

THE ANNIHILATION OF TIME AND SPACE

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[I. Spiraling Out]

A travel book, at its purest, is addressed to those who do not plan to follow the traveler at all, but who require the exotic anomalies, wonders, and scandals of the literary form romance which their own place or time cannot entirely supply.

— Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*

The desert is... an ecstatic critique of culture, an ecstatic form of disappearance... [W]ith the extermination of the desert Indians, an even earlier stage than that of anthropology became visible: a mineralogy, a geology, a siderality, an inhuman facticity, an aridity that drives out the artificial scraps of culture, a silence that exists nowhere else.

— Jean Baudrillard, *America*

After stuffing my car with supplies, I hopped on the road to Utah mentally prepared to put in whatever work was necessary. During the drive, I even managed to conjure up a vision of myself engaged in the ultimate in art tourism awkwardness: clambering around the high desert landscape with a bottle of water in one hand and tripod in the other, there I would be, my head bobbing on the horizon in search of a masterpiece, and my poor, sweaty, chafed neck craning under the weight of excessive AV media bags and amateur daypacking. After all, venturing to see Robert Smithson's landmark earthwork, Spiral Jetty, has become the de facto embodiment of the Land Art pilgrimage, replete with tales of woe as much as epiphany. Over the years, the mythic creature has thwarted several sojourners' attempts to witness it due to faulty directions, submersion beneath the Great Salt Lake, or simply bad luck.

In reality, I descended onto the iconic site in an age of GPS and smart phones. Armed with a YouTube video showing the entire route from highway to artwork in time-lapse, a newly re-graded road, and panoply of maps at my disposal, finding the renowned artwork nowadays is so easy a monkey could do it. In a cheap gesture to said facility, I was tempted to make a status update perched upon the salt-encrusted monument to entropy but was spared by a lack of reception. Further testament to leisurely access was driven home by my decision to leave a water bottle in the car, which rested in a gravel turnout that both dead-ended the road and functioned as a default parking lot. Around lunchtime, what appeared to be a group of college students casually laid down a blanket and folding chairs directly next to their sedan with an air of familiarity and comfort akin to tailgating. Their leashed miniature dog furtively peered out at passerby before alternately darting behind a radio, pile of snacks and Styrofoam cooler. Speaking to a fellow art pilgrim, who trekked from NYC in hopes of kick-starting her dissertation, I sensed a palpable state of disappointment that the journey had been so trouble-free. Just over her shoulder, a Mormon family with five girls timidly pecked at the water's edge with shoe-covered feet before drifting back up the fifty yards to their mini-

van. The mother of the group explained that they had lived nearby their entire lives but had never heard of the infamous artwork until the Salt Lake City Tribune ran a story the day before about the DIA Center for the Arts losing their lease on the land to the state of Utah due to clerical error and an unpaid administrative fee of \$250. In the event that future permission might be limited, they decided a Friday afternoon excursion was warranted.

Interacting with the Jetty itself was an über-conscious balancing act between perception and comprehension, the sort of thing one would expect with any framed art experience. However, the vastness of the frame at Rozel Point combined with years of built-up art geek anticipation begged for a sense of transcendence that, of course, never materialized. I had a feeling this would happen even before I arrived, but I also hoped somewhere deep down that the Jetty would be granted immunity from the weight of over-inflated expectations. After exhausting any desire to take more photos or re-enter the water, I sat back and watched the art faithful and day tourists alike congregate at the Jetty's base to pack salted foam into plastic containers before I headed back to the car to empty my water bottle and do the same.



Photo of Spiral Jetty in July 2011 taken by author

Art critic Michael Kimmelman has written extensively on earthworks and notes how, "... the time spent looking and thinking about a work is often proportionate to the effort made to get to it." By that assertion, traveling to the Spiral Jetty gives prospective visitors ample resources to ratchet up expectations, and mine from the experience later. Not surprisingly, the abundant writing available on Smithson's monument provides a parallel archive of expeditionary narratives and psychoanalytic discoveries. Borrowing the tropes of travel writing, the art travelogue that frequently emerges uses the Jetty and other earthworks as foils to interrogate the self as much as art. As qualitative measures of promise become vetted through quantitative tallies of filled gas tanks and booked airfares, a cumulative receipt of 'getting there' becomes blended together with the embodied and psychological experience of uninhabited vistas, internal monologues and basalt boulders.

This form of genre writing becomes especially prominent during the thirty year period in which the 1500 foot long by 15 foot wide rock formation was swallowed up by the Great Salt Lake and no longer visible. (Having been built during a particularly dry period, the Jetty prominently appeared as a continuous extension from dry land into the lake before water levels rose and submerged it within two years of its completion). With the monument existing solely as a memory in film, photographs and other models of "non-sites," Smithson went so far as to make claims on how one should experience the trip between the referential image (photo of site) and the actual location of the Jetty. By pronouncing that, "everything between the two sites could become physical metaphorical material devoid of natural meanings and realistic assumptions," Smithson acknowledges the trip's "fictitious" nature. For if everything from poetic dissonance to offbeat characters can come into play in the overall experience of the work, then the trip itself becomes "invented, devised, [and] artificial."² The recorded journey becomes a figment of the imagination.

It is a truism to say that travel writing, like travel itself, is generated by nostalgia.

— Patrick Holland & Graham Huggan, *Perspectives on Travel Writing*



Stills from pirated YouTube videos of the film *Spiral Jetty*, 1972

Anyone who has seen Smithson's 16mm portrait of Spiral Jetty or read any of his writing on it, knows that the artwork's documentation traffics in romantic allusions to time travel in spades. Incorporating lens flares and swirling shots from a helicopter overhead, the film inter-splices images of the artist scrambling over the rock coil alongside natural history museum footage and close-ups of maps and pages scattered into the wind. Prior to Smithson's fatal plane crash three years after completing Spiral Jetty, he characterized the film as a "time machine," which includes point-of-view imagery trucking down the sole dusty road out to the site.³ To this day, one is able to retrace the path Smithson took toward his signature work in a way virtually unchanged since the film was made in 1970. In the Spiral Jetty, a nostalgic desire to flatten time and space runs rampant.

Nonetheless, art historian Caroline A. Jones points out that Smithson had his share of critics in his day who compared his rhetoric of cultural timelessness to the primitivist fascinations held by the modernists his work sought distance from. Jones recalls: "Jackson Pollock's desires to be 'in' his painting, a shamanistic ambition related to his admiration for the Navaho sand painters of the Southwest," as well as, "Barnett Newman's reminiscence of standing on the Indian burial mounds in Ohio, where the feeling was that you're in here, out there was chaos..." Both of these Modernist artists sought nothing less than an escape from the European studio sign-system through these alternative 'primitivist' projections.⁴

Not coincidentally, anthologies of the Land Art movement often attribute the desire to work in the natural environment on the part of Smithson and other earthwork artists as one seeking dialogue with a more vast sense of space and time: one that would not simply be outdoors, but would really be outside of the dominant arts infrastructure and its network of saleable distribution. In

seeking a space excused from the conditions occupied by the typical restraints of the art world, a turn toward the land provided an implicit sense of freedom, openness and perpetuity. However, within the framework of the American landscape, space has to first be evacuated of political memory before it can be perceived as transparent, open or timeless. In other words, a whole host of muted histories and cultural signs must be forgotten in order to see space as visible on said terms. Smithson would hardly disagree as his writing reveals a purposeful awareness of the embedded past of his chosen site even as his prose remains lyrically opaque.

In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Susan Stewart describes nostalgia as being inherently utopic, as it references a past that only has ideological reality. In her words, nostalgia seeks "an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin."⁵ Seen in this light, a longing to experience the Spiral Jetty in a fashion that mirrors its grandiose representation can also be seen as a desire to step back and revisit time like space, to go back to its place of origin: a time where operating outside the dominant power structure, both in terms of art and culture at large, was still seen as a realistic possibility. In retrospect, after witnessing the ease in which ephemera and even work about the critique of institutions has come to represent the art institution itself, this desire expressed by Smithson and others to operate outside certain extensions of cultural power appears symptomatic of the late 60s and early 70s counter-culture of resistance — an ideological position that seems more fraught to occupy today despite its continued attractions.

Writing on the genre of travel literature to develop in the mid- and late nineteenth century, historian Ali Behdad explains that European travelers to the Orient during this period had come to the party late. By this time, the Orient had already lost its exoticism and, if anything, had been transformed into a sign of Western hegemony. As a result, these belated travel writers "could not help but experience a sense of displacement in time and space, an experience that produced either a sense of disorientation and loss or an obsessive urge to discover..."⁶

Performing as if like a time machine, the form of travel writing to develop by these orientalist undergoes a suspension of disbelief as continued attempts are made to write from the vantage point of pioneers. I can hardly judge. I too had come to the Spiral Jetty in search of discovery only to arrive late as well. I had hoped to find a sense of authenticity in the monument that transcended time, however, one could argue that the work still performed on cue.

Acting as a conceptual failsafe, Smithson's use of entropy (as a barometric thermometer of time, energy and cultural dissipation) to explain his artworks allows the Jetty to remain relevant even if the work is never found or disappears before our very sight. When explaining his inclusion of shots taken from a natural history museum in his film of the Jetty, Smithson described wanting to depict the earth's history, which to him was "... at times like a story recorded in a book each page of which is torn into small pieces. Many of the pages and some of the pieces of each page are missing."⁷ Visible or not, monuments like Spiral Jetty operate to remind us that buried histories surround us like scattered pages — in the perception of open vistas and piles of rocks, in the to and fro of our streets and highways, and in the commemorated landmarks that may be real, symbolic or completely fictitious.

[II. Settling In]

Anyone that hopes to find the Spiral Jetty has to head toward another monument first — The Golden Spike National Historic Site. Situated in Promontory, Utah, the National Park Service center marks the location where the first transcontinental railroad was joined in 1869 as well as the departure point for the only navigable road out to Robert Smithson's artwork fifteen miles away. Not surprisingly, there is a much broader public investment in this watershed moment in our nation's history than Smithson's landmark. However, any time spent in the center reveals that visitors en route to the Jetty tend to see the officially designated national historic site as a final pit stop: the last chance to use the bathroom, fill up water bottles and ask for directions. There are plenty of exceptions to be sure, however, clearly not enough to shake the perception of one park center volunteer who revealed his nickname for the Jetty: "the local nuisance." I don't think this antagonism runs both ways as Smithson himself partially chose the site at Rozel Point for its evidence of a Silurian technological past.⁸ Nonetheless, both of these monuments clearly operate in separate spheres of influence and cater to different audiences that for the most part show little interest in each other. The center's bookstore does have one Robert Smithson book. Other than that, it is all railroad history, including documents impossible to find anywhere else such as the script used for re-enactments of the Golden Spike ceremony conducted on site several times each year.

The re-enactment itself mimics the hoopla and fanfare that took place on May 10, 1869, the date of the original driving of the Last Spike at Promontory Summit when the Central Pacific railroad from the West connected with the Union Pacific railroad from the East. The occasion was telegraphed to cities across the country using wires laid alongside the same tracks that had just been completed, thus making the ceremony one of the first nationwide live media events in history. Upon closer inspection, it is here, in the perception of the railroads and spectacle of its historic representation that another *time machine* reveals itself: one that predates the Spiral Jetty by one hundred years.

Many of our modern clichés about the impact of technology, particularly about the consequences of the internet and telecommunications, first appeared as clichés about nineteenth-century railroads, particularly the transcontinental railroads in North America.

— Richard White, *Transcontinental Railroads: Compressing Time and Space*

Written accounts gleaned from newspaper headlines and articles of the day frequently characterized the dawn of transcontinental transportation as the inevitable *annihilation of time and space*. As great distances now collapsed in terms of the time it took to get there, space began to be thought of and discussed in reciprocally contracted terms. Commenting on the Atlantic cable and transcontinentals in 1869, Margaret Irvin Carrington's writes: "[W]ith only a single

wire to underlie the Pacific, the whole earth will become as a whispering gallery, wherein all nations, by one electric pulsation, may throb in unison, and the continent shall tremble with the rumbling of wheels that swiftly and without interruption or delay transport its gospel and commerce."⁹

For the first time, space and time could be thought of in terms of simultaneity through an instantaneous electric pulsation. This new orientation in the traditional space-time continuum brought tremendous awe, but also anxiety over the shift in customary ways of life, including the seemingly unrestricted circulation of capital and ideology that was not lost on Carrington. However, these concerns ultimately gave way to the "[u]topian promise implicit in the establishment of speed as a new principle of public life."¹⁰ As railroad construction reshaped the landscape by literally blasting straight through it, the concept of motion that had always been determined in relation to the absolute power of nature was now a function of mechanical power.¹¹

Eventually, the railroad and its subsequent stops became the universal means by which people began to measure time and distance; and, as result, a sort of chronopolitics developed. Time itself, which had always been measured as a function of local solar time, was now forced to adapt itself to a unified, mechanical standard as the demand for consistency in train scheduling superseded the socio-cultural framework of time that had stood for millennia. In fact, it was the railroads that initiated the use of standard time and time zones in 1883 that was only later enacted into law by the US government years later. Many people were initially resistant to this concept of time. In 1900, half of the citizens of Detroit refused to follow the city council rule to be on Standard Time, thus forcing the law to be rescinded and local solar time temporarily restored.¹² However, this battle would later be lost as quickly as the treaties of American Indians were violated to make way for the railroad.

To this day, the legacy of the transcontinental railroad can be seen in our conception of spatial planning and development along corridors of traffic and transportation. As the new rail line sliced through the country like a painted vector in abstract space, a new central axis of orientation remapped traditional distinctions of North and South. Gridded land plots were laid out and distributed equidistantly from the rail line like a spine. And, roads and service depots began to sprout up and develop in relation to the distance between stations along the rail rather than according to the landscape or traditional markers. Excerpts from nineteenth century authors critical of this experiential shift in travel and tradition read as if lifted from a J.G. Ballard novel: Scenery is reduced to spectacle, the previously human-scale continuity of land is contracted into inorganic departure and arrival points, and the traveler's body becomes an anonymous parcel or mechanical projectile.¹³ Of course, it was only a matter of time before the train ushered in the age of the large-scale industrial accident as well. Where it would take a whole new generation of writers to romanticize the railway, an explosion of panoramic landscape painting paralleled the expansion of the transcontinental railroad as new vistas and vantages were now rendered by artists in their full glory.¹⁴



John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872

Culling from park rangers, local residents, and volunteers pulled from the audience, a party of participants assembles every Saturday between May and August at the Golden Spike National Historic Site to don periodic garb and relive history. Reading from scripts and riding on replica trains built to within a quarter inch of the originals, re-enactors perform the original ceremony as captured by newspapers and memoirs. As expected, the re-enacted version of history appears playful and dramatized for entertainment's sake. However, as it turns out, the original Last Spike ceremony was an equally unstable performance of historical theatre in its own right.

Several notable dignitaries made the trip to commemorate the transcontinental feat, which is considered by many to be the greatest technological achievement of the nineteenth century. Representing the Central Pacific from the West coast was the railroad's president and governor of California, Leland Stanford, who later founded Stanford University. Stanford had originally picked a different engine, Antelope, to be used for the ceremony in Utah. However, it had been deemed aesthetically unfit on the way to Promontory when it was struck by a giant Ponderosa cut down by unsuspecting loggers. Things had not gone any smoother for the representatives of the East. The vice-president of the Union Pacific, Dr. Thomas Durant arrived two days late to the "wedding of the rails" as his train had been stopped en route to the summit and shackled to the tracks by approximately 400 disgruntled, laid off railroad workers who had not been paid in four months. Threatened with his life should he wire for soldiers instead, Durant was forced to have \$80,000 brought out to the workers on site before the train was freed and allowed to proceed. As a result, all of the ceremonial dates on the pre-engraved spikes and rail tie used in the ceremony are labeled, May 8, 1869, two days before the event actually transpired.

Exact accounts of everything that transpired that momentous day are a little shaky as the major reporters assigned to cover the historic event went home when word got out about Durant's delay. Nonetheless, it is clear that in the pomp and circumstance, Stanford was to have the honor of driving the last spike into the equally plush rosewood tie, which would literally and symbolically connect the East with West and unite the entire country. Cast in 17k gold and advertised in posters leading up to the event, the Golden Spike was one of four spikes used in the ceremony, and was eventually tapped into place by Stanford after being pre-fitted into a drilled hole. The final fourth spike was of plain lead but wired to the transcontinental telegraph line so that the entire country would hear the blows as it was driven into place. Stanford and Durant both missed the final ordinary spike as neither man had been accustomed to the full swing required for such work, but nonetheless, the live telegrapher on hand typed, "D-O-N-E," sending word to cities across the continent and prompting parties to erupt in the streets. As citizens celebrated the national achievement akin to putting men on the moon, an anonymous railroad worker was called forward to drive the final spike. Soon thereafter as Durant and Stanford retired

to their cars, the remaining ceremonial spikes and tie were removed for fear of theft and replaced by a final set of spikes and common tie. It is now believed the final workers to complete this task were of Chinese descent, and therefore, the final spike to be driven in this landmark event was actually rendered by an undocumented "John Chinaman." Needless to say, this part of the historical record is markedly absent in any re-enactment of the day.



Famous Andrew J. Russell photograph of Golden Spike ceremony, May 10, 1869, Promontory Summit, Utah

The Golden Spike ceremony is symptomatic of how the Chinese have been written out of the historical depiction of Western settlement in general, perhaps as they didn't quite fit into the model of Manifest Destiny. Much has already been written about the role of Chinese as a source of labor in the mining and railroad industries, which at one point comprised 80% of the workforce of the Central Pacific. However, as historian Sandra Koelle has noted, much of our conception of the Western pioneer is based on a boom or bust economy model.¹⁵ Once mining claims were thought to be exhausted of their peak productivity, Euro-American miners moved on in search of yet more untapped natural resources, seldom staying in one location for long. Yet, only when these used claims were considered of little value were they then made available to Chinese miners who would stay and mine the "played out" claims for decades. Thus, settling into communities of the West for markedly longer durations than most of their white Euro-American counterparts. Prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act and other discriminatory measures that would eventually drive them out of the region, the Chinese made up a quarter of the population of Idaho. In fact, until 1959, evidence of this former presence could still be seen in the form of a dilapidated building in Lewiston, Idaho. Formerly the site of a Chinese Masonic lodge, the building's contents were eventually packed up into storage and the structure razed as the *Lewiston Morning Tribune* took the place of residents that had long since departed.



Old Chinese Masonic Lodge, 1959. Lewiston, Idaho. Courtesy Idaho State Historical Society.

The inventory of materials and man-hours frequently cited in histories of the transcontinental reads like an earthwork artist's wet dream. At the end of April, an army of Chinese laborers spearheaded by Irish crew leaders famously laid 10 miles of track in a single day, which included: "25,800 ties, 3520 rails averaging 560 pounds each, 55,000 spikes, 14,080 bolts, and other material making a total of 4,462,000 pounds."¹⁶ However, within 35 years, the site formerly regarded as one of the most noted locations in the country had been reduced to a historical footnote. Having found a more direct route over the Great Salt Lake, the railroad no longer passed over Promontory Point. By 1909, both of the original locomotives on hand for the historic Last Spike ceremony had been scrapped for \$1,000 each. By 1942, the rails themselves had been pulled up and salvaged as part of the war effort's need for steel. Today, the replica trains that are used for the historical re-enactments of the Golden Spike ceremony do not connect to the West and East like their predecessors and act as disembodied parts of a larger history. In 1994, a small clipping from the *Sacramento Bee* dated 1869 was discovered that revealed that the replica trains, which had been painted by hired Disney animators in the 1970s, were not historically accurate in their dramatic color scheme.¹⁷ At the time, only black and white photographs had been used for historical reference, which allowed active imagination to take over. But, they could hardly be blamed. Like a patina, the historical truth had been painted on retroactively according to the records that were preserved and made available at the time.

[III. Digging Up]

Desires are already memories. — Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

In *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians and the American Landscape*, historian Jared Farmer notes how our scenery has, for better or worse, always matched the history of our society. In the early colonization and territorial expansion of the United States, the mapping, naming and renaming of natural landmarks became a direct manifestation of the military and economic power wielded by settlers and government allies alike. The very making of a National Map required the tactical unmaking of many indigenous geographies, and, in some cases, the complete erasure of native landmarks from public perceptibility altogether. For example, in the Pacific Northwest, the "Bonneville Dam, the Dallis Dam, and Grand Coulee Dam — defining features of the modern Columbia River — replaced landmark fishing sites: the Cascades, Celilo Falls, and Kettle Falls."¹⁸ Unfortunately, traveling along our highways and byways will not help one visualize how this form of geographic power transmuted into the smooth paved surfaces we drive on today. The history of our nation's transportation network is annotated through periodic signposts and kiosks, which in their aesthetic and textual sterility register as accents to the panoramic.

Even in less ominous examples, it becomes clear that landmarks do not by default endure over time. Like other contingent objects, landmarks have life-cycles. They are privy to the same whims and tastes of the dominant culture as any art object despite any sense of grandeur or physical inevitability they might presumably hold. This point is driven home when looking at the

change in transport technologies over the years, which subsequently not only altered long-standing routes of passage but perceptions of culturally relevant landscape itself. "As the primary mode of long-distance travel shifted from animals to railroads, and from railroads to automobiles, whole sequences of roadside landmarks became unfastened." For example, "Utah's Castle Gate once consisted of two pillars on either side of the canyon of the Price River. For late nineteenth-century railroad tourists, this 'natural wonder' marked the entrance/exit to Utah. By 1966 the rock formation had become so unimportant that the Utah Department of Transportation razed one side of it to make room for a wider highway."¹⁹ As it stands today, the possibility remains for a cartographer "to create an alternative map of the United States composed entirely of lost places and phantom place-names."²⁰ One such place to start would be with the phantom existing on and through U.S. Highway 12, stretching between Lewiston, Idaho, and Lolo, Montana.

As part of the Northwest Scenic Byway, the route of U.S. Highway 12, otherwise known as the Lewis-Clark Highway, is nationally recognized for its photogenic and historic qualities. Along its trajectory one can witness an equal distribution of signpost real estate toward its storied past: the 4-week Lewis & Clark Long Camp of 1806, subsequent encampment by missionary Asa Smith, who spent 2 years trying to convince natives they needed Protestantism before he left for Hawaii, as well as the attack on Looking Glass, who soon thereafter joined Chief Joseph and other Nez Perce Indians in their flight from the homeland their ancestors had occupied for centuries. Still, one fact-laden marker remains so conspicuously absent as to render the road an amnesiac monument — there is no indicator as to how the highway itself was built.



Construction sign for Lewis-Clark Highway near Kooskia, Idaho about 1943. Courtesy University of Idaho Library.

If one were to travel to Kooskia, Idaho today, one would find nothing that mentions the Canyon Creek Prison Camp, or Kooskia Internment Camp for that matter. Only a few concrete slabs and clearings in the forest give any indication that the area near milepost 104 on Highway 12 in Kooskia was ever previously inhabited. However, the Lewis-Clark Highway was built by incarcerated laborers who lived there — first by federal prisoners, and later by citizens of Japanese ancestry who occupied the site in a prison-cum-internment camp during World War II.

In the 1930s, the government had begun operating satellite prison camps to help with national construction projects. By the 1940s, federal dollars were tight for these camps as all funds needed to be funneled toward the war effort. One of the most noted locations in the country had been reduced to a historical footnote. Having found a more direct route over the Great Salt Lake, the railroad no longer passed over Promontory Point. By 1909, both of the original locomotives on hand for the historic Last Spike ceremony had been scrapped for \$1,000 each. By 1942, the rails themselves had been pulled up and salvaged as part of the war effort's need for steel. Today, the replica trains that are used for the historical re-enactments of the Golden Spike ceremony do not connect to the West and East like their predecessors and act as disembodied parts of a larger history. In 1994, a small clipping from the *Sacramento Bee* dated 1869 was discovered that revealed that the replica trains, which had been painted by hired Disney animators in the 1970s, were not historically accurate in their dramatic color scheme.¹⁷ At the time, only black and white photographs had been used for historical reference, which allowed active imagination to take over. But, they could hardly be blamed. Like a patina, the historical truth had been painted on retroactively according to the records that were preserved and made available at the time.

While there already exists significant scholarship on the War Relocation Administration (WRA) internment camps of Japanese Americans, including the one at Minidoka, Idaho, the site at Kooskia has largely been forgotten. Run by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for the Justice Department, this road-building project that employed Japanese alien internees was the only one of its kind in the United States. Due to the rules of the Geneva Convention, the internment camp at Kooskia could not be recognized as a forced labor camp. Therefore, the INS had to find Japanese Americans who were already incarcerated in other internment camps that would voluntarily relocate to Kooskia. As an incentive, these volunteers were offered a wage; however, it was negligible and the predominant reasons most gave for volunteering for relocation ranged from: moving closer to family already interned in the Minidoka camp, proving loyalty to the country, avoiding the unfavorable conditions at other WRA camps, or simply escaping the boredom.



Kooskia internee at work about 1943. Courtesy University of Idaho Library.

As there are few survivors of the Kooskia camp still alive, much of the evidence about daily camp life or explanations as to why internees volunteered to come to Kooskia in the first place is limited to written correspondence at the time. Internees were allowed to send and receive mail at Kooskia; however, letters were not to exceed 25 lines; 7 lines were allotted for postcards. All mail correspondence whether in Japanese or English was sent in unsealed envelopes to INS translators in Fort Missoula who acted as censors underlining passages to be deleted. Some of these censors were Korean as they had been forced to learn the language during the Japanese occupation of Korea, however, the primary translator/censor assigned to the Kooskia mail was Japanese American. By order, any text marked for deletion was to be physically cut out from the letter rather than obliterated in ink. Letters which had been earmarked for correction were copied after notations were made and routinely sent to six different offices within INS, which explains how one can still view these documents without alteration in the National Archives in Washington D.C.

In a letter from James Yano, a fisherman from Mexico, his sentiment for explaining why he moved to the Kooskia camp from the Santa Fe incarceration camp is preserved for us, but would have been lost on his intended recipient. His letter, first written in Japanese and then translated, retyped and marked for correction in English, demonstrates that he initially thought Santa Fe:

... was a good place with the mild weather and also very nice views like resort. But the building where we lived was very old.... [The] worst of all was that they didn't get along well in camp. I felt unhappy why they couldn't enjoy happier camp life. Anyway bachelors impressed me as if they were stubborn. Furthermore, foods were not satisfactory. To tell you the truth, when they asked for volunteers, I thought it was a good chance, and got out of there.²²

While it could be easily argued as to whether or not such discretion was even necessary on the part of censors, what is most noteworthy about this particular internee's experience is the nature of Yano's citizenship — he was Mexican. The predominant scholarship on the Kooskia Internment Camp has been by archaeologists, who have accordingly amassed a museological index of material objects that includes the described letters as well as registries that reveal startling facts. It is now known that several Kooskia internees were not American citizens who had volunteered to relocate, but rather Japanese Latin Americans kidnapped from their home countries, such as Peru and Panama (due to fears of them blowing up the Panama Canal). Unearthed documents reveal that the US government colluded with 13 Central and South American countries with the express purpose of exchanging kidnapped citizens for US citizens that were being held captive in Japan. It turns out this was a significant benefit discussed in deliberations on the use value of forming the separate internee labor camp in the first place. In the process of identifying the most suspect Japanese Latin Americans, the US Embassy coordinated with host governments to round up the most prominent and influential citizens, which meant journalists, businessmen and teachers, or the unlucky few taken in the stead of those who bribed their way out.

Of all Latin American countries involved, Peru was the most egregious in its willingness to expunge its citizens of Japanese descent, some of which were Nisei — 2nd generation citizens born in Peru who had never been to Japan, and did not speak Japanese or English but Spanish. Prior to the war, the Peruvian government had already implemented discriminatory labor and immigration practices aimed at Japanese as there had been mounting public resentment against their labor productivity in the agricultural sector during what was otherwise a nationwide depression. After the war, the Latin American detainees in question were effectively state-less as they had been stripped of their passports upon entry into the United States and were therefore illegal aliens (thus, making the US government complicit in war crimes). In the case of Peruvian Japanese, the Peruvian government refused to re-admit its citizens, and of the 2,200 Latin American detainees removed from their home countries and placed in US internment camps, only a fraction were allowed to stay in the United States. Despite Japan not being their home, the remaining detainees were deported to the war-torn country, with some detainees being sent directly to Hiroshima.

Immigrant labor issues played a key role in the growing public resentment that silently underwrote the eventual incarceration and internment of citizens with Japanese ancestry both in the US and abroad. However, the revolving pool of labor hands — in the case of Kooskia, from federal prison workers to Japanese Americans and Latin Americans — has several antecedent and successive examples. After all, the influx of Japanese immigrants into the States at the end of the nineteenth-century was fueled by the labor void created by the restrictions imposed on Chinese through the Chinese Exclusion Act. In turn, when Japanese Americans were incarcerated during WWII, this left a major shortage of agricultural workers, especially in the California beet industry. As a result, the Bracero Program was initiated with the Mexican government in 1942, which allowed Mexican immigrants to come work as seasonal contracted laborers for US growers and ranchers. This program was initially considered a booming success, as evidenced by the 4 million laborers that worked in the US during its activation before poor labor conditions and immigration complaints ushered in its abolishment in 1964.²³ Occasionally, these migrations manifest in existent buildings and landmarks or in the signs of our streets. In other cases, the shuffling of names and registered homes breach the surface through archaeological acts of remembrance.

[IV. Reversing Back]

In April of 1942, Portland residents of Japanese ancestry were given a few days to report to the local Assembly Center before being sent to internment camps six months later. Now the site of the Portland Expo Center, the Pacific International Livestock Exposition buildings were sprayed with white paint and its dirt floors lined with plywood as a means of converting its use for animals to humans. One of Portland's most famous residents, Bill Naito, lived in this "assembly center" before his family was allowed to go to Salt Lake City. At the time, Naito was a sophomore at the now defunct Washington High School, the site of the current TBA Festival.

Only able to carry what could fit in a suitcase, many of these citizens were forced to give up everything else they owned, including homes, businesses, pets and family heirlooms, as there was uncertainty as to if, and when, they would ever return. As a result, "evacuation sales" took place in a matter of days for Japanese American businesses that occupied an area of town known as Japantown, or Chinatown today. Leading up to 1942, there were over one hundred Japanese American businesses in the area, which had come to define a significant portion of the city and its labor force. Only a sliver of former Japantown is visible as Chinese laborers soon replaced the evacuated labor force, just as the Japanese had done when excluded Chinese were forced to abandon the railroads a full generation before.

One of the businesses that operated out of Japantown was Portland's only Japanese and English language newspaper, *Oshu Nippo*, whose editor, Iwao Oyama was immediately targeted by local and government authorities as a threat to national security. In the aftermath of Mr. Oyama's incarceration, all of his publication equipment was seized by the US government, which was later used to produce propaganda for the Navy. After the war, when Oyama moved back to Portland to restart his life and the newspaper that had come to define it, his equipment was never returned. This experience of starting over from scratch was a common experience for Japanese Americans coming back to the Pa-

cific Northwest. Those who returned to Portland found that their homes and businesses had been looted and vandalized, and even headstones marking the graves of Japanese American residents had been overturned in Portland's Rose City cemetery.

Mr. Oyama took up residence in the predominantly African-American city of Vanport accompanied with the mimeograph he had acquired during his incarceration to produce a simpler version of his prior enterprise. However, the mimeograph was lost when Vanport infamously flooded soon thereafter, and the paper was never restarted as the editor-in-chief died 3 years later.²⁴ Oyama had been forced to live in Vanport as widespread discrimination practices in Portland that had always applied to African Americans were now directed at returning Japanese American internees. After the Vanport flood, many of the African American residents that were displaced moved into the areas of North Portland before they were displaced yet again by the gentrification brought on by artists and urbanites in search of creative opportunities and cheaper grand old homes which continues to this day.

Traveling even further back in time, we see that another curious publication is no longer with us, the *Trans-Continental*. Printed aboard the first chartered excursion by rail from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the *Trans-Continental* resembled an instantaneous gossip rag for the privileged. Reporting on the daily events on the train as well as those seen through the windows, the newspaper served a population of 130 passengers who were all members or related to members on the Boston Board of Trade. While the *Oshu Nippo* became a migratory publication due to imposed hardship, the *Trans-Continental* was on the move as an expression of economic and cultural capital. Twelve issues were printed in total with each issue being printed in a different city: six issues on the westward journey and six on the return east. As to be expected, one newspaper issue was printed at the most prominent station stop on tour — Promontory Summit, Utah.



Trans-Continental, 1870

September acts as a surrogate extension of the former *Trans-Continental* and *Oshu Nippo* in its selective voice and audience, as well as its predetermined short life span as an in-print circulation. It may very well circumnavigate the art world, disappear forever, or only resurface in the dusty attics of friends and family members years later. Polished on the surface like a well-weathered stone, the embedded history of the future is unknown within the archaeology of art. Perhaps, over time, cultural miners will look back and peer into the intentional fissures and cracks of their day — the ones that gladly turn themselves over like rocks, ready to reveal their stratification in the clear light.

1. Michael Kimmelman, *The Accidental Masterpiece: On the Art of Life and Vice Versa* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 183.
2. Robert Smithson, "A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites, 1968" in Robert Smithson: *The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 364.
3. Robert Smithson, "Spiral Jetty, 1972" in Robert Smithson: *Spiral Jetty*, ed. Lynne Cooke et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 11.
4. Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 334.
5. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 23.
6. Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 13.
7. In "Spiral Jetty, 1972," Smithson quotes Thomas H. Clark and Colin W. Stearn, *Geological Evolution of North America* (New York: Ronald Press Co., n.d.), 5.
8. In "Spiral Jetty, 1972," Smithson uses the terms *Devonian* and *Silurian* as technological periods, thus creating a set of double entendres. The origin of the words lies in the pre-historical formation of the planet, however, they were also used in the popular sci-fi television show, *Doctor Who*, that was running at the time.
9. Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: WW Norton & Co., 2011), 149.
10. Nigel Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), xiii. The majority of ideas presented on the social and historical implications of the railroad technology stems from this comprehensive and oft-cited opus.
11. *Ibid.*, 1-16.
12. Michael Douma, curator, "Daylight Saving Time," last modified 2008, <http://www.webexhibits.org/daylightsaving>.
13. Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 52-70.
14. *Ibid.*, 129-134.
15. Alexandra Koelle graciously shared her paper, "We Used to Have a Chinatown: The Cultural Politics of Chinese History in the Northern Rockies," presented at *Chinese Remembrance 2011*, Lewiston, Idaho, June 23-24, 2011.
16. Erle Heath, "A Railroad Record That Defies Defeat: How Central Pacific laid ten miles of track in one day back in 1869," *Southern Pacific Bulletin*, Vol. XVI, No. 5, May, 1928, pp. 5 on *Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History Museum* website, last modified February 17, 2006, http://cpr.org/Museum/Southern_Pacific_Bulletin/Ten_Mile_Dayhtml.
17. Robert R. Dowty, *Rebirth of the Jupiter and The 119: Building the Replica Locomotives at Golden Spike* (Tucson: Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, 1994).
18. Jared Farmer, *On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians and the American Landscape* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 11.
19. *Ibid.*, 9.
20. *Ibid.*, 11.
21. Priscilla Wegers, *Imprisoned in Paradise: Japanese Internee Road Workers at the World War II Kooskia Internment Camp* (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho, 2010), 1. The bulk of historical information on Kooskia paraphrases this incredibly researched document.
22. *Ibid.*, 37.
23. Gilbert Park Carrasco, "Latinos in the United States: Invitation and Exile" in *Immigrants Out! The New Nativism and the Anti-Immigrant Impulse in the United States*, ed. Juan F. Perea (New York: NYU Press, 1997).
24. Oregon Nikkei Endowment, "Oregon Nikkei History: A Brief Summary," last modified June 4, 2010, <http://www.wdiscovernikkei.org/en/journal/2010/6/4/oregon-nikkei-history>.



Oshu Nippo, 1915