The sculptures and figures all sit on a pedestal at or above eye level with the dome overtop to protect them from the elements. Around the pedestal and even over the dome, he carved out space for plantings. The surface appears to be made of large, roughly one-foot in diameter rocks stacked on top of one another. However, Wagner actually mortared the rocks together with concrete that he hid

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[171] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (August 6, 1937): 6; *Stevens Point Daily Journal* (September 14, 1937): 4.

[172] Stashek*, A Promise Fulfilled*, 1.

beneath the surface. He apparently wanted the sculptures to blend effortlessly into the landscape without betraying the industrial material holding it all together.

In addition to following these somewhat traditional formats like that of artist priests at the *Dickeyville Grotto* and Father Paul Dobberstein's (1872 – 1954) *Grotto of the Redemption* (1912 – 1954) in West Bend, IA, Wagner created elements clearly inspired by the contemporary interest in rock gardens especially apparent in his central water feature. He carved the water feature into the ground and surrounded it by rocks for a naturalistic appearance. Keeping with the traditional fishpond accoutrement, Wagner's co-builder, Rybicki, added a lighthouse, waterfall, and a waterwheel (Figure 2.18).

Like most of the concrete sculpture gardens, the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* operated as a destination and Wagner built a concrete mosaic registration table for guests to sign. Many of the guests were on organized pilgrimages, which were sometimes, but not always, religious in nature. For instance, a rosary-making group from Green Lake, WI organized a bus trip to the grotto in 1967.[173] In 1954, the Women's Catholic Order of Fresters planned a bus trip to the grotto garden with 34 members in attendance.[174]

Other visitors included Boy Scout troops and vacationers. Newspapers describe nearly all of them as stopping at the grotto to enjoy the sculptures and a picnic. In 1961, for instance, a large group of Boy Scouts from troops 297, 294, 298, 299, and 293 from various Catholic

[173] *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (July 27, 1967): 32.

[174] *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (August 4, 1954): 10.

churches in Stevens Point went to the garden to walk the trails and enjoy a picnic.[175] Some reports estimate more than sixty-thousand annual visitors.[176]

At the time, advocates for Wisconsin tourism encouraged people to visit local destinations such as the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave*. Writing for Wisconsin Rapids, an anonymous contributor points to the adage "the grass is always greener" to describe sightseeing. They argue that while most people travel to a metropolitan city like Los Angeles or New York, even as far as Europe or South America, few think to admire sights close to home.[177] The author goes on to describe the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave's* stones and glass catching pools of red light in the sunset, encouraging readers to bask in domestic wonders. Ultimately, the author combats a prejudice that they never outright state: that to find beauty, one has to travel far, or the alternative expectation, beauty and wonder are not likely to be found in a small town like Rudolph, WI.

Taking to the road, many other Wisconsinites discovered the roadside wonders of their and nearby states, encouraging others to do the same. In 1932, a small party from Sheboygan, WI traveled to the *Dickeyville Grotto, The Grotto of the Redemption,* and the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* and upon their return, said "they never realized there are so many places of beauty so near home" and that "anyone interested in art and antique treasures" would find it worth the drive. Characterizing the grottos as the product of "measureless patience," Mrs.

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[175] *Stevens Point Daily Journal* (May 1, 1961): 11.

[176] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 11, 1953): 8.

[177] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (August 6, 1937): 6.

Michaels, a member of the traveling party, described the artistic uniqueness of each grotto, "entirely different" from each other.[178]

While religiously significant for Catholics, places like the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave, Dickeyville Grotto,* and *The Grotto of the Redemption* also appealed to travelers because of their beauty. Writing a column on "Vacation Spots in Wisconsin," Deane Markusch recommended the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* for its peaceful setting, caves, bridges, gardens and picnic grounds.[179] Even advertisements for businesses in Wood County referenced the rock garden, calling their hometown, "The Town with the Grotto" noting the grotto's national interest and that it was responsible for more visitors to Wood County than any other attraction or historical place.[180] The garden earned recognition because of its monumental scale, quantified by number of grottos and plantings, which appealed to tourists looking for natural and cultural beauty close to home.

Reflecting on the disconnect between modern life and the American identity, Elliot West pointed out that trails and the idea of a journey and progress became a part of the American identity especially during the early twentieth century. He defined the word trail in American popular culture as routes that pioneers heroically made in pursuit of their goals and despite the risks involved.[181] The trail relates to this examination of concrete sculpture gardens on a couple levels. In a literal sense, it relates to concrete sculpture gardens role as tourist attractions, of

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[178] *Sheboygan Press* (October 1, 1938): 2.

[179] *Stevens Point Daily Journal* (June 20,1957): 3.

[180] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (August 1, 1956): 32.

[181] Elliott West, "Pathways," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* (Autumn 2001): 23.

destinations along the modern American trail. Metaphorically, the trail relates to the artists role as pioneers expanding and experimenting with concrete and gardening for expressive purposes.

During the twentieth century, the trail took on a mythic role in American consciousness. The story of the American trail was a modern conception that came of use during a time of rapid urban expansion. As Elliot West notes, it represented the "virtues of individualism and self-reliance," evoking images of lone pioneers "exhausted and downtrodden." It denoted "the pioneer's victory over a noble opponent," the land itself.[182]

Likewise, Ronald Primeau argued that the need to define America's national identity according to self-discovery motivated the road genre – a predominantly Euro-American genre of literature. Road or trail stories suited American national identity and the pursuit thereof, demonstrated by originative narratives like the pioneering duo Lewis and Clark. The myths of exploration intrinsically tied America's geographical taming as self-fulfillment.[183]

With the actuality of the trail flattened and paved, the road made pioneers of anyone with a vehicle. Encouraged by national tourism campaigns and attitudes about the heroism of ordinary men and women, the road became the new American trail. Primeau wrote that the road offered travelers the opportunity to exchange their routine for an adventure. Rather than embarking on a quest to tame the land, travelers embarked on quests to see something new.[184] Touring concrete sculpture gardens was an activity that broke free from the mundane.

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[182] West, "Pathways," 24.

[183] Ronald Primeau, *Romance of the Road: The Literature of the American Highway* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1996), 15.

[184] Primeau. *Romance of the Road*, 15.

The act of viewing concrete sculpture gardens requires one to "hit the road" and explore highways through small towns. As American mass culture homogenized homes and gardens, citizens sought out "the end of the road" for the chance to experience the sensation of discovery.[185] In a way, the artwork encouraged the viewer to play the role of modern explorer.

While American literature followed the road genre to tell stories of self-discovery through travel, art environments and especially concrete sculpture gardens materialized the ideal. The artists transformed their homes into roadside art installations that disrupted the norm just enough to break the mundane, while still being familiar and registering within national identity. The sculpture gardens materialize this time and place in which the roads expanded American mobility. By following concrete paths, drivers participated in reinforcing a national identity that included the consumption of tourism.

Wagner transformed the landscape to such a degree that the garden functioned and continues to function as a tourist destination. Many roadside concrete sculpture gardens such as the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* provide presence to geographical absence. They materialize the human ability to occupy a space and yet transcend it through the imaginings of the mind. While the landscapes the artists occupied offered certain resources that may or may not have fit their ideals, the artists willed the landscape to change and to represent something other than itself. We first encountered this tendency with the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* and that Wagner cultivated the flat, treeless plot of land into a rolling woodland garden.

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[185] Nancy Watson, "One Woman's View," *The Brattleboro Reformer* (Monday, June 15, 1959): 4; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford, England; New York, NY: Blackwell, 1989), 273.

However, the general topography of the garden is only one example of his transformational endeavors.

One of the greatest attraction of the *Rudolph Grotto Garden* is a rocky forty-five-foot tall mound called *The Wonder Cave* (1935-1957), which rises from the northern side of the property (Figure 2.19). Allegedly inspired by European catacombs, Wagner built the largest known above ground cave system within this manufactured hill. Along the 0.2 miles long of winding narrow paths of concrete and rock, he staged scenes from the bible along with tableaus of little towns and signs with religious words, sayings and symbols illuminated by over four-hundred lights (Figure 2.20).[186]

Wagner used materials from a landscape without caves or mountains in order to transpose a miniature mountain and cave system onto the land. His *Wonder Cave* is a reduced replica inspired by memories of distant places. Perhaps the incompatibility between the artificial landscape and the setting is the very thing that adds to their allure for tourists. Wagner's *Wonder Cave* exists within a specific Midwestern, agrarian landscape and yet endeavors to transform it, to make it other than what it is, dislodging the viewer from the landscape they occupy, and perhaps, even, the time they occupy. The altered space transports the viewer while they stay still.

Outside the cave, the garden plant life and use of natural rock connects nature with spiritual inspiration, but inside, it is a psychedelic dissociation triggered by florescent lights and bright colors. Wagner painted all the stones lining the interior's narrow corridors in nearly fluorescent reds, oranges, greens, and yellows. He outlined the forms of the rock with lighter colors, which has a flattening effect on the medium-sized, high relief rocks that form the walls

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[186] *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* (July 11, 1953): 8.

and ceiling of the cave. For instance, he outlines the green rocks surrounding "The Garden of Olives" tableau in orange paint – the same orange paint with which he coats the rocks on the ceiling. It has the effect of stained glass (Figure 2.21). Though uneven and protruding, the painted veneer circumscribed and flattened the rock into a mosaic under the glowing fluorescent lights.

As viewers walk, crouch, and ascend through the cave, they encounter niches curated with tableaus and religious miniatures. All throughout are illuminated signs with religious words, scriptures, and prayers designed and made by Wagner's co-builder Rybicki. Rybicki punctured large sheets of tin, which he backlit to reveal words and images. The aluminum signs postured around secrete corners and propped above the viewers head reflect the surrounding lights while serving as a secondary source of illumination.

The path guides visitors up to the top of the cave and toward its centerpiece, a two-story tall cavern staged to represent the garden of olives. After following the path up and around "The Garden of Olives" tableau, visitors climb to a second story walkway that opens to a cavernous space where a full scale large dead tree trunk stretches from the bottom to the top of the cave (Figure 2.22). Marking the center of the cave system and narrative moment of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, it serves as the literal and figurative center of the artwork.

Eventually the viewer makes their way to the cave's exit, which sits atop the mount in such a way to be virtually invisible to viewers below in the gardens. At the top, Wagner installed a sculpture of the Christ figure with smaller marble worshipers set into small grottos built into the side of the hill. Amidst them, he installed a sundial with the words "THE SUN MARKS THE FLEETING HOURS," words for reflection on life's brevity before descending back into the garden below (Figure 2.23). The sundial faces away from the viewer, looking to the south at the

edge of the *Wonder Cave* walkway. In effect, you have to read it upside down, making it less a functional thing and more a symbolic thing.

The *Wonder Cave* is disorienting and transporting. It is damp and cool like a natural cave, but the bright colors and lights along with hidden biblical scenes, characters, and scriptures indulge the senses. Viewers find themselves in a position of discovery because of all of the hidden scenes tucked into niches and hidden around winding corners. Every step provides access to new vignettes. The interior of the cave is an extreme version of the sort of transformative endeavor of these artists, but Wagner was not only interested in this theme park experience. When he went about building the expansive gardens, he acknowledged that the space he envisioned was of a landscape that was difference from that of the church site. He writes, "Before I began building, I had wished for a place on the side of a hill for the Grotto's natural setting. But since there was no place on these premises, not even a suitable slope, I decided to build on level ground."[187] Today visitors encounter a space with winding paths raised high and low, sculpted from the once level ground. Over the years, Wagner carved into and built up the landscape to create water features, rocky peaks, and even a cave system. Certainly, the central Wisconsin landscape being relatively flat and agricultural land lacked the structures that Wagner envisioned in his ideal garden and so he set about transforming the landscape, bringing a European destination to central Wisconsin.

Contrasted with artists like Fred Smith who added sculpture to the landscape while making minimal hardscaping alterations, Wagner's recreation of distant landscapes might seem incompatible. Yet, just as the term rock garden has a certain amount of flexibility in describing

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[187] *Father Philip J. Wagner and the Grotto Shrine, Rudolph, Wisconsin* (Rudolph, WI: Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave, 1972), 1.

garden accessories, hardscaping, and sculptures, artists worked with and against the landscape they occupied to varying degrees. Other concrete sculpture garden artists found ways of profoundly altering the landscape leading the artwork to function theatrically.

Similar to Wagner, Samuel P. Dinsmoor of the *Garden of Eden* in Lucas, KS created a concrete sculpture garden that exhibited *natural* features that were *unnatural* for the location. Dinsmoor first moved to a farm just outside of Lucas, Kansas in 1891. Fourteen years later in 1905, he purchased a half-acre corner lot in town near the train station where he began an ambitious project that would serve as an attraction for locals and for travelers along the rail. If his advertising efforts and guidebook titled *Pictorial History of The Cabin Home in Garden of Eden* are any indication, he built the house and its gardens with tourism in mind.[188] He boasted of the house's novel features including its cement gables, floors, baseboards, and windowsills. Altogether, he claimed to have used over 113 tons of cement.

Trees are scarce in central Kansas and so beginning in 1905, the native Ohioan began building a log cabin house out of the region's primary building resource: limestone (Figure 2.24). The limestone logs run the full lengths of the house. Cut into long square logs rather than typical rectangular blocks, the limestone is solidly secure with dovetail joints and concrete mortar (Figure 2.25).

Dinsmoor also put the cement to use building a grove of concrete trees surrounding his limestone log cabin (Figure 2.26). Of the twenty-nine trees, fifteen reach more than thirty feet tall and fourteen ranged between eight and twenty feet tall. One might imagine Dinsmoor having

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[188] S.P. Dinsmoor, *Pictorial History of the Cabin Home in Garden of Eden* (Lucas, KS: Friends of S.P. Dinsmoor's Garden of Eden, 2002).

chopped down imaginary concrete trees to build his concrete and limestone house in lieu of timber.

Like all rock gardens and most concrete sculpture gardens, Dinsmoor included a concrete pond, which he claimed to be a natural spring. He joked that anyone could have a natural spring in their yard, if they tapped the main.[189] We can imagine the statement applying to the concrete trees and limestone house. Anyone can have a log cabin, if he or she carves the stone. Anyone can have an arboretum, if he or she sculpts the tree. Dinsmoor's *Pictorial History of the Cabin Home in Garden of Eden* includes humorous stories that wrap the garden home in a layer of absurdity and satire.

Dinsmoor and Wagner created their works for different reasons. Wagner's garden was religious, fostering an experience of meditation and quiet. Dinsmoor's garden was political and intellectual, expressing his ideas concerning populism, trusts, and freemasonry. Though their messages varied, they both created works that mimicked landscapes uncommon to their location and they both garnered tourist attention because of those contradictions. Had Dinsmoor built a log cabin in Ohio or Wagner built a grotto on a rocky hillside, their works' impact would be quite different.

In terms of scale, their work to transform the landscape were certainly herculean. Though they grew out of a tradition of landscaping and artistic curb appeal, the scale of their works and deviations from traditional accoutrement registered as individualistic in style and subject matter and heroic in scale. The stories they told about massive boulder relocation efforts and the will to overcome natural obstacles contribute to the ideal of heroic individualism.

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[189] Dinsmoor, *Pictorial History of The Cabin Home*.

Conclusion

The *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* is an example of how artists expanded upon popular trends in rock gardening. Designers and columnists discussed rock gardening as a way to express individuality and as a way to show pride in one's home. The process of creating a garden is transformative, turning nature into culture. By tending their properties from the simple act of adding flowers to a front yard, mowing a lawn, or adding a concrete birdbath, homeowners communicate their participation in contributing to the appeal of their neighborhood and community. Adding design elements to a home's exterior conveyed a number of characteristics such as hard work and civic responsibility.

Starting with simple projects, the artists expanded upon them over the course of decades, eventually reaching monumental degrees. The ways in which people described concrete sculpture gardens by listing the amount of materials and labor demonstrated an interest in hard work as a part of the artwork's impact. This aligned with the same ideals surrounding home improvements, which showed pride, individuality, and hard work. Distinguishing themselves from other rock gardens by their large scale, the concrete sculpture gardens expressed, and perhaps exaggerated, the ideals of hard work to a heroic level. The work stood as a sort of document on the artist's ingenuity and brawn.

Although the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* was a religious space, it was also a creative space that symbolized the heroic individualism of one man, Wagner. The *Rudolph Grotto* published a history of the garden and of Wagner. In it, the anonymous authors noted that though the garden was a space dedicated to spiritual reflection, it was equally "a lasting

memorial to the faith and devotion of one man." [190] The statement placed Wagner squarely within the heroic arc. Wagner created the garden, facing obstacles along the way, but because he continued over the course of decades, his lasting achievement became his legacy. His fingerprint is in every stone and planting, preserved through the stories people tell about the grotto garden, didactic materials at the location, and writings about it. Few writings describe the shrines and their subjects, but all describe Wagner's work. With the help of community members and Edmund Rybicki, Wagner produced a work that still attracts tourists to Rudolph to see the seventy-five ton rock and the world's longest manmade cave.

Interpretations of Wagner's artwork and his life followed the heroic formula: predisposition, obstacle, realization, and lasting impact. Wagner characterized his project in terms of heroic individualism. In a packet about the garden, he wrote about the number of farms and woodlands from which he sourced rocks, saying: "I suffered in journeyings often, in over fifty farms and thirty woodlands, assembling building materials" Wagner phrased the task of searching for and gathering stones as a suffering, indicating that in pursuit of his goal, he encountered challenges. He continued by describing the obstacles of his pursuit "in perils from the truck being mired…in perils in finances, and where to get the next load of rocks, in hunger and thirst and in fastings often, in cold and exposure." [191] The expansion of his garden at this monumental scale involved logistical issues such as finding and transporting rocks, managing to get through financial hardships, and working in outdoor conditions that were unfavorable. He ended by emphasizing the amount of time that the project took him: "For over forty years, I

[190] Stashek*, A Promise Fulfilled*, 7.

[191] *Father Philip J. Wagner and the Grotto Shrine*, 3.

labored in this parish, and over thirty in this Grotto Shrine."[192] Wagner's description of himself as having faced many challenges and overcome them is an example of his deployment of the rhetoric of heroic individualism.

Wagner's contemplation of the tribulations he faced in constructing the garden circle back to the story of the seventy-ton boulder and the shrine to patriotism. Both describe a testing of the will and ultimate endurance. Both esteem labor, dedication, and even suffering as part of a noble pursuit. Both center all of these things on an individual, Wagner, and his achievement despite the numerous "perils" of his project. In some sense, we might argue that the boulder represents Wagner, both solid and unyielding, are ever-present occupants of this roadside concrete sculpture garden.

The materials of concrete sculpture gardens express the values the artists took upon and promoted within themselves. The ideals of heroic individualism- grit, hard work, economy, and individuality-- each come through the accumulations of concrete and rock. Gardens like the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* were monuments unto ideas such as spirituality, but they also came to be monuments about the artists that created them.

[192] *Father Philip J. Wagner and the Grotto Shrine,* 6.

Figures

Figure 2.1: Philip Wagner, *Patriotic Shrine*, 1955. *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave,* 1927-1983. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, August 2019.

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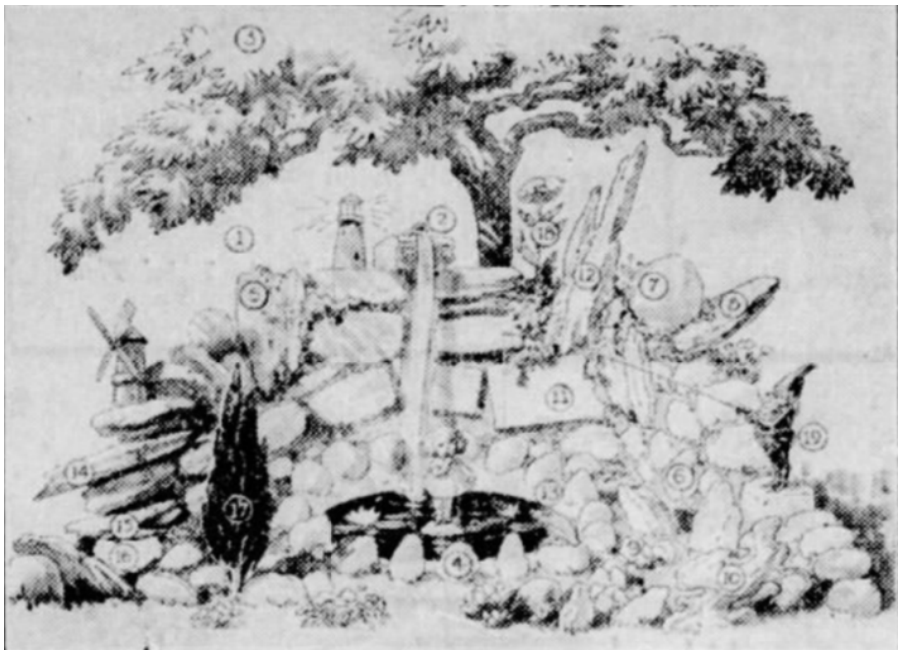

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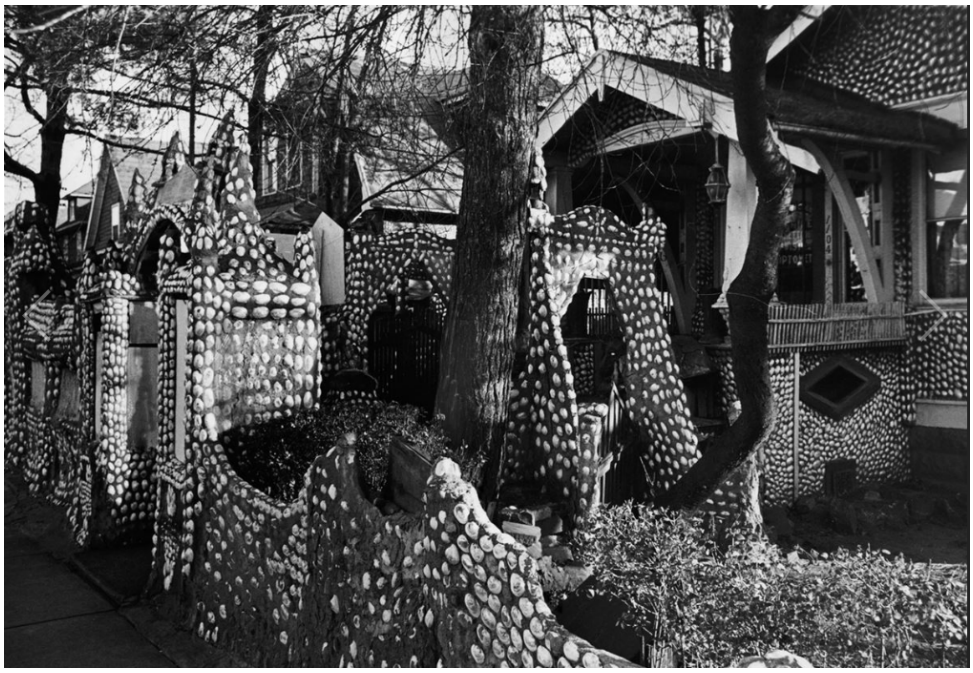


Figure 2.11: Cassius "Doc" Hettinger, *Garden of Eden*, Toledo Ohio, 1919-1950.

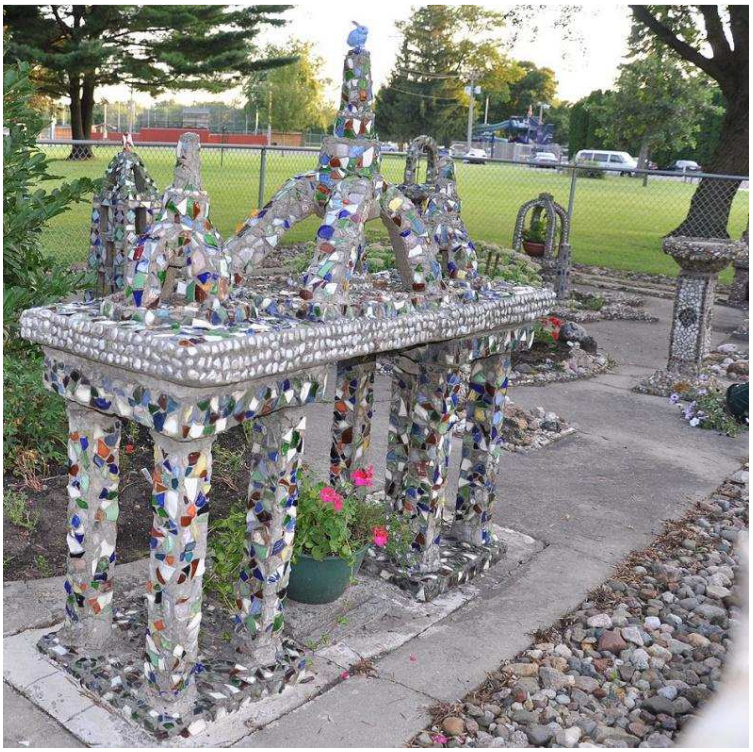
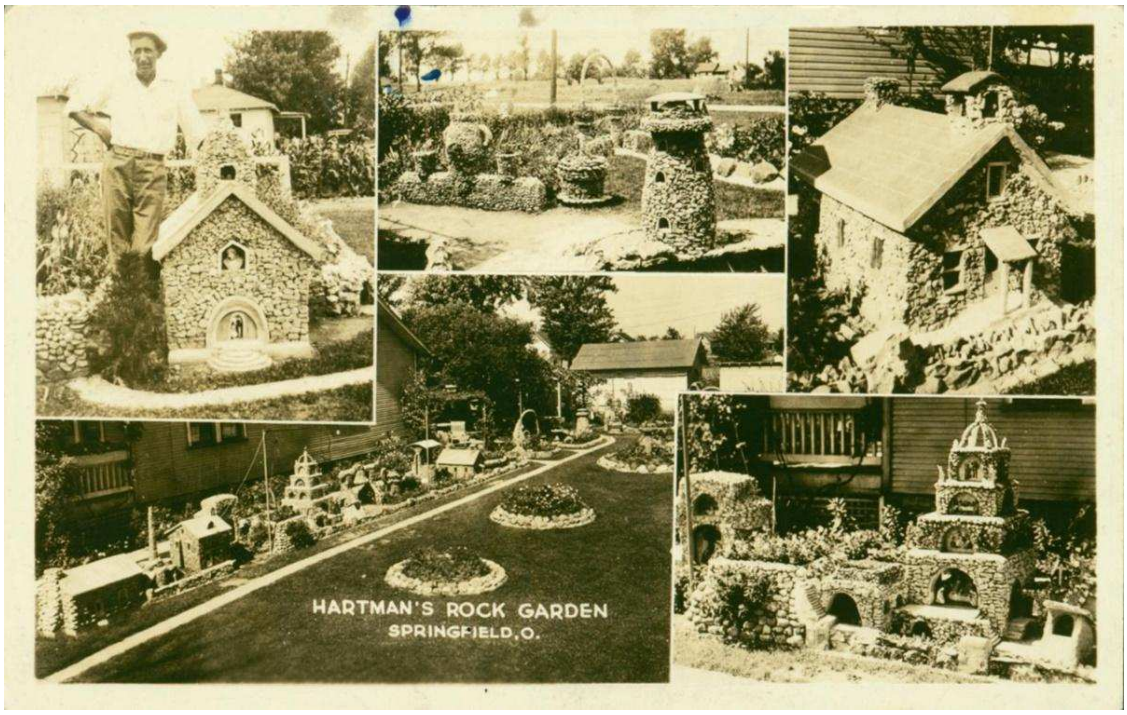


Figure 2.12: Martha Timm, *Martha Timm Memorial Rock Garden*¸ c. 1940-1984, New Hampton, IA.



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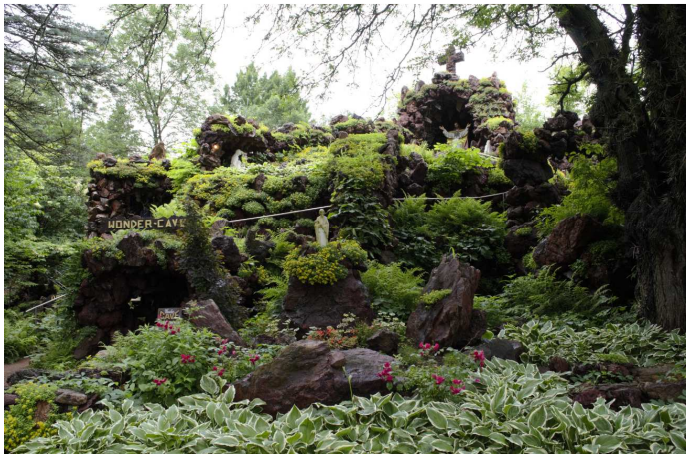
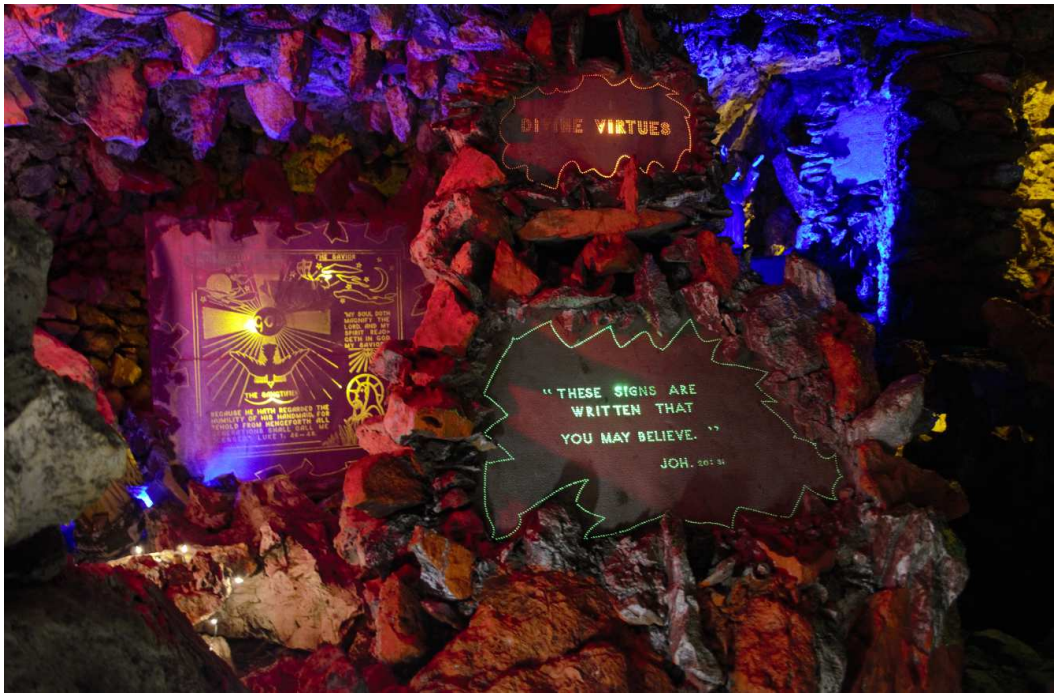


Figure 2.19: Exterior view of *Wonder Cave. Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave,* 1927-1983. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, August 2019.



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Chapter 3: Cementing an American Medium

On July, 1st 1911 in Oregon, Illinois (one hundred miles west of Chicago), approximately one thousand visitors attended the unveiling of what reviewers called "the first heroic cement statue."[193] (Figure 3.1) Following a three-year-long effort, Lorado Taft (1860 – 1936) had finished his forty-seven-foot-tall monument to the American Indian near the Eagle's Nest Art Colony he had founded thirteen years prior. Today, the towering sculpture called *The Eternal Indian* (1908 – 1911) still overlooks the Rock River from atop its stone pedestal.[194]

The critic's use of the term *heroic* is significant, especially in this examination of heroic individualism and concrete sculptures. Why might the writer have used this term? What qualified the sculpture as heroic? Was it merely its size? Did it relate to the subject matter or perhaps even the material? Was the sculpture heroic because it signaled Taft's work and accomplishment in developing concrete sculpture technology?

Critics used the term heroic to describe Taft's work again more than a decade later, when a reviewer situated Taft's "Fountain of Time" (1922) as among a growing body of heroic works (Figure 3.2). The anonymous columnist wrote that the Chicago sculpture "was one of the first great pieces of sculpture in concrete" before noting, "other heroic pieces of concrete sculpture are now to be found both in Europe and America."[195]

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[193] John G Prashun, "A Novel Use of Cement in Sculpture: Indian was Built," *Dixon Evening Telegraph* (Saturday, January 11, 1913): 5.

[194] A, Staff Correspondent, 1911, "Red Man's Statue Unveiled: Lorado Taft's Colossal Effigy of Black Hawk Dedicated. Tribute to Vanishing Race Special Train Takes Chicago People to Imposing Ceremony" *Chicago Daily Tribune* (July 02, 1911): J16.

[195] "Concrete and Art," *Santa Cruz Evening News* (Saturday, March 22, 1930): 4.

Compared to Blackhawk hero whose body forms an obelisk in *The Eternal Indian,* the *Fountain of Time* is not thematically heroic. It is an abstract sculpture with bodies forming a wave. Where they differ in subject matter, the two sculptures connect on two potential points that might be heroic: scale and material. Considering that Taft's *Fountain of Time* was as large in scale as his *The Eternal Indian,* the writer may have used *heroic* as a synonym for monumental.

Fascination with *The Eternal Indian* remained strong three years after Taft finished the sculpture, when the *Scientific American* published an article detailing the artist's technique while focusing on the large volume of materials required, similar to the manner in which columnists described the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave,* noted in chapter two. According to the report, Taft used two tons of steel reinforcing rods and 283 cubic yards of concrete, twenty tons of quarter-inch dust pink granite screenings and 412 barrels of Portland cement.[196] As specific as the numbers are, they are also ambiguous. Could 412 barrels translate in a relatable way for the average newspaper reader? The writer certainly did not expect that the tally would serve as a recipe for reproduction. Instead, the report functioned as a way of quantifying monumentality.

Designed by a prominent sculptor and associated with the nearby artist colony, *The Eternal Indian* was an exercise in applying concrete for artistic purposes and the medium proved to be compatible with the undertaking. The large amounts of concrete used in its preparation made it exceptional not only for the fact that it used concrete, but that it dwarfed many life-sized figures sculpted from bronze and marble. Unlike bronze and marble, concrete offered its user affordability, durability, and plasticity making it especially suitable for large-scale public sculptures.

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[196] Prashun, "A Novel Use of Cement in Sculpture," 5.

Taft's sculpture prepares us to consider concrete's dynamic position within American material culture and art history. The medium, its qualities, and its cultural associations are full of conflict, bringing tensions between old and new, plastic and permanent, popular and elite to the surface. Concrete tethers us to a lineage dating back to the Roman Empire while thrusting us into the era of good roads. It offers a durability with which wood cannot contend and yet its quality of plasticity is responsible for its inevitable deterioration. Making concrete one of the definitive mediums of the modern world, early-twentieth century American designers promoted its domestic and artistic possibilities, inspiring everything from do-it-yourself projects to architectural experimentations.

In this chapter, I situate concrete sculpture gardens within a historical period in which the public explored concrete as a practical solution and an American medium. I begin with a brief history of concrete and its role as an integral medium in developing American mobility. Many road-paving projects took place at the local level, leading the public to record their opinions concerning concrete in public forums such as local newspapers. The development of new concrete technologies and the National Highway System coincided what architects and engineers called "The Cement Age," which was a period during the first half of the century in which designers and builders experimented with the possible uses of concrete. This leads to an examination of how people used everything from business advertising campaigns to do-it-yourself guides to present concrete as the American solution to mobility, design, architecture, home-improvement, and public arts.

Concrete sculpture gardens relate to each of the opportunities that concrete presented. The gardens developed into destinations, supported by concrete highway improvements and increasing traffic. They originated from popular home-improvement practices, testing the use of

concrete for artistic purposes. Concrete sculpture garden artists joined in a national exploration, testing the creative limits of concrete. Critics, contractors, landscape architects and designers perceived concrete's potential as a medium for expressing individuality and championed concrete as the ideal American medium.

Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, important advancements in the manufacture and application of concrete led to improvements in the material's durability and accessibility while the public grew in confidence concerning the uses and methods for working with concrete. Largely, the demand to experiment and improve concrete resulted from the necessity for road improvements accompanying the invention and commercialization of the automobile, securing associations between concrete as modern, clean, affordable, and long-lasting. The gradual process of paving concrete roads, applying concrete in the engineering of architecture, and experimentations with using concrete in home and garden design coalesced during this era of cement.

The same material that proved its strength and durability on the road, inspired artists to create. Concrete's plastic character means makers can mold it into seemingly endless shapes, sizes, and forms. Users can paint it, embed it, mold it, model it, and add aggregate to it. Architects, artists and designers were quick to recognize the value of this increasingly available material. Largely, plasticity, durability, and affordability of concrete held broad appeal. In 1909, one anonymous contributor to the periodical *The Cement Ag*e wrote, "What material can be used that is effective and yet not too costly or too delicate? Such a substance, combining the plasticity of terra cotta with the substantiality of stone or marble, and at a cost which will soon be

remarkably low, is concrete."[197] Concrete sculpture garden artists used the medium's plasticity, durability and affordability to their benefit, creating monumental outdoor environments that could scarcely have been possible if concrete were any less affordable, durable, or plastic.

Furthermore, their medium was a physical representation of cultural values. It represented in material form all that constituted the ideals of heroic individualism: grit, hard work, individuality, industry, and so on. These attributes were not lost on writers of the time, who encouraged the public to see concrete as not only an artistic medium, but also an American medium.

The New American Trail

Concrete has a long history stretching back to ancient times, but Portland cement, or cement commonly used today, is a modern invention. In 1824, Joseph Aspdin discovered how to remove the carbon dioxide from the source material (typically limestone), by burning finely ground chalk and clay together. Over the next century, architects and engineers explored applications for concrete including the first concrete home by William Wilkinson in 1854 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England;[198] the first concrete street in the United States poured in 1891 by George Bartholomew in Bellefontaine, Ohio (Figure 3.3); and the first ready-mix concrete entered the market in 1913.

In general, concrete is composed of a mixture of cement and water with aggregate, which is typically a course-grain sand or gravel. In mixing concrete, a user can chose aggregate according to their taste or the demands of the project. For instance, ground marble or granite

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[197] "New Use of Concrete for Garden Ornaments," *The Craftsman* (August 1, 1909): 586.

[198] Joyce M. Brown, "B. Wilkinson (1819-1902) and His Place in the History of Reinforced Concrete," *Transaction of the Newcomen Society,* 39 (London: Newcomen Society, 1966-67), 129-142.

gives the concrete the illusion of being marble or granite. Similarly, colored aggregate stone can produce colorful results. Designers can also combine aggregates to achieve desired mixtures.

A majority of the individual artworks and sculptures that make up concrete sculpture gardens required the technological advancement of reinforced concrete. French horticulturist Joseph Monier invented reinforced concrete. Monier sought a durable and fireproof substitute for building garden planters and learned to reinforce the concrete with iron or steel.[199] Although there are variations in the steps a designer might take, essentially after filling a mold partially with concrete, the user would set rods or mesh of iron or steel before continuing to fill the mold with the remaining the concrete. The reinforcement makes the concrete even more durable, and less prone to cracking or breaking especially when sculpting free forms like arms and legs in concrete statues or narrow posts for fences.

The technological developments of Portland cement and reinforced concrete required decades of experimentation and campaigns for improving public and professional knowledge. During the years of the concrete sculpture garden, the use of concrete for building roads, bridge abutments, and architecture grew exponentially with the foundation of organizations dedicated to developing and educating the public and professional on uses for concrete. For instance, the American Concrete Institute (then called the National Association of Cement Users) held its first annual meeting in 1905 and continues to develop concrete technology and provide educational resources today.[200]

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[199]M. Moussard, P. Garibaldi, and M. Curbach, "The Invention of Reinforced Concrete (1848 – 1906)," in *High Tech Concrete: Where Technology and Engineering Meet,* eds. D. Hordijk & M. Luković.(Berlin: Springer, 2018).

[200] *National Association of Cement Users. Proceedings of First Convention* (Indianapolis, Indiana: National Association of Cement Users, 1905).

Advances in Portland cement and asphalt (bitumen) cement overlapped during the early twentieth century. While engineers used Portland cement for paving purposes, roads required a material that was slightly more flexible with extreme changes in temperature in order to prevent cracking. As a result, while Portland cement continued to grow as a technology and resource for infrastructure, asphalt (bitumen) concrete developed as the ideal variation for paving roads. Some attribute the invention of modern asphalt to Edward J. de Smedt, a professor at Columbia University in 1870. However, civilizations dating to ancient Egypt and Rome used the tar-like substance bitumen for a variety of purposes, including sealing baths. Bitumen is flexible and when used in cement mixtures, protects concrete from excessive breaking.[201]

Developments in concrete coincided modern advancement that physically connected city with country. In reviewing the history of asphalt, there are a number of indications that paving city streets was not as strong of an impetus to develop affordable and durable concrete as the need to pave rural highways.[202] This owes to the fact that rural travel requires drivers to travel much further distances and that roads and cars often endure far greater wear. This hints at the relationship between rural towns where many of the concrete sculpture garden artists lived and the ideas circulating around the time concerning concrete and the development of paved roads. Firstly, it indicates that paving rural highways was a priority. Secondly, it indicates that the

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[201] Freddy L. Robers, Louay N. Mohammad, and L.B. Wang, "History of Hot Mix Asphalt Mixture Design in the United States," *Journal of Materials in Civil Engineering* (July / August 2002): 279.

[202] Robers, Mohammad, and Wang, "History of Hot Mix Asphalt," 279.

concrete had to meet a high demand with affordability. Finally, it recognizes that technological advancements in concrete were relative to technological advancements in mobility.[203]

The invention of the automobile encouraged the development and mass production of concrete. When Ford began producing their Model T in 1908, producing millions of cars by 1927, the ability to travel began to demand expansions in infrastructure.[204] Moving from a soft cover roof that could only take a certain degree of "beating" by the elements to hard top cars and finally to encased cars meant riders could take longer trips at greater comfort. At the same time, road lobbying persisted as the responsibility of road maintenance and development steadily bended from property owners and communities to local and federal governments.[205] Historian Pierce Lewis pointed out that the lobbyists for better "all weather" roads included automobile manufacturers, petroleum industry, the steel and concrete industry, and small-town boosters. The boosters believed roads would connect their small towns to a network of drivers effectively improving their own local economies.[206]

The good roads efforts of rural representatives began in the nineteenth century coinciding the popularization of the bicycle.[207] Lobbyists for good roads used slogans like "get the farmers out of the mud," which was popular as early as the 1910s. While trains and trolleys catered to the

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[203] Peter J. Hugill, "Good Roads and the Automobile in the United States 1880-1929," *Geographical Review* (July 1982): 327-249.

[204] Pierce Lewis, "The Landscapes of Mobility" in *The National Road,* ed. Karl B Raitz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 27.

[205] Lewis, "The Landscapes of Mobility," 28.

[206] Lewis, "The Landscapes of Mobility," 29.

[207] Bruce Edsall Seely, *Building the American Highway System: Engineers as Policy Makers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).

ease of city traffic, rural residents communicated frustration by the dusty and muddy conditions of dirt roads.

At the same time, some residents were cautious about road improvements, particularly that the roads could funnel economic benefits away from small towns and into big cities.[208] Similarly, auto association representatives like John H. Holman noted in 1914 that the immense cost of paving all roads in concrete was impractical and could actually deter farmers from supporting good roads. He also noted concerns that urban drivers would force farmers off paved roads while zipping through town. However, the solutions to these issues were hardly obvious as Holman expressed by writing "the construction and maintenance of our roads, is, in my opinion, one of the most important questions that the state of Minnesota has to deal with today."[209] Even while the challenges and concerns for the betterment of rural farmers were of paramount concern, he expressed the knowing that road improvement would be beneficial. The issue more so concerned fair implementation.

Just six years later in 1920, the *Willmar Tribune* published the embittered words of an Iowa State Highway Commission supervisor named Aaron-Grimm. He expressed his frustration that money had been wasted on gravel roads rather than making the practical decision to pave with concrete years prior. The supervisor explained, "We spent an average of over $1200 per mile per year trying to maintain that as a graveled road and today we have nothing to show for our money…We have spent of $31.50 per mile on our concrete road. We have had six years use

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[208] Richard W. Judd, "Good Roads for Whom? Farmers, Urban Merchants, and Road Administration in Maine, 1901-1916." *Maine History* 43 (2008): 383-410.

[209] Speech of John H. Holman, President of the Auto Association, before the Willmar Motor Club (March 30, 1914) published in the *Willmar Tribune* (April 8, 1914): 3.

of the oldest mile."[210] Going on to note the durability of the concrete road, he called on Federal and State officials to release funding for concrete roads because it was a good investment.

His words foreshadowed advertisements of the 1930s by the Portland Cement Association. The association published statements like "road tinkering is costly…Make the maintenance dollar do full duty."[211] The accompanying image depicts road workers with shovels, apparently patching a road with their automobiles parked in the background (Figure 3.4). The visual suggests a few things in keeping with Aaron-Grimm's attitude. Concrete could handle the heavy lifting demanded by modern travel, making the economically practical decision clear: concrete was the answer for the modern world.

Another ten to twenty years more and concrete roads were well established and proved to be more durable, require less maintenance, and overall cost less money and effort. Statements such as "in Missouri, the average asphalt or concrete road lasts about 30 years, the average oil or macadam road 10 years" point to the then-established association between concrete, durability, and affordability.[212] The passing decades calmed early uncertainties. Concrete gradually proved itself as the right fit for the American road.

These examples of concrete and the road provide a general overview of the complex back and forth conversations and educational efforts occurring in the public realm concerning concrete as it related to people's personal, professional, and civic lives. The push to educate the public on

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[210] Herbert Wadell, "Some Information about the Babcock Road Plan," *Willmar Tribune* (March 10, 1920): 2.

[211] Advertisement by the Portland Cement Association published in *The Boyden Reporter* (Thursday, April 7, 1938): 5.

[212] "Concrete lasts 30 Years," *Rock Valley Bee* (Friday, December 26, 1941): 6.

cost and benefits of concrete roads worked to address early concerns about investment and maintenance. Educational efforts, paired with the pressures of lobbyists and automobile technological advancements and increasing car ownership triggered exponential growth of large-scale paving and surfacing campaigns. While in 1904, rural roads were rarely surfaced with only one-sixth surfaced, by 1935 at least one third of rural roads had been paved some even with concrete and asphalt.[213] From the Lincoln Memorial Highway Association of 1913, the Good Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 to the Federal-Aid Highway Act 1944 and of 1956, paved roads became a grid spanning the nation and connecting Americans to all other parts of the nation.

The development of the roads and cars expanded America's geographical cohesion, spanning a diversity of geographical features made increasingly accessible. As more and more American's lobbied for bigger, better, and more roads to support their mobility and interconnectedness, they incidentally shaped America's national identity. The development of concrete and automobile ushered in unprecedented mobility prompting people to re-envision their relationship between home and the world at large. The world grew smaller thanks to new, paved roads that connected urban centers and traversed long swaths of land. With increased traffic and Sunday drivers leisurely passing through town, drivers avoided the busy city and highway roads by taking less-crowded backroads, where travelers claimed the scenery was "better" anyway.[214]

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[213] "Americans Adopt the Auto," *National Museum of American History,* accessed May 26, 2021, https://americanhistory.si.edu/america-on-the-move/better-roads; United States Federal Highway Administration. America's highways, 1776-1976. U.S. Dept. of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration: For Sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off, 1977. doi: 10.5479/sil.177024.39088003321007

[214] "Sunday Drivers," *The Lacrosse Tribune* (Monday, May 10, 1949): 4. [reprinted from the Wisconsin State Journal).

Cement was at the center of it all, serving as the surface for tourism and mortar adhering a national identity. No matter the person's background, eventually nearly everyone traveled the road, tracing their personal history along local county roads and far-reaching highways. Like a circulatory system made of concrete, the roads circulated people and gave them opportunities to connect with all parts of their country.

National tourism played a major role in the development of a national identity and culture between 1880 and 1940. It was a central component in developing a common identity across the vast expanse of the United States.[215] Traveling and mobility became central to the national character. The feeling of national pride as it relates to the landscape was encouraged by national travel campaigns like the See America First movement, development of a national park system, and development of roads to provide access to natural and cultural wonders. The common roads dictate what places are accessible and important, cultivating shared experience by those who travel them. Therefore, individuals experienced the emergence of national tourism on both personal and shared levels.

Capitalizing on the traffic past their homes, concrete sculpture garden artists learned to position their homes as destinations, waysides, parks, and places that travelers might stop to rest for lunch or visit as destinations in and of themselves. For example, Matthias Wernerus of the *Dickeyville Grotto* conceived of the grotto as a place that would draw pilgrims and tourists alike. He provided registers for visitors and sold souvenirs and postcards from the grotto gift shop. Similarly, the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave* boasted the number of annual visitors representing "every state in the union" and their annual picnic attracted more than five thousand

[215] Marquerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 6.

guests.[216] For a town with fewer than one thousand residents, the ticket sales were impressive and reinforced the idea of the grotto as tourist destination and economic resource.

Between the 1930s and the 1960s, newspapers encouraged readers to take their cars out and explore their region, highlighting art environment sites. Travel resonated with the pursuit of a national identity that related to the land and to self-discovery. One 1959 *La Crosse Tribune* article encouraged readers to combine history with their sightseeing trips. The article divided the state of Wisconsin into regions and lists recommended sights, their location and a brief description. They featured *The Dickeyville Grotto*, which they described as "a grotto of religious significance and artistry in stone."[217] The 1929 article "Grotto at Dickeyville, Wis., Mecca of Increasingly Large Number of Travelers" updated readers on the progress of *The Dickeyville Grotto* and reported that many people keep going back to see it grow.[218] The 1963 Iowa article "Get Set for Miles of Pleasure"[219] paired information about the shrine with an advertisement listing thirteen service stations and an advertisement on camera film, positioning the art environment at the center of tourism. A *Ripley's Believe It or Not* article featured the grotto as far away as Greenville, Pennsylvania.[220]

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[216] *Stevens Point Daily Journal* (August 19, 1936): 3.

[217] "Combine History with Sight-Seeing On Your Automobile Tours of State," *The La Crosse Tribune* (Sunday, May 17, 1959): 17.

[218] "Grotto at Dickeyville, Wis., Mecca of Increasingly Large Number of Travelers," *The La Crosse Tribune* (Sunday, September 9, 1928): 13.

[219] "Get Set for Miles of Pleasure," *The Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune* (Thursday, August 15, 1963): 5.

[220] "Believe It or Not…by Riply," *The Record-Argus* (Monday, October 10, 1938): 3.

Likewise, guidebooks taught locals and travelers to consider their hometowns and small towns as destinations while bolstering public knowledge about grassroots artistic projects like concrete grottos. The Writer's Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of Wisconsin's American Guides series *Wisconsin: A Guide to the Badger State* even featured *The Dickeyville Grotto* as part of "Tour 12."[221] Likewise. *Iowa: A Guide to the Hawkeye State* featured the *Grotto of the Redemption* in West Bend and the *Our Lady of Grace Grotto* located in a small park in West Burlington.[222]

Concrete had become the new American trail. In relation to the art environment, drivers performed a blended version of European pilgrim and American pioneer symbolically expressed through the exercise of travel to monuments of spiritual and civic religion. While grottos have roots in particularly Catholic European traditions, American artists created a version that was outwardly both religious and political. Daniel Olsen's work on religious travel in North America provides one way interpret how this tendency relates to the road and American identity. Olsen described how the public translated the religious pilgrimage of Europe into a sort of patriotic-cum-religious pilgrimage in America. Tourism satisfied the pursuit for "quasi-religious authenticity, truth, and self-actualization through participating in the 'ritual' of sightseeing and sacralizing tourist attractions and places."[223] Although destinations like *The Dickeyville Grotto*

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[221] Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of Wisconsin, *Wisconsin: A Guide to the Badger State* (New York: Duell, Slaon and Pearce, 1941), 430.

[222] Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of Iowa, *Iowa: A Guide to the Hawkeye State* (New York: Viking Press, 1938).

[223] Daniel H. Olsen, "Ritual Journeys in North America: Opening Religious and Ritual Landscapes and Spaces," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* (2016): 37.

may have been distinct for their specific flavor of religious proselytization by participating in a grotto-making tradition, it participated in American tourism in equal parts.

Travel and the "romance of the road" has served as a recurrent motif in modern American literature. The artists captured in physical form what Donald Primaeau argued was the road genre of American literature which captured "time, place, and culture in simple and popular stories" that placed individualism and the trail at the center of American identity.[224] As the road and travel operated as a symbol of pursuit of self, a symbol of the pursuit to define national identity, so too was the concrete sculpture garden a product and formative of national identities.

In many cases, the concrete sculpture garden artists were tourists who documented their personal travels in their artworks. The poetry of this practice is that concrete connected the artist to places they would visit, stretching before them as the new American trail. That same medium that made travel of this nature possible was the material and binder that the artists used to document their travels, memories, and beliefs. For instance, Madeline Buol of Dubuque, IA described how she collected objects to incorporate into her sculpture garden. While on a road trip to Canada, she bought a figure of a saint that she was inspired to install in a grotto. Afterwards, she stopped to collect rocks from the place where she purchased the statue. She intended to use the rocks in her grotto garden and so the rocks were mementos connecting her to the memory of her travel and to the saint statue. She described the story, saying, "We took a trip to St. Ann's shrine in Canada, where I bought a statue of Blessed Mother. We picked up rocks at the St. Lawrence River as the tide went out, and I saw a Grotto at Dodgeville one time, in the shape of a

[224] Primeau, *Romance of the Road*, 3.

star, so I remembered that, and decided that would be my next Grotto."[225] Her story paints a vivid picture of concrete's circular role. It created an opportunity for people like Buol to experience new places and then as the medium with which she could commemorate that experience.[226]

The Cement Age

As concrete became more widely available, architects and garden designers of the early twentieth century were especially interested in concrete's aesthetic possibilities. Through their books, periodicals, and conferences, they proselytized the artistic use of concrete, encouraging the professional contractor and homeowner alike to consider the many ways concrete could beautify everything from private residences to public parks. In their advocacy, they invited would-be creators to think of concrete as more than just the canvas on which one adds pigment. Instead, they staked the claim that concrete itself was an expressive and aesthetic medium and invited viewers to approach the material with fresh perspective.

Educational campaigns concerning concrete technology and application along with technological developments of concrete as a medium of infrastructure, architecture, and art were mutually productive. One prominent designer named Colin Campbell attributed the increase in education to improvements in concrete and concrete design, saying,

> There is no doubt that the explanation of the slow development of concrete in architectural structures is due primarily to lack of knowledge among architects of its possibilities. However, within the past few years these possibilities have been understood

[225] Madeline Buol, interview, 1945, John Michael Kohler Arts Center 55.

[226] Buol, interview, 56.

> and appreciated more fully, and for that reason we see rising, here and there, monuments to the designer's skill in adapting concrete to the scheme which he had in mind.[227]

By the time Campbell made this statement in 1918, the number of publications including articles on concrete in design had dramatically increased during the prior ten years.

In part, publications like *The Cement Age* contributed to the sudden proliferation of concrete designs. Published between 1904 and 1912, *The Cement Age,* was one of the earliest publications to champion concrete design and architecture and to take a pointed stance on the medium's artistic potential. Following the nomenclature of the three-age system including the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age, *The Cement Age*, by virtue of its title, claimed the contemporary period as the era of cement. The conversations had within the body of their publication exhaustively considered the opportunities for concrete to revolutionize architecture, infrastructure, and design. Although they were not the only publication to provide instructions, schematics, and inspiration for their readers concerning the uses for concrete, they certainly were one of the earliest publications dedicated to pushing the limits of what concrete could do. Another periodical of the time was *The Cement Era*, which began publishing in 1907 until 1917. One volume from 1914 featured the concrete building for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington, DC., a concrete bungalow in Coconut Grove, Florida, concrete roads in Ohio, garden ornaments, patents, and advertisement for new concrete working tools.[228]

Written primarily for a readership of architects and designers, *The Cement Age* provided detailed technical instructions and examples, while taking a distinct position when it came to artistry in concrete projects. Because people used concrete to build roads, homes, fences, etc., it

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[227] H. Colin Campbell, "Concrete as a Medium of Artistic Expression," *The American Architect* (August 21, 1918): 217.
[228] *The Cement Era* XII (January 1914).

had certain associations with twentieth-century industrialization. *The Cement Age* articles encouraged professional readers to consider the vast application potential of concrete beyond its typical associations with infrastructure.

Foremost, their arguments focused on varying mixtures. Concrete is composed of a mixture of cement and aggregate. By mixing different types of aggregate with the cement, designers could cause the medium to take on the appearance of all types of geological sources, such as marble, limestone, pebbles, etc. Therefore, for *The Cement Age* contributors, concrete was incredibly versatile and gave users the option to create everything from sculptures of fine art to attractive rubble fences, depending on the desired aesthetic of the project.

At the same time, one of the problems *The Cement Age* editors perceived in the field was that designers and architects used concrete's plasticity to mold it into replicas of other common materials like stone and brick by experimenting with mixtures. Echoing the design philosophy of William Morris, the periodical's contributors argued that designers ought to treat concrete like concrete rather than use it as a counterfeit of other materials. Instead, they directed readers away from mimicry by showing them how to experiment with the concrete surface, for example by adding ornamental tiles, which they compared to stained glass in cathedrals and to trends in art nouveau.[229] In turn, readers learned to leverage the material's unique character and embrace its aesthetic.[230] Contributors provided examples on how to build, sculpt, and decorate with concrete in ways that embraced concrete's plasticity, color, and texture.

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[229] Ray Moulthrop, "Opportunity for Original and Artistic Design in Concrete," *The Cement Age* (January 1, 1910): 17.

[230] Henry C Mercer, "Where Concrete Stands for Concrete," *The Cement Age* (January 1, 1908): 9.

Working around the same time that *The Cement Age* was in print, Campbell was one of the foremost voices on concrete design and architecture of the 1920s, writing books for public audiences such as *Concrete on the Farm and in the Shop* and *Practical Concrete Work for the School and Home*.[231] His books provided instructions and inspiration to homeowners and community members, detailing how to mix concrete, achieve various surface finishes, create molds, and engineer structures. He encouraged his reader to think carefully about concrete's color, texture, and physical qualities and how to adjust them according to the user's desire.

Instructions for homeowners were published everywhere from topical periodicals like *American Homes and Gardens* to local newspapers like the *Great Bend Tribune.* One article titled "Concrete Ornaments for the Garden and How to Make Them" belonged to a multi-part series in which the December 1909 article focused on designing and building concrete fences (Figure 3.5). The article begins, "concrete fences are becoming more in favor every year, for the reason that they always look substantial and neat, and at the same time require practically no expense for maintenance."[232] After noting the growing popularity, the author notes the benefits of concrete's durability and aesthetic of neatness before providing instructions and examples of mixing Portland cement. The *Great Bend Tribune* published detailed instructions for mixing cement as early as 1908, instructing the reader on exact measurements, order for mixing, how to add water and prevent cracking from the sun.[233] Together, they contributed to a public record of

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[231] Henry Colin Campbell & Walter F. Beyer, *Practical Concrete Work for the School and Home* (State College, PN: Pennsylvania State University, 1917); and Henry Colin Campbell, *Concrete on the Farm and in the Shop* (New York: The Norman W. Henley Publishing Co., 1916).

[232] Ralph C. Davison, "Concrete Ornaments for the Garden and How to Make Them: IV: - A Concrete Fence," *American Homes and Gardens* (December 1, 1909): 471.

[233] "To Measure and Mix Concrete," *Great Bend Tribune* [Great Bend, Kansas] (Thursday, November 26, 1908): 3.

working with concrete that emphasized the ease with which to use the material and the benefits of its strength and versatility.

While publications provide a public record of didactic content for homeowners and contractors, material evidence suggests that concrete sculpture garden artists were aware of each other's experimentations, influencing and even teaching one another through personal correspondence and copying. For instance, the *Wegner Grotto* in Monroe, WI exhibits the same harp-shaped fences iconic of the *Dickeyville Grotto* (Figures 3.6 & 3.7). Individuals from the city of Monroe, who maintain and operate the *Wegner Grotto* today, report that the fence was a deliberate nod to the *Dickeyville Grotto*, which influenced Wegner's work.[234] The *Dickeyville Grotto* inspired Madeline Buol to build a monument to god and country in her garden in Dubuque, IA (Figure 3.8). Her grotto interprets the *Dickeyville Grotto* in miniature setting a shrine of the Virgin Mary at the center of two arches – one written with the word "religion" and the other "patriotism" – balancing each other symmetrically. Records indicate that Nick Engelbert of Hollandale, WI visited the *Dickeyville Grotto* in 1929 and local caretakers report that it inspired him.[235] Even Sabato Rodia of the *Watt's Towers* claimed in an interview to have worked on religious grottos in Wisconsin including the *Dickeyville Grotto.*[236] The collaborations and inspirations between the *Dickeyville Grotto* and other concrete sculpture gardens serve as

[234] Interview with Jarrod Roll by Cortney Anderson Kramer, July 3, 2019, Monroe County Historical Society.

[235] *Dickeyville Grotto,* unpublished draft Wisconsin Historical Society Archive Dickeyville folder.

[236] Sam Rodia interview by Ray Wisniewski and Jeanne Morgan, Feb.-March 1953, Los Angeles, CA; "Rodia's Towers: Nuestro Pueblo, A Gift to the World," in *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments,* ed. David Franklin Ward (Madison, WI: Popular Press 1984): 80-81.

only one example. Evidence suggests that the artists knew of and visited other sites, no doubt finding inspiration from their peers in concrete sculpting.

Early on in her endeavor, Buol struggled with her materials falling down and decided to write to Dobberstein, the artist of the then-famous *Grotto of the Redemption* (West Bend, IA). He replied to her letter with instructions on mixing cement and preparing the materials and aggregates for a grotto. He told her to "take one part sand to two parts cement and add water just to make a creamy mixture."[237] He went on to tell her how to build the sculptures in molds on flat ground, allowing five days for it to set before standing it up.[238] Their correspondence demonstrates that artists shared ideas with one another, pointing to a grassroots transmission of knowledge contemporaneous to formally published instructional articles.

During the Cement Age, concrete sculpture garden artists had access to didactic materials such as newspapers and periodicals, which encouraged people to create artistic ornaments for their gardens. The articles included examples, instructions, and design recommendations. At the same time, the artists shared information with one another, increasing the body of knowledge produced through formal and grassroots means.

The Concrete Solution

When presented with problems concerning mobility, architecture, public art, and home improvement, Americans positioned concrete as the solution. It answered the practical needs of a growing nation requiring infrastructure and roads as well as its needs for public sculpture and art. One of the ways writers shaped concrete as both a practical and aesthetic solution for the needs

[237] Buol, interview, 56.

[238] Buol, interview, 54.

of Americans was by showing how concrete could apply to both rural and urban settings. They argued that it met the needs and aesthetics of country homes, gardens, and public spaces. At the same time, they reassured readers that anyone with any experience level could work the medium with ease. Altogether, their efforts addressed existing concerns about aesthetics and knowledge by providing examples and instructions showing that concrete was a solution for all sorts of domestic needs.

By exploring concrete's application within the garden and in rural architecture, designers demonstrated concrete's versatility between city and country in attempts to dislodge concrete's strong association with urbanity. The motivation for their work was the belief that concrete was ripe with aesthetic potential. Writing for *The Cement Age* in 1908, Albert Moyer strategically used examples of concrete in rural and countryside settings to inspire readers to think of concrete in new ways, asking his reader to imagine a concrete house in harmony with nature "where there are winding roads, trees, a hillside and possibly rocks."[239] He asked his reader to estrange themselves from their memories of concrete, freeing themselves to create unencumbered by the usual combinations. In one instance, he used the example of a concrete country home, asking the reader to reacquaint themselves with the physical and aesthetic qualities of concrete. Discussing the concrete country home, he argued that its color, texture, and style suited a countryside property.

Moyer argued that concrete's rugged natural aggregates of stones in low relief were ideal for country residences. Conveying the appropriateness of concrete in building country homes, the philosophies of Moyer and his contemporary Campbell – who encouraged designers and

[239] Albert Moyer, "An Artistic True Concrete Residence," *The Cement Age* (January 1, 1908): 2.

homeowners to experiment with concrete surface handling – coalesced in the small town of Hollandale, WI. Nestled on a hill just outside of town, Nick Engelbert's *Grandview* matches in character the type of rubblework surface handling that concrete champions published on a decade or more prior (Figures 3.9 & 3.10). Engelbert surrounded his family home with painted, rubble, and mosaic concrete sculptures that animate the matching concrete "stucco" house. The entire surface of the house is impressed with small stones of varying shapes, colors, and textures.

Engelbert's house is similar to a home that Moyer called the "True Concrete House," sharing a simplicity of the square structure while achieving low relief aggregate and rubble across the surface. The texture of the surfaces of both concrete house are nearly identical from a distance, but the method used is different. The Moyer house designers added large aggregate to the mold and then polished the surface to expose the stones in low relief. On the other hand, Engelbert added concrete to a frame and then impressing the still wet surface with rocks. Both houses use a mixture of rubblework surface texture and glass mosaic ornamentation. Mosaic ornamentation framed the Moyer house windows similar to the way Engelbert highlighted the crown of his front porch with glass and ceramic mosaic.[240]

For the most part, advocates presented concrete as an architectural and outdoor medium, suited to building homes as well as paths, flowerpots, benches, fences, and other garden accessories. *The Cement Age* pressed the appeal of using concrete within the garden. By documenting examples of elaborate gardens occupied by concrete figures, flower urns, fences,

[240] Cortney Anderson Kramer, "Embedding the Surface: Concrete Art Environments and D.I.Y. Rubblework," *SPACES* (March 2021), accessed March 2021, http://spacesarchives.org/resources/blog/embedding-the-surface/.

and ponds, the writers set a precedent for using concrete outdoors.[241] Campbell was also an enthusiastic advocate for concrete in outdoor design. In one particular article from 1914, he contemplated the appeal of concrete as an artistically expressive medium for outdoor settings, supporting his idea with images of gardens designed with concrete features. He points to the color and texture, writing, "the natural soft gray stones of straight concrete blend pleasantly with all outdoors," before providing examples of garden ornaments such as vases and garden seats similar to those found in both the *Buol Grotto* and the *Dickeyville Grotto*.[242] He continued by painting a picture in the reader's imagination of concrete details integrated into the garden:

> Almost any expanse of lawn forms a suitable setting for the swimming pool, pergola, and such lawn furniture as benches, flower vases and sundials. The added touch given by the landscape architect in planting or clumping trees and shrubbery finishes the setting. Entranceways to the home grounds, lamp posts and balustrades, porches, and lintels over doorways and windows and panel in walls are concrete details or fixtures that can in no other way be made so satisfactorily unless it be with sculpted stone.[243]

For Campbell, concrete's applications in the garden were not only ideal, but limited only to the maker's imagination.

Another contemporary to Moyer and Campbell, C. J. McCarthy's writings provide another example of writers identifying contemporary design preferences for using concrete in outdoor and country settings. As early as 1908, McCarthy wrote,

> In using concrete for country residences I wish the reader to eliminate from his mind all thought of concrete, such as he sees about him in retaining walls, bridge abutments and other work where concrete has been employed, but to try to picture a concrete made of selected materials, the molds or forms taken off as soon as possible while the concrete is yet green the surface scrubbed with a scrubbing brush, or if the concrete is too stiff a wire

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[241] "The Use of Concrete in Garden Ornamentation on Castana Estate, Rosemont, Pa." *The Cement Age* (May 1, 1914): 216.

[242]Campbell, "Concrete as a Medium of Artistic Expression," 217.

[243]Campbell, "Concrete as a Medium of Artistic Expression," 217.

> brush, water being sprayed on with a hose, thus removing all the mortar which has come to the surface, and exposing the large pieces of aggregates; in fact, throwing them slightly in relief, giving a rough surface of accidentally distributed colored stones.[244]

In the article, he provided a number of suggestions for concrete finishes on window openings, beams, and exterior surfaces. He ended his article by observing that design experimentations with concrete were not only versatile, being as fit for the country as it is for urban development, but its aesthetic offered something unique and harmonious with nature. Describing concrete design by writing, "it is simple, dignified, the countenance is full of expression and alive with purpose, and it harmonizes with the natural surroundings and gives a feeling of strength and repose." [245] Early advocates for concrete design taught readers to reimagine concrete and to break free from the expectation that concrete was solely functional, economical, and urban. Rather they argued it was ripe with untapped aesthetic potential.

Part of describing concrete's usefulness for rural or urban settings was the unsaid implication that the material was something people of a variety of backgrounds could use. The democratic attitudes toward using concrete resemble the ways in which writers talked about rock gardening, pointing out that women were interested in and able to use concrete for home improvements as well as men. Writing a newspaper column on a local demonstration, a Kansas City Times contributor described the concrete mixing booth that "swamped with women visitors."[246] When the demonstrator asked the women about their interest in learning to use concrete, the women responded that if they did not do the work, no one would because their

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[244] C. J. McCarthy, "Framing Domes, Pendentives and Niches II," *Carpentry and Building* (April 1908): 121.

[245] McCarthy, "Framing Domes," 122.

[246] "Spell by Power Tools. Women are Fascinated by Do-It-Yourself Demonstrations," *The Kansas City Times* (Tuesday, September 28, 1954): 29.

husbands were not interested or that they wanted to join their husbands on projects to spend time with them.

The article, which muses over women's interest in using a buzz saw and working with concrete, also sheds light on the popular interests of individuals using concrete for home improvements. According to the article, listeners asked about patching curbs, building birdbaths, and creating rock gardens to which the presenter responded, "Ladies, it's just like making a cake. You just add water and stir it up. Then spread it on like icing."[247] The article reveals a number of important things central to the concrete age: its durability affordability and plasticity produced broad appeal for homeowners of all backgrounds, needs, and ambitions. Whether building a road, a birdbath, or a monument, concrete was up to the task.

Citizens conceived of concrete as the material that symbolically supported the mobility of Americans and as the material that could improve life, promising to attract young people towards staying home rather than leaving for big cities. In a sense, concrete countered the appeal of the city by promising the potential to make home just as modern and cultural. Concrete advertisements of the time focused on this belief. "Keep the Boys on the Farm!" one ad exclaims, "How? Make Home Attractive." "Tear down the old worn-out porch! Build one of concrete. Stop wading around in the mud! Build concrete walks."[248] The advertisement for Ash Grove Superfine cement suggested that concrete home improvements could keep young people from leaving for big cities. Pointing out the affordability, it reassured the buyer that the material was accessible to just about anyone and yet the value was big.

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[247] "Spell by Power Tools, 29.

[248] "Keep the Boys on the Farm!" *The Onaga Herald* (Thursday, July 17, 1919): 3.

While concrete's durability made it a desirable home improvement material, its affordability made it democratic. Newspaper advertisements abound showing off concrete's availability and affordability for homeowners to tackle any number of projects.

> GOOD CONCRETE MIX GRAV-el, $1.60 ton delivered. Fine mortar sand, $1.60 ton delivered. Fairview Gravel Company.[249]

Concrete advocates positioned the medium as the practical solution to improving roads and homes alike because it was affordable and practical.

If concrete had a personality, what words may have arisen from the era's sentiments of this material that transformed the modern world? Reflecting on the concrete house in 1908, Moyer described concrete's personality by speaking as the house personified, "I am strong, substantial, durable, beautiful, and am of concrete."[250] By simultaneously promising strength and beauty, concrete offered a solution to the demands of a quickly changing nation that demanded a quick, affordable, and durable medium for building everything from infrastructure to art.

Moyer summarized the practical qualities of concrete likewise recognized by his contemporaries. Concrete was financially affordable and thereby accessible to people of all economic backgrounds. It was durable and could withstand years, if not decades, of outdoor exposure. Users could design it according to a variety of style preferences. Finally, concrete met a variety of practical needs from paving roads to building benches. As often as the practical nature of concrete came to the fore, designers and artists found inspiration in the aesthetic appeal of concrete.

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[249] "FOR SALE Miscellaneous," *The Daily Clintonian* (Clinton, IN) (Friday, Jun 11, 1948): 10.

[250] Albert Moyer, "An Artistic True Concrete Residence," *The Cement Age* (January 1, 1908): 2.

Individuality and the Concrete Surface

Concrete sculpture garden artists distinguished themselves from one another through surface handling. Altogether, there are three tendencies on how artists approached the concrete surface: bare concrete, mosaic, or hidden concrete. An example of a bare surface would be Dinsmoor's *Garden of Eden* (Figure 3.11). While Dinsmoor painted much of the concrete surface to add color to faces, words, and certain objects like the American flag, he also left much of the concrete bare, relying on his modeling, shadow, and texture to depict subjects like trees and human figures. Alternatively, Smith's *Wisconsin Concrete Park* is an example of mosaic surface handling (Figure 3.12). Smith covered his sculptures by pressing broken bits of glass and other objects into the cement. Finally, the *Rudolph Garden Grotto and Wonder Cave* is an example of concrete work where the artist hid the concrete behind large rocks in order to achieve a natural grotto or tumbled rock effect (Figure 3.13). The concrete provided the structure for the grotto, but not the surface aesthetic.

Concrete sculpture garden artists demonstrated their interest in surface handling by experimenting with different combinations of textures, colors, and materials according to their aesthetic goals. Similarly, journal contributors like Campbell pressed the importance of finishing as a way to transform the medium to meet individual tastes. He encouraged makers to try out methods for embellishing the surface of the concrete by buffering it to reveal a desirable

aggregate such as marble[251] or by embedding the surface with a mosaic of glass or stone, a technique preferred by many concrete sculpture garden artists.[252]

One of the most popular ways for using concrete "artistically" in the garden was by designing attractive fence posts and wells in the rubble style. Makers achieved the rubble effect by embedding irregularly sized small stones into the surface of the concrete before it completely set. Depending on the shape and size of the stones or bricks, the designer could achieve a variety of finished results ranging from random-looking rubble appearance to tightly woven tiled effects according to one "how to" article on rubble masonry (Figure 3.14).

Rubblework, as it designers called it, was popular for adorning a variety of surfaces from buildings to small decorative objects. [253] Campbell described rubblework in glowing terms, writing, "walls of exceedingly attractive appearance are being laid up with the assorted stones and concrete creations." Going on to teach readers how to make a gatepost with photographs for inspiration, he claimed that rubblework's strong appeal was easy to attain by makers of all experience levels and that "the results can easily be made artistic" (Figure 3.15).[254] Two things were important for him to convey to his readership: concrete rubblework could add appeal to a

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[251] "In small ornamental objects such as flower vases, sundials and garden seats, colored sands and selected aggregates such as marble chips and granite screenings are often used" See Campbell, "Concrete as a Medium of Artistic Expression," 217.

[252] "A great deal of interesting work has been done by inserting colored tiles into the concrete field and working out mosaic patterns in glass or stone." See "New Use of Concrete For Garden Ornaments," *The Craftsman* (August 1, 1909): 584.

[253] George Rice, "Rubble Masonry and Concrete Effects," *The National Builder* (May 1, 1910): 35.

[254] Campbell, "Rubble Concrete: Its beauty and strength and how to do this class of work to best advantage," *American Carpenter and Builder* (May 1, 1915): 72.

homeowner's yard and working with concrete was easy. Then he went on to instruct his reader on how to mix the concrete, build a mold, and apply the rubble.

Not long after Campbell taught readers how to create rubblework, Buol, Wernerus, and Smith began embedding rocks, crystals, and glass into their concrete sculptures. They practiced what countless writers encouraged their readers to do, to keep the concrete structure simple but to think about how to add interest to its surface. For example, Buol created a miniature shrine to the Virgin Mary (Figure 3.16). The concrete structure includes a pedestal with a small round grotto built to house a miniature statue. From the back, the grotto is a flat sphere and from the front, it is concave with concrete built up into circles intended to frame the sculpture of Mary, which sat on a small platform. The general shape of the structure is simple, but Buol added elaborate color combinations and textures to the surface. On the back of the sculpture, she used blue and green marbles to write the words "Mary" and "Virgin" and used additional marbles in red, yellow and purple to create rings of marbles meant to resemble rosettes. She aligned the rosettes into the shape of a cross that she outlined with either rock or broken bits of ceramic. In all of the spaces between the words and cross, she decorated the surface with shells and rocks of varying sizes and trimmed the entire circular structure with small white shells. Similarly, Wernerus and Smith sculpted simple forms, but used embedded materials to add color, form, texture, and transparency to the artwork.

Contemporary gardening periodicals instructed readers to make grottos aesthetically pleasing by adding color to the surface. Published in 1931, an essay in *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening* referenced Dobberstein's *Grotto of the Redemption* in West Bend, Iowa as

a famous example of "brilliant color combinations."[255] The author, Ray Wyrick wrote that grotto work was effective and pleasing especially when formed with colored stones. With its use of colorful rocks reportedly shipped and collected from around the world, the *Grotto of the Redemption* impressed Wyrick and he shared his experience as inspiration for would-be grotto builders.[256]

Writers encouraged readers to think about inexpensive ways of embellishing concrete surfaces by reusing found and broken materials. In the 1923 "How to" journal article "How to Make Concrete Walls Attractive," B.F. Clark provided instructions for the reader on using affordable alternatives to gravel, especially by recycling broken glass. He encouraged readers to break heavy bottles in all different colors and to scatter them randomly across the surface of the concrete to create and "artistic effect."[257] Artists like Smith, Buol, and Hartman each followed this technique, using materials that they found. Smith often used broken bottles such as the Hilex bleach bottles he reported gathering from the local dump and broken glass scraps provided by the local glass factory.[258] Buol used found porcelain and mementos and Hartman used bits of rock collected from the local monuments company.[259] Concrete sculpture garden artists did just as

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[255] Ray F. Wyrick, "Improvement of Catholic Cemeteries. In Three Parts-Part III," *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening* (January 1, 1931): 289.

[256] Wyrick, "Improvement of Catholic Cemeteries," 289.

[257] B.F Clark, "How to Make Concrete Walls Attractive," *Building Age and the Builder's Journal* (September 1, 1923): 76.

[258] Smith, interview, 8.

[259] "Rock Garden Attracts Visitors Worldwide," *River Cities News & Advertiser* (Tuesday, August 25, 1987).

Clark recommended. They experimented with surface handling by using free or inexpensive materials.

Clark also instructed readers to accomplish an artistic surface while taking into consideration some practical methods according to the nature of glass. He told his reader to use fragments from glass bottles because of their rounded shape. By pressing the glass into the concrete, the sharp edges sunk into the concrete's surface, protecting the glass from breaking and the maker from injury. While some concrete sculpture garden artists pressed broken pieces fully into the concrete, many more seem to have experimented with more hazardous surface handling choices. For example, Paul and Matilda Wegner of the *Wegner Grotto* pressed glass into the concrete so that the shards stood on their edges. They packed the pieces of glass tightly together, leaving the surface a glittering cacophony of colors. The aesthetic effect is reminiscent of geodes or crystals, which have rough, uneven, and pointed edges.

Embellishing the surface with embedded objects as recommended by columnists and as practiced by concrete sculpture garden artists was not limited to the Midwest. The trend stretched across the United States, growing from a variety of traditions and inspirations. For instance, Joseph Sciorra has argued that outdoor mosaic shrines in the Northeast have precedent in the European *pique-assiette* technique of decorating ceramics. Sciorra framed *pique-assiette* work as a favorite of New York and east coast Italian immigrants who created small grottos in their urban gardens. The shrines rose in popularity at the same time that concrete sculpture gardens grew in prominence in the Midwest.[260] Whether in the Northeast or in the Midwest, homeowners made embedded concrete garden ornaments throughout the 1930s and 40s, suggesting that mosaic

[260] Joseph Sciorra, "Why a Man Makes the Shoes?: Italian American Art and Philosophy in Sabato Rodia's Watts Towers," *Sabato Rodia's Towers in Watts: Art, Migrations, Development,* ed. Luisa del Giudice (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 183-203.

styles of surface handling were widely popular even if they meant different things to different people.

Mosaic surfacing was a solution for creating in ways that were financially affordable. Even Wagner, who intentionally hid the cement behind rocks and other surface embellishments at the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave*, used leftover glass from the Kokomo Opalescent Glass Co. (Kokomo, IN) to embellish garden fixtures like the *Ten Commandments* sculpture, planters, a *War Memorial,* and a register (Figure 3.17). Wagner would melt glass of various colors into lumps in old oyster pails.[261] Then he would break the glass into pieces the size of one-inch tesserae before setting them into the surface of the concrete. Similarly, Smith of the *Wisconsin Concrete Park* used broken glass to decorate his concrete sculptures because he could get the material free of cost and because he liked the way the color and reflectiveness of the glass enliven what he referred to as the otherwise "dead" concrete.[262]

Wagner was friends with and often discussed grotto making with Dobberstein who is well known for building the *Grotto of the Redemption* in West Bend, IA.[263] Though Wagner embellished with broken glass occasionally, the two had different aesthetic goals for their grottos. Dobberstein used surface embellishments as a way to designate space. He used different mixtures of materials from one section of the grotto to another, surprising his viewer with a different aesthetic surface around every corner. Wagner, on the other hand, was consistent with his use of natural rock as the surface for each of his grottos, which he intended to look as natural

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[261] *Father Philip J. Wagner and the Grotto Shrine, Rudolph, Wisconsin* (Rudolph, WI: Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave, 1972), 4.

[262] Smith "Fred Smith Interviewed," 9.

[263] Stashek*, A Promise Fulfilled*, 11.

as possible, intentionally hiding much of the concrete. As a result, the grottos appear as piles of freestanding rocks.

Though artists often used available resources, they still found room to make deliberate aesthetic choices according to their tastes. While Buol and Dobberstein embedded their shrines with materials that had reflection and shine along with stones and shells, other artists chose to use mostly rock, following the rubblework tradition. For instance, Hartman mostly used rock gathered from nearby housing developments and rivers, which he used to cover the surfaces of his miniature houses, flowerpots, and garden borders (Figure 3.18). Regardless of their preference, they treated surface handling as an important part of their creative work, putting into practice the advice of contemporary designers who likened concrete surface handling to adding "a bit of azure or vermilion" to a canvas.[264]

A New Art of Concrete

The distinctly American appeal of concrete sharpens when comparing how American designers discussed concrete versus their contemporaries in England. While Campbell, Moyer, and McCarthy wrote and advocated for concrete in America, designers approached the material with hesitancy in Europe. For example, during the twenty-first ordinary meeting of the Royal Society of the Arts in 1931, a representative named Major R. A. B. Smith of the British Portland Cement Association presented a paper to peers on the use of concrete in architectural design. He presented the audience with a number of examples of concrete architecture from the Los Angeles area.

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[264] Howard F. Stratton, "Gardens and Porch Decorations of Cement with Mosaic Embellishment," *The Craftsman* (January 1, 1914): 394.

The audience responded noting that Smith had successfully demonstrated that concrete seemed durable and useful in the Los Angeles climate and they recognized progress in concrete architectural design. Others remarked that the experimentation with concrete in America was impressive, but fell back into questioning the use of the material in London beyond building warehouses and factories. They argued that "the morals of concrete had still to be laid down" pointing out that the priorities of efficiency and cheapness that were so valued in the United States were not compatible with English values.[265] For instance, one listener proposed the following questions to their peers: "whether commercial necessity was – to put it baldly – uppermost." Posing the question of priorities between economy and tradition, they went on to cast concrete as cheap, quick, and disposable.

> The position was brought down so closely and tightly to a cash basis that some advocates of reinforced concrete could even argue that we might throw off our houses and homes…the new ideas were ease of construction, cheapness of execution, and apparently the facility of pulling down the building as quickly as possible and erecting a new one in its place. [266]

The underlying assumption was that brick and stone lasted for generations, and though comparatively expensive, they were more desirable.

The conversation between British architects and designers provides a point of comparison for better understanding the unique trajectory of concrete developments in the United States. Concrete's plasticity, durability, and affordability did not appeal to the imaginations of designers in London as it did to the imaginations of Americans. The conversation about concrete design shed light on differing design philosophies. Architects in London felt that concrete betrayed the design ethics of William Morris and John Ruskin – who argued for materials to be authentic to

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[265] *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* (June 19, 1931): 734.

[266] *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* (June 19, 1931): 733.

their true nature. American designers, especially those writing for the Arts and Crafts Movement periodical *The Craftsman,* positioned concrete as entirely compatible with these design ethics. For them, it was not a matter of what materials were acceptable; it was a matter of execution. As noted formerly, even *The Cement Age* followed the philosophy that designers should not try to use concrete as a copy of brick or stone, but ought to consider concrete's unique physical character in artistic design.

Americans, seeking to expand and grow infrastructure and cultural resources, saw concrete's affordability, plasticity, and durability as up to the challenge. The conceptualization of concrete's affordability, durability, and plasticity was framed as being American in character and as meeting the unique needs of the rapidly developing nation. In the early 1900s, the School of Industrial Art In Philadelphia was busy experimenting with the aesthetic applications of concrete. Noting their efforts, an anonymous contributor for *The Craftsman* described the material as uniquely suited to American needs and values.[267] The author interpreted concrete's affordability as democratic because it was accessible to just about any class of people to use in the design of their home and garden. Furthermore, they argued that concrete was durable and practical, possessing a sort of American grit embodied in material form.

Artists like Taft played a major role in founding concrete's relationship with American art. In 1920, nine years after he completed the *Eternal Indian* monument, Taft completed another monumental concrete sculpture. In collaboration with John J. Earley (1881 – 1945), an architect and sculptor known for innovative techniques using concrete aggregate, the two designed *The Fountain of Time* near the entrance of Washington Park in Chicago, IL. The sculpture resembles

[267] "New Use of Concrete for Garden Ornaments," *The Craftsman* (August 1, 1909): 586.

a 120-foot-long wave composed of one hundred human bodies cast in concrete and polished to reveal the brown coloration of crushed Potomac River gravel aggregate.[268]

The sculpture received a fair amount of interest especially regarding the artists' choice of material. Earley described the benefits of concrete as an artistic medium by first comparing it to metal. He wrote, "metal is cast, it is an exact mechanical reproduction of the artist's work, as is concrete; but metal because of its color and the peculiar quality of its surface is hard to use, that is, it is hard, particularly hard in large subjects, to fit into ordinary surroundings."[269] Essentially, Earley noted that metal could accurately capture an artist's design, but the appearance of its surface was limited. Instead, Earley argues that concrete retained the plasticity desirable for sculpting as in metal, but concrete presented the artist far more flexibility in how they might articulate the surface through variations in color and texture. At the same time he noted that concrete was better suited to "ordinary surroundings" than cast metal.

Approaching concrete with the intentions of creating a fine art sculpture, Earley's assessment of concrete was strikingly similar to that of Campbell, a home and garden designer. Writing five years prior to Earley, Campbell stressed that the creative value of concrete lied in its plasticity:

> [Concrete] perhaps permits wider range of expression in its field of use than any other single material that may be compared with it. It lends itself to decorative effects principally because of its plastic nature before hardened, and the limit of ornament or

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[268] Richard W. Steiger, "Historic Exposed Aggregate: Fountain of Time – Mighty Sculpture Cast in Concrete," *Trimedia Studios* (1984), accessed March 17, 2021, file:///C:/Users/Cortney/Downloads/Concrete%20Construction%20Article%20PDF_%20Fountain%20of%20Time%20--%20Mighty%20Sculpture%20Cast%20in%20Concrete.pdf

[269] John J. Earley, "Building the 'Fountain of Time," *American Concrete Institute: Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Convention* (Detroit, Michigan: Friesma Building, 1923), 185.

> artistic expression that concrete will gratify is governed entirely by the good taste and ingenuity of the architect and actual worker with the material.[270]

Like Earley, Campbell first noted that users could mold concrete in virtually endless ways before extending that sense of plasticity to the surface of the medium. Essentially, concrete presented a plasticity that metal did not possess. An artist or designer could also control the surface of the concrete with ornamentations.

Earley also compared concrete to stone, noting that stone was a desirable medium for outdoor use. He argued that stone's color and texture was a better match for ordinary and outdoor surrounding than metal. Comparing stone to metal, Earley explained, "On the other hand stone has a color and texture which is easier to adjust to general use and environment. [271] However, stone lacks the plasticity, which made metal so desirable.

Weighing the pros and cons of metal and stone sculpture in 1930, one anonymous contributor to the *Santa Cruz Evening News* positioned the debate as an issue of national compatibility. While artists and architects in Europe criticized concrete for its prioritization of practicality and affordability over tradition, this writer directly pointed to those same qualities as distinctly American in value and necessity. The author described stone as the most expressive material for sculpture, but noted that it was difficult to execute successfully. They positioned concrete as the answer, stating, "Sculptors have always found stone, in one form or another, the most expressive material in which to work. Nevertheless, the difficulties of consistently successful operation in stone are obvious. Hence the opportunity offered by concrete for a "stone

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[270] Campbell, "Concrete as a Medium of Artistic Expression," 217.

[271] John J. Earley, "Building the 'Fountain of Time," *American Concrete Institute: Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Convention* (Detroit, Michigan: Friesma Building, 1923), 185.

that you can mold" has been accepted by many foremost sculptors."[272] The contributor cited their issue with European sculptural materials as lacking affordability and unable to endure exposure to the extreme climates typical of the United States. Additionally, they noted the general absence of an American garden tradition, leaving the field open to interpretation and experimentation.

Similarly, an early 1909 article on concrete garden ornaments in *The Craftsman*, reviewed French, Japanese, Italian, and English garden's traditional use of balustrades, terraces, fountains and other garden ornaments. The anonymous contributor argued that while they were attractive and could serve as inspiration, Americans should pursue a fashion that "is in keeping with our country."[273] They went on to show how marble was unfit for American gardens because of the attention it needs in severe climates and that it is very expensive so that only the elite could afford it. The anonymous author argued that bronze and iron were aesthetically desirable, but also expensive and required constant attention to prevent corrosion. Finally, they pondered the use of terra cotta in gardening and concluded that although terra cotta was easily molded and affordable, it lacked durability. Finally, they offered that concrete had the durability and plasticity that matched American needs. The writer left the reader with this thought that "it has remained for America to prove the extreme utility of the material along the line of garden furnishing"[274]

Essentially, designers identified concrete as possessing two of the most desirable qualities of stone and metal. Concrete was plastic and malleable like metal, but possessed the appearance

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[272] "Concrete and Art," *Santa Cruz Evening News* (Saturday, March 22, 1930): 4.

[273] "New Use of Concrete for Garden Ornaments," *The Craftsman* (August 1, 1909): 586.

[274] "New Use of Concrete For Garden Ornaments," 586.

and durability of stone. Earley went on to describe the process he and Taft used to make the sculpture before admitting they thought concrete had the potential to be the "most satisfactory" of mediums. He maintained, "on these occasions I always bring to you the same message, namely; that concrete has in itself and of its own nature properties, which is skillfully developed and controlled, will make it the most satisfactory architectural and artistic medium ever known."[275] Taft published on concrete, championing the same three qualities of plasticity, durability, and affordability. In his essay "A New Art of Concrete," Taft discussed the potentials for concrete's expressivity of form, offering artists the opportunity to play with color, mold original forms, and create something that would last indefinitely. He pressed his reader to consider its application as potentially ushering the "greatest developments in American art."[276]

One of the main points to Taft's argument for concrete usage especially as it pertained to public sculpture was in response to the belief that people were leaving small towns for the big city. He observed that one of the allures of the city was its cultural resources, or rather that the city's cultural resources were more valuable than what rural towns possessed in terms of history and heritage. Conveying sadness by these attitudes, he hoped that people would find beauty, simplicity and history in their homes and local towns. Reflecting on the problem, he considered that people would be less likely to want to leave their small town if the town had artistic, cultural resources like attractive monuments, public art, or architecture. He proposed that concrete could be the solution because it was affordable and easy to use, saying "Now by this new process it is possible that our home town shall have beautiful little fountains and monuments and decorations

[275] Earley, "Building the 'Fountain of Time," 190.

[276] Loredo Taft, "A New Art of Concrete," *American Concrete Institute: Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Convention* (Detroit, Michigan: Friesma Building, 1923), 184.

as exquisite in design as the world can produce and yet created at a comparatively small expense." By building and creating with concrete, Taft argued that people were "doing something very great and noble for America."[277] Thus, creating in concrete was an act of patriotism, heroism, and even pioneerism with artists approaching concrete with the spirit of discovery.

In some ways, concrete was also part of the problem that Taft identified. Because of concrete and developments in motor vehicles during the first half of the century, Americans became increasingly mobile. The idea of geographical mobility went hand in hand with the idea of economic mobility. Moving physically to another place was also part of the pursuit of opportunity, thus the necessitation of mobility as both literal and ideological permeated the American dream.[278] Just as early critics voiced concerns about concrete roads funneling people and business out of rural communities and into urban spaces, mobility offered the possibility of leaving as much as it offered the possibility for coming.

Artists and designers were not alone in advocating for the aesthetic opportunities of the concrete medium. In an update on the development of roads near Detroit, Michigan, a contributor for the Chicago Commerce volume of 1913 summarizes the appeal of concrete in these terms: "75 miles of concrete roads have been completed, which for durability, economy, freedom from dust, cleanliness, low maintenance, charges and general serviceability are unequaled."[279] The writer notes the same qualities of concrete that appealed to Taft and Earley.

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[277] Taft, "A New Art of Concrete," 184.

[278] Pierce Lewis, "The Landscapes of Mobility," in *The National Road*, ed. Karl B. Raitz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[279] "Third American Road Congress," *Chicago Commerce* Volume 19 (1913): 13.

Whether building roads or monuments, concrete advocates consistently communicated qualities that, in some ways, define the American aesthetic of economy and industry. Architects, designers, and artists positioned concrete as the solution to creating prosperous and attractive infrastructure. By doing so, they were defining an American aesthetic rooted in the values of plasticity, durability, and affordability.

Conclusion

Plasticity, durability, and affordability was the mantra of the day and this mantra was distinctly American. Durability resonated with the gritty determination of heroic individualism. Affordability aligned heroic individualism's affinity for democratization, signaling that this great material was also accessible to anyone. Finally, plasticity nodded to the importance of individualism and the ability to tailor the material to one's personal needs and ambitions.

Citizens from a variety of professional backgrounds used concrete to completely reimagine and alter the landscape of the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. Whether it be by producing monumental works of public art, building artistic concrete houses, or laying the foundations to support mobility and tourism; designers and planners saw concrete as the answer to their goals of developing, democratizing, and connecting Americans. Unlike designers of other countries such as England, American designers concluded that the comparatively unindustrialized landscape of the United States demanded a quick and affordable medium that could meet the cultural and infrastructural needs of rural and urban communities. Altogether, their efforts centered concrete in the development of the national aesthetic.

Champions of concrete in art and architecture proselytized the medium to the contractor and homeowner alike. They provided instructions for creating concrete mixtures, building molds, and designing the aggregate and texture of the object. By providing figures illustrating examples

of concrete used in gardens and home exteriors, they inspired homeowners with plans for birdbaths, planters, and fences. Furthermore, they reassured homeowners and contractors that anyone could work with concrete, no matter their experience level.

Concrete was the ultimate democratizing medium. Fine artists like Taft designed the first concrete sculptures, advocating in his art and writing all the reasons why concrete was the most ideal medium for public art. Because of its affordability, small towns and even private homeowners could afford to commission or even make artworks themselves from cast concrete. By showing that artistic structures and sculptures were accessible to anyone, concrete champions set the stage for small towns and individuals to build cultural and creative spaces up around themselves rather than having to travel to see great works of art.

In so many ways, the concrete culture of the first half of the twentieth century paved the way for the concrete sculpture garden movement, enabling Americans to express the values of heroic individualism on a number of levels. Drivers could play the role of the pioneer along stretches of highway, but they could also play the pioneer in their experimentation with concrete. Their designs set them apart and reinforced their sense of individuality while the strong material expressed grit and determination. The concrete of the roadside sculpture garden operates as much more than just a binder or structural support. If the works were made of marble, wood, or steel, they would be completely different. However, by choosing concrete, the artists participated in a nationwide campaign to promote concrete as a vital American medium.

Figures

Figure 3.1: Loredo Taft, *The Eternal Indian*, 1911.

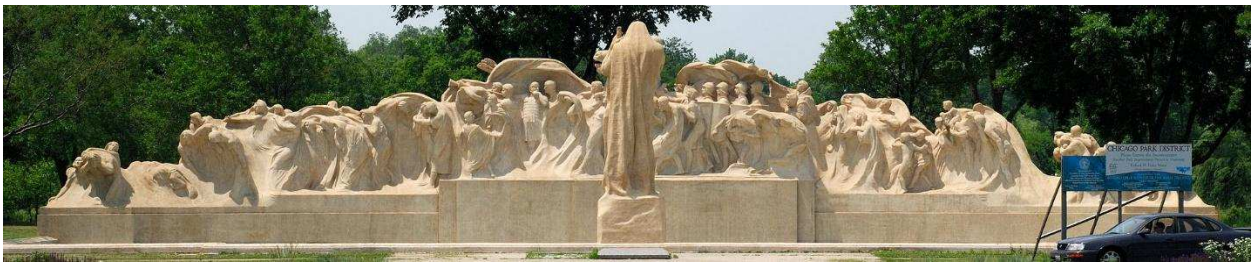


Figure 3.2: Lorado Taft, *Fountain of Time,* 1922.

Figure 3.3: Photograph of oldest concrete street in America, Ohio State Archives, State Archives Series 741 AV, Box 3, Folder 43, Ohio History Connection. Accessed June 2019 at https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p267401coll32/id/14423/.

Figure 3.4: Advertisement by the Portland Cement Association published in *The Boyden Reporter* (Thursday, April 7, 1938): 5.

Fig. 5—Rubble Panel

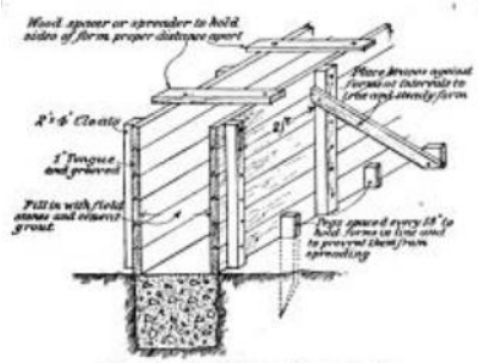


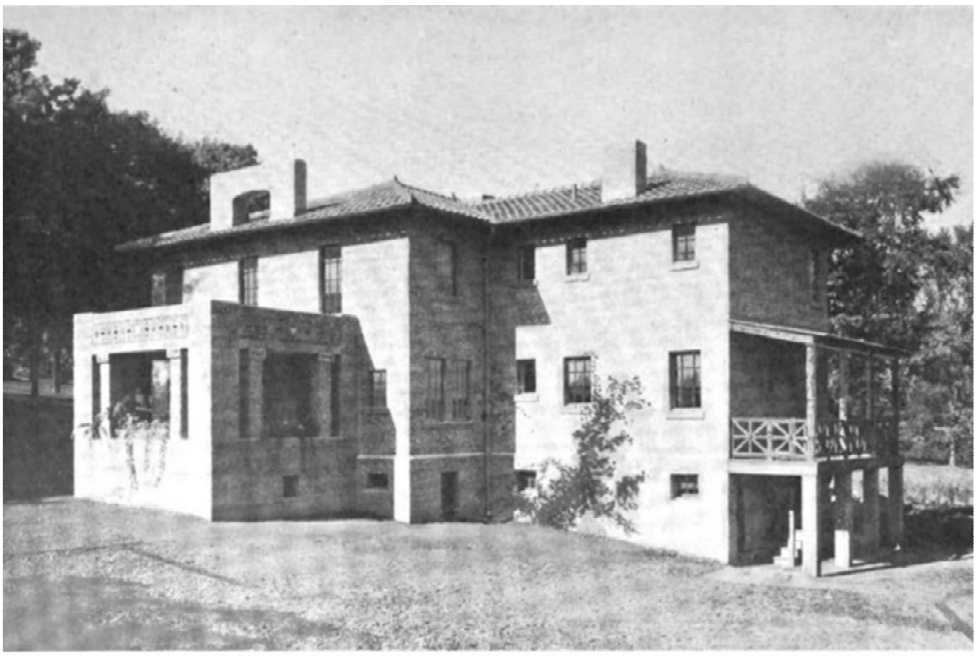
Fig. 6—Mold for rubble panel

Figure 3.5: Diagram from Ralph C. Davison, "Concrete Ornaments for the Garden and How to Make Them: IV: - A Concrete Fence" *American Homes and Gardens* (December 1, 1909): 471.

Figure 3.6: Paul and Matilda Wegner, detail of prayer garden, *Wegner Grotto*, 1929-1936.

Figure 3.7: Garden border detail of Father Mathias Wernerus, *The Dickeyville Grotto,* 1918-1931. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, May 2019.

Figure 3.8: Photograph of Madeline Buol with detail from *Madeline Buol Grotto,* unknown date. Photo courtesy of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.



A TRUE CONCRETE HOUSE IN WHICH AGGREGATE IS EXPOSED TO GIVE COLOR AND PLEASING TEXTURE.

Figure 3.9: Albert Moyer, "An Artistic True Concrete Residence," *The Cement Age* (January 1, 1908): 2.

Figure 3.10: Nick Engelbert (1881-1962), Grandview, Hollandale WI, c. 1930-1960. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, June 2019

Figure 3.11: Samuel P. Dinsmoor, detail of Civil War soldier and woman at *Garden of Eden,* 1907-1928. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, September 2019.

Figure 3.12: Fred Smith, detail of *Wisconsin Concrete Park,* 1948-1964. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, August 2019.

Figure 3.13: Father Philip Wagner, detail of *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave,* 1927-1983. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, July 2019.

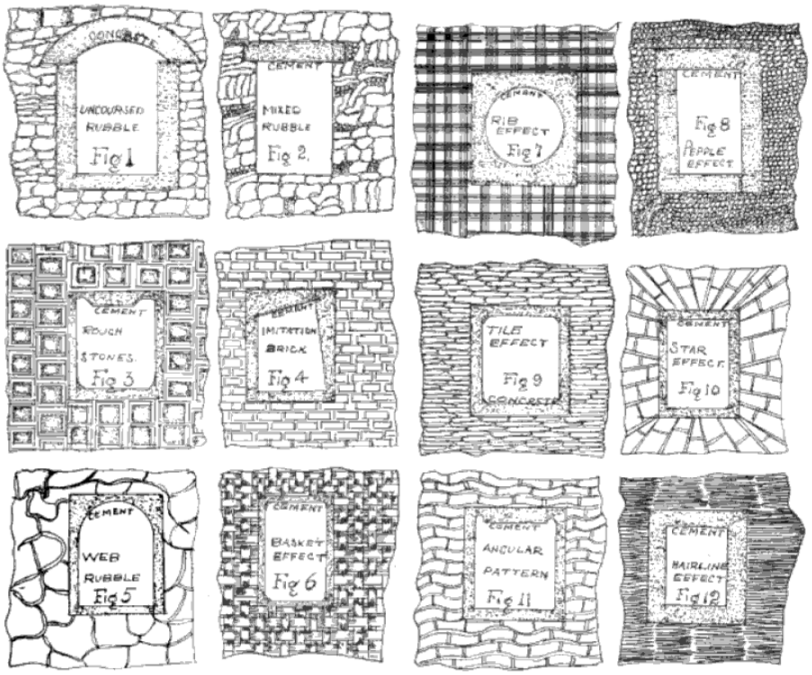


Figure 3.14: Diagram from George Rice, "Rubble Masonry and Concrete Effects," *The National Builder* (May 1, 1910): 35.

Photograph of Artistic Rubble Concrete Estate Gateway. These Posts will Never Fall Down.

Figure 3.15: H Colin Campbell, "Rubble Concrete: Its beauty and strength and how to do this class of work to best advantage," *American Carpenter and Builder* (May 1, 1915): 72.

Figure 3.16: Madeline Buol, detail of *Virgin Mary Grotto* at the *Madeline Buol Grotto*, 1943-1957. Photo courtesy of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Figure 3.17: Phillip Wagner, detail of war monument, *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave,* 1927-1983. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, July 2019.

Figure 3.18: H.G. "Ben" Hartman, detail of *Hartman Historical Rock Garden,* 1932-1944. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, July 2019.

Chapter 4: Heroic Analogues

Concrete sculpture garden artists combined sculptures representing a variety of places, times, and cultures in their gardens. Drawn together by little more than their shared location and material, the otherwise unrelated subjects enter into a pictorial dialogue. For instance, in James Tellen's *Woodland Sculpture Park,* a Native American family, Abraham Lincoln and the Virgin Mary all occupy the same small property. On the surface, the installation seems like a random collection of characters that are virtually impossible to interpret according to a common narrative. Yet they share a common style, material, and location that draws them together.

In part, the concrete sculpture garden presents the appearance of continuity because a significant proportion of figures are prominent symbols of the American iconography, each conjuring the ideals of heroic individualism in their own way. In this chapter, I will show how the artists modeled the ideals of heroic individualism through their choices of subject matter. This chapter has three sections, each focuses on an individual sculpture garden: James Tellen's *Woodland Sculpture Garden* (c. 1942 – 57) (Figure 4.1), Matthias Wernerus's *Dickeyville Grotto* (1920 – 1930) (Figure 4.2), and Samuel P. Dinsmoor's *Garden of Eden* (1907 – 1928) (Figure 4.3). Each section uses popular texts such as magazines and periodicals to understand popular reception of the figures represented in the gardens. Written accounts—including speeches, sermons, and editorials—demonstrate the writers' and readers' ease with moving between religious, popular, and historic figures as they pertained to issues of the day and socio-cultural ideals.

I will also outline how the artists spatially positioned their sculptures to build meaningful visual analogies. In the first chapter, I summarized how scholars and popular writers described

concrete sculpture gardens as intuitive art or art that the artist made without a plan. In some ways, we have explored how the artists grew their projects over the course of years if not decades. To a degree, one might argue that the way artists organized their gardens was a function of time and space, with little planning involved in how the sculptures would relate to one another. However, the gardens described in this chapter suggest a careful attention to organization and interaction between sculptures. The sculptures relate to one another thematically and their spatial arrangement draws them into interpretively rich comparisons.

By mixing heroic symbols like Abraham Lincoln with sculptures of local wildlife, the artists created tension between great and ordinary, defining heroics in their own terms. To call the sculpture gardens heroic is insufficient, but to call them popular also fails to capture the impact of the artwork and the artist's creative contribution. They mixed the sublime with the mundane on a number of levels discussed in this text. In chapters two and three, I showed how they mixed humble materials with monumentality. In chapter one, I argued that the artists positioned themselves as visionaries while maintaining their identity as workers. The same holds true for their subject matter, which includes symbols that oscillate between the ordinary and extraordinary in a way that eludes definition.

The three gardens examined in this chapter each exemplify the strong influence the narrative of Christianity had on the narrative of the United States. The artworks focus on themes of self-actualization, sacrifice, and work while bridging the divide between earthly and heavenly models. For instance, many gardens include Christian and political figures like Christ and Abraham Lincoln. The story of Christ had a strong influence on the mythic story of Abraham Lincoln. According to the analogies, both historical figures were born from humble origins, were predisposed to greatness, achieved power and influence, represented moral ideals of freedom and

liberty, and ultimately were killed for their cause. The discourse of early twentieth century, in orations and publications, effortlessly moved between Christian and political models for civic behavior, directing all citizens to be heroic in their own way. In the gardens, the artists exhibited the same fluid combinations of spiritual and civic ideals, translating them in broadly relatable terms. Reflecting on chapter one, the artists described their personal story and creative identity in a similar manner. While the artists boasted of their exceptionalism, they also maintained their identity as "self-taught" and as workers. They used their humble origins or lack of education as a way to prove their predisposition and work ethic. At the same time, they did not minimize their accomplishment and pursued a certain amount of fame and recognition.

This chapter begins by examining one of the most common garden occupants, Abraham Lincoln. In the decades following his assassination, Lincoln became a national symbol of democratic ideals, which the public tapped into in the wake of the World Wars and Great Depression. Serving multiple civic needs at the time, his symbol came to represent heroic individualism's ideal of hard work and self-improvement as much as he represented a national martyr for freedom. Then, I turn to Matthias Wernerus's *World War I Monument* dedicated to three local men who died in service. Located behind the church, a central pathway bisecting the church's cemetery spatially connects the monument to a *Sacred Heart* shrine of Christ, which frames the soldiers' deaths in terms of sacrifice and provides hope of eternal life. The final example centers on Samuel P. Dinsmoor's *Cain and Abel* and looks to other sculptures in the garden for interpretation. Historical documents suggest that the public could have understood the story of Cain and Abel for its populist undertones, especially when presented alongside Dinsmoor's other sculptures that were overtly populist. Each of these examples demonstrate how the artists mixed and overlapped metaphors that relied on the public's visual vocabulary. Without

considering how the individual sculptures work together to creating meaning, it would be virtually impossible to focus on one cohesive interpretation of the gardens.

Sculpture gardens are collective and multifaceted, offering a variety of inlets for interpretation. Nick Engelbert's *Grandview* exemplifies the variety of subjects in a single garden. The site overlooks an expansive agrarian landscape from his northwest-facing house on Highway 39 just outside of Hollandale, Wisconsin (Figure 4.4). Engelbert sculpted concrete figures and ornaments for the garden while also covering the entire exterior surface of his home in a stucco-like application of pebble-encrusted concrete. Engelbert made more than forty sculptures between 1937 and 1952. They include *Viking in a Boat, Blarney Castle, Stork with Baby, Austro-Hungarian Eagle, The Organ Grinder, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs with Paul Bunyan, Swiss Patriots, Peacock, Carinthian Forest Ranger and Deer, American Eagle, Old Glory, Neptune's Fountain, Hapsburg Castle, Lion, Lighthouse, The Family Tree,* and *Uncle Sam with Donkey and Elephant*. In addition to the figures, he made a concrete tree stump, porch, and planters. Whereas many of the sculptures represent cultural and national symbols—such as the Austro-Hungarian Eagle and Swiss patriots representing Nick and his wife Katherine's respective home countries[280]—sculptures like *Snow White* relate to popular culture and the pond and lighthouse recall the domestic rock gardens discussed in chapter two. Considered together, the sculptures represent a variety of places and times. Some are fictional and others are nonfictional. Some are animal or human and others are ornamental or functional.

Engelbert created and mixed his subjects in such a way that was common for roadside concrete sculpture garden artists. Fred Smith sculpted figures of Ben Hur inspired by the

[280] Visitors guide for Grandview, *Nick's Grandview* (Hollandale, WI: Pecatonica Educational Charitable Foundation).

gladiator film by the same name. He also created Paul Bunyan as well as anonymous lumberjacks in his garden referencing the heroic folk hero and the local lumber industry. His garden also featured concrete deer and birdhouses. Similarly, Ben Hartman's garden included a concrete centerpiece in the form of the Maxwell House coffee cup along with a miniature reproduction of the Betsy Ross house and a scene of the last supper. A single concrete sculpture garden might feature symbols of local industries stationed alongside political figures and religious scenes.

Writers have interpreted these works from a number of approaches, including the works' relationship to the artist's biography, popular culture, and religious traditions. We can consider the spaces as playgrounds for the artists' children and grandchildren as was the case at the *Hartman Rock Garden* and James Tellen's (1880 – 1957) *Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden* (1942 – 1957) in Sheboygan, WI. We can consider them in terms of popular culture and the flattening effects of mass media. Surely, mass media contributed to the relatively consistent application of subjects like Snow White across sites. We might even examine the role of religion in the construction of shrines and grottos, which homeowners like Madeline Buol mimicked. Ultimately, the opportunities for interpreting the subjects of the concrete sculpture garden are endless and complex.

The frame of heroic individualism offers the opportunity to interpret the works in such a way that embraces the variety of subjects on display. Even when the subjects varied between popular, religious, and patriotic, collectively they reinforced the ideals associated with heroic individualism both by virtue of their scale and by virtue of the subject's laden meaning. The artists often depicted subjects that served as role models of heroic individualism, choosing to

depict publicly legible figures that were democratizing and individualizing at the same time.[281] Furthermore, the variety of subjects present in the garden signals a leveling out of any hierarchies.

This chapter will also cover examples that model labor and pioneerism in the concrete sculpture garden. Heroic individualism strongly relates to labor. Even until the present day, the American dream is predicated on hard work. The maxim that hard work begets success is a sign of individual achievement. However, these actions are also a part of a collective American dream in which the combined efforts of citizens amounts to the success of society—a theme that has also recurred throughout this project, especially in chapter two. For many Americans of the era, heroic individualism permitted one to pursue individuality in a way that was democratic and socially constructive. To pursue one's American dream through hard work was to perform a civic duty. This chapter shows how concrete sculpture garden subjects reinforced the same ideals, promoting self as well as community.

It is important to note that most of the artists built their work on their home properties. Homeownership was and remains a sign of the American dream. The time the artists invested in their home was on a heroic scale, positioning it as a monument of heroic individualism. The artwork itself symbolically represented work and ambition in creative terms. Though likely

[281] Michael J. Steudeman, "The Guardian Genius of Democracy: The Myth of the Heroic Teacher in Lyndon B. Johnson's Education Policy Rhetoric, 1964-1966." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* (Fall 2014): 477-510. Citizens, especially those of influence such as politicians and media makers, represented heroic individualism in everyday terms. A good example is that of the heroic teacher. For some members of government and the public, the American dream has presented a conundrum between the pursuit of self-interest and the altruism of caring for one's community. Michael Stuedeman describes heroic models such as the myth of the heroic teacher helped policy makers address conflicting ideologies associated with the American dream. Specifically, Stuedeman brings up individualism and egalitarianism as both constitutive of the American dream but politically opposite promises. By presenting a respected profession such as a teacher in heroic terms, citizens could protect individuality at the same time that they reinforced civic responsibility.

inspired by popular home improvement trends, they pushed their creative enterprise to its limit, communicating to the public a deep dedication to their endeavor and the countless hours of work and effort toward individuation.

Each of the artworks discussed in this chapter relate the artist to larger-than-life characters and the publicly legible ideals the character represents. [282] For instance, by recreating and participating in the popular representation of Lincoln as a worker, Tellen related his efforts to that of a historic "great." In turn, the characteristics that Lincoln represents cast themselves onto the artist, indicating that Tellen shares values such as hard work, honesty, dedication, and democratic idealism associated with the figure of Lincoln.

The Rail Splitter

James Tellen (1880 – 1957) built a sculpture garden at his summer cottage in Black River WI.[283] He began the project sometime around 1944 when he fashioned a fallen tree fence with a group of Native Americans and bears all made in concrete. Tellen made his sculptures by filling mesh armatures with rocks, which he plastered before finishing the sculptures with layers of

[282] Kendall R. Phillips, *Framing Public Memory*, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004). Framing Public Memory provides a foundation for better interpreting the role of recognizable imagery used in the grassroots concrete sculpture garden. The second part of the book is titled the "Publicness of Memory." It delves into repetition, national imagery and the "renovation" thereof, and how commemoration or eulogy frames memory. Each of these points are important for working through the dissertation's second chapter which investigates how artists tried to cement – quite literally – memory (which can be personal or collective) and memorial (to veterans, lost loved ones, or even self) into their artwork.

[283] Tellen participated in a number of government programs including metalcraft classes hosted by the City Recreation Department of Sheboygan, WI. A furniture-stripper by trade for the Northern Furniture company, Tellen was featured for his metalwork in the November 10, 1953 issue of the Sheboygan press. From taking applied arts classes in Mechanical Drawing in 1902 from the International Correspondence Schools based in Scranton, PA to his 1921 participation at The School of Applied Art based in Battle Creek Michigan, Tellen was consistently interested in the arts including drawing, metalwork, and sculpting.

concrete (Figure 4.5). During the cold winter months, he would work out the details of his sculpture's faces from the basement of his Sheboygan home, burying those he was dissatisfied with throughout the nearby summer property. He mused that one day someone would discover his rejected sculptures buried in the ground. According to his grandchildren, Tellen was quite secretive about his technique, having avoided sharing his methods with his son when he asked.[284]

Tellen's artistic inclination was evident throughout his life. He worked for Northern Furniture Company where at one point he painted decorations on furniture.[285] Enthusiastic about trying different media, Tellen took classes in metalworking and completed correspondence courses in drawing.[286] He drew numerous pencil sketches including busts of Lincoln in his characteristic bow tie (Figure 4.6).[287] He also made low-relief woodcarvings, worked with clay, and even painted. His Black River cabin, which he finished building by the late 1920s, was full of objects that Tellen handcrafted including furniture, light fixtures, and fireplace screens.[288]

Embracing the rustic old-fashioned style of cabin life, Tellen created sculptures inspired by American pioneer mythology including a family of Native Americans, a man on a horse and a pioneer mill scene (Figure 4.7). He also included biblical sculptures of the Virgin Mary and Jesus tucked far behind the house in a secluded setting away from the road. Among the fifteen

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[284] Tellen's grandchildren participated in an interview documented in the John Michael Kohler Art Center archive. Tom Brown and Mary Tellen-McMullen, interview by Jane Bianco, Friday, August 26, 2005.

[285] "Artist in Concrete Beautifies His Black River Cottage with Outdoor Sculpture," *The Sheboygan Press* (October 18, 1948): 13.

[286] "An Enthusiastic Student of Metalcraft," *Sheboygan Press* (Tuesday, November 10, 1953); Letter from The School of Applied Arts, Battle Creek Michigan to James a Tellen (April 16, 1921).

[287] Untitled drawing # 91, Sheboygan, WI, John Michael Kohler Arts Center archive.

[288] Objects from the Tellen log cabin are in the John Michael Kohler Arts Center collection.

sculptural tableaus constituting the park today, Tellen included a life-size sculpture of Abraham Lincoln.

Captured in a contemplative glance, Lincoln stands astride a concrete fallen log located next to a gravel driveway that runs between the sculpture and the log cabin. Resting his hands on the long handle of an oversized mallet, the figure gazes to his right and toward the property's entry gate. The mallet is propped against one of three splitting wedges lodged into the resting log. Dressed in work clothes rather than the iconic top hat and beard, this Lincoln is a workingman. Lincoln's relaxed gaze is visible from the kitchen and the front patio windows, where his viewer—we might imagine—also paused to enjoy looking at nature.

For many Americans living increasingly urban lifestyles after the 1920s, the symbolism of Lincoln splitting logs appealed to their nostalgia for an old-fashioned and self-reliant lifestyle.[289] Lincoln portrayed the domestic tasks of chopping wood for the fire and logs for the cabin, reminding viewers of simpler times (Figure 4.8). The close proximity of the fallen log to the log cabin house strengthened the connection between living and concrete worlds, drawing cabin visitors into an imaginary past where Lincoln worked in the woods beside American pioneers.

Tellen's depiction of Lincoln is one of countless ways artists, politicians, and popular media have represented the president since his lifetime. His image includes the heroic emancipator, national martyr, and savior of the Union. In these instances, artists often depicted Lincoln wearing a serious countenance and sometimes-bestowing freedom to a nearby grateful slave as in the 1876 *Emancipation Group* by Thomas Ball (Figure 4.9). While such images

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[289] Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 22.

imbued Lincoln with almost godlike presence, artists like Tellen depicted Lincoln as an ordinary man using the pervasive rail-splitter format.

Over the course of this section, I will summarize the trends in which artists depicted Lincoln from the time of his campaign to the time that Tellen created his sculpture of Lincoln in the 1950s. This review shows how the evolution of Lincoln's image resulted from the political and social needs of the time. In light of the variety of Lincoln's portrayals, we gain a better understanding as to why Tellen may have chosen this version of Lincoln and why it matters in regards to heroic individualism. Essentially, heroic individualism is rooted in the ideals of grit and work, which the rail-splitter formula modeled and reiterated from the time of Lincoln's campaign for president until the time Tellen sculpted his concrete figure.

Images of Lincoln splitting logs portray him as a common worker with a young, bare face standing over a log, often with his axe pulled, but sometimes at rest. His clothes typically appear a bit worn with his sleeves rolled, symbolizing the hard work of his task and his class (Figure 4.10). The formula often includes a nearby book or Lincoln holding a book in his hand opposite to the hand wielding his ax—symbolically balancing the symbols of hard work with academic pursuit. Tellen followed the format by sculpting an open book, hat, and jacket on a concrete stump next to the Lincoln sculpture.

Tellen took inspiration from a long tradition representing Lincoln as the ideal hard-working American. Based on popular images in print media, Tellen's rendering captured Lincoln's duality as erudite leader and hardy pioneer with careful regard to the sculpture's setting. Making Lincoln appear natural and cohesive with the setting, Tellen formally conveyed a number of attributes associated with Lincoln. He presented Lincoln as both ordinary and dignified, depicting him with a strong body, well-fitting work clothes, a shaven face, and bare

head. The Kohler Foundation, in their unpublished biography of Tellen, referred to this handling of Lincoln as "humanizing the heroic."[290]

Set next to a summer cabin in the woods, Tellen may have found it unfitting to design his Lincoln in the likeness of geographically nearby monuments, such as the seated sculpture of *Lincoln with Mary Todd Lincoln* in Racine, WI. The Racine, WI statue *Mary Todd and Abraham* by Chicago artist Frederick C. Hibbard is the first-known sculpture of the presidential couple and it depicts Lincoln sitting in a chair with a shawl in his lap with Mary Todd Lincoln standing to his right. The sculpture was dedicated in 1943 at a time when people needed a figurehead that could empathize with the large number of lives lost during World War II (Figure 4.11).[291]

Hibbard's sculpture inspired Fred Smith to make his own version in the *Wisconsin Concrete Park*. Next to the sculpture, Smith included a sign reading, "Lincoln Monument Unveiled July 30, 1962 and is the second monument of its kind in the USA," nodding to Hibbard without naming him explicitly. Unlike Tellen, Smith designed a number of monuments in his garden including a monument to Sacagawea and Iwo Jima. Smith's version of Hibbard's sculpture fit within his program of concrete monuments in a way that would have been incongruous with Tellen's sculpture garden, which does not include any sculptures following monument formats. It is in keeping with Tellen's other sculptural choices—pioneers and Native Americans, for example—that he would choose to design Lincoln in a way that was suitable to the setting. The naturalness of Tellen's Lincoln animates the sculpture within the space as though Lincoln was a living presence chopping wood for the cabin. By contrast, Smith's monument is

[290] Kohler Foundation, "James Tellen" Kohler, WI, Kohler Foundation Ltd. (June 7, 2001).

[291] Frederick Hubbard, *Mary Todd and Abraham*, July 4, 1945.

detached from its setting. It does not interact with the trees and the home or the land like the rail-splitter. The monument produces the impression that Lincoln is a far-off figure that one observes.

While Tellen and Smith chose different formats to fit the themes of their gardens, the images served similar purposes—they present Lincoln as a relatable American. Tellen and Smith portrayed Lincoln's strength and heroism in ordinary terms by showing him as a worker and a husband. This made it possible for the viewers to see themselves in the heroic model. At the time Hibbard, Smith and Tellen made their sculptures, they had experienced both Depression and World Wars, which presented professional and personal strains on laboring classes. Presenting Lincoln as an American hero with the emotional closeness of a fellow worker or family member positioned him as a model for a public grappling with the nationwide crises.

Images of Lincoln varied throughout history, corresponding with changes in public sentiment, the demands of the moment, and the place in which the image would reside. When the public needed Lincoln to represent a strong political leader, they represented him in a suit, standing or sitting, and with a stern expression. When they needed him to represent the ideals of hard-working men, they depicted him in worker's clothes. Some made him look homely with oversized clothing and gaunt features, while others made him look strong and dignified. The choices in visual representation gesture to the dual personalities of Lincoln as either or both hero and ordinary man, evident in the designations Americans still know today: Honest Abe, the self-made man, the savior of the Union, and the Great Emancipator.[292]

The rail-splitter formula grew in popularity during Lincoln's campaign for president, promoting Lincoln as a relatable commoner who aspired to greatness through the pursuit of

[292] Peter S. Field, "Our Shrinking Lincoln," *Autralasian Journal of American Studies* 40 no 1 (July 2021): 38.

knowledge.[293] Historian Mark Plummer attributed the rail-splitter character to campaign advisor Richard Oglesby. Oglesby, among others, believed that to win the presidential election, Lincoln needed to establish himself as a relatable worker in the eyes of the public. With the rail systems in boom, imagery of Lincoln as the rail-splitter connected his life experience with working-class voters. Learning that Lincoln had split some rails near Decatur as a young man, Oglesby arranged for Lincoln to perform a demonstration where he split logs in front of an audience in Springfield, IL. The resultant media enthusiasm perpetuated Lincoln's persona as a self-taught and self-made man who had climbed from being a humble pioneer to candidate for the highest political office.[294]

Lincoln played a major role in shaping the media and public's idea of himself as a self-made man. Historian Kenneth J. Winkle argued that Lincoln intentionally overemphasized his humble familial upbringing as a way of accentuating his achievement. Arguing that his family lacked education and financial means, he pointed to his individual ability for self-improvement.[295] Lincoln attributed his success to hard work and the pursuit of knowledge, rather than recognizing the advantageous relationships he built along his path to success.[296]

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[293] Fallen Log Fence with Native Americans and Bears, a Pioneer scene, a tree with elves, a tavern scene, a mill, Abraham Lincoln, "Whistle While We Work," a wishing well, a goat on a rock, a cathedral, the grand canyon tableau, prehistoric scene, man on raft, Christ, and Virgin of Fatima. There are also other sculptures that Tellen made for other locations that caretakers relocated to the woodland garden: a small pond with a sculpture of St Peter and a miniature grotto. The property includes a cabin home, a "brat house" which is a small building that is akin to a small bar with a grill, and a work shed / garage.

[294] Mark A Plummer, "Richard J. Oglesby, Lincoln's Rail-Splitter," *Illinois Historical Journal* 80 no. 1 (Spring 1987): 5.

[295] Kenneth Winkle, "Abraham Lincoln: Self-Made Man," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* 21 no. 4 (Summer 2000): 1-16.

[296] Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, 9 vols*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955), 3: 497.

The strong symbolism of Lincoln's image solidified in the wake of his assassination. For the many American soldiers that died in the Civil War, Lincoln's assassination inspired a sort of solidarity for a grieving nation. Not only did individuals feel the loss of their loved ones, but they also shared in the loss of the nation's leader. Many people thought of Lincoln as a "fallen soldier" which shaped how they narrated his life and service in public memory with lasting impact through the World Wars (Figure 4.12).[297]

After his assassination, describing Lincoln as a martyr was also a way for people to seek meaning for the loss of loved ones. Americans collectively identified Lincoln as a martyr-saint, erasing controversies about his political stances and replacing them with the narrative of Lincoln as the Savior of the Union.[298] Surveying historic sites dedicated to Abraham Lincoln, such as Lincoln's Birthplace and the Lincoln Monument, Richard West Sellars noted the pervasiveness of this myth even into the present. His work shows how the myth of Lincoln as an American hero and an ideal is just as important a phenomenon as the actual history of Lincoln's life because of its lasting impact on generations of Americans and their national identity.[299] Tellen's work is one such example of how the public observed, recreated, and perpetuated the symbolic ideals of the Civil War leader.

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[297] Eyal J. Naveh, *Crown of Thorns: Political Martyrdom in America from Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: NYU Press, 1990), 3.

[298] John Barr, *Loathing Lincoln: An American Tradition from the Civil War to the Present* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 57.

[299] Richard West Sellars, "Remembering Abraham Lincoln: History and Myth," *The George Wright Forum* 11 no. 4 (1994): 52-56.

After Lincoln's death, and especially during funeral recitations, leaders explained Lincoln's death according to divine providence. They described how God ordained Lincoln to achieve a specific mission and once the mission was complete, Lincoln was "taken." The problem with this sort of description – for some – was that it aligned Lincoln strongly with the divine, as a sort of messiah or divine leader that people might easily construe as a life exceeding that of the common man. Looking for ways to democratize Lincoln as both a common man and a great man, they landed on describing him as a directed by Providence. Thus, in memory, he straddled two dimensions, the divine and the human.[300]

During World War I, Americans debated how Lincoln ought to be portrayed – oscillating between hero and an ordinary man. The two visions of Lincoln were representative of how Americans envisioned themselves and their country, especially when defining what it meant to be a democracy. Historian Barry Schwartz described the particular debate surrounding two memorial statues by George Gray Barnard and Augustus Saint-Gauden (Figures 4.13 & 4.14). The two sculptures of Lincoln were perceived either as too godly or too homely, each challenging the public's belief in the historical figure. People were upset, even enraged by images of Lincoln that conflicted with their sense of historical memory. It was critical that the icon of Lincoln fit within their paradigm. For many, portraying Lincoln as a common man diminished his authority and the cult or myth of Lincoln that developed especially during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt leading up to the centennial of Lincoln's birth in 1909. Others thought that the myth needed correction and that greatness was to be seen in Lincoln as a folk figure, a champion of and by the common man. It became important for the public to avoid

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[300]Eyal J. Naveh, *Crown of Thorns: Political Martyrdom in America from Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: NYU Press, 1990), 53.

depictions of Lincoln at an extreme of godliness or poverty and instead convey his duality as both a working man and a heroic intellectual.[301]

Lincoln's "rags to riches" biography shaped his popular representation as an ordinary man through the early twentieth century. This coincided with increasing popular interest in the individual pursuit of happiness and success for which Lincoln could serve as an example of the American dream. The story follows that Lincoln was born into poverty and worked as a rail-splitter, but rose to the highest authority position in the nation. This narrative presented Lincoln as a national success story and offered proof that America was a land of unlimited individual opportunity.

Moving through the 1920s, symbols of Lincoln's as the "great commoner" became increasingly ubiquitous in American popular culture. For instance, in 1921 Charles Ives wrote a song based on Edwin Markham's poem titled "Lincoln, the Great Commoner." Markham's poem communicates in prose what Tellen communicated in concrete. He wrote:

> And when the step of earthquake shook the house,
> Wrenching rafters from their ancient hold,
> He held the ridge-pole up
> and spiked again the rafters of the Home….
> He held his place …
> he held the long purpose like a growing tree [302]

[301] Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 301-319.

[302]Edwin Markham, *Lincoln, The Great Commoner,"* 1921.

The image of Lincoln as a tree, strong and unshakable is evident in Tellen's composition. *Lincoln* rises from the ground amidst a canopy of trees. His sturdy triangular stance appears that he will long hold his place as the Lincoln of Markham's "Great Commoner."

At the same time, the many Americans grew to know Lincoln as the "great liberator." This facet of his myth centered on the mission of emancipation, freeing the United States from slavery—an act that Lincoln originally shied away from promoting.[303] Ultimately, Lincoln's decision to abolish slavery earned him a status symbol of emancipator that endured long after his presidency.

Moving into the decade of the New Deal, the symbol of Lincoln evolved in emotional and political impact according to the financial and racial challenges of the time. Historian Nina Silber argued that Lincoln represented an authority that was "in sync" with the people, powerful, but knew the people. His ability to balance between roles as a commoner and a great leader made him a symbol that was both democratic yet authoritative for a time in which people needed an authority to empathize with their experience in the wake of the Great Depression.[304]

In the years leading up to World War II, representations of Lincoln as the *great emancipator* began to hold an ambivalent position in the American consciousness. Eyal Naveh traced shifting attitudes about Lincoln from the decades following the Civil War and into the World War II. He argued that Jim Crow laws along with unchecked racism led to Americans distancing themselves from the idea of Lincoln as the emancipator of black slaves and rallied

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[303] Naveh, *Crown of Thorns,* 57.

[304]Nina Silber, "Abraham Lincoln and the Political Culture of New Deal America," *Journal of the Civil War Era* (September 2015): 364.

around a broader definition of Lincoln as the "liberator." With this broader definition, Lincoln could take on the symbol of liberty in general, without forcing the public to come to terms with domestic inequalities related to skin color.[305]

World War II era propaganda expanded Lincoln's symbol as the great emancipator on a global scale, presenting World War II as the second opportunity for emancipation. Americans invoked Lincoln's myth to encourage one another to see the war as a moral obligation to provide freedom and liberty to the world from the tyranny of the Nazis. Images of Lincoln and references to him were common during World War II. For instance the phrase, "what would Lincoln do" printed alongside images of soldiers might inspire action and people to "be like Lincoln."[306]

From Lincoln's Presidential campaign onward, the ax was a symbol for Lincoln and for American ideals of fighting for liberty and freedom. Images included the ax as a symbolic weapon against the Nazis in war propaganda like "as in 1865—so in 1943."[307] In this depiction, the rail-splitter's tool, the common man's tool, is used to destroy Axis ideologies represented as a wooden swastika (Figure 4.16). Importantly, the image relies on the public's visual literacy to make a critical analogy between Lincoln as the common man and his tool as an analogy for the current crisis.

In his book *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era,* Schwartz argued that there was never a time when Lincoln was more popularly invoked and referenced as an American symbol than during World War II and the years leading up to it. During the Depression and World War

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[305] Naveh, *Crown of Thorns,* 58

[306] Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era,* 60.

[307] "As in 1865—So in 1943," *Philadelphia Record* (February 12, 1943).

II, Americans portrayed Lincoln as a hero to a degree unlike any other time in history. His image stood out as a symbol of the great heroism required of all citizens in the commitment to win the war.[308] He argued that while Americans hesitated to enter into the war for lack of purpose, Lincoln provided them with a purpose by offering an analogous narrative through which they might understood the current crisis.[309]

Creating his garden less than a decade after World War II, Tellen may have drawn upon the 1940s and 50s revival of Lincoln. The idea of Lincoln as a commoner who achieved greatness continued to be an important factor in Lincoln's mythology during these decades. When roadside concrete garden artists portrayed Lincoln during and after the World Wars, they effectively balanced Lincoln's heroic and everyday attributes. For instance, Tellen's figure of Lincoln is statuesque with evenly planted feet, balancing a mallet so that the entire structure forms a triangle at all angles. The shape is symmetrical, lacking a casual bend in the knee or any indication of motion aside from his tilted head. His stance is strong and stable. Resting at ease on the handle of his mallet, Lincoln's hands form a perpendicular line to his body. His garments are simple, with his sleeves rolled up around his elbows and his pants bunching around the top of his knee-high boots. His figure is still sturdy and dignified.

His clothing resembles the symbols of the working men and women pictorialized in World War II propaganda. The idea of "rolling up your sleeves" symbolized the call to work collectively in the war effort. From Rosie the riveter to images of George Washington, farmers,

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[308] Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era,* 20.

[309] Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era,* 60.

and enlisting soldiers, everyone rolled up their sleeves as a symbol of national service (Figure 4.15).

During the early twentieth century, Lincoln was one of the main symbols of American civic religion. He represented a civic analog to the Christ figure while helping Americans add meaning to their civic and individual lives by operating on both the heroic level of leader and martyr, but also by his relatable beginnings. Considering Lincoln as a pseudo-Christ figure was quite common in the early twentieth century, as, for example, in publications such as John Wesley Hill's 1920 *Abraham Lincoln –Man of God*. Ultimately, the central narrative of Christianity is redemption through sacrifice and so by framing Lincoln's assassination as a martyrdom, he came to represent a national Christ figure. Christ began his life as the son of a common carpenter, rose in influence, and was martyred for the liberation of human souls. Lincoln's mythic story followed the same format, casting him as a working person that achieved greatness and finally died as a martyr for his cause.[310]

Like the Christ figure who was common and divine, Lincoln served as a political figurehead that was both common and divine and could thereby serve as a model for good citizenry and for American ideals. As a symbol of liberty, Lincoln fit the visual culture of the Civil and World Wars and the Depression, but more so, the narration of his presidency as a struggle and sacrifice modeled to Americans how they ought to respond to crises.

Tellen effortlessly combines Lincoln's full-scale figure in the same garden that he sculpted religious figures Mary and Jesus (Figures 4.17 & 4.18). As visitors walk through the woods, traveling further away from the house, they encounter these religious figures. Tellen

[310] Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era,* 22.

placed Lincoln between his home and the spiritual figures in the woods, spatially marking Lincoln as an intermediary between man and the divine. Lincoln's ultimate assassination was the beginning of the formation of his cult that defined the rest of his life. By situating him in the sculpture garden amidst the humdrum of daily life and kitchen chores, his visage serves to communicate a number of values tied to America's Christian-based cultural history and Tellen projects these intertwined ideologies in the very layout of his sculptures.

Through self-deprecating jokes about lacking education, Lincoln reinforced the myth that he was a self-made man.[311] Arguing that one is self-made means arguing that one has the rugged individualism needed to overcome the challenges of not having systems, people, or other resources that contributed to one's success. Rugged individualism supposes that one's individuality is solely responsible for their success in life and thus the responsibility of failing to be successful falls solely on the individual.[312] Lincoln was a model of the ideal heroic individual. His myth set him up as ordinary and of the people and yet was anything but. People called him the great liberator and advocate for freedom, thereby serving the propagandistic needs of a nation facing two World Wars which required a cause to motivate—a cause of freedom, making any advocate of American individuality a hero.

Such individualism relates to the public perception of folk art and self-taught artists of the early- to mid- twentieth century. Art historian Deborah Harding noted that for artists such as Tellen, art "fostered a continued or renewed sense of patriotic duty, reverence for national heroes, awareness of national history, and an ever-present affirmation of American values" in a

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[311] Peter S. Field, "Our Shrinking Lincoln," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 40 no 1 (July 2021): 40-41.

[312] Jack Turner, "American Individualism and Structural Injustice: Tocqueville, Gender, and Race," Polity 40, no. 2 (2008): 197.

setting and medium that articulated those values in the semantics of the everyday.[313] In essence, Tellen's Lincoln employed a familiar national symbol that heroized the labors of working men. He took that symbol and translated it in a material that represented the progress, practicality, and ruggedness of the American identity, reinforcing Lincoln's own character in the same terms and bridging the divide between a man like Tellen and the American mythic Lincoln. Greatness and ordinariness found common ground in Tellen's concrete sculpture garden.

Christ, the Soldier, and the Citizen

In the 1930s, Matthias Wernerus (1873 – 1931) grew in fame for creating the *Dickeyville Grotto* (1920 – 1931) of Southwestern Wisconsin. Born in the Kettenis, he was an Alsatian with German and French parents. Before beginning his training for priesthood in Liege, Belgium, he served three years in the army. In 1904, he moved to the United States to complete his studies at the St. Francis Seminary, where he was ordained June 1907.[314] He eventually became pastor of the Holy Ghost Parish in Dickeyville, Wisconsin in 1918, where he served the rest of his life.

Between 1925 and 1930, Wernerus built the *Dickeyville Grotto* with the help of many community members. Reportedly, Wernerus originally shared his interest in building a grotto to a parishioner named Leo Meissen, who responded, "why not build a big one and make it worthwhile?"[315] Meissen and Wernerus were both from Europe and knew of Catholic grottos. They also would have been aware of the public enthusiasm for the nearby *Grotto of the*

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[313]Deborah Harding, *Stars and Stripes: Patriotic Motifs in American Folk Art* (New York: Rizzoli, 2002), 11.

[314] Dickeyville Grotto, *Grotto and Shrines, Dickeyville, Wisconsin* (Dickeyville, WI: Dickeyville Grotto, 1965), 3.

[315] "Congratulations Dickeyville Grotto 50th Anniversary," *The Platteville Journal* (Thursday, September 11, 1980): 6.

Redemption in West Bend, Iowa. With the help of his brother-in-law Gus Riemanapp, Leo Meissen used his skills as a blacksmith to complete the grotto's ironwork including the reinforcement for the fences that wrap throughout the garden. An anniversary celebration article named the friends and neighbors, such as George and Frankie Splinter, Billie Lawrence, and Raymond Benton, who helped Wernerus build the grotto. Wernerus's cousin Marie Wernerus worked all the rosette flowers throughout the garden. Community members even helped find rocks. Art Widerhold, for instance, drove through fields looking for fill rock.[316] Similar to the *Rudolph Grotto Garden and Wonder Cave*, the *Dickeyville Grotto* is a public space that many community members helped build and maintain.

Located on the Holy Ghost Parish grounds, the *Dickeyville Grotto* is a collection of shrines and grottos that symbolize the love of God and the love of country. The two largest and most ambitious grottos are the *Shrine to Patriotism* and the *Blessed Virgin* grotto located opposite a flower garden (Figures 4.19 & 4.20). Wernerus included a variety of garden accessories such as birdhouses, ornamental fences, and large flowerpots throughout the property. The surfaces of the grottos and accessories are highly encrusted with geodes, arrowheads, pottery, tile, stones, shells, fossils, agate, petrified wood, and glass.

Called, "the greatest day in Dickeyville's history," the dedication of the *Dickeyville Grotto* on September 14, 1930 met with great pomp and circumstance (Figure 4.21).[317] The community members that had supported the construction accompanied visitors from throughout the state, including the then governor Walter J. Kohler who gave an address to the crowd. At

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[316] "Villagers recall work," *The Platteville Journal* (Thursday, September 11, 1980): 6.

[317] Holy Ghost Church, *125th Anniversary 1873-1998* (Dickeyville, WI: Holy Ghost Church, 1998): 14.

seven in the evening, the church illuminated the grotto during a light processional and Papal blessing. The evening ended with a fireworks display and music performed by the Dickeyville brass band and Cuba City Military band.[318] More than five thousand people attended the dedication mass with the day's events totaling a crowd between ten and fifteen thousand.[319] The joint participation between members of religious and political community mirrored the themes of the grotto and signaled support for the messages Wernerus and his friends inscribed in the concrete.

The grotto's comparisons between love of God and love of country were a part of a national conscience where narratives of individualism and the common good could co-exist. Wernerus's comparisons between the two fidelities are also apparent in his earliest work located in the cemetery behind the church. Symbolizing the civic religion of a nation recovering from World War I, his cemetery installations juxtaposed images of Christ the martyr and the soldier memorial, reinforcing the belief that being a good citizen and being a good Christian were compatible pursuits.

Between the World Wars, proving this point was especially important for Catholics, whose loyalty other Americans doubted. Non-Catholic citizens questioned whether Catholics would be loyal to Rome or loyal to the United States. During the war, the Catholic Fraternity, the Knights of Columbus responded to distrustful public sentiments by publishing materials showing all the work they were doing to serve American soldiers.[320] Signaling his love for God and

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[318] "Dickeyville Grotto Dedicated Today," *The Capital Times* (September 14, 1930): 20.

[319] "Congratulations Dickeyville Grotto," 6; Holy Ghost Church, *125th Anniversary 1873-1998* (Dickeyville, WI: Holy Ghost Church, 1998): 13.

[320] "Service under Fire! The Knights of Columbus. National Catholic War Council K. of C. and Other War Welfare Activities," *United War Work Campaign* (November 1918), accessed August 26, 2021,

country may have been a way for Wernerus to explore existing comparisons between spiritual and civic religion in response to a World War and mounting tensions toward Catholics.[321]

Wernerus built the *Shrine to Patriotism* and the *Blessed Virgin* grotto after completing smaller projects including his first experimentation with concrete, which was a memorial dedicated to three local men killed during World War I (Figure 4.22). Dated to 1920, the memorial is located at the end of a concrete path bisecting the cemetery. An archway fence with the words "Most merciful Jesus grant them eternal rest" signals the entrance to the graveyard and directs visitors to the memorial at its center. At the end of the pathway, a concrete staircase rises up to a masonry limestone pedestal supporting a crucifix with three marble figures. The two figures flanking the central crucifix are of equal size while a smaller central figure sits below the Christ figure. To the left, a Virgin Mary sculpture bows her head with her eyes directed to a plaque at the base of the figural group. The plaque includes the engraved names of three soldiers, their birth and death dates, and cause of death. Two of the men died of disease at camp and one died in battle. The mourner at the right, John the Baptist, turns his face up toward the Christ figure on the cross.

The memorial group foreshadows Wernerus's larger works—the *Grotto of the Blessed Virgin* (1925-1929) and the *Patriotic Shine* (1925-1929)—where he drew comparisons between religious and national devotion. The sightlines of John the Baptist and Virgin Mary sculptures point to the names of the memorialized men and to the Christ figure above, drawing the two together. Christ on the cross reminds the viewer of the shared suffering and martyrdom of the

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http://www.firstworldwar.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/Documents/Details/HIA_WWISC_B021_F029.

[321]Lerond Curry, *Protestant-Catholic Relations in America: World War I through Vatican II* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015). muse.jhu.edu/book/37534.

spiritual figure with the men who died in war: one making a sacrifice for God and the other for country. It also symbolized the Christian redemption and the reassuring promise of an afterlife.

At the time, American soldiers implicitly registered as martyred heroes because the nation framed the war as a battle between good versus evil. As in the figure of Lincoln who took on the symbolic role as national martyr for freedom, so too did the soldier represent a civic sacrifice.[322] Memorial installations like Wernerus's supported national narratives by translating soldiers' deaths into meaningful sacrifices for the purpose of universal liberty. In a similar way, according to the Christian religion, Christ sacrificed his life to free humankind from the enslavement to sin.

The public drew Christ as the model soldier who died for his cause and endured in belief even while suffering violence. He was an example for soldiers facing the Axis powers. Historian Peter Harrington wrote about James Clark's print *The Great Sacrifice* and how it became iconic of the soldier's good death (Figure 4.23). The image depicts a crucified Christ with his body and face forming a line down toward a soldier. The soldier's limp hand rests on Christ's feet providing a direct connection between the two. The soldier and the Christ figure wear placid expressions. Both youthful figures sacrificed their lives for an imagined good. At the same time, the image reminded the viewer of their faith that Christ promised eternal life for his followers and so mourners might find hope that their loved one was in heaven rather than focus solely on their premature death.[323] Comparisons between the soldier and Christ often operated on these multiple levels: providing meaning and comfort simultaneously.

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[322] Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era,* 22.

[323] Peter Harrington, "The Great Sacrifice: From War Souvenir to Inspirational Icon," *Print Quarterly* (June 2010): 148-157.

The belief was so ubiquitous that the soldier was acting in service to God and that sacrifice was akin to Christ's sacrifice that some religious writers made efforts to emphasize distinctions between the two. They wrote that though the soldier's sacrifice was Christ-like, it still paled in comparison.[324] The effect was to connect the soldier's death to the highest and most preciously protected sacrifice according to Christian belief, thereby ennobling the soldier's death. At the same time, the comparison offered a purpose for their death and provided comfort. Framing death according to Christian martyrdom, gave it meaning.

Having honored the local soldiers with a central location in the church cemetery, Wernerus turned his creative attention back to the memorial in 1924 when he first experimented with embedded concrete. Having constructed the steps and base out of concrete and set the sculptural group into place, Wernerus added a layer of concrete to the stair rail, embedding it with colorful marbles, broken pottery, rocks and shells. To finish the memorial, he molded a pair of matching decorative urns at the base, finishing them in the same manner. After completing the memorial, he made two large flowerpot urns outside the entrance of the church where they reside to this day.[325]

Wernerus paved a concrete pathway encircling the memorial. Branching off is a short concrete path with a sign pointing to Wernerus's grave (Figure 4.24). His burial site does not include any sculptures or encrusted surfaces. There is little to distinguish it from the rest of the plots except for the headstone being slightly larger than average. His plot's proximity to the monument is important. It connects Wernerus with the soldiers and with Christ. The spatial

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[324] Harrington, "The Great Sacrifice," 147-157.

[325] Lisa Stone and Jim Zanzi, *Sacred Spaces and Other Places: A Guide to Sculptural Environments in the Upper Midwest* (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago Press, 1993), 29.

arrangement positioned Wernerus as heroic in his own way. Through his art, he conveyed the values of individual freedom and sacrifice as shared between his religion and his country, earning his own immortalization as had the World War I soldiers.

The memorial is located in the church cemetery, which dates to the founding of the Holy Ghost Parish in 1872. Father Wernerus managed a redesign of the cemetery in 1920 to accommodate his memorial. He had a fence installed with a wrought iron gate with brick entry posts and organized the space so the memorial forms a strong perpendicular line through the cemetery.[326] He also had trees removed and paved a straight pathway directly from the wrought iron gate to the memorial (Figure 4.25).[327]

Just outside the gate and at the opposite end of the pathway, Wernerus built a grotto to the *Sacred Heart* (1930). The structure mimics the design of the WWI memorial (Figure 2.26). Flanked by two urns, a staircase rises up to a covered shrine sheltering a painted Christ figure. Having matured in his mastery of concrete, Wernerus encrusted the entire structure except for the Christ figure with shells, porcelain, glass, geodes and tile.

The base of the structure is styled after tumbled rocks with flowerbeds where he built up the surface with geodes and shells, arranging them in such a way to show off the crystalline forms but varying the materials to create a natural aesthetic. The naturalistic aesthetic gives way to patterns and carefully plotted spans of color wrapped around four columns supporting a domed roof. The columns feature broken bits of white porcelain, all pressed into the concrete

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[326] Susan A. Niles, *Dickeyville Grotto: The Vision of Father Matthias Wernerus* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 10.

[327] Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, "Holy Ghost Parish Historic District," WISDot#1650-07-02, Prepared by UWM-CRM, (2016).

perpendicularly so that the surface is rugged and crystalline. Wernerus wrapped a single line of wooden balls and rosettes made of green and red glass from the base to the domed roof, mimicking the pattern of green and red flowers across the interior of the dome.

Wernerus built the sculpture just outside the cemetery as a reminder to visitors of God's love to humanity, which the *Sacred Heart* symbolizes. The covering appears to be a baldachin, which is a sheltering structure used for religious objects. Rather than choosing to cover the figure with a grotto, which only reveals only the front of the sculpture to the viewer, the baldachin-style shelter offers views of the structure and sculpture from all angles. On the front fascia of the shelter, Wernerus spelled the words "SACRED HEART" in broken bits of glass that he pressed into the concrete in his characteristic way. Rather than lay the tesserae flat against the concrete to produce a mosaic, he pressed the shards of glass in perpendicular to the surface so that the result looks crystalline, like the inside of a geode. He drew the association between his surface handling and the stone-encapsulated crystals by pressing geodes into nearly every surface of his "Sacred Heart" shrine. On the left fascia, Wernerus wrote "BLESS US OH" and at the right fascia, he wrote "NOW AND FOREVER." It is impossible to read the words together on the square structure, but as you walk around it, the message reads "BLESS US OH SACRED HEART NOW AND FOREVER." Above the words "SACRED HEART," Wernerus created a small mosaic of the Sacred Heart made of tesserae. He finished the crown of the structure with a cross in gold mosaic.

The *Sacred Heart Shrine* reinforces the connection Wernerus made between the soldier's sacrifice and that of Christ by drawing a direct line from the shrine to the World War I monument (Figure 2.27). Spatially, visitors must pass the shrine to enter the cemetery. Once at the entry gate, the war monument is straight ahead.

Certainly, Christ fits the definition of a martyr far better than a soldier does, but on the level of national conscience, the distinctions dissipated through narrations of military deaths being for a cause. A martyr is a person who dies for what they believe in and, in the case of a soldier's death, people said they died in a war against evil. War is a battle between groups in which murder is the soldier's objective even though they take on the risk of death. The objective of war is to defeat enemies and preserve self. It hardly matches the image of Christ the sacrificial lamb willingly and violently killed for his belief. At this level, it is incompatible that soldiers would come into comparison with Christ. Yet, war is a central theme in all religions. Historians Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts argue that it is common for people to describe war in terms of sacrifice. Even in Christianity, the purposes of war and death are ennobling, conveying a war as a battle between good and evil positions destruction and death as a means to the triumph of good over evil.[328]

In *Crown of Thorns: Political Martyrdom in America from Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King, Jr*., cultural historian Eyal J. Naveh argued that the American civil religion gives meaning to the American experience. He showed how Americans have consistently applied biblical perspectives to interpret historical experiences. For instance, during the nineteenth century, an ideology was prominent that the democratic process and the perfection thereof expressed the commitment to collective salvation. Over the course of early-twentieth-century progressivism, the ideology began to shift away from an emphasis solely on sacrifice for the greater good to one of greater individualism and personal fulfillment. These ideas become especially strong after World War I. The narration of civic religion and martyrdom took on

[328] Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts, eds. *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 217.

influences from psychoanalysis and the idea of individual happiness, self-expression, and fulfillment. Essentially, the ideal of collective salvation through the democratic process took on a more individualistic bent.[329]

Naveh argued that the existing ideals narrated through Lincoln's assassination along with the recent loss of life from the World Wars connected the American consciousness with martyrdom. For many Americans, soldiers sacrificed themselves as martyrs for freedom—though they defined freedom vaguely. By their death, framed as a sacrifice for freedom, the nation might gather in common recognition and immortalization of the soldier-martyr-hero. By their death, they signified the perfection of American character.

Catholics of the time often used examples of Catholic soldiers who had died as proof of their willingness to sacrifice for love of country—a sentiment that citizens of other countries also indicated as in the unification of loves shared by René Gaëll. Describing the priests who served in the war, Gaëll wrote "the love of our country and the love of God so long separated were now as one," signaling the blurred lines between civic and spiritual purpose.[330] For those who recognized the analogies between Christ and the heroic military man, the soldier's death took on a supernatural significance. By modeling Christ's sacrificial nature, the soldier's sacrifice both united members of the nation as well as brought the body politic closer to God.[331] Although the idea of the heroic martyr has waxed and waned in prominence through American history, it has

[329] Naveh, *Crown of Thorns,* 170.

[330] René Gaëll, Priests in the Firing Line (London: Longmans and Green, 1916), 3.

[331] Naveh, *Crown of Thorns,* 190.

remained a strong characteristic giving meaning to tribulation and the pursuit of a moral body politic.

Considering martyrdom, Jan Willem van Henten explored the use of Christian symbols and allegories of martyrdom to explain the World War I soldier deaths. Van Henten specifically analyzed soldier memorials in Germany and the United Kingdom, and explained that the rhetoric of Christian sacrifice acted to comfort and provide meaning for the soldier's deaths, but also pointed to the soldier's reward in death. Their death, then, produces two outcomes: a benefit to those living on earth and a reward in the afterlife for their sacrifice.[332]

The analogies between soldiers and Christianity also functioned in the reverse. For example, the phrase "Soldier of Christ" was a popular phrase around World War I. Citizens used the phrase to describe people whose labors and endurance through challenges defined their life stories. A eulogy written and published for a priest is a good example of the language associating work, particularly religious work, as akin to the labors of a soldier. The eulogy opens by referencing a quote from II Timothy 2:3, which says "Labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." Delivering the address, Rev. Dr. Joseph Diamond opened his account of the deceased Bishop with the words, "Fortitude and heroism are the watchwords of this life that is today the subject of our thoughts and the very breath of our souls."[333] Community members remembered how the deceased had cared for old men by founding the Beaven-Kelly home. In this instance, laboring for a cause that was by certain measures altruistic was heroic and related to living one's life as a soldier for Christ. This analogy also works within the grotto. The Dickeyville congregation

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[332] Jan Willem van Henten, "Commemorating World War I Soldiers as Martyrs," in *Martyrdom: Canonisation, Contestation, and Afterlives,* eds. Ihab Saloul and Jan Willem Van Henten (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 153-175.

[333] "Calls Bishop a True Soldier for Christ, *The Berkshire Eagle* (October 9, 2020): 2.

buried Wernerus directly next to the soldier's monument. In a sense, this arrangement situates Wernerus as a "Soldier of Christ." While he may not have fought in the war, the grotto was evidence of his incredible labors for Christ by building the grotto.

Writers also used "Soldier of Christ" to compare religious belief to good citizenry especially regarding military service for World War I. One particular article outlined the qualities that made a "soldier of Christ" according to II Timothy 2:3. They were the same characteristics that made a good soldier in the Civil War. Thus, an assessment of prior wars for freedom was the model of behavior for soldiers of the Great War. The article exhorts men to be soldiers of Christ by fighting wickedness and enduring great hardship, by being loyal citizen and by aggressively going to battle against the enemy. It does not distinguish a war of good and evil or spirituality from "earthly" wars of nations, calling men to be good soldiers and citizens was indistinguishable from calling them to be good Christians.[334]

During and following World War I, Newspapers widely published commemorative addresses with orators drawing analogies between good civic and religious behavior. Accompanying a memorial to World War I soldiers, one priest posed the question "What is a good soldier of Christ?" He argued a good soldier followed orders by his superior officer, Christ the "Captain of our salvation." He goes on to compare earthly soldiers to heavenly soldiers. Earthly may be volunteer or drafted, but spiritual soldiers are always volunteer. Uncle Sam's soldiers have equipment as the heavenly soldier has "Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Faith, Hope, Spirit, and His Word."[335] The comparisons establish religious loyalty as akin to civic loyalty and

[334] "Soldiers of Christ Lack "Pep" of Nations' Fighters," *Santa Ana Register* (May 19, 1919): 5.

[335] "Rev. Wheeler's Address," *The Western Star* (January 7, 1921): 1.

responsibility, but in all cases, they positioned spiritual as the higher virtue that begets good earthly soldiers.

Another example attributed to a writer named Macmillen used the model of Christ to exhort citizens to action during the war. The account reads, "Our troops who will go across the ocean to make the great sacrifice for the rights of civilization are like the soldiers of Christ." Bracing for the US entry into the Great War, the speaker framed the soldier's entry into battle as a sacrifice akin to the sacrifices made by men of Christ. "They will have heavy loads of self-denial," the writer continues, "but they are fighting for a belief, for a faith in the rights of mankind. In this they are likened to the soldiers of Christ who fought for their faith and for the rights of the rest of the world to learn the Christian faith."[336]

The exhortations that compared soldiers of heaven and earth in terms of sacrifice, endurance, and belief in some noble purpose were quite common. They help us grapple with the complex relationships between Christ, soldier, and soldier of Christ, the three figures visible in Wernerus's installation. The church honored the earthly solder for their sacrifice with the war memorial, which is steps away to the memorial to the soldier of Christ—Wernerus whose labor and endurance followed the same ideals. Finally, the *Sacred Heart* shine points to the ultimate example of sacrifice and endurance symbolized by the Christ figure.

The analogies drawn between patriotic and spiritual models and everyday citizens gets to the heart of heroic individualism in which labor and endurance operate on the ordinary and

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[336] Macmillen, "Like Soldiers of Christ our Troops Arise: Fight for their faith and the rest of the world," *Reading Times* (May 21, 1917): 11.

extraordinary. Heroic individualism does not mean that one has to be a martyr or a soldier, but these figures acted as models of good citizenship for heaven and earth.

Cain, Abel, and Populism

Samuel Perry Dinsmoor (d. 1932) was born on March 8, 1948 near Coolville, Ohio (Figure 4.28). In 1888, he and his family moved to Russell County, Kansas where Dinsmoor bought an eighty-acre farm. The family moved at a time when national marketing campaigns framed Kansas as a "Garden of Eden."[337] Whether or not Kansas upheld its agrarian promise, Dinsmoor made his home into an Eden of his own design.

Retiring in 1905, Dinsmoor sold his farm and purchased a corner lot in town.[338] In 1906, Dinsmoor began building his limestone log cabin home, furnished with rock by L.C. Brown and constructed by Steve Truitt.[339] By 1910, he claimed to be dissatisfied with the lot and added an arbor of concrete trees and his iconic figures of Adam and Eve.[340] His first wife, Frances died in 1917 and in 1924, Dinsmoor married Emilie Brozek. Brozek was only twenty years old at the time when Dinsmoor was eighty-one years old. Dinsmoor had previously hired the young Czechoslovakian as a housekeeper and companion. The couple had two children together and local papers called the couple the Adam and Eve of Lucas.[341]

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[337] Gilbert C. Fite, "Daydreams and Nightmares: The Late Nineteenth-Century Agricultural Frontiers," *Agricultural History* 4 no. 4 (October 1966): 285-294.

[338] *Lucas Sentinel* (May 26, 1905).

[339] *Lucas Sentinel* (February 22, 1907).

[340] *Lucas Independent* (September 1, 1910).

[341] *Lincoln Republican* (April 24, 1924).

Dinsmoor used recognizable imagery and Christian symbols throughout the garden. In its final state, the *Garden of Eden* (1907-1928; Lucas, KS) included an elaborate concrete arbor, figural sculptures, a pond, and a mausoleum (Figure 4.29). At the front of the house, he sculpted the Bible story of Cain and Abel, including figures of their parents Adam and Eve and the notorious snake.

Dinsmoor's earliest sculptures, Adam and Eve stand like sentinels forming a passageway into the garden. They raise their clasped hands overhead forming an archway into a grape arbor stretching the entire depth of the house (Figure 4.30). Dressed in the traditional masonic apron with the symbolic compass, Adam grips the body of a snake that wraps over his body and down below his feet where he steps on the snake's head. To Adam's right, Eve holds out her open palm just above her head, raising a concrete apple to match the gaze of a serpent floating overhead. The couple is wearing clothes, suggesting that they have already partaken of the forbidden fruit, and yet the unbitten apple indicates Dinsmoor captured them in the moment of temptation. The figural couple foreshadows the rest of Dinsmoor's program in which he mixed symbols, taking creative liberties with well-known subjects and altering them to convey new—though ambiguous—messages.

As in the case of the *Dickeyville Grotto*, Dinsmoor's *Garden of Eden* collectively produces meaning. I demonstrate this by examining two vignettes—*Labor Crucified* and *Cain and Abel*. Taken together, the sculptures provide a frame of reference for interpreting Dinsmoor's cocktail of political, popular, biblical, and masonic symbols.

Dinsmoor included masonic symbols in the three-tiered mausoleum (1917-1920) he built close to the sidewalk at the back of his property (Figure 4.31). To this day, Dinsmoor rests inside a concrete casket accessible to garden visitors. On the side of the mausoleum and just above eye

level is a concrete relief sign reading "S.P. DINSMOOR & WIFE" with the masonic symbol "G" for geometry and the masonic square and compass (Figure 4.32). The limestone log-style structure combines the artist's consistent use of masonic symbols, his novel utilization of local materials, and concrete sculptures. At the top of the mausoleum are electric lamps that rise and curve over like snakes. At the pinnacle of the mausoleum, Dinsmoor originally had a concrete American flag, which has since then been relocated to the ground.

Inside the mausoleum, Dinsmoor built a niche into the wall where a concrete casket sits. The casket has a glass window embedded into the cover and even more than one hundred years after he died, visitors can view Dinsmoor's corpse. Though petrified and slightly sunken, his facial features and beard still resemble photos of the artist as an old man.[342]

Dinsmoor's body and mausoleum were a spectacle—a thing that might fascinate and attract visitors to the *Garden of Eden.* The lure of seeing a body for the sake of spectacle was enough to produce an income of sorts for the site. When he called his home "most unique home, for living or dead, on Earth," he was making a pitch for tourism, positioning his artwork and future resting place as a destination.[343] While, the subject matter strongly symbolized his political ideals, his body ensured attention would stay on the artist as the central figure of the garden.

Dinsmoor made his coffin long before he died and he would take double exposure photos of himself looking at himself lying in the coffin. He described that his coffin was ready for his body when he died and joked that he wanted to see what he would look like: "People die just to

[342] Photography is prohibited inside the mausoleum.

[343] Dinsmoor, *Pictorial History of The Cabin Home.*

be put in those things but he got in his to have his picture taken and was able to get out to see how he looked."[344] Dinsmoor sold the photos of himself in the casket to tourists to the garden (Figure 4.34).

Dinsmoor talked about his plans that his body be buried in the mausoleum and the ways he expected to haunt the garden after his death. He told humorous stories of the different things he hoped to do, attaching his memory and the stories of his activities after death to the viewers' experience of the place. Talking about his garden, Dinsmoor spoke of the future and his occupancy long after his inevitable death. Dinsmoor wrote in *Pictorial History of the Cabin Home*, "Say! That tree will be a beauty. I want to see it in about ten or fifteen years from now. I may be in the Mausoleum. If I am, some dark night I will slip out and take a look at it, or some other people will see it which will be just the same."[345] The stories in his *Pictorial History* were entertaining. He wrote them as a guide for tourists.

Also in his *Pictorial History*, Dinsmoor provided an explanation for choosing to a burial in concrete. He wrote, "It seems to me that people buried in iron and wooden boxes will be frying and burning up in the resurrection morn. How will they get out when this world is on fire? Cement will not stand fire, the glass will break. This cement lid will fly open and I will sail out like a locust."[346] He wrote that the glass lid of his tomb ensured that "future generations may see the genius who figured out just what Moses was talking about when he wrote his book."[347] His

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[344] "Untitled," *Osborne County Farmer* (Thursday, November 11, 1915): 8.

[345] Dinsmoor, *Pictorial History of the Cabin Home*.

[346] Dinsmoor, *Pictorial History of the Cabin Home*.

[347] NEA Service, "Kansan Takes No Chances: Builds His Eden of Concrete," *Knoxville News-Sentinel* (Sunday, August 14, 1927): 19.

statement suggests that Dinsmoor had figured out the true, symbolic meaning of the book of Genesis, which includes the story of the Garden of Eden and of Cain and Abel. What did he mean by the true meaning? Did he intend to communicate more than a pastiche of masonic and biblical references?

Dinsmoor's dead body is a constant presence in the garden where a disembodied concrete all-seeing eye stands watch over a devil figure preying on babies, Cain murdering his brother Abel, and an octopus printed with the word TRUST wraps its tentacles around a woman, child, and the globe. The garden is one of mischief and misdeeds, where the apparent protagonists are a man and woman yielding a saw called "Ballot" to tear down the tree called "Chartered Rights" upon which the "TRUST" stands. Initially, it might appear as a cacophony of unrelated images, but they each circle back to Dinsmoor's worldviews.

Along the same stretch of sidewalk that Dinsmoor located his mausoleum, he created a *Circle of Life* tableau (Figure 4.34). Some records refer to the scene as the *Epic of Life*. Dinsmoor said that he intended it to represent modern civilization and the "endless chase of one species after another."[348] It pictorializes life as a hierarchy. Mounted on a series of concrete trees, the figure of a civil war soldier focuses his rifle on the back of a Native American who focuses his arrow on a canine, who stretches its open mouth toward a cat, who preys on a bird that focuses on a caterpillar.

The mausoleum and *Circle of Life* tableau each consider mortality and man's place within cycles of life and death that connect all manner of flora and fauna. The garden portrays moments of life and death with Eve frozen in the moment of temptation, gazing on the forbidden

[348] "The Kansas Garden of Eden," *Fairview Enterprise* (Thursday, July 2, 1936): 1.

apple. In the *Circle of Life,* figures are each poised on their prey. In a small pond near the corner of the lot, Dinsmoor sculpted a large snake winding around the pond's circumference. The snake raises its head and expands its jaws targeted on a small bird. In sum, the garden includes many creatures preying upon one another in faintly sinister ways. Even Cain preyed on his brother Abel. The theme of mortality is significant, but is there a more specific message that Dinsmoor meant by saying he had solved Moses's message? What do these strange combinations of characters mean and what was Dinsmoor trying to communicate to his audience?

Dinsmoor was a fervent populist and it may have inspired subjects he sculpted in his garden. For instance, he may have gravitated to Cain and Abel because their story is about the value of one's labor in the eyes of God and the jealously that may follow wealth and favor. The two brothers offered God sacrifices from their labor: livestock and produce. Cain offered God produce, the product of his labors in the field, but God preferred his brother Abel the herder's sacrifice of a sheep. In a rage of jealousy, Cain murdered his brother.

Cain and Abel may have been an appealing subject for Dinsmoor because he was a long-time freemason and the brothers play a role in freemasonry rituals and beliefs. According to masonic lore, Cain was an important early freemason taught in the art of geometry by his father Adam, the very first freemason. This is supported by Dinsmoor's Adam, who he sculpted wearing a traditional masonry apron with the masonic square. Certain freemason texts say that though Cain killed his brother and God banished him as a result, Cain went on to build the foundation for half of civilization and his genealogical line bore the first chemist name Tubalcain.[349] While Dinsmoor used suggestive freemason symbols with Adam and his sons, it is

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[349] James Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons: Containing the History, Charges, Regulations, and of that Most Anäent and Right Worshipful Fraternity. For the Use of the Lodges* (London: William Hunter, 1723).

difficult to know exactly what the sculptures mean because freemasons keep most of their rituals and symbols secret.

Regardless, it is likely that Dinsmoor was aware of freemason references to the Garden of Eden and the story of Cain and Abel. Throughout his life, Dinsmoor was a freemason and politician who wrote on issues concerning labor, local government, and farming. He served as president of the United Order of Anti-Monopoly Lodge chapter in Lucas in 1893 and was a member of the Modern Woodmen of America lodge.

On the opposite side of the property, Dinsmoor strongly conveyed his political beliefs, sculpting his variation of a crucifixion scene titled *Labor Crucified* (or *Crucifixion of Labor*) (Figure 4.35). Dinsmoor's final sculpture left incomplete due to his failing eyesight, *Labor Crucified* depicts five leg-less figures. At the center is a figure of a crucified man. Instead of the traditional "INRI" sign that accompanies figures of Christ crucified, Dinsmoor added a sign with the word LABOR and tucked it beneath the figure's nailed feet. Surrounding the figure are his assailants: the doctor, lawyer, preacher, and banker each identified with the same all caps printed letters.

The installation directly related to Dinsmoor's populist politics and his active involvement and leadership within the party of underdogs. Dinsmoor held populist rallies on the *Garden of Eden* grounds, which one local newspaper called "Dinsmoor's grove" in 1896.[350] He even ran for Fairview Township trustee as the Populist nominee in 1892. Though he lost, the local populist convention later elected him chairman in 1898.[351]

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[350] *The Russell Record* (Thursday, August 13, 1896): 2.

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Labor crucified was a relatively common image used by the Populist Party especially in political cartoons. Presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan gave a speech about the "cross of gold" at the Democratic National Convention of 1896. He ended his speech with the illustration of labor being crucified saying, "Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."[352] His illustration inspired people to model images of golden crosses and labor crucified (Figure 4.36). In 1896, the cartoon "The Cross of Gold" 1896. *The White Slave, Or, The Cross of Gold* was a short story written by the labor historian Helen Sumner Woodbury.[353] Though it was years later when Dinsmoor built his sculpture of *Labor Crucified*, the meaning had yet to fade from public memory as some still employed the phrase when discussing Bryan's politics.[354]

Crucifixion imagery served a number of political ideals of the time including socialism, anarchism, and Dinsmoor's populism. It enabled the laboring classes and advocates thereof to express injustice. It also encouraged people to find meaning in suffering. Symbolically, laborers might follow Christ's example. According to the Bible, Christ was a worker, a carpenter, who

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"Populist Convention," *The Russell Record* (August 27, 1898): 1.

[352] *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held in Chicago, Illinois, July 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, 1896*, (Logansport, Indiana, 1896), 226–234. Reprinted in *The Annals of America,* Vol. 12, *1895–1904: Populism, Imperialism, and Reform* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1968), 100–105.

[353] Helen L. Sumner, *The White Slave, Or, the Cross of Gold* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, Publishers, 1896).

[354] See mentions linking Bryan and Populist Party to the phrase "crucifying labor:" "Dragging Religion into Politics," *Western Kansas World* (Saturday, April 8, 1899): 2.; "Fifty years ago the average…" *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* (Friday, August 21, 1896): 4; "Trade and Labor Picnic," *The Chicago Chronicle* (Tuesday, September 8, 1986): 3; "Rattling the Skeleton," *St Louis Globe-Democrat* (Thursday, February 15, 1917): 12.

taught his followers to care for one another, sharing resources and money to help the poor and sick. Images of working-class individuals crucified sent a strong message about Christian tenants of selflessness in contrast to greedy beneficiaries of capitalism.

It can be argued that Dinsmoor's *Garden of Eden* is about labor and the crucifixion or exploitation thereof. The story of Cain in this context is more than Biblical story. It is a story about the first grafter, Cain, who killed his brother out of the jealousy of his brother's labor, which God attributed with more valuable than his own. The image of *Labor Crucified* is Dinsmoor's modern equivalent, putting bookends on a history that began with creation and continued into the present. Dinsmoor wrote, "I believe Labor has been crucified between a thousand grafters ever since labor begun…" The front of Dinsmoor's house with its story of Cain and Abel pictorializes the past and original labor while the back of the house pictorializes Dinsmoor's present. Dinsmoor continued, "I could not put them all up, so I have put up the leaders – Lawyer, doctor, preacher and banker. I do not say they are all grafters, but I do say they are the leaders of all who eat cake by the sweat of the other fellow's face."[355]

It is interesting that he would use the term *grafter* in this situation because set within the garden it is difficult to not think of its multi-meaning. Dinsmoor uses *grafter* to mean those who live off the work of others, but grafter also has a specific meaning in gardening. A grafter is a tool used for grafting as a form of propagation by uniting two branches, typically a smaller branch into a larger branch, together. Dinsmoor wrapped his garden with a series of large trees that he essentially grafted together through a web of branches. At the end of the garden where he portrayed "labor crucified" he positioned the grafters in an elbow of the tree, where the branches

[355] Dinsmoor, *Pictorial History of the Cabin Home.*

meet as though grafted together. The grafted branches draw energy from the tree trunk just as the lawyer, doctor, banker, and preacher live off the energy of labor.

Before continuing with this interpretation, it is important to note that Dinsmoor sculpted his garden from front to back. In other words, he sculpted *Adam and Eve* and *Cain and Abel* long before *Labor Crucified.* Dinsmoor spoke of the garden in two distinct yet, analogous parts. The front represented the past and the back represented the present. My interpretation of Cain and Abel as the original story of violence and greed built around labor assumes that Dinsmoor was conscious of this reading of Cain and Abel long before he began working on his populist imagery in the back of his house. Did Dinsmoor begin sculpting his garden with these sorts of analogies in mind?

Historical populist texts indicate that Dinsmoor may have been aware that Cain and Abel were symbols of jealousy and want. A *Lexington Herald* article titled "Poverty and Riches" from 1896 discusses the mounting divide between rich and poor. The author writes that men have always exchanged their labor for a money, but now they struggle to work or have to accept less and less. They compare the labor struggle to Cain and Abel, saying that the "great problem is to relieve human want" by creating "an equality of wealth."[356] Other contemporary references to Cain and Abel, use the story of the brothers to date human behavior to the beginning of time, writing that violence and murder date as far back as Cain and Abel.[357]

Newspaper articles used recognizable stories like Cain and Abel from the Bible to describe their political positions in a manner similar to Dinsmoor's sculptural analogies. One

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[356] "Poverty and Riches," *The Lexington Herald* (Sunday, October 11, 1896): 4.

[357] *The Nebraska State Journal* (Sunday, October 10, 1987): 12.

popular article from 1896 used the story of Cain and Abel to say that the history of labor dated to the book of Genesis, in other words, it started with the first brothers on earth. The anonymous author writes, "from the time that Cain killed Abel until now history has been little more than a record of warfare."[358] Newspapers throughout Nebraska and Kansas published the article and featured quotes from a speech by the populist and democratic leader William J. Bryan, who went on to be Secretary of State. According to the report, Bryan criticized financiers as unsupportive of laboring men and the destroyers of unions. Like Dinsmoor, he framed the history of labor as a history of warring between classes dating back to Cain and Abel.

It was somewhat common to use the analogy of Cain and Abel to communicate long-lasting and strongly held disputes between people or groups. *The Chicago Chronicle,* for instance, used the biblical brothers to illustrate the "bad blood" between Democrats and Populists approaching the 1896 election.[359] These examples show how writers referenced Cain and Abel in ways that Dinsmoor may have known and that resonated with his political leanings.

Throughout the garden, Dinsmoor relied upon his viewer's visual literacy to translate his mixed metaphors. Whether or not he intended his Cain and Abel to represent an exact analog to his labor crucified, they were an instance of violence. Dinsmoor portrayed violent acts throughout the garden, beginning with Adam and Eve he then sculpted a hierarchy of predators from woman to worm, and ended his installation with the rich preying upon the laboring class. Dinsmoor may have begun with the Garden of Eden theme, later becoming inspired to contemplate how it related to the present. These musings are impossible to know, but as modern

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[358] *Chappell Register* (Thursday, September 3, 1896): 6.

[359] "Bad Blood at Duquoin," *The Chicago Chronicle* (Saturday, October 10, 1896): 6.

viewers, we can appreciate the complex layering of analogies that pictorialize humanity's struggle for equality.

Conclusion

Just as the road has been a site and symbol of self-discovery, ambition, and the motion or mobility of one's life story, artists used their artwork as a visual roadmap of their lives. The concrete, rather than paving actual roads, takes viewers on journeys that are often personal and involve telling one's civic and social identity. Yet, these personally felt experiences are often shared experiences. Spiritual belief is personal and yet countless people identify with and experience a shared spiritualism. The same holds for civic feelings. For instance, the loss of life during war is simultaneously a personal and public experience. By choosing symbols that held personal yet broad significance, the artists created work that resonated with many Americans.

A 1908 speech draws together the themes discussed in this chapter, exemplifying the ease with which the public discussed religious and civic ideals that foregrounded heroic individualism in personal and public terms. In this widely published Memorial Day address in Meriden, Connecticut, Reverend W. A. Moore spoke during a wreath-laying ceremony at the Walnut Grove cemetery. Using allusions to Christian sacrifice, he drew upon symbols such as the soldier and Abraham Lincoln to enlist members of the public to civic action, such as voting. He called the honored soldiers martyrs, posing the question "Is there not a more splendid heroism suggested on this day by the memory of our martyred patriots?" Considering the dead soldiers as martyrs to a national cause, he answered with a quote by Theodore Roosevelt from a Memorial Day address from two years prior saying, "It is the man behind the ballot who counts most in

civil life, just as it is the man behind the gun who counts most in military life."[360] His statement called upon the individual to contribute to civic society through their vote as soldiers had given their lives. His address resonates with symbols scattered throughout concrete sculpture gardens. The martyred World War I soldiers of Wernerus's grotto find common ground with S. P. Dinsmoor's triumph of the ballot over tyrannical monopolies. Both reference the waging of wars by ordinary people against literal and figurative foes.

Tightening the allusions between the soldier martyr and an iconic leader, Moore indicated that Christian stories model American myths and heroes. He continued, "God raised up Abraham Lincoln to be a savior in his day and in his way." Tellen's Lincoln, the common man, was a symbol of the ideal American, having achieved success from humble beginnings he was an example of the American dream, but he also achieved something superior, having lost his life in the pursuit of liberty. Facing the challenges of the day, Moore asked, "Lives there among us now the Savior we need? No! Not as one man, not as a single, supreme soul."[361] With this statement, he suggested an important point of American heroic individualism—the idea that by pursuing one's own self-realization and self-improvement as Lincoln had done, every person participated in the heroic national cause. In other words, he prompted people to conceive of their ordinary lives, participation in democracy, and service as something meaningful and even heroic.

Like concrete sculpture gardens, Moore's address included Lincoln, Christ, and soldiers—all strong civic and religious cultural symbols at the time. He effortlessly shifted from one figure to the next because of the strong parallels established between them. National and

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[360] "Memorial Day Here Parade and Exercises," *The Journal* (May 30, 1908): 2.

[361] "Memorial Day Here Parade," 2.

cultural narratives portrayed Lincoln, Christ, and soldiers as martyrs and heroes for God and country and religious leaders taught the public that the same principles that made a good Christian, made a good citizen.

In some ways, the narrative arch of civic and religious heroism is the same arch of heroic individualism. Whereas the story of Lincoln portrays him as sacrificing himself for a noble cause and overcoming obstacles, the history of art – especially that of outsiders – portrays artists as sacrificing money and well-being for the sake of their art. And so, the combination of figures occupying concrete sculpture gardens represent the same values that encouraged the artists to create and conceptualize their work in terms of heroic individualism.

Figures

Figure 4.1: James Tellen, *Abraham Lincoln,* 1942-57. *Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden,* Black River, Wisconsin. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, August 2019.

Figure 4.2: Matthias Wernerus, *World War I Monument*, 1920. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, June 2019.

Figure 4.3: Samuel P. Dinsmoor, detail of *Cain and Abel* series, 1907-1928. *Garden of Eden,* Lucas, Kansas. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, September 2019.

Figure 4.4: Nick Englebert, *Grandview,* c. 1930-1960. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, August 2019.

Figure 4.5: James Tellen, detail of cement reinforcement, *Woodland Sculpture Garden*, Black River WI, 1942-1957

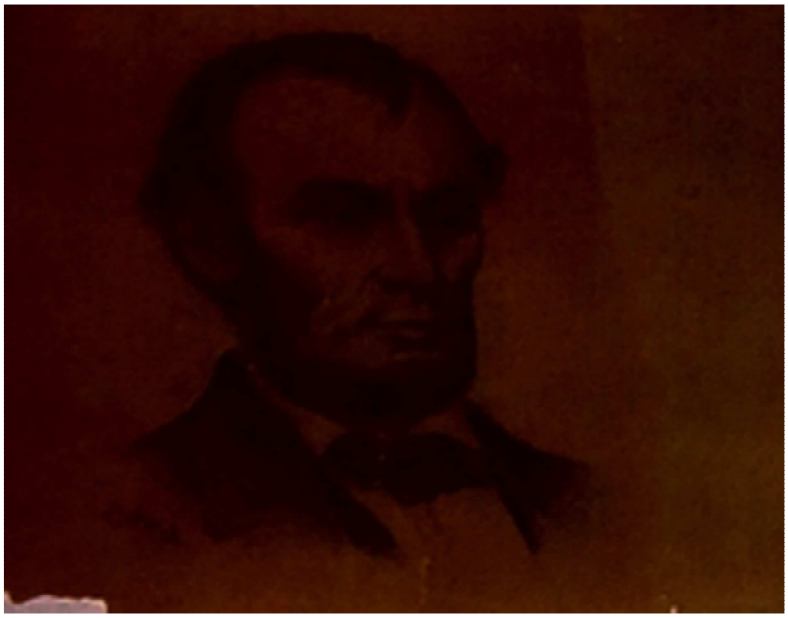

Figure 4.6: James Tellen, *Untitled,* unknown date, drawing on paper. John Michael Kohler Arts Center archive.

Figure 4.7: James Tellen, *Pioneer Group,* 1942-57. *Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden,* Black River, Wisconsin. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, August 2019.

Figure 4.8: James Tellen, *Abraham Lincoln,* 1942-57. *Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden,* Black River, Wisconsin. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, August 2019.

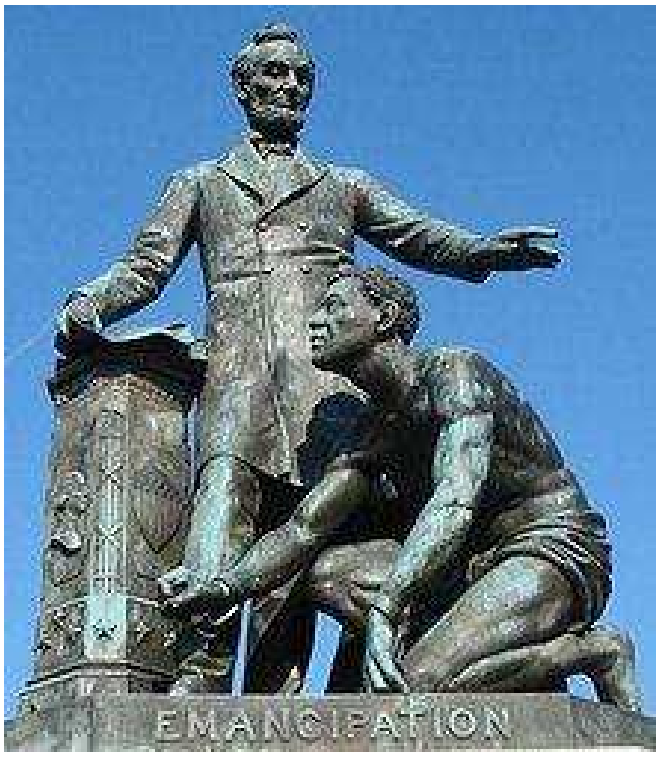

Figure 4.9: Thomas Ball, *Emancipation Memorial,* 1876. Bronze, Lincoln Park, National Park Service.

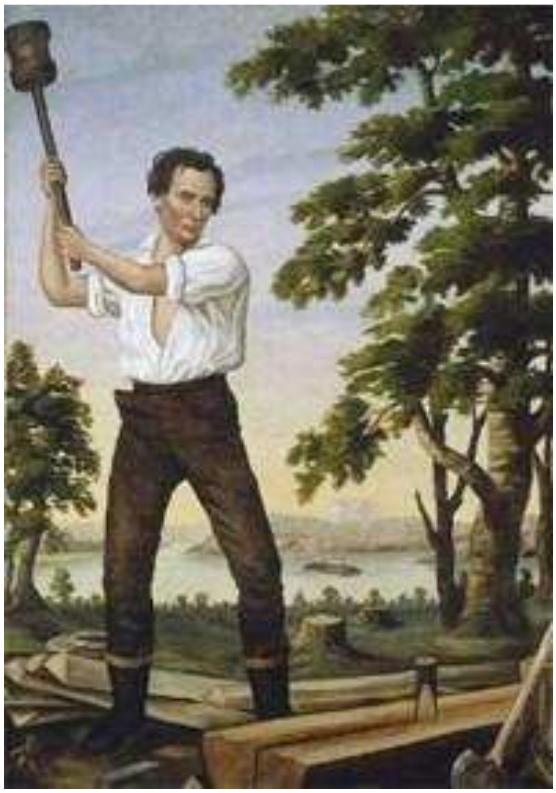

Figure 4.10: Chambers, *The Railsplitter,* c. 1858. Oil on canvas, Chicago History Museum.

Figure 4.11: Frederick C. Hibbard, *Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln,* 1943. Racine, Wisconsin.

Figure 4.12: U.S. Office of War Information, "That These Dead Shall Not Have Died in Vain," 1943.

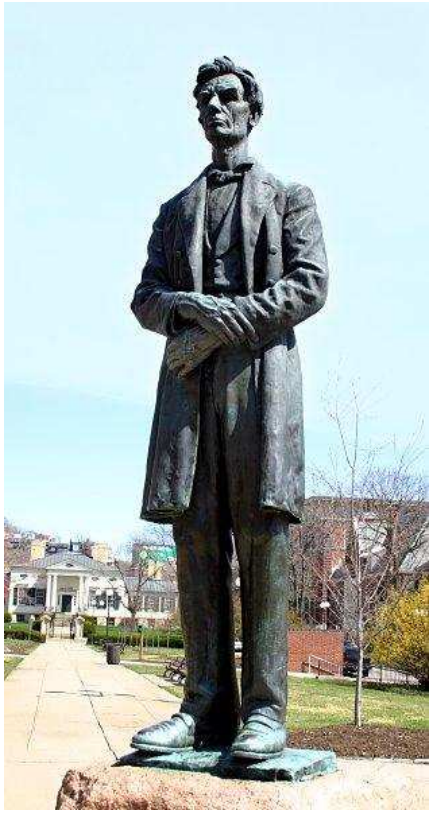

Figure 4.13: George Grey Barnard, *Abraham Lincoln,* 1917.

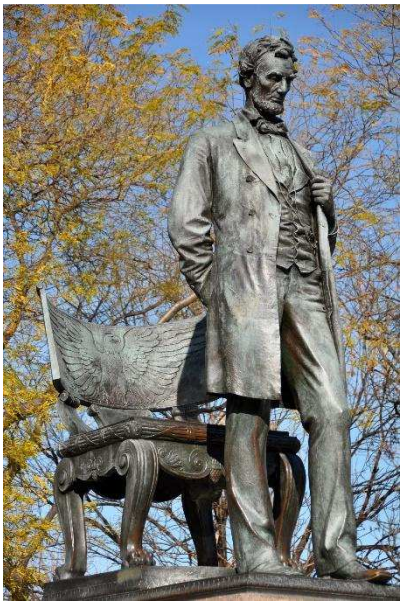

Figure 4.14: Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *Abraham Lincoln: The Man (Standing Lincoln)*, 1887.

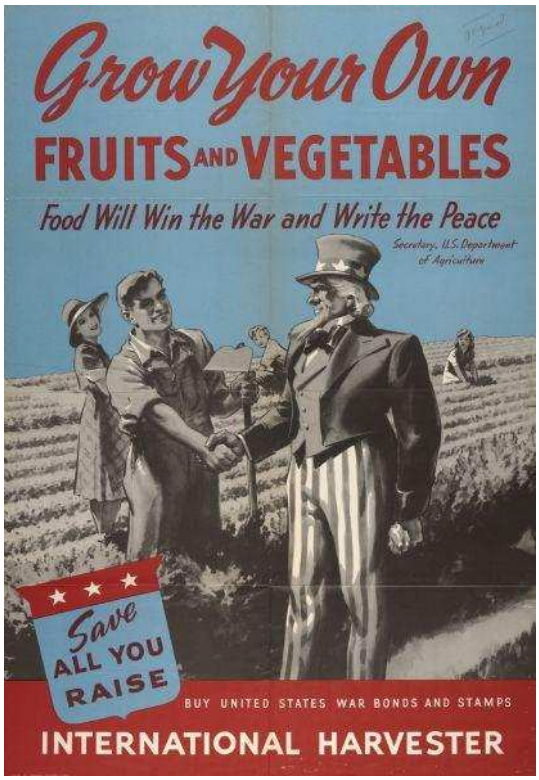

Figure 4.15: International Harvester Company, "Grow Your Own Fruits and Vegetables," 1943. 22 x 32in Wisconsin Historical Society.

Figure 4.16: "As in 1865—So in 1943" February 12, 1943, *Philadelphia Record.*

Figure 4.17: James Tellen, *Virgin Mary,* 1942-57. *Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden,* Black River, Wisconsin. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, August 2019.

Figure 4.18: James Tellen, *Christ,* 1942-57. *Tellen Woodland Sculpture Garden,* Black River, Wisconsin. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, August 2019.

Figure 4.19: Matthias Wernerus, *Patriotic Shrine*, 1925-1929. *Dickeyville Grotto,* Dickeyville, Wisconsin. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, June 2019.

Figure 4.20: Matthias Wernerus, *Grotto of the Blessed Virgin*, 1925-1929. *Dickeyville Grotto,* Dickeyville, Wisconsin. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, June 2019.

Figure 4.21: *Untitled,* photo of the Dickeyville Grotto dedication ceremony*,* 1930. Published in *The Platteville Journal Bicentennial Special* (Thursday, September 2, 1976): n.p.

Figure 4.22: Matthias Wernerus, *World War I Monument*, 1920. *Dickeyville Grotto,* Dickeyville, Wisconsin. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, June 2019.

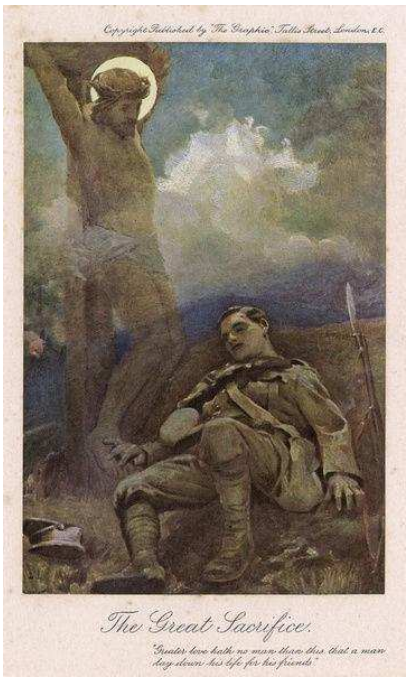

Figure 4.23: James Clark, *The Great Sacrifice,* 1914.

Figure 4.24: Grave marker of Matthias Wernerus. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, June 2019.

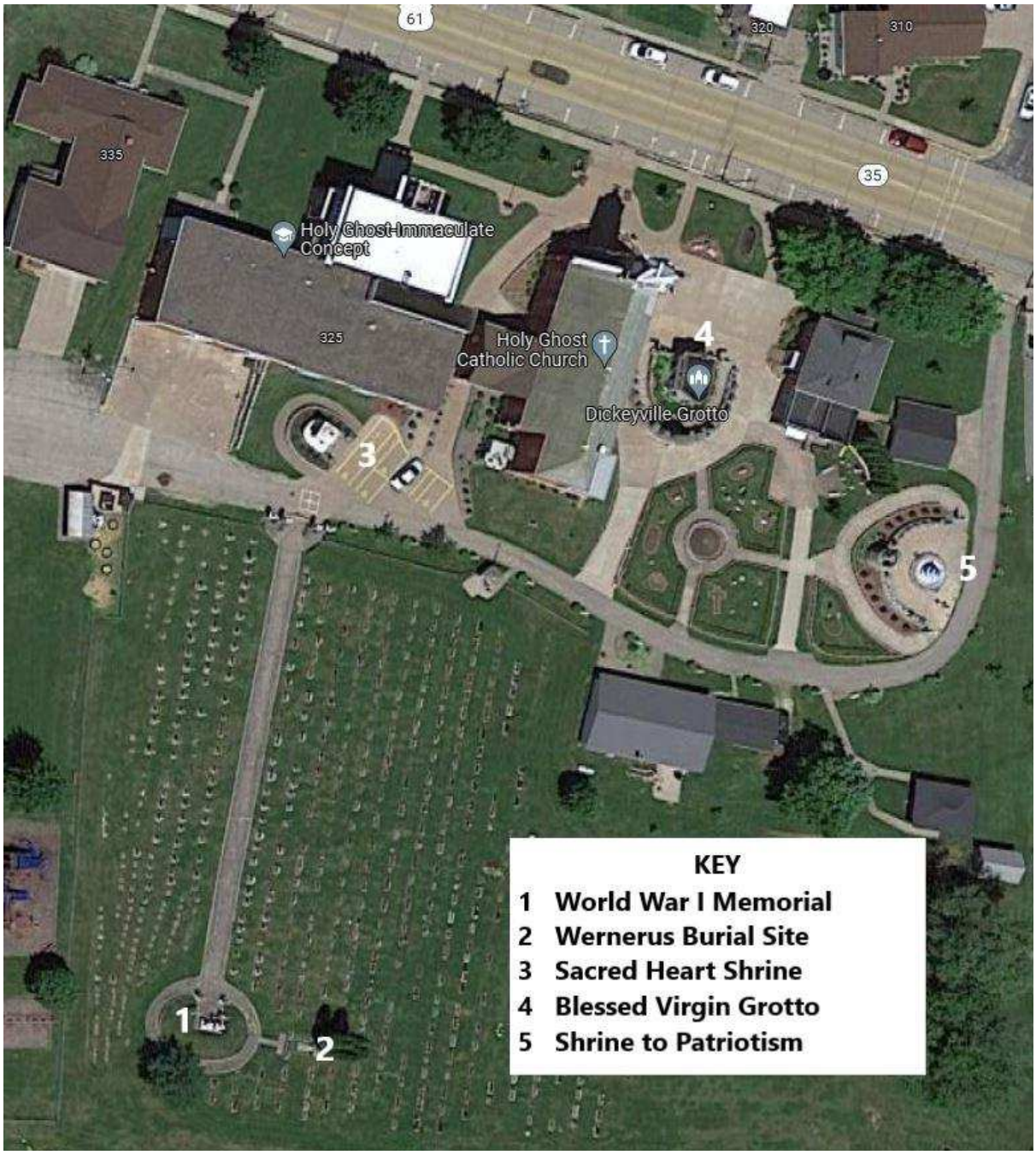

Figure 2.25: Site Map of Dickeyville Grotto.

Figure 2.26: Matthias Wernerus, *Sacred Heart Shrine,* 1930. *Dickeyville Grotto,* Dickeyville, Wisconsin. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, June 2019.

Figure 2.27: Path from *Sacred Heart Shrine* to *World War I Monument. Dickeyville Grotto,* Dickeyville, Wisconsin. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, June 2019.

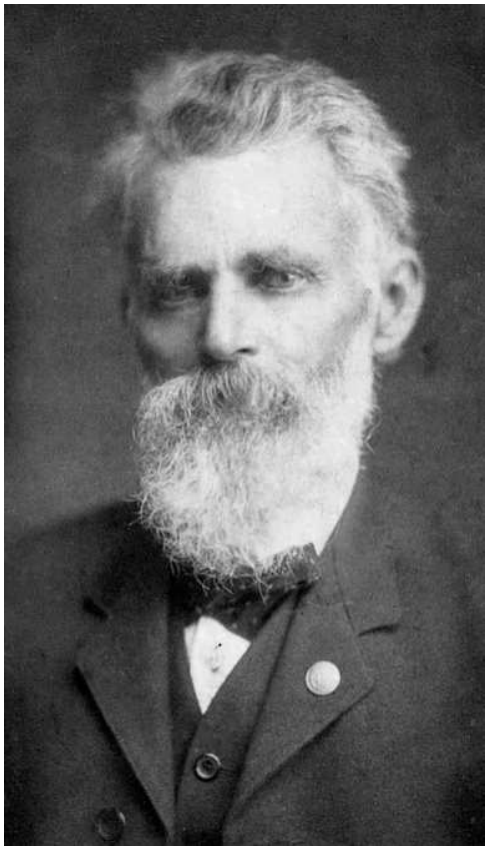

Figure 4.28: Photograph of Samuel P. Dismoor, n.d.

Figure 4.29: Samuel P. Dinsmoor, *Garden of Eden,* 1907-1928. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, September 2019.

Figure 4.30: Samuel P. Dinsmoor, *Adam and Eve,* c. 1910. *Garden of Eden,* 1907-1928. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, September 2019.

Figure 4.31: Photo of S.P. Dinsmoor outside his mausoleum, n.d. John Michael Kohler Arts Center.

Figure 4.32: Samuel P. Dinsmoor, detail of mausoleum, unknown date. *Garden of Eden,* 1907-1928. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, September 2019.

Figure 4.33: Samuel P. Dinsmoor, double exposure photo of Dinsmoor looking at himself in a concrete casket, 1905-1932. Garden of Eden archive.

*Figure 4.*34: Samuel P. Dinsmoor, detail of *Circle of Life Tableau,* 1907-1928. *Garden of Eden,* Lucas, Kansas. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, September 2019.

Figure 4.35: Samuel P. Dinsmoor, *Labor Crucified,* c. 1928. *Garden of Eden,* Lucas, Kansas. Photo by Cortney Anderson Kramer, September 2019.

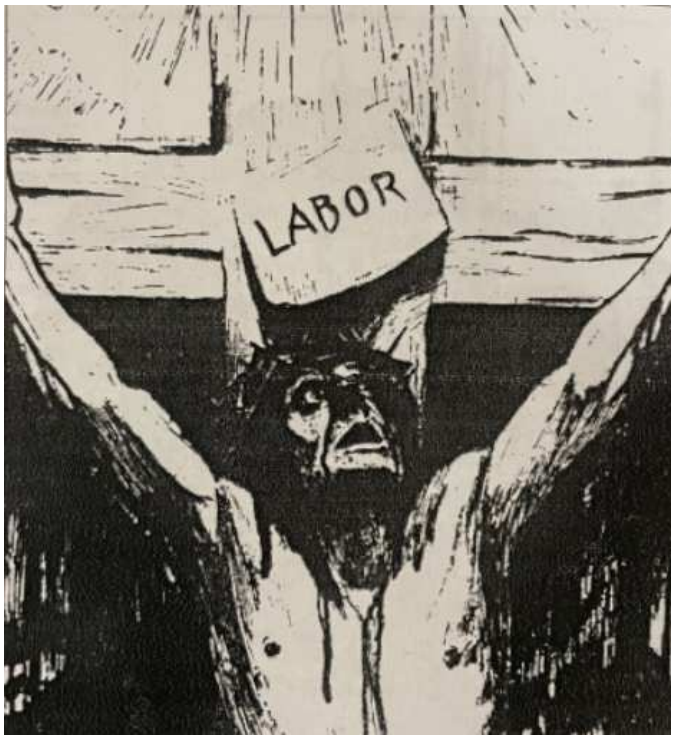

Figure 4.36: "The Crucifixion of Labor," *Appeal to Reason* (December 30, 1913).

Conclusion

Concrete sculpture gardens provide the opportunity to examine heroic individualism and its influence on shaping the art world of the cement age. Being a type of art environment, they might be mistaken as one of many varieties of intuitively constructed visionary art works. However, when we consider them collectively based on their medium, their coherence comes into focus. Technological advancements in concrete made it possible for people to use concrete in this sculptural manner. Furthermore, the associated marketing campaigns promoting concrete encouraged the artists to see it as more than an industrial or structural material. They learned to see it as an artistic, sculptural, and architectural medium that was especially well-suited for the garden. These among many other historical factors produced a movement of homeowners who transformed their properties into monumental works of art.

By examining their art against an array of historical sources that includes art criticism, local newspapers, popular magazines, and industrial journals, I have shown that the works constitute an art movement - defined by a shared time, medium, place, and culture. I also have challenged existing categorizations of concrete sculpture gardens, which tend to perpetuate narratives of artistic genius and individuality. Categorization and definitions are designed to help us communicate and connect ideas, but they can also limit our vision and interpretation as in this case where a body of art is frequently misunderstood by its association with outsider and folk art. In reality, concrete sculpture gardens resist categorization because they are thoroughly multiple categories at once. They are a product of modernism, the cement age, gardening and home improvement, craft and even religious tradition.

Even in their time, though, the artists began to categorize and describe the artworks in terms of exceptionalism. Perhaps they did not use the term visionary, but their own words

mirrored the idea of artistic genius and individuality propagated by the history of Western art as represented by art institutions and famous modern artists. Homeowners of the American midwest argued that they possessed a sort of birthright to the world of art by claiming their creative disposition and individuality in a way that was in keeping with the ideals of the era. They presented their artworks as proof of their creative heroics and of the power of their vision and determination. The narrative that promoted their work as a product of grit and individual expression was shared throughout the art world at the time - and has a lineage spanning the history of Western art. While the qualifications for being an artistic great was often reserved for the elite, concrete sculpture garden artists contributed to redefining the heroic in ordinary terms.

Art institutions reinforced the artists' ambitions by validating their work before a national audience. Art world collectors, dealers, galleries, and institutions played a major role in defining the self-taught artist as a heroic laborer. Recently, Katherine Jentelson produced a reception history of self-taught artists, arguing that Federal Art Project director Holgar Cahill's promotion of self-taught artists through exhibitions and publications treated self-taught artists as heroes within the American cultural myth of exceptionalism. By defining the artists as heroes, he set them as examples of the American dream.[362] Self-taught artists fit the era's interest in work that seemed to follow an American tradition and yet demonstrated innate expression and ability.

Preceding Cahill, art world insiders like the critic Frank Crowninshield wrote about the self-taught artist John Kane, describing the artist as a pseudo messiah: "They had sought him in the schools and academics, among the discoveries of the art critics and the protégés of the rich…The found him poor, unknown, unlettered; past sixty-seven; in broken health; without

[362] Katherine Jentleson, *Gatecrashers: The Rise of the Self-Taught Artist in America* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020), 11.

friends or influence; the votary of no school, and the pupil of no master."[363] According to Crowninshield, Kane's work was important because he and his work upended expectations of what constituted an artist and artwork. His story reinforced the "genius narrative": that an artist have a predisposition, face adversity, and overcome adversity through the production of their body of artwork. Kane served as the ideal hero. He was an artist who produced a large body of work, despite his limited resources and social position.

Crowninshield's statement resonated with the desire to discover something pure out of humble origins, qualifying Kane as a messiah of American art and a hero fit to visualize the elusive epitome of American culture. No doubt, the exhibitions of self-taught artists' work signaled the value for artists outside of the mainstream and encouraged them to build a name for themselves. The Museum of Modern Art's *Masters of Popular Painting: Modern Primitives of Europe and America* and *Modern Primitives: Artists of the People* and publications such as Sidney Janis's *They Taught Themselves: American Primitive Painters of the 20th Century* (1942) taught the public to value alternative sources of artistic output, reinforcing interest in artwork that registered as folk or of the people.[364]

According to the press release, *Masters of Popular Painting* was the largest exhibition of the 1937-38 season and featured one hundred and fifty paintings by self-taught artists such as

[363] Frank Crowninshield, "Forward," in *Sky Hooks: The Autobiography of John Kane,* ed. Marie McSwigan (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1938), 10.
[364] Museum of Modern Art, *Masters of Popular Painting: Modern Primitives of Europe and America* Exh. #76 (April 27–July 24, 1938); Museum of Modern Art, *Modern Primitives: Artists of the People* Exh. #153 (October 21, 1941–April 30, 1944); Sidney Janis, *The Taught Themselves* (New York: The Dial Press, 1942).

Henri Rousseau, Horace Pippen, and John Kane.[365] When describing the purpose of the exhibition, the director, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., observed the recent seriousness with which the public had begun to grant folk and self-taught work and noted that the exhibition intended to promote the artwork, "not as folk art, but as the work of painters of marked talent and consistently distinct personality."[366] Nearly six years later, the Museum of Modern Art acquired ten new works by self-taught artists and curated the exhibition *Modern Primitives* as a way of promoting what they called "the finest and most representative Museum collection of its kind in the world."[367] The exhibition featured work by Morris Hirshfield and André Bauchant, who Barr praised for their manner of painting a "straightforward, innocent and convincing vision of the common man, ignorant of art or unaffected by it."[368] Including a preface by Barr, Janis's *They Taught Themselves: American Primitive Painters of the 20th Century* introduced the "critical innocence" of the self-taught artist with monographs on thirty different artists including Kane and Hirshfield.

By highlighting artists of diverse socio-economic, gender, and racial backgrounds, these efforts made the art world more inclusive,[369] but they also associated characteristics such as innocence and humbleness with artists promoted as "of the people," focusing on their

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[365] The Museum of Modern Art, *Press Release*, April 27, 1938: 1. Accessed July 1, 2021 https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_325111.pdf?_ga=2.11877559.2078561612.1627672489-1464130159.1627672489.

[366] Museum of Modern Art, *Masters of Popular Painting: Modern Primitives of Europe and America* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1938), 9.

[367] Museum of Modern Art, "Museum of Modern Art Opens New Series of Galleries with Ten New Acquisitions of Modern Primitives," Press Release (October 16, 1941)

[368] Alfred H. Barr, Jr. quoted in Museum of Modern Art, "Museum of Modern Art Opens New Series of Galleries with Ten New Acquisitions of Modern Primitives," Press Release (October 16, 1941).

[369] Jentleson, *Gatecrashers*.

backgrounds as laborers and workers.[370] While famous self-taught painters like "Grandma" Moses and Horace Pippen attracted the interest of exhibiting institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art, other artists built their art around themselves and their homes, drawing on the nationalistic affinity for an art of the people while accessing national audiences thanks to increasing mobility and domestic travel.

Contemporary to Janis's advocacy of art by the people, Smith and Rusch actively participated in constructing their work as unique and expressively authentic when they said "It's gotta be in ya." By working through their individuality in art, they claimed a space within the history of heroic individualism. Their works offered physical evidence of their creative ideas. Their determination to create despite what many would acknowledge are obstacles—limited education, training, and monetary resources—showed they were resourceful and innovative. The monumental scale of their endeavors proved their grit and determination.

The concrete sculpture gardens are evidence of a shared vision far more than they are of an individual vision. They are all monumental in scale and developed over the course of years. They utilize reinforced concrete with embedded surface ornamentation. They incorporate elements from popular gardening, especially rock gardening. The artworks share the same subjects, favoring the heroes of American mythology and Christian religion. But, most importantly, they share common ideals that are representative of a predominantly white and masculine vision of creativity.

Concrete sculpture garden artists fit the quintessential model of the American outsider. They translated the cultural heroics inspired by the ideals of a national mythology which cast the

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[370] Museum of Modern Art, *Masters of Popular Painting,* 95.

rail splitter and the carpenter's son as the model's of heroic individualism. Encouraged by everything from popular "how-to" articles and national exhibitions, these homeowners learned to see themselves as artists and thus narrated their own lives and work in the terms of artistic heroics.

Appendix: Concrete Sculpture Gardens in the American Midwest

Illinois

Joe LaFleur (1902-1976), *LaFleur Grotto*, Byron, Illinois, 1954-1969.

William Arthur "Bill" Notzke (1891-1991), *Jubilee Rock Garden*, Jubilee, Illinois, 1930s.

Arthur and Elizabeth Martin and Ed Seitz, *Rockome Gardens*, Arcola Illinois, c. 1937 – 1950s.

Lucille Logiodice, *Lucille Logiodice Rock Garden*, Elmwood Park Illinois, c. 1950.

Indiana

Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1896.

Saint Mary of the Woods Grotto, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1928.

Father Phillip Ottavi, *Geode Grotto,* Jasper, Indiana, 1960s.

Father Philip Ottavi and Father Thaddeus Sztuczko, *The Providence Home Geode Grotto,* Jasper, Indiana, c. 1960-1970.

Iowa

E. O. "Bud" Allen, *Mini Grotto*, Harris, Iowa, 1952-1957.

Madeline Buol (1902-1986), *Madeline Buol Grotto*, Dubuque, Iowa, 1943-1957.

Father Paul Dobberstein (1872-1954), *Crucifixion Grotto*, Wesley, Iowa, 1925.

Father Paul Dobberstein (1872-1954), *Liberty Fountain,* Humboldt, Iowa, dedicated 1918.

Father Paul Dobberstein (1872-1954), *Grotto of the Redemption*, West Bend, Iowa, 1912-1954. (Extant)

Father Paul Dobberstein (1872-1954), *Immaculate Conception Grotto*, Carroll, Iowa.

Paul Friedlein (c. 1887-1984), *Jolly Ridge*, Guttenberg, Iowa, c. 1950s-1970s.

William Lightner (d. 1968), *Our Mother of Sorrows Grotto*, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1929-1941.

Our Lady of Grace Grotto, West Burlington, Iowa, 1929-1931.

Bartlett Joshua Palmer (1882-1961), *A Little Bit O'Heaven*, Davenport, Iowa, 1921-1961.

Martha Timm (1891-1984), *Martha Timm Memorial Rock Garden*, New Hampton, Iowa.

Kansas

Florence Deeble (1900-1999), *Florence Deeble's Rock Garden*, Lucas, Kansas, 1935-1999.

Samuel P. Dinsmoor (1843-1932), *Garden of Eden*, Lucas, Kansas, 1907-1928.

Roy and Clara Miller, *Miller's Park*, Lucas, Kansas, c. 1920s-1960s.

Glenn Stark, *Untitled*, Kingman KS,

Michigan

Silvio Barile, *Silvio's Italian American Historical Museum*, Redford MI.

Minnesota

Fritz Adler Rock Garden, Salvation Army camp at Lake Lucerne, Minnesota, 1930-39.

John Christensen (d. 1939), *Christensen's Rock Garden* (*Itasca Rock Garden*), Albert Lea, Minnesota, 1925-1938.

Jack Ellsworth (d. 1974), *The Ellsworth Rock Gardens*, Voyageurs National Park, International Falls, Minnesota, 1940s-1965.

Untitled rock garden by railroad mail carrier, Utica, Minnesota, 1935.

W.J. Jensen Home Rock Garden, Minneapolis, Minnesota c. 1932.

E. C. Johnson, *Johnson's Rock Garden*, Hendricks, Minnesota, c. 1940s.

John Koher, *Dinkeyland*, St Paul, Minnesota, begun 1940s.

T. H. and Halvor Landsverk, *Landsverk Concrete and Wood Carving Sculpture Exhibi*t, location unknown, c 1939.

Mrs. M. E. Nuntzman Home Rock Garden, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1935.

Joe H.P. Pederson, *Gas Station and Rock Garden Sculptures,* Arco, Minnesota, begun 1936.

Carl Peterson (1869-1969), *Carl Peterson Sculpture Garden,* St James, Minnesota, begun early 1920s.

Joe Suilmann, *Joe Suilmann's Grotto and Museum*, Wabasha, Minnesota.

Arnold Vogt (c. 1885 – 1955) and Hugo Vogt (c.1880 – 1956), *Ak Sar Ben*, Aitkin, Minnesota, 1918 – 1930s.

Louis Wippich, *Molehill Rock Garden*, Sauk Rapids, Minnesota, 1949-1973.

Missouri

Larry Baggett (d. 2003), *Trail of Tears Memorial*, Arlington, Missouri.

Black Madonna Shrine and Grottos, Eureka, Missouri.

Joe Sandullo, *Small Concrete Objects*, St Louis, Missouri.

Ohio

Cassius "Doc" Hettinger (d. 1955), *Garden of Eden*, Toledo, Ohio, after 1919.

Harry George "Ben" Hartman (1883-1944), *Harman Rock Garden*, Springfield, Ohio, 1932-1944.

"Sir" Harry D. Andrews, *Chateau Laroche* or *Loveland Castle,* Loveland, Ohio, c. 1920-1980.

South Dakota

Father Scheier, *St Peter's Rock Garden*, Farmer South Dakota, completed 1933.

Wisconsin

Henry Diefenbach (1897-1967), *Untitled,* Algoma, Wisconsin, 1959-1965.

Nick Engelbert (1881-1962), *Grandview*, Hollandale, Wisconsin, c. 1930-1960.

Grotto of the Holy Family, St. Joseph, Wisconsin.

Mollie Jenson, *Mollie Jenson's Zoo and Museum*, River Falls Wisconsin.

August Klatt (1877 – 1951), *North Prairie Houses,* North Prairie, Wisconsin, 1930-1938.

John and Bertha Mehringer, *Fountain City Rock Garden,* Fountain City, Wisconsin, 1930s.

Herman Rusch (1885-1985), *Prairie Moon Museum and Garden* (c. 1959-1974) Cochrane, Wisconsin.

Fred Schlosstein, *Untitled Miniatures,* Cochrane, Wisconsin, 1930s.

Fred Smith (1886-1976), *Wisconsin Concrete Park*, Philips, Wisconsin, 1948-1964.

Stewart Smith, *Stewart Smith Concrete Sculpture Garden*, Dunn, Wisconsin, c. 1950.

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