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IMMIGRATION, THE AMERICAN WEST, AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY:
GERMAN FROM RUSSIA, OMAHA INDIAN, AND
VIETNAMESE-URBAN VILLAGERS IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

by

Kurt E. Kinbacher

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
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Lincoln, Nebraska

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IMMIGRATION, THE AMERICAN WEST, AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY:
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Kurt E. Kinbacher, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2006

Adviser: John. R. Wunder

The North American West is a culturally and geographically diverse region that has long been a beacon for successive waves of human immigration and migration. A case in point, the population of Lincoln, Nebraska -- a capital city on the eastern cusp of the Great Plains -- was augmented during the twentieth century by significant influxes of Germans from Russia, Omaha Indians, and Vietnamese. Arriving in clusters beginning in 1876, 1941, and 1975 respectively, these newcomers were generally set in motion by dismal economic, social, or political situations in their sending nations. Seeking better lives, they entered a mainstream milieu dominated by native-born Americans -- most part of a lateral migration from Iowa, Illinois, and Pennsylvania -- who only established their local community in 1867. While this mainstream welcomed their labor, it often eschewed the behaviors and cultural practices ethnic peoples brought with them.

Aware but not overly concerned about these prejudices, all three groups constructed or organized distinct urban villages. The physical forms of these enclaves ranged from homogeneous neighborhoods to tight assemblies of relatives, but each suited a shared preference for living among kinspeople. These urban villages also served as stable anchors

for unique peoples who were intent on maintaining aspects of their imported cultural identities.

Never willing to assimilate to mainstream norms, urban villagers began adapting to their new milieus. While ethnic identity constructions in Lincoln proved remarkably enduring, they were also amazingly flexible. In fact, each subject group constantly negotiated their identities in response to interactions among particular, cosmopolitan, and transnational forces. Particularism refers largely to the beliefs, behaviors, and organizational patterns urban villagers imported from their old milieus. Cosmopolitan influences emanated from outside the ethnic groups and were dictated largely but not exclusively by the mainstream. Transnationalism is best defined as persistent, intense contact across international boundaries. These influences were important as the particularism of dispersed peoples was often reinforced by contact with sending cultures.

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INTRODUCTION

Jacob Giebelhaus, Charles Stabler, and Tran Bai Si were all drawn to Lincoln, Nebraska, by opportunities to "materially or spiritually" improve themselves and their families.¹ Giebelhaus departed Norka, Russia -- an ethnically German settlement -- at the turn of the twentieth century; Stabler moved from Omaha Nation -- an Indian Reservation within the United States -- during World War II; and Tran fled the Republic of Vietnam -- a conquered country -- in the late 1970s. Although they came from dramatically different worlds in different eras, all three took employment with the Burlington Northern Railroad, and they surrounded themselves with other members of their ethnic groups and built urban villages.² These ethnic enclaves served as comfortable centers for group adaptation to a mainstream community that did not always welcome or accept heterogeneity. From these havens, Germans from Russia, Omaha Indians (herein after "Omahas"), and Vietnamese all negotiated flexible and changing identities that responded to multiple forces from both old and new milieus.

While these urban villages and their residents were not always acknowledged, Lincoln has long hosted multicultural communities. They were all generally overshadowed by an Anglo-American mainstream that was established by an earlier lateral migration from Iowa, Illinois, and Pennsylvania beginning in the 1850s and 1860s.³ Their community on the eastern cusp of the central Great Plains was erected around educational and state governmental institutions. Also a transportation hub and a regional center for agribusiness, much of the labor that constructed its modern

¹Walter Nugent, *Into the West: The Story of Its People* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 4-6.

²Anna Schwindt Giebelhaus, interview by Gertrude Schwindt, transcript, 16 July 1980, folder AV1.636.06, Neighborhood Oral History Project, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, 1; Linda Ulrich, "Stablers Proudly Live Their Indian Heritage," *Sunday Journal-Star*, 20 April 1980, 1D; Mark J. Swetland, ed., *Umoⁿhoⁿ iye of Elizabeth Stabler: A Vocabulary of the Omaha Language* (Macy, NE: By the editor, 1977), vi-vii; and *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1985), 751.

³Addison Erwin Sheldon, *Nebraska: The Land and the People* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing, 1931), 287, 299.

infrastructure and built corporate wealth was provided by ethnic workers who entered the economy at the bottom.⁴

New arrivals -- whether immigrants or migrants -- may have come to improve the dire situations they faced in their home nations, but they generally had no intentions of abandoning their imported cultural identities. Indeed, identity remained a "key component" in an adaptation process that was ongoing throughout the twentieth century and its adjacent decades (1876-2006).⁵ These urban villagers were influenced simultaneously by particular, cosmopolitan, and transnational forces that allowed them to negotiate "unique and often exceptional ethnic cultures" within their new milieus.⁶

Particularism refers largely to the beliefs, behaviors, organizational patterns, and material artifacts urban villagers imported from their sending cultures. Not necessarily nostalgic survivals, these cultural components were maintained in Lincoln as long as they were useful for day-to-day living. Some items thrived into the twenty-first century while others did not. Intriguingly, the saliency of ethnic identity often was defined by retentions and survivals of these cultural artifacts.

Cosmopolitanism added "externally imposed dimensions," to the urban villagers' experiences.⁷ Generally defined as worldly influences, for this narrative's purposes these were forces dictated from outside the urban villages largely, but not exclusively, by the mainstream. Work, school, and the Capital City's social and political structures were all controlled and responsive to mainstream norms. Interactions with other ethnic groups

⁴Elliott Robert Barkan, "Proximity and Commuting Immigration: An Hypothesis Explored via the Bi-polar Ethnic Communities of French Canadian and Mexican Americans," in Jack Kinton, ed., *American Ethnic Revival: Group Pluralism Entering America's Third Century* (Aurora, IL: Social Science and Sociological Resources, 1977), 164-65.

⁵Miguel Carranza, "The Search for Space and a Sense of Place: Mexicanos/Latinos Settle in the Heartland," oral presentation, 18 January 2006, Paul A. Olson Seminar in Great Plains Studies, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

⁶Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

⁷Ibid., 4.

and even kinspeople who migrated to other locales also sometimes constituted cosmopolitan influences.

Transnationalism is best defined as persistent, intense contact across international boundaries.⁸ These influences were important as dispersed peoples often remained connected to "imagined communities of race and nation" decades and even centuries after they left.⁹ Truly a category full of nuances, the sending culture often remained a central component of cultural identity even when contact became intermittent or historical.

Because sweeping generalizations about immigrants and migrants often obfuscate "the diversity of experience from group to group," this study focuses on "specific identities" that developed in Lincoln.¹⁰ Logically, because "place specific" studies yield important place specific results, identity construction among similar populations in Topeka, Wichita, Oklahoma City, Sioux City, or Omaha would be at least slightly different.¹¹ National social, political, economic, and cultural constraints "set outer limits on the range of local variance, but within these limits, place-to-place variation" was certainly significant.¹²

The most important units of space for Lincoln's new arrivals were the urban villages they themselves constructed or organized. Significantly, all three subject groups tended to live in geographic proximity to their cultural kinspeople. Intimately familiar places, urban villages are regularly envisioned by city planners and architects in the twenty-first century. Responding to the depersonalized sprawl of suburban America,

⁸Elliott R. Barkan, "America in the Hand, Homeland in the Heart: Transnational and Translocal Immigrant Experiences in the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 35 (Autumn 2004): 345.

⁹Peck, 159-60

¹⁰Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 30; and Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose, eds., *Constructions of "Race", Place, and Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 12.

¹¹Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Quantification and the New Urban History," *Urban History* 13 (Spring 1983): 676.

they emphasize polynucleated communities with a mixture of residential, commercial, and open spaces that provide residents with a "sense of place." Ideally, the urban village would also provide affordable housing and access to transportation.¹³ While not benefiting from central planning, an older form of urban village grew organically in most American cities. Allowing residents to avoid "total alienation" in a strange society, they became the homes for cultural expression in a world where "*environment* was surely altered, but *community*" persisted.¹⁴

Urban villages in Lincoln and beyond anchored many families and served as centers for many others who were less sedentary.¹⁵ Discreet locations, however, are not the only places useful for examining identity issues among immigrants and migrants. Notably, Gunther Peck concentrated on three transient ethnic communities that moved across the entire trans-Missouri North American West. Focusing on Canada and the United States as receiving cultures and two European nations -- Italy and Greece -- and Mexico as sending cultures, he deviated from the pattern of many immigration histories that tied ethnicity to "fixed places -- to neighborhoods, business districts, and urban contexts."¹⁶ A ground-breaking monograph, *Reinventing Free Labor* also deviates from the prevailing emphasis on the transition from old-milieu artisan work to new milieu-

¹²Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Mainstreams and Side Channels: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11 (Fall 1991): 14.

¹³Lynne B. Iglitzin, "The Seattle Commons: A Case Study in the Politics and Planning of an Urban Village," *Policy Studies Journal* 23 (Winter 1995): 621.

¹⁴Karel B. Bicha, "The Survival of the Village in Urban America: A Note on Czech Immigrants in Chicago in 1914," *International Migration Review* 5 (No. 1, 1971): 73, 74.

¹⁵See, Peck, 3-4. While Peck examines transient workers -- largely groups of men -- many more family groups had both the stability of community and the ability to move for work. As the twentieth century progressed -- fewer and fewer jobs required large-scale migration on the Great Plains largely because agriculture was mechanized. While not discounting the endeavors of Hispanic farm laborers, this is not their story. Volga Germans and Omaha Indians abandoned migratory farming in the 1950s and 1960s. Vietnamese -- already an urbanized or urbanizing population -- largely avoided such labor schemes as sufficient factory work was available.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 159.

wage labor. Consequently, the familiar construction of work found in most labor histories is reformed to include spatial considerations.¹⁷

While expanding notions of place and broadening intellectual horizons, Peck's temporal scope was confined to a well-studied era of late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century immigration that brought 18 million individuals into the United States before nativist restrictions redefined international movement in the early 1920s. The long twentieth century, however has been distinguished by another era of immigration that since 1965 has added even more people to the American body politic.¹⁸ These most recent arrivals came primarily from Asia and Latin America rather than Europe, but their motivations were largely the same. Additionally, a smaller but no less significant movement of peoples from indigenous Nations -- long isolated from the mainstream by the same forces that excluded foreign-born peoples -- began immediately after World War II.

In narrowing space and broadening time, a different view of multicultural human migration emerges. Comparing three divergent populations over the course of 130 years yields insights into the complexity, flexibility, and durability of cultural identities. These ascriptions were undoubtedly influenced by mainstream attitudes that were also continuously evolving -- in some cases in response to earlier ethnic encounters. These particular urban villages -- all three underrepresented in current scholarship -- are ideal laboratories to explore the interaction of ethnic groups and the urban mainstream on the Great Plains and in a capital city -- Lincoln, Nebraska. They also serve as a platform to bring the constructs employed in immigration history, American Indian history, Southeast Asian Studies, and Western History into unique collaboration.

¹⁷Ibid., 5-7.

¹⁸Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration in the Formation of an American Identity," *History Teacher* 30 (November 1996): 11.

"Immigration, the American West, and the Twentieth Century" is a narrative with two inherent biases. First, it suggests ethnic diversity is generally a positive state of affairs as it allows multiple cultures to contribute to the intellectual health and economic vitality of the greater community. As the mainstream increasingly recognizes that there is great strength to be garnered from all its human components, it becomes imperative that urban villagers strive "to hold on to the good from the old culture while taking advantage of the new."¹⁹ Secondly, cultural identities are rarely surrendered to the mainstream. Despite the vaunted "American melting-pot" ideal, it is "erroneous to assume that the traditional cultures dissolved and that the ethnic members have assimilated totally" into the mainstream.²⁰ Indeed, culturally specific behaviors and beliefs, no matter how faded they become, often outlasted the enclaves that sheltered them. The presence of long-term cultural persistence and the need to avoid semantic pitfalls is best served by suggesting that immigrants and migrants do not actually "assimilate" into the mainstream, but rather they "adapt" themselves to the receiving culture.²¹

Reflecting the dichotomy between ethnic and mainstream cultures, this volume is divided into two sections. The three chapters of the first section examine academic constructions of identity and place, discuss mainstream attitudes and regulations surrounding immigration and federal and state Native American policies, and construct a historical picture of Lincoln, Nebraska. Section two consists of three chapters examining individual constructions of community and identity formation for Germans from Russia, Omaha, and Vietnamese urban villagers. Finally, Chapter 7 makes comparisons and draws conclusions about the entire project.

¹⁹Mary Pipher, *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), 71.

²⁰Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 59.

Significantly, this narrative focuses on three ethnic groups that revered extended families and patriarchal hierarchies. Indeed, Jacob and Anna Giebelhaus, Charles and Elizabeth Stabler, and Tran Bai Si and Tran My Loc all centered their lives around raising their many children and interacting with their many relatives.²² Consequently, stable communities were economically desirable and culturally necessary as all these urban villagers fully intended on passing down their ethnic identities to future generations.

²¹Nazli Kibria, *Family Tightrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 19.

²²Giebelhaus, interview by Gertrude Schwindt, 1; Ulrich, 1D; Swetland, *Umoⁿhoⁿ iye*, vi-vii; *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1990), 809; and *Ibid.* (2000), 593.

SECTION I

CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE MAINSTREAM: IDENTITY, LEGAL
ISSUES, AND LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

CHAPTER 1

IDENTITY FORMATION, PLACE, AND PERFORMED CULTURE

While people living in Lincoln, Nebraska, certainly label themselves as Omahas, Germans from Russia, and Vietnamese, they necessarily interact with and participate in a mainstream culture largely created and directed by "Anglo" Americans. Groups outside the "white" channel contribute to the mainstream much in the way branches feed rivers; their cultures and human capital enhance the larger flow. Rivers, however, have little control over their predetermined courses, and separation ends when physical geography forces confluence. Peoples, on the other hand, may have multiple points of contact without necessarily experiencing convergence. Shared space and economic necessity are among the most cogent sources of connection. Ethnic practices, especially the retention of performed culture and the preference to remain in urban villages, reinforce desires to remain separate.

Unique patterns of convergence and separation require human tributaries to negotiate *identities* -- best defined as a set of core communal values -- that interweave components of several cultures, including the mainstream.¹ Immigrants in Lincoln often import cultures that have existed for hundreds if not thousands of years. Although many of these individuals are steeped in tradition, none of their sending societies exist in stasis. Identities "are neither discreet nor natural" as "social, political, and historical contexts" all influence core values.² Identity formation, then, is never complete. In the modern urban environment, complex and dynamic confrontations with "internal and

¹Scott B. Vickers, *Native American Identities: From Stereotype to Archetype in Art and Literature* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 27.

²John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 8.

external" stimuli accelerate the changes experienced by even the most conservative individuals.³

The array of possible "interactions of peoples and cultures" is astounding, even in a community the size of Lincoln.⁴ Because identity discusses "the relationship of the individual to society," it is necessarily a discreet construction.⁵ Immigrant groups are received differently by every host, and each locale borrows from the immigrants in distinct ways. Consequently, experiences of the "exceptional ethnic cultures" found in Lincoln -- and in most other western cities -- while important for creating a greater understanding of community building and identity formation, must remain in most every way unique from other case studies.⁶

As this particular investigation is comparative in nature, it is important to consider the "*salience* of identity" as the intensity of any given designation -- whether assigned or volunteered -- depends on any number of "different social settings."⁷ Race, class, gender, family, the number of years spent in the community, age, the era of immigration, education, and employment possibilities all effect identification with any specific group. Consequently, identities range from divisive to symbolic depending on any a multitude of factors.⁸ Interestingly, it is not always clear when "an identity" stops being one and starts "being another."⁹

³David Bibas, *Immigrants and the Formation of Community: A Case Study of Moroccan Jewish Immigration to America* (New York: AMS Press, 1998), 2-3.

⁴Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth, eds., *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 3.

⁵Philip Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 124, 127, and 139.

⁶Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 3.

⁷Richard D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 38.

⁸Ibid., xiii.

⁹Tony Waters, "Towards a Theory of Ethnic Identity and Migration: The Formation of Ethnic Enclaves by Migrant Germans from Russia and North America," *International Migration Review* 29 (Summer 1995): 518.

What is certain is that changes in identity and shifts in the community are multidirectional. Obviously, voluntary immigration increases the "ethnic diversity of the host culture."¹⁰ In Lincoln, Germans from Russia, Omahas, and Vietnamese are prominent, but not alone in establishing communities. For members of the receiving society open to cultural enrichment, newcomers bring intriguing customs, exotic foods, and important values. They offer their hosts equal opportunity to transform their own identities into something more cosmopolitan. In the end both mainstream Nebraska and the immigrants that become ethnic groups make accommodation for each other.

ETHNICITY AND THE MAINSTREAM

Because of the great flexibility in identity formation, the "ethnic group in American society" needs to be viewed as a "new social form" rather than as a survival from an earlier era.¹¹ Of course, Germans from Russia, Omahas, and Vietnamese formed ethnic attachments long before emigrating to Lincoln. Sometimes subtly and other times overtly, the new milieu transformed these identities, and, once in the host community, they necessarily displayed different outlooks from their counterparts in the sending community. Like identity in general, "ethnicity is continuously being reinvented in response to changing realities within the group and the host society."¹²

Ethnic groups within the United States are usually comprised of "indigenous or immigrant"¹³ populations whose subcultures serve as "specialized dependent" parts of

¹⁰Milton M Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York Oxford University Press, 1964), 60.

¹¹Nathan Glazer and Daniel J. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1963), 15.

¹²Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawski, George Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12 (Fall 1992): 5.

¹³Michael Cronin and David Mayall, eds., *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration, and Assimilation* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 3.

the whole.¹⁴ Although it "can feel very primal," the foundations of ethnicity are fundamentally "social rather than biological."¹⁵ Despite individual differences and subgroup formation, members of each distinct ethnic population share "a social-psychological sense of peoplehood stemming from history" and a common "social structure" that features sets of "crystallized social relationships" that relate directly to "the major institutional activities" of a given society.¹⁶ Exclusion of other group loyalties -- save American nationalism¹⁷-- is one of the hallmarks of ethnic identity.¹⁸

The "ethnic group or subsociety" serves three main purposes. First, it is a source of "group self-identification." This allows individuals to declare "*Umó'hó' bthí'm*" (I am Omaha), or "*Ich bin Daitch*" (vernacular -- I am German), for instance. Secondly, it provides support networks and institutions that allow individuals to associate with a single ethnic group from cradle to grave. Finally, "it refracts the national cultural patterns of behaviors and values through the prism of its own society."¹⁹ In short, ethnic identity and community formation create safe-havens from which its members can interact with mainstream society without having to become full-fledged members. Within these groups, ethnic populations both resisted change and accommodated favorable components of the receiving society. As a result, they became something new, "ethnic Americans." These unique cultures have proven so dynamic that they are often easily identified "into the third and fourth generation and beyond."²⁰

¹⁴Julian Steward, *The Theory of Culture Change: The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955), 47.

¹⁵Nancy C. Dorian, "Linguistic and Ethnographic Fieldwork," in Joshua A. Fishman, ed., *Handbook of Language and Identity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25.

¹⁶Gordon, 30.

¹⁷Ibid., 37.

¹⁸Sara E. Stoutland, *Neither Urban Jungle nor Urban Village: Women, Families, and Community Development* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 30.

¹⁹Gordon, 38; and Bibas, 3.

²⁰George E. Pozetta, ed., *Assimilation, Acculturation, and Social Mobility* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), vi.

As ethnicity involves "a dialogue" between mainstream and contributing cultures, ethnic identities are at least partly ascribed by a rather dominant American culture.²¹ Even as the United States is accepting its greatest wave of nonwhite immigration ever, few would contest that White Anglo-Saxon Protestant values define America's "core society."²² While not inherently racist in sentiment, white males that dominated this mainstream frequently promoted "Anglo-conformity" as vital to national interests.²³ Consequently, "Irish Catholics, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Polish, Italians, Arabs, Jews, Hispanics, Russians, and various other racial/ethnic groups as well as women and homosexuals" were widely marginalized.²⁴ Additionally because the non-European world was long constructed as "backward, un-Christian, and semi-barbaric,"²⁵ Native Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans consistently faced prejudice and discrimination -- processes that alternately hindered or prevented "social interaction across group boundaries."²⁶

The mainstream, then, often actively discouraged acculturation into American society.²⁷ Indeed, competing constructions of race and ethnicity have had dynamic consequences for many immigrant peoples. As a general rule, most European groups, at least in the twentieth century, were ethnic minorities, but racially mainstream. Native American and Asians, on the otherhand, were ethnic by their own definition, but they often faced an additional racial assignation. This extra layer of separation caused

²¹Conzen, et al., 12.

²²Gordon, 74.

²³Ibid., 103.

²⁴Vickers, 31.

²⁵Edward W. Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 73.

²⁶Allen J. Williams, Jr., David R. Johnson, and Miguel Carranza, "Ethnic Assimilation and Pluralism in Nebraska," in Frederick C. Luebke, ed., *Ethnicity on the Great Plains*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 218.

²⁷Glazer and Moynihan, 13.

racialized groups to be "spatially incarcerated." For Indians this pattern existed both on and even more intensely off the reservation.²⁸

Such racial barriers often had interesting effects. In the case of the Coeur d'Alenes of Idaho, for instance, new identities were created for the sole purpose of interacting with Americans. Prior to confinement, this "nation" existed as a series of independent but related bands. Legally united to be placed on a reservation, Coeur d'Alenes created an identity for themselves that "was simultaneously imposed by outsiders and edited, reformulated, and influenced by tribal peoples."²⁹ They were, in effect, a new ethnic group constructed of formerly distinct parts.

Similarly, other peoples advanced their own acculturation policies that allowed existence within a foreign world.³⁰ There were, of course, many possibilities. Groups were defined or elected to be ethnic minorities, colonized peoples, victims of racism, dependents, and nations.³¹ There was and continues to be a great deal of overlap in all these categories. Still Indian -- and Asian -- identities "continue to be largely determined by racial factors related to the aligned powers of authority, authorship, authenticity, in the arenas of politics, the fine arts, and literature."³²

In addition to racial and religious terms, the mainstream depicts itself as both individualistic and exceptional. Most Americans accept that "fostering an independent and entrepreneurial spirit is the moral responsibility of every individual and

²⁸Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (February 1992): 17; and David E. Lopez, "Language Minorities in the United States," in James R. Dow, ed., *Language and Ethnicity: Focusshrift in Honor of Joshua A. Fishman* (Philadelphia: John Benjamin, 1991), 132.

²⁹Laura Woodsworth-Ney, *Mapping Identity: The Creation of the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation, 1805-1902* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2004), 2.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 5.

³¹M.A. Jaimes-Guerrero, "The Metaphysics of Federal Indian Law and U.S. Colonialism of American Indians," in Richard A. Grounds, George E. Tinker, and David Wilkins, eds., *Native Voices: American Indian Identity & Resistance* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 77.

³²Vickers, 165.

community."³³ Groups that do not share these values are viewed with suspicion. Still, Indians survived American colonization, and after centuries of population decline, they began a steady increase by 1910. People from around the world flocked to America and American cities in search of better lives. Between 1891 and 1920, 18 million immigrants, including many Germans from Russia disembarked on American shores. Between 1965 and 1996, 16 million more -- including over one million Vietnamese arrived.³⁴ Although not of the mainstream, these new arrivals were generally welcomed because they provided human capital to forward the prevailing economic system. Still tensions between mainstream society and "the other" were and are a consistent factor in American life.

In terms of political agency, "The People" as referenced in the Constitution slowly has become a much more inclusive concept.³⁵ Scholars suggest that in "its more 'mature' form, a national identity can permit the blurring of differences and serve to unite a multi-ethnic people behind a single national ideal."³⁶ Still, attitudes towards non-western European immigrants and Native Americans have been rather callous throughout American history. Consequently, retention of an ethnic identity has often been encouraged from the inside and the outside. New arrivals in Lincoln, for example, sought to preserve many of their traditions out of respect. The process was augmented by a need for community acceptance not found in the mainstream. The urban village and performed culture were the most powerful ways to achieve cultural retention and construct an identity that celebrated separateness.

³³Sara E. Stoutland, *Neither Urban Jungle nor Urban Village: Women, Families, and Community Development* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 3.

³⁴Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration in the Formation of an American Identity," *History Teacher* 30 (November 1996): 11.

³⁵Christopher W. Norris, "Peoples, Nations, and the Unity of Societies," in *Cultural Identity and the Nation State*, eds., Carol C. Gould and Pasquale Pasquino (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 21.

PERFORMED CULTURE

Because many peoples live "on cultural and national borders," numerous identity options were available.³⁷ Those that maintain the core values of an ethnic group often "go to great lengths to assert their identities, and reproduce obvious markers to define group boundaries."³⁸ For Volga Germans, Omahas, and Vietnamese in Lincoln, as well as ethnic enclaves around the country, "idiosyncratic" behaviors reinforce group identities and serve as a "blueprint or mental template of what should be done and how it should be done."³⁹ Ultimately, performed cultures provide weapons "of group defense" that allow immigrants to "ward off assimilative pressures of the modernizing American world."⁴⁰

Best defined as sets of "cultural assumptions" and remembered "physical features," performed cultures were imported from sending societies and transformed to meet the needs of immigrants in their new communities. Largely non-material in nature, these items are derived from each group's heritage.⁴¹ Social gatherings, worship services, funerals, and a variety of celebrations served as platforms of time for communal expressions of these old values. Language, oral and written histories, folkways -- especially food, dance, and music, religion, and class are among the most powerful components of performed culture.

³⁶Cronin and Mayall, 3.

³⁷Gupta and Ferguson, 18.

³⁸Waters, 519.

³⁹Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Mainstream and Side Channels: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11 (Fall 1991): 11.

⁴⁰R.B. Le Page and André Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of Identity: Creole-based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 2.

⁴¹Peter G. Boag, *Environment and Experience: Settlement Culture in Nineteenth-Century Oregon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 38, 80, 141; see also, Gordon, 32-33, 79.

Time

Time, a crucial component of identity construction, can be measured in several important ways. The mainstream concentrates on a very linear notion of time that focuses on eras and geopolitical events. This conception of time is important as assimilatory pressures on immigrant groups have changed dramatically over the decades of the twentieth century. While immigration itself is alternately desirable and then undesirable, for most of the century, mainstream Americans expected populations to acculturate themselves to prevailing American norms and mores. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, ethnicity is often celebrated or at least tolerated by many Americans.⁴² Still, conservative, mainstream expectations have certainly not disappeared altogether.

Ethnic groups also change over the course of generations, and as a general rule, "cultural experience is inevitably eroded" through the passage of this sort of time. Not surprisingly, those closest to arrival maintain greater cultural practices and a stronger sense of ethnic identity.⁴³ Subsequent generations continually rehash the ethnic/mainstream discussion as they redefine an identity that best serves them. Over the course of time many of the cultures original practices are transformed. Ethnic customs that have been maintained usually show up around holidays and tend not to be part of a daily practice.⁴⁴ Sometimes, traditions are even invented rather than maintained or rediscovered.⁴⁵

Stressing history and language, the construction of a Spanish-American heritage in New Mexico in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries eased "political and

⁴²Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 1.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 55, 106.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 101.

⁴⁵William A. Douglass, "Basque-American Identity: Past Perspectives and Future Prospects," in Stephen Tchudi, ed., *Change in the American West: Exploring the Human Dimension* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1987), 191.

social marginalization" of an annexed population.⁴⁶ By emphasizing sixteenth and seventeenth-century conquests, New Mexicans unabashedly appealed to the expansionist sensibilities of the Anglo population. Drawn from a similar time in history, they traced their ancestry through Spanish censuses and connected their bloodlines to the Conquistadors. Ignoring the Mexican era altogether, they highlighted a pure European heritage.⁴⁷ To cement this unique identity, a thriving Spanish-language press of at least sixty newspapers blossomed by 1900. This allowed Spanish Americans to produce and disseminate their own historical record.⁴⁸

Facing a similar presence, Navajos were also "culturally, politically, and economically marginalized" by American rule in the Southwest.⁴⁹ Unable to continue their hunting and raiding economy and lacking the mechanism or the desire to claim whiteness, they began constructing new identities around work. Many placed traditionally crafted pottery, textiles, and jewelry into the realm of commerce and began selling their goods to a mainstream clientele. Generally misunderstood by their patrons, Indian artists were cast as exotic, non-threatening "primitives."⁵⁰ In this world of "civilization" and "savages," herding livestock, especially sheep, became "central to the evolution" of the Navajos. Sheep not only allowed the weaving industry to expand, they also "provided the base for social cooperation and mutual interdependence" as well as a sense of economic security.⁵¹ Interestingly, scholars suggest that sheep husbandry and speaking the Navajo language were the two most cogent factors of identity formation

⁴⁶Nieto-Phillips, 2, 8-9.

⁴⁷Ibid, 17, 23, 33.

⁴⁸Ibid, 187.

⁴⁹Laura Jane Moore, "Elle Meets the President: Weaving Navajo Culture and Commerce in the Southwestern Tourist Industry," in Sandra K. Schackel, ed., *Western Women's Lives: Continuity and Change in the Twentieth Century* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 353.

⁵⁰Ibid., 350, 351-52.

⁵¹Peter Iverson, *Diné: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 23, 79.

among twentieth-century Navajos. As both practices are now eroding, new identity markers may soon emerge.⁵²

Constructing identity around livestock care is not unique to Indian groups. Contemporary Basque festivals in the America West, for example, often feature a shepherders' ball as a celebration of their unique place in the history of the region. Today, few Basques engage in this particular activity. Interestingly, while nineteenth and early twentieth-century immigrants made their livings as shepherds, they were well aware that they held "one of the most denigrated occupations in American society."⁵³ Prior to the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, tramp herders were viewed as unfair competitors for grass on the western range. Federal range management ended this practice and "removed the major source" of tension between Basques and the mainstream. By the 1940s, a notable shortage of shepherders forced Congress to enact special legislation to attract Spanish Basques into Idaho and Nevada. Basques, then, were transformed from "villain to hero" in less than a generation. The movement towards ethnic celebration in the post-World War II era enhanced Basque American pride and led to successful, albeit ahistorical, celebrations.⁵⁴

San Francisco's Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Pageant, on the otherhand, had no historical antecedent. Started in 1958, the event allowed women from around the nation to compete for scholarships and to demonstrate their commitment to community service. The pageant also provides an opportunity to examine how "idealized versions of womanhood" changed over a forty-year period. During the Cold War, for instance, Chinese American women depicted "their ethnic identity as a non-threatening blend of Eastern Confucian and modern Western cultures." Concerned with the objectification of women in general and the "exotic" portrayal of Asian American women in particular,

⁵²Ibid., 317.

⁵³Douglass, 186.

social activists in the Chinese community often picketed the event in the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1980s the event was revitalized as images of Chinese American women and Chinatown itself were remolded to reflect the community's new prosperity. In the 1990s, most pageant contestants stressed their personal agency and desire for advancement as reasons to participate. Promoting an authenticity of Chinese culture -- including language usage -- has become a central theme in the event.⁵⁵

As these examples suggest, the cultural identities of Asian, European, and indigenous groups across the United States are rarely static. Similarly, over the course of decades and generations, internal and external forces necessarily redefine the meaning and shape of performed culture activities. While identity markers and behaviors change over time, connections to a specific ethnic identity are not necessarily weakened as a result. The tendency for English to become an ethnic group's first language, for instance, does not necessarily equate to full acculturation into mainstream society.

Language

Still, using a language other than the one sanctioned by mainstream culture is best seen as a proactive expression of identity.⁵⁶ Conversing in German, Omaha, or Vietnamese, for example, is a clear mark of distinction, and speaking in any of these tongues serves as a cultural link to a distinct history. Additionally, language preserves "extensive cultural content" and helps to frame "core spiritual concepts" of ethnic groups. For Native Americans who remain physically and psychologically close to their original countries, indigenous language retention preserves a "profound connection to the region." Interestingly, the logic of all languages is just as important as the words.

⁵⁴Ibid., 190-91.

⁵⁵Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, "'Loveliest Daughter of Our Ancient Cathay!': Representations of Ethnic and Gender Identity in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Beauty Pageant," in Sandra K. Shackel, ed., *Western Women's Lives: Continuity and Change in the Twentieth Century*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 390-91.

Many ideas central to identity would "be difficult or impossible to express with equal clarity or depth of meaning in another language."⁵⁷ Consequently, language, even in a bilingual household, remains a "lingering artifact" of great importance.⁵⁸

Language preservation has historically eased the transition in movement from *Vaterland* --an ideological fatherland -- to *Heimat* -- a local homeland. This transition is vital because learning social English takes anywhere from one to three years of fairly concentrated effort. During these learning years, the "intelligence, personality, and energy of new arrivals" is compromised unless an appropriate outlet is constructed.⁵⁹ Traditionally, foreign language presses eased this transition. Weekly, monthly, and a few daily newspapers addressed scattered peoples and connected them to kinsfolk in many corners of the world. Oftentimes, these organs are not local or even regional, but national. Leaving the local news to word of mouth, they report news from the sending society along with major developments of interest in the larger receiving society. Additionally, substantial space is devoted to the noble -- and sometimes mythical -- history of the place left behind.⁶⁰

Despite the benefits offered by the retention of mother-tongues, language struggle is a world-wide phenomenon. This is partly due to the modern construction of the nation state which highlights the errant proposition that nationhood requires racial, cultural, and linguistic homogeneity.⁶¹ In reality, there are a mere 200 nations in the world who host as estimated 5,000 languages. Still, most countries, including the United States, have constructed a linguistic hierarchy. From the seventeenth century on, English served as "the language of the upper and dominant class, the vehicle and symbol

⁵⁶LePage and Tabouret-Keller, 180.

⁵⁷Dorian, 31-32.

⁵⁸Waters 521.

⁵⁹Mary Pipher, *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), 75.

⁶⁰Conzen, et al., "The Invention of Ethnicity," 22-23.

⁶¹LePage and Tabouret-Keller, 180.

of culture" in America.⁶² Although it has never been an official federal, constitutional, or national statutory tongue, English and monolingualism have consistently been promoted at the expense of all other peoples' heritages.⁶³

This has certainly been the case in Nebraska since 1920 when the state's constitution was amended as follows:

The English language is hereby declared to be the official language of this state, and all official proceedings, records and publications shall be in such language, and the common school branches shall be taught in said language in public, private, denominational and parochial schools.⁶⁴

These provisions were adopted as part of an anti-German crusade that swept the nation during World War I and its aftermath. The state went on to ban foreign-language instruction in the classroom, but was forced to retreat on the issue by the United States Supreme Court.⁶⁵ Although the hysteria receded in the mid-1920s, this language stipulation -- the first of its kind in the entire nation -- remains in effect in the twenty-first century. Nebraska's long-standing precedent took on new meaning in the late-twentieth century as Hispanic and Asian immigration increased. As of March 2003, an additional twenty-six states have specified that English is their official language. On the national level, measures, such as the English Language Unity Act, have also been proposed but not passed.⁶⁶

In the United States, then, language "policy" is often embroiled in "ethnic and racial politics."⁶⁷ Vacillations in federal policy regarding Indian rights and sovereignty "greatly weakened the ability and interest of Indian tribes to retain their languages." At

⁶²Horace M. Kallen, "Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot: A Study of American Nationality" *Nation*, 25 February 1915, 217.

⁶³Dorian, 26; and Nancy C. Carnevale, "'No Italian Spoken for the Duration of the War': Language, Italian-American Identity, and Cultural Pluralism in the World War II Years," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22 (Spring 2003): 7.

⁶⁴Nebraska Constitution, art. I, sec. 27 (1920).

⁶⁵See *Meyer v. State of Nebraska* (1923), 42 Supreme Court 625.

⁶⁶Rob Toonkel, "U.S. English Supports Introduction of Unity Act of 2003, *U.S. English, Inc.*, 31 March 2003, <http://www.us-english.org/inc/news/preleases/viewRelease.asp?ID=14>.

⁶⁷Lopez, 142.

the dawn of the twenty-first century, most Americans presently speak English as their first language, and very few are monolingual in their original tongue.⁶⁸ In general terms, the smaller a language group, the lesser chance of linguistic survival.⁶⁹ For many Indian nations, the local school system has been forced to take on language preservation as only a few elders are left to transmit this ancient knowledge. The generations in between the elderly and the children were often unable or unwilling to learn the old tongue.

Unlike Indians, European immigrants rarely experienced official steps to "hasten linguistic and cultural enfeeblement."⁷⁰ The great exceptions were national emergencies such as the two World Wars. German American culture was targeted for extermination during World War I. Although laws barring German language were overturned in the 1920s, the efforts of assimilationists had far reaching influences, and many ethnic Germans abandoned *Deutsch*. Similarly, the use of Italian and the promotion of Italian culture were greatly curtailed during World War II. The mother tongue proved to be no more resilient in this case. From these examples, it appears fairly certain that the flow of people and language is unidirectional and the national language, whether official or not, is often required for acceptance and advancement.⁷¹

Still, English is not the official language of the United States and bilingualism comes in and out of fashion. Prior to the 1920s, hundreds of thousands of students were educated in German, Polish, Czech, or Swedish. Pressures to join the mainstream deterred this practice until 1968, when results of the immigration reforms of 1965 and the demands of the Civil Rights Movements made homogeneity and exclusion

⁶⁸Joshua A. Fishman, ed., *Language Loyalty in the United States: The Maintenance and Perpetuation of non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups* (London: Mouton, 1966), 22.

⁶⁹David Harding, "Native Self-Determination Building: The Crees of Northern Quebec and the Navajos of the American South West," in John R. Wunder and Kurt E. Kinbacher, eds., *Reconfigurations of Native North America* (Forthcoming), 32.

⁷⁰Fishman, *Language Loyalty*, 30.

troublesome concepts.⁷² The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 recognized that monolingual education discriminated against indigenous peoples and immigrants. Subsequent legislation and court challenges have reaffirmed the principle that public education is for all children, regardless of language.⁷³ In 2006, Vietnamese, Hispanics, and many other groups are entitled to "bilingual education and bilingual election services" in accordance with this Act.⁷⁴

Not surprisingly, as language is the key to "assimilation on the one hand or the persistence of ethnicity on the other," bilingualism has met with mixed reactions.⁷⁵ Interestingly, cognitive studies by professional educators hailed bilingualism as a method to promote cognitive flexibility.⁷⁶ Many other experts and citizens believe that "fluency in English is necessary for the full integration into the American mainstream" and that, although no languages need be banned, making English the official language of the United States is necessary. Conversely, still others insist that training "immigrant groups or territorial minorities" to favor English is an expression of power,⁷⁷ as language abandonment is "nearly always due to a local history of political suppression, social discrimination, or economic deprivation."⁷⁸

While all these positions have merit, they may overstate the dormancy of non-English languages. Not all people abandon language under duress. As a general rule, mother tongues remain vibrant when they are used to express social intimacy or to

⁷¹Calvin Veltman, "Theory and Method in the Study of Language Shift," in James R. Dow, ed., *Language and Ethnicity: Focusshrift in Honor of Joshua A. Fishman* (Philadelphia: John Benjamin, 1991), 147.

⁷²"History of Bilingual Education," *Rethinking Schools*, online 12 (Spring 1998): http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/12_03/lanhst.shtml.

⁷³Peter Kipp, "1968 Bilingual Education Act," *History of Education: Selected Moments*, http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~danila_schugurensky/assignment1/1968kipp.html.

⁷⁴Lopez, 137.

⁷⁵Carnevale, 5.

⁷⁶Alexander Portes and Richard Schauffler, "Language and the Second Generation: Bilingualism Yesterday and Today," in Alejandro Portes, ed., *The New Second Generation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996), 11.

⁷⁷Veltman, 145.

⁷⁸Dorian, 39.

conduct commerce.⁷⁹ For many immigrants, language and other cultural practices showed marked decline among members of the second generation who interact regularly with the mainstream. Some suggest that assimilatory pressure leveled ethnic difference, and others assume identity was merely transformed by American culture and the composite result was a unique and separate identity.⁸⁰ Language denotes belonging to a group, but this function "is easily replaced by other markers that are just as effective."⁸¹ While descriptive richness may be compromised, religious institutions, traditional economic practices, and other long running traditions make excellent repositories of core cultural values. These values clearly survive language loss.⁸²

History -- Oral and Written

Group history, as much as language, serves to strengthen ethnic identity. Oral and written narratives serve as the "construction of a group's biography," and they are often called upon to reproduce "mythical accounts which legitimate group cohesion."⁸³ "Cultural memory" however, is densely layered and dependent on specific experiences both at their point of origin and at the point of contact with the mainstream.⁸⁴ Histories preserve ancient stories, serve as tools of empowerment, and are sometimes transformed by pressures on ethnic culture.

Most human groups have creation stories somewhere in their pasts. For many peoples and individuals, they remain vibrant components of cultural values in contemporary times. This is especially true among North American indigenous peoples who lay claim to almost as many creation beliefs as there are Indian nations. Passed

⁷⁹Douglass, 195.

⁸⁰Glazer and Moynihan, 12.

⁸¹Dorian, 31-32.

⁸²LePage and Tabouret-Keller, 240.

⁸³Waters, 520.

⁸⁴Meaghan Morris and Brett de Bary, *"Race" Panic and Memory of Migration* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), 3.

down from generation to generation, these narratives root "traditional Indian identities" deep "in the archaic past."⁸⁵ Interestingly, stories of origin may be a more salient marker of identity for peoples who share their versions of creation with only a select group. Omahas, for instance, share their creation only with their cognates, Quapaws, Poncas, Kansas, and Osages. Similarly, Vietnamese creation beliefs are common only to peoples of the Indochinese peninsula. Interestingly a number of minority groups in that region set themselves apart from the Vietnamese mainstream by varying interpretations of this narrative. Creation stories of Vietnamese and Omahas set these groups apart and also from neighboring ethnic groups. Germans from Russia, on the otherhand, share their story with all of Christendom., and their narrative, then, is less apt to set them against the mainstream.

Wherever a group's history begins, all recognize that great "emotional and political energy" lies in memories and historical narratives. Histories promote ideas of cultural longevity and the ability to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds. Histories recount triumphs and mourn great leaders. Consequently, historical narratives often empower. Memory and history, however, are sometimes selective and even used to promote political ends.⁸⁶

To these ends, historical identity is sometimes strengthened through popular culture and mass media. For instance, in the Mexican American *colonias* -- suburban ethnic enclaves -- of southern California in the 1920s and 1930s, a brand of theater that celebrated a mythical California mission heritage emerged. Players found that performing softened Mexican American fears about "discrimination, segregation, and repatriation," expanded their experiences beyond their segregated communities, and allowed them to mold further their identity in contrast to images of Euro-Americans and

⁸⁵Vickers, 10.

⁸⁶Nieto-Phillips, 211-12.

Mexican nationals.⁸⁷ While the history they presented was largely fictional, an accurate retelling of the past seemed somehow irrelevant. Perhaps more accurate, but no less theatrical, Cherokees on their reservation in North Carolina have performed a drama entitled "Unto These Hills" to enrapt tourists for over fifty years. The story plots developments within the Cherokee nation between the arrival of the Spanish on Cherokee homelands in 1540 and Cherokee removal to Oklahoma in the 1830s.⁸⁸ Oddly, the drama is enacted outside a town that presents Indians in the most stereotypical of ways in an attempt to gain tourist dollars. History, then, sometimes has economic motives as well as factual ones. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the mass media may "pose the clearest challenge to orthodox notions of culture" as history is easily coopted for any variety of reasons.⁸⁹

Folkways

The persistence of folkways -- particularly family and gender structures, music and dance, and food -- demonstrates that "considerable residues of ethnic culture" are retained among acculturated individuals as well as those preferring cultural separation.⁹⁰ Patterns of behavior are maintained because they represent a "system of shared meanings and values, and serve to enhance, codify, and legitimate these values." As identity and ethnicity are changeable, so too are folkways. Typically, the first generation adheres to the practices of the old place, and beginning with the second generation sometimes

⁸⁷Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 124.

⁸⁸"Unto There Hills," <http://www.cherokee-nc.com/unto.htm>.

⁸⁹Gupta and Ferguson, 19.

⁹⁰Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Immigrants, Immigrant Neighborhoods, and Ethnic Identity: Historical Issues," *Journal of American History* (Fall 1979): 605.

radical changes are made that allow practices to remain vital in a new milieu.⁹¹ Cultural celebrations often reinforce an ethnic group's "otherness."⁹²

Folkways are maintained in four distinct ways. "Ethnic survivals" exist as retained sets of folklore that are practiced with little concern for ethnic identity. Folkways in this category can be "detached" if they maintain the old-world form, or "adapted" if they are modified in urban villages. "Retentions," on the other hand, celebrate ethnicity. As such, they often preserve practices of the sending culture in a form no longer used in the older world. "Ethnic revivals" are cultural forms that have been returned to a community after a period of dormancy. While these forms also venerate ethnic identity, they may be anachronistic or they may incorporate practices from outside the culture. Finally, "ethnic reintensification" occurs where American born ethnics learn folkways directly from immigrant generations and continue performance without lapses. This form may be the most powerful for identity construction.⁹³

For most immigrants, family -- both nuclear and extended -- constitutes the single most important institution imported from the sending culture. As such, they often worked hard to make sure families remained strong and vital.⁹⁴ Ethnic identity was often strongest when traditional family structures remained in tact. Older constructions of family almost universally favored community over individuality, and fierce loyalty to insiders and corresponding wariness of outsiders often developed. As such, families were sustaining and constraining simultaneously, especially in cultures where traditional

⁹¹Stephen Stearn, "Ethnic Folklore and the Folklore of Ethnicity," *Western Folklore* 36 (January 1977): 14, 22.

⁹²Joe Sawchuk, "Negotiating an Identity: Métis Political Organizations, the Canadian Government, and Competing Concepts of Aboriginality," *American Indian Quarterly* 25 (Winter 2001): 73.

⁹³Stearn, 18.

⁹⁴Pozetta, *Assimilation*, viii.

roles were well defined.⁹⁵ Traditionalists preferred to marry within the community, a habit that reinforced strong identities.

Despite conservative inclinations, family construction and preservation rarely remained static in immigrant societies. Among groups with small populations, marital exogamy was common as early as the second generation.⁹⁶ Inter-marriage, more often than not, led to identities favoring the mainstream as two ethnicities were hard to preserve. Even among households with a single ethnicity, traditional hierarchies and practices often remained strong at home and in the urban villages, but were weakened when individuals interacted with the greater community.⁹⁷ For example, elder males and their opinions may have received deferential treatment at home, but been largely ignored in political issues that involved the city of residence. While some immigrants were able to live comfortably with such a dichotomy, other groups experienced remarkable friction as a result.

Food, as a general rule, was more a source of comfort than friction. Most scholars of identity and ethnicity agree that the "continuity of eating habits among ethnic groups is one of the strongest forms of Old World behavioral persistence."⁹⁸ Food and food preparation also support other forms of cultural performance. Feasting, for instance, is common on religious holidays for many ethnic groups. Food's importance extends beyond religion as well as some "rituals involving food, while not part of an actual religious service, are nevertheless sacred within a particular ethnic community."⁹⁹ Offering food to participants at an Indian handgame, for instance, is expected, ritualized, and consistent with the core values of many indigenous societies.

⁹⁵Pipher, 73.

⁹⁶Williams, et al., 220.

⁹⁷Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 164.

⁹⁸Stearn, 21; see also, Alan M. Kraut, Ethnic Foodways: The Significance of Food in the Designation of Cultural Boundaries Between Immigrant Groups in the U.S., 1840-1921," *Journal of American Culture* 2 (Fall 1979): 417.

⁹⁹Kraut, 416.

Always a flexible artifact, food was not only important in the urban village, but it also played a role in the home and the greater community. In many respects, the kitchen "was the social nexus of the immigrant family."¹⁰⁰ Gender roles were learned within its confines, meals to be savored by all family members were prepared, and recipes for unique foods that reinforced identities were transmitted. In some cultures, especially in the latter portions of the twentieth century, entrepreneurship and food intersected as ethnic groceries and stores were common. In this manner, food connected people to other residents of the urban villages who patronized these establishments.¹⁰¹ While many such business ventures supported identity by catering to ethnic tastes, making food available to mainstream population as well is not without risks. There are numerous instances when "the incorporation of ethnic foods into the American cuisine" has come "at the cost of diluting then original distinctive taste of the food." Chinese chow mein -- largely a manufactured and stereotypical culinary creation -- is a case in point. Additionally, over time, "a dish may become so thoroughly American that its ethnic associations" are drastically reduced.¹⁰²

In the modern consumer culture of mainstream society, food is not alone in succumbing to commercialization and reduced identity construction. Indeed, the rhythms and melodies of folk music can be heard around the country in the twenty-first century. Many times it is out of place with its progenitors. People in Minneapolis play and dance to Cajun fiddles and accordions. The wailing harmonica and twangy guitar of Mississippi Delta Blues wafts out of downtown bars in Lincoln, Nebraska. Fiddle tunes from Ireland, New England, and the upland South are often reproduced without regard to cultural geography as they drive the figures of modern contra and square dances nationwide.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 413.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 414.

Amazingly, while music is readily available for modern consumers and players, some forms of music are culturally specific and add to the ethnic identity of peoples. As a case in point, singing, drumming, and dancing remain sacred to Native peoples precisely because they reinforce "an Indian identity."¹⁰³ In addition to culturally specific forms, pow-wows -- famous venues of "ceremonial song and dance"¹⁰⁴ -- aid in the construction of pan-Indian identities. While there is still national variation, many "contest" pow-wows incorporate a certain amount of homogeneity.

Indians are not alone in their love of traditional music. Here again, the modern mainstream consumer culture has eroded many once important traditions. Preferring popular forms of entertainment, in some cultures few youth step in to replace aging musicians and dancers.¹⁰⁵ Even when they do, their performances are only nominally tied to the communities that sired the traditions. While exact performance may have once been important, in many cases, modernized music and dance forms are expressed as tradition, especially if the forms were dormant for a time. Created traditions, however, often carry as much weight as those carefully handed down.

Religion

Houses of worship -- whether a Christian church, Indian ceremonial grounds, or Buddhist temple -- are often vital to the maintenance of an ethnic identity and to the preservation of distinct communities.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, religion both unites and divides ethnic groups as most urban villages host multiple venues for religious ceremonies. In some cases, ethnic committees are divided into a number of Christian denominations. In

¹⁰²Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 86.

¹⁰³Benjamin P. Kracht, "Kiowa Powwows: Tribal Identity through the Continuity of the Gourd Dance," *Great Plains Research* 4 (August 1994): 258.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 257.

¹⁰⁵Lawrence McCullough, "The Role of Language, Music, and Dance in the Revival of Irish Culture in Chicago, Illinois," *Ethnicity* 7 (December 1980): 438, 442.

¹⁰⁶Waters, 521.

others, the population splits among religions that offer very different worldviews. In Lincoln, most Germans from Russia subscribed to Christianity, and Vietnamese and Omahas often made other choices.

On a larger scale, some Native Americans continue to practice their traditional religions, others converted to mainstream Christianity, and still others belong to the pan-Indian Native American Church (NAC). The destruction of indigenous economies and the occupation of Indian lands often made ancient practices impossible as the very basis of their religions were virtually destroyed. Those who persisted were often forced to abbreviate their ceremonies as ritualistic elements were lost or made meaningless. Ultimately, the confinement of Indians onto reservations led to religious contraction.¹⁰⁷ Many converted to Christianity at the behest of mainstream missionaries. This was sometimes unsatisfactory. Filling a spiritual void, the NAC was incorporated in the early twentieth century to provide a "bridge between traditional faiths and the realities of contemporary life."¹⁰⁸ While a multi-tribal organization, many Native nations establish their own rituals in accordance with their own cultures. Attending NAC ceremonies is an option for Indians living in urban areas, including Omahas in Lincoln. Choosing this practice over Christianity has powerful connotations for identity preservation.

Similarly, many Asian immigrants practice Buddhism. Founded on the Indian subcontinent, the religion began to spread across Asia by the third century BCE. In the late-twentieth century, a number of forms of Buddhism were imported to United States. By 1995, there were an estimated three to four million practicing Buddhists in America. In many respects, Buddhism is a nationalistic enterprise as Indian, Tibetan, Japanese, and Vietnamese branches of the religion all incorporate cultural traditions that make

¹⁰⁷Stearn, 28.

¹⁰⁸Carole Hampton, "Native American Church," in Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., *Encyclopedia of North American Indians* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 418.

ceremonies and meanings unique. Consequently, the 160 Vietnamese Buddhist centers in the United States support the continuation of Vietnamese identity.¹⁰⁹

Of course, not all Vietnamese practice the same religion, and many are Roman Catholic. Having ministered to immigrant practitioners for hundreds of years, the American Catholic Church incorporated the new parishioners into a time honored system. They constructed "national parishes," assigned them priests from within their ethnic community, and performed masses in the language of the people.¹¹⁰ While services in German, Czech, and Polish, to name a few, have long since subsided, services in Spanish and Vietnamese remain a vital part of the Catholic Church's mission. Immigrants that imported Protestant traditions were generally afforded the same courtesy. They too founded congregations serviced by ethnic clergy who conducted services in familiar tongues.

Interestingly, in some circumstances, Christianity also mitigates ethnicity. Inter-marriage of German and Irish Catholics, for instance, tended to lead to greater acculturation of typically ethnic populations. The offspring of these unions were typically more mainstream and less ethnic. Additionally, in the post World War II era, parochial schools trained students to enter the middle and upper classes, a process that further strengthened acculturation.¹¹¹ Sociologists suggest that most Catholics of European origin were largely indistinguishable from mainstream Americans by the early 1960s.¹¹² Other experts, however, argue that while ethnicity was modified through church contact, the parochial schools stressed the "ethnic values of founding

¹⁰⁹Peter N. Gregory, "Describing the Elephant: Buddhism in America," *Religion and American Culture* 11 (No. 2, 2001): 236-39.

¹¹⁰Gordon, 198.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Richard D. Alba, "Social Assimilation Among American Catholic National-Origin Groups," *American Sociological Review* 41 (December 1976): 1044-45.

generations," assuring continuity and laying the ground work for the ethnic revival later in the decade.¹¹³

While less apt to experience parochial education, the exogamy among Protestants certainly served the same acculturating process. Inter-marriage often resulted in the disappearance of ethnic congregations. Additionally, shifts in denomination were often a sign of high levels of acculturation into the mainstream.¹¹⁴ Interestingly, while religion has declined in importance in some areas of the country in the twenty-first century, differences between Protestants and Catholics and divisions between Buddhists and Christians remain vital to identity construction.¹¹⁵

In total, many immigrants employed aspects of performed culture in order to "hold on to the good from the old culture." Such practices, however, did not preclude efforts towards "taking advantage of the new."¹¹⁶ Rather, these remembered behaviors were part of the complex dialogue that accompanied identity transformation in new milieus. The construction of ethnicity, however, "may be a quality that owes as much to the circumstances of settlement in a new country as it does to the culture imported from the old country."¹¹⁷

ETHNIC CLASS STRUCTURES

Apart from place and performed culture, "the social bond" that forms many ethnic identities is often "tied to a form of economic subsistence."¹¹⁸ Most urban villages, despite dramatically different worldviews, share a common economic starting

¹¹³Melford E. Spiro, "The Acculturation of American Ethnic Groups," *American Anthropologist* 57 (December 1955): 1245.

¹¹⁴Waters, 521.

¹¹⁵Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 146.

¹¹⁶Pipher, 71.

¹¹⁷Oliver Zunz, "American History and the Changing Meaning of Assimilation," *Journal of Ethnic American History* 4 (Spring 1985): 56.

¹¹⁸Waters, 516.

point; their residents generally "arrived with preindustrial cultural values and confronted a complex urban-industrial economy."¹¹⁹ Peoples who enter the modern economy tend to bend their culture more towards the mainstream. Those that maintain communal practices tend towards old-world conservatism. The experiences of diverse populations of Germans from Russia demonstrate these trends. Often, if "a migrant group assimilated, it was in the material interests of individuals to do so, while if they did not, there were corresponding material advantages to forming an ethnic enclave."¹²⁰

While communal economies supported urban villages, those entering the market, but not reaping its rewards remained tied to their enclaves. Indeed, "an ethnic group" allows peoples to "collectively cope with poverty." The "informal reciprocal exchange" practiced in poor communities reinforces ethnic identity.¹²¹ Even while these systems remain central to social cohesion, some community members were able to raise their "social status" in a way that allowed the development of "parallel class structures" that mimic the host community's norms. Although affluent ethnics may not remove themselves from the urban village, they often associate mainly with other ethnics that have achieved similar status. In this manner, "Ethclass" becomes a vital component of individual identities.¹²² Immigrants with a high socio-economic status tended to be more acculturated than those of lesser means.¹²³ Additionally, for European immigrants, an "occupation" revered by the mainstream sometimes led to racial acceptance as entire groups of people were embraced as "white." While indigenous, Asian, and African peoples were not always economically static, they often were assigned places in the complex "racial hierarchy" that existed in many communities.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹Pozetta, *Assimilation*, viii.

¹²⁰Waters 516.

¹²¹Stoutland, 30.

¹²²Gordon, 40, 49-51.

¹²³Williams, et al., 219.

¹²⁴Peck, 166, 189.

Despite individual success stories, in urban villages, most inhabitants remained "isolated from the market system," and, consequently, were often "denied many of the benefits of the United States' capitalist economy and its electoral political institutions."¹²⁵ At times, these factors only strengthened ethnic identity. Other times, isolation took heavy tolls and those able to appear "American" did so. The political advantage of life in the mainstream often causes a shift in identity.¹²⁶ Most Immigrants move rapidly a generation or two into middle-class mainstream. Those who do not are largely impoverished and as a result "reactive ethnicity" develops.¹²⁷

PLACE: REGIONS, URBAN VILLAGES, AND HUMAN IMAGINATION

Like performed culture and class, place is a vital component of identity, but interestingly not all scholars agree on its significance. Some argue it is possible to draw general inferences about western life by examining specific places.¹²⁸ They use localities -- from valleys to states -- as jumping off points to examine larger movements. The problem with such case studies is that "no single place in America is a microcosm," and consequently generalizations are difficult to make.¹²⁹ Indeed, localities are influenced by many national and regional trends, but they still stand alone as unique entities. Citizens in any given place bring specific sets of performed culture that intertwine with an already established local mainstream to produce a place like nowhere else.

Communities such as Lincoln, Nebraska, and the urban villages within them, are best viewed through the lens of "localization." This concept refers to "the tendency of an immigrant-constructed culture to embed and reproduce itself" within the mainstream.

¹²⁵Stoutland, 5.

¹²⁶Dorian, 27.

¹²⁷Pipher, 78.

¹²⁸See generally, William G. Robbins, *Landscapes and Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997); and Boag.

Immigrant cultures are influenced both by their experiences within the urban village, and their wide-ranging experiences within the "broader local community."¹³⁰ Indeed, in Lincoln and beyond, "the previous events and experiences that are the building blocks of distinctive local values, social milieus, and culture affected the responses of contemporaries to systemic change."¹³¹ As different groups enter a place, the entire fabric of that community necessarily changes, even if these changes are minute, they are changes nonetheless.

Considering place, then, allows regional and local identities to emerge fully. Ideas about these spaces, however, are malleable. They can be both "traditional"-- durable and ancient -- or "voluntary"-- "products of the mobility and geographic freedom bequeathed individuals by the industrial revolution."¹³² Urbanscapes are almost universally involuntary, but greater regions may be constructed traditionally and then brought to the city. In any event, people "inevitably try to rationalize the landscape and the social and economic conditions they find themselves in."¹³³ Such visions can be interpreted in many ways depending on time and perspective.

For example, New England -- the most studied of all American regions -- is constructed largely from the view of its mainstream inhabitants, although differences over time and according to ethnic lenses often yield multiple visions. Hosting an overwhelmingly white and English population as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, New England identity was constructed in "response to a shifting relationship with England." Still, the region was not "rhetorically stable" until after the American Revolution. when a "Yankee regional self-consciousness" emerged. This shared identity

¹²⁹Thernstrom, 5.

¹³⁰Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Mainstreams and Side Channels," 7.

¹³¹Timothy R. Mahoney, "Urban History in a Regional Context: River Towns and the Upper Mississippi, 1840-60," *Journal of American History* 72 (September 1985): 339.

¹³²Michael P. Conzen, "Cultural Regions, Homelands, and Ethnic Archipelagoes in the United States: Methodological Considerations," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 13 (Spring/Summer 1993): 16.

painted New England as "a nation within a nation" -- a place where Pilgrims and Puritans melded into one egalitarian people who wandered into wilderness "in pursuit of civil and religious liberty."¹³⁴ This long-lived mainstream vision of the region belied the rampant industrialism that occurred between 1870 and 1910. Ignoring successive waves of French Canadian, Polish, and Italian millworkers, colonial virtue allowed many residents to ignore "urban squalor, industrial strife, class conflict, and the human offscourings of undemocratic governments." The city on the hill, however, was as much the ethnic urban village by the mill.¹³⁵ Additionally, American ethnic history has been complicated by scholars who accept the myth of a homogeneous New England and advance the region as the cradle of national culture.

Other regions, however, are constructed externally as popular images are related to the greater nation. Alaska, for instance, demonstrates that spatial imagination is central to the human experience.¹³⁶ Despite vast oil wealth and the preponderance of a mainstream population in urban areas, the forty-ninth state is often positioned as "a state of nature." Interestingly, this "deeply cultural phenomenon" illustrates a "national identity" based on a Turnerian view of expansion.¹³⁷ Its continued acceptance as a wilderness, however, mitigates Turner's argument that the frontier closed in 1890, and

¹³³Howard Roberts Lamar, "The Rise of a Great Plains Aesthetic," *Great Plains Quarterly* 9 (Spring 1989): 69.

¹³⁴Joseph A. Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 12, 77, 80, 93, 104, 190.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 205.

¹³⁶Norquay and Smyth, 5.

¹³⁷Susan Kollin, *Nature's State: Imagining Alaska as the Last Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 178. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner suggested that the American character was shaped by the existence of a series of frontiers located just to the west of an expanding civilization. He envisioned American movement across the continent as the force that separated the United States "from the influence of Europe." Farmers -- the main players in a grand process -- grappled with and then settled the "wilderness." Their movements from civilization into barbarism and back again endowed noble American citizens with the traits of "individualism, democracy, and nationalism." See, Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier on American History," in *Annual Report, American Historical Association 1893* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1894). While Turner insisted the frontier closed in 1890, additional frontiers captured the American imagination throughout the twentieth century.

images of Alaska allow Americans to continue believing in an exceptionalist view of their nation's history.

The Great Plains are defined from within and without. For those living on its vast expanses, it is often conceived as being in "The Middle of Everywhere."¹³⁸ This is especially true for Native American peoples who construct the grasslands into sacred landscapes. Many European immigrants -- Germans from Russia included -- moved to the Plains deliberately. Their sense of place, whether rural or urban, is certainly colored by their choices. Refugee populations may have had no inkling of what the region was about prior to arrival. Their experiences on the Plains may be closer to isolation than centrality.¹³⁹

Urban Villages

Within regions and within cities, ethnic communities form through a process that proceeds in three general stages. The "preparatory state" begins when a collective of immigrants cluster in an amorphous pattern in close vicinity to one another. After several years of almost haphazard settlement, "community formation" begins. During this stage, ethnic populations acquire a "measure of stability and permanence." Finally, the urban village forms during the "supra-local stage." At this point, "ethnic national organizations provide the community with an overarching structure."¹⁴⁰ Depending on the immigrant group, these structures may include houses of worship, centers for congregation, and local business designed specifically to serve an ethnic population.

Ethnic enclaves are a common feature of American cities. "Immigrant communities emerge as remarkably vibrant and complex entities that provided effective cushions between the often strange and harsh dominant society and newly arrived

¹³⁸See, Pipher.

¹³⁹Gordon, 39.

residents."¹⁴¹ New arrivals into a community -- especially if ethnic or racially "other" -- are both pushed and pulled into urban villages. The push factors can be economic and social. Mexican Americans in southern California, for instance were segregated into *colonias* by employer and banker paternalism and "Jim Crow" constraints. At the same time, members of these communities were able to own their homes, construct their own social and economic institutions, and create a distinct identity that honored Mexican traditions while enjoying the relative economic freedom of the United States.¹⁴² In more traditional cities with established boundaries, districts that offered inexpensive rents were favored. Similarly, these districts allowed people of common ancestry, background, and "cultural orientation" to live near each other for social support.¹⁴³

It was within these urban villages that ethnicity was created or reinforced and propagated. They allowed concentrations of ethnically "homogeneous individuals whose primary attachments are to each other--whatever the extent of acculturation."¹⁴⁴ Interestingly, the ethnic individuals within the enclave were often no less mobile than the average American from the mainstream. While population turnover was a fact of life in urban villages, "institutional continuity" in the form of churches and businesses often fostered community stability and the continuation of specific identities.¹⁴⁵ Clearly, "Ethnic neighborhoods are important not merely as visible manifestations of ethnicity, but also for their capacity to concentrate the institutions of and cultures of an ethnic group."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰Bibas, 19.

¹⁴¹Pozetta, *Assimilation*, vii.

¹⁴²See, Garcia.

¹⁴³Charles Hirschman, "The Melting Pot Reconsidered," *Annual Review of Sociology* 9 (1983): 406.

¹⁴⁴Alba, "Social Assimilation," 1030.

¹⁴⁵Thernstrom, 232.

Remembered and Reconstructed Places

While the urban village is generally the immigrant's reality, they frequently remained tied to their point of origin through memory. Discussions of identity, then, also need to address broader "spatial dynamics" as immigrant and indigenous groups exist within "international contexts."¹⁴⁷ Harkening back to their sending culture, "Remembered places have often served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed peoples."¹⁴⁸ Such representations "constitute as important component in the development of ethnic consciousness among immigrants."¹⁴⁹ Even among people from the same region as themselves, the desire to look back is often intense. Consequently, structures and building patterns from the old world are often reproduced in the new allowing a certain sense of physical and cultural continuity. Still, even in an urban village with many imported features, individuals can become "experience-distant" over the course of time. Consequently, they often lose interest in their old homes and focus solely on the present situation.¹⁵⁰ Subsequent generations -- especially among European groups -- often move out of the urban village and into the larger community. The urban villages sometimes become remembered places, especially among populations that have largely grown acculturated to the mainstream. After neighborhoods and networks of the early ethnic enclaves cease to be vital, the spirit of their existence "becomes transmitted into something more cultural and symbolic."¹⁵¹

Groups that have moved beyond their original settlements often focus their nostalgia on neighborhoods that their families used to live in. A number of urban villages -- including the South Bottoms in Lincoln -- have been included in historic

¹⁴⁶Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 253-54.

¹⁴⁷Peck, 7, 159.

¹⁴⁸Gupta and Ferguson, 11; see also, Peck, 160.

¹⁴⁹Kathleen Neils Conzen, et al., "Invention of Ethnicity," 21.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 25.

preservation projects. Such projects generally show a marked "conservative nostalgia for a less tumultuous world."¹⁵² As such, they tend to celebrate a mainstream national identity while often marginalizing immigrants and the working classes. Ironically, "communicating history by reference to the built environment still sustains a contrived and elitist vision of the past."¹⁵³ The mechanisms that preserve are typically mainstream. The National Park Service has been preserving archaeological and historical sites since 1935. In 1949 their work was expanded by the creation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In 1966, the Historic Preservation Act established the National Register that allowed structures and sometimes entire neighborhoods to receive a certain amount of preservation. Finally, in 1976, federal tax incentives were approved to encourage preservation¹⁵⁴ Historic preservation efforts often gentrify the neighborhoods they are attempting to preserve, giving history a white-washed look.

Ironically, the mainstream often recognized the contributions urban villagers made to the greater community only after their enclaves became historical memories. When the ethnic communities were actually vibrant, the preferred historical narrative concentrated on the heroic actions of long-term American citizens. Although they tend to be less interested in the national myth, the largely acculturated grandchildren of immigrants focused their histories on the original sending community rather than the urban village. Consequently, the true role of the ethnic enclave in any given city's development is often obfuscated.

Nonetheless, urban villages were important to overall community development, and in many cases, remain so to this day. The citizens in these

¹⁵¹Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Immigrants," 612.

¹⁵²Alan Mayne, "City as Artifact: Heritage Preservation in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Policy History* 5 (No. 1, 1993), 159, 161.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 161, 168.

enclaves necessarily respond and adapt to the peculiarities of their new milieus. The host community, whether they acknowledge it or not, is also influenced by new arrivals in their midst. Constant interaction among peoples and places creates unique local cultures that are necessarily modified by each successive wave of immigration.

CONCLUSIONS

Identity construction among immigrant and migrant groups is a complicated and never-ending process influenced by a plethora of internal and external forces. Cultural ascriptions will necessarily be localized as dialogues between specific sending and receiving societies are never exactly identical. Regional comparisons certainly enrich the understanding of local conditions, but larger trends should be viewed as a collections of discreet circumstances and developments.

While the Anglo-American mainstream influences identity construction in virtually all ethnic communities, bastions of older identities survived, were retained, or were revived by even the most acculturated immigrant groups. The salience of these identities is variable, but true abandonment of imported ways and beliefs is uncommon. The repositories of identity are many, and even long dormant performed cultures and remembrances can be revitalized in response to any variety of modern situations. Significantly, revivals exist as new forms that would be unrecognizable in the sending culture, but their meanings amidst local communities are undeniable.

Even in a mobile world, place remains central to identity construction. Urban villages -- or memories such neighborhoods -- are significant repositories for most behaviors that define cultures. Built or organized around imported preferences and institutions, these spaces protect images of still other places that exist as fact,

memory, or myth among their residents. Expanding, contracting, relocating, or disbanding as local conditions dictate, successive urban villages are common constructions in many mainstream cities including Lincoln, Nebraska.

CHAPTER 2

CONFRONTATIONS AND CONVERSATIONS: INDIANS, IMMIGRANTS, AND THE UNITED STATES

Identity construction among ethnic groups was often limited and prescribed by political and intellectual developments in mainstream culture. As an Anglicized "settler colony," the United States exercised political domination over indigenes, minorities, and non-English European groups from its inception.¹ Indeed, the mainstream has a long history of refusing to respect the rights contributing peoples "have been found to legally possess."² Therefore, examining historical attitudes and policies towards Indians and immigrants is an important prerequisite for interpreting identity formation in the twentieth century.

To a large degree, the "immigration and naturalization policies pursued by a country are a key to understanding its self-conceptualization as a nation."³ America, then, is a land of paradoxes. Its motto -- *E pluribus unum*, out of many, one -- seemed to reinforce pluralism, as did its needs for land and labor to construct a prosperous continental empire.⁴ Equality under the law, however, was widely ignored in the construction of the nation state. From its colonial beginnings, the United States was "neither very united nor very comfortable with diversity."⁵ People outside the mainstream were valued for their property or their human capital but denied full

¹Diva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, "Introduction: Beyond Dichotomies -- Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class in Settler Societies," in *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class* (London: Sage Publication, 1995), 1.

²Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins* (London: Macmillan, Ltd., 1969), 8.

³Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration in the Formation of an American Identity," *History Teacher* 30 (November 1996), 12.

⁴Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis, 1.

⁵Benjamin R. Barber, "Blood Brothers, Consumers, or Citizens? Three Models of Identity -- Ethnic, Commercial, and Civil," in Carol C. Gould and Pasquale Pasquino, eds., *Cultural Identity and the Nation State* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 57.

participation in American political and economic life. The intellectual currents behind these actions were both racist and xenophobic.⁶

For native peoples, ever changing governmental notions of "civilization" often skewed social, political, and economic growth.⁷ While immigrants were spared federal legislation for over a century, identities were often challenged by "blatant nativist sentiment."⁸ As conglomerates, both groups encountered literally thousands of agencies -- "schools, churches, fraternal orders, patriotic societies, civic organizations, chambers of commerce, philanthropies, railroads, and industries,"⁹ -- that attempted to mold their identities to resemble preferred American patterns. Many of these organizations were spawned by statute and supervised by local and federal governmental agencies; their ultimate goal was to delineate who would be included or excluded from the mainstream.

Because "the original inhabitants of North America owned or at least claimed the land and its resources," they entered into or ignored the European system on their own terms.¹⁰ Responding to this independence and citing their unsuitability for either slavery or indenture, calls for Indian exclusion were heeded for hundreds of years. Relegated to the status of second-class denizens, they were not naturalized into the body politic until the twentieth century, and their contributions to the commonwealth were largely ignored. These actions, combined with a precipitous population decline, allowed Indian identities to be "written into public consciousness by non-Indians."¹¹ As a result, the historic

⁶James A. Cohen, "Value Judgments and Political Assessments about National Models of Citizenship: The U.S. and French Cases," in *ibid.*, 123.

⁷Laura Woodsworth-Ney, *Mapping Identity: The Creation of the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation, 1805-1902* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2004), 3.

⁸Nancy C. Carnevale, "No Italian Spoken for the Duration of the War," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22 (Spring 2003): 6.

⁹John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 245.

¹⁰Roger L. Nichols, "The American in Nineteenth-Century America: A Unique Minority," in *The American Indian Past and Present*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 102, 99.

¹¹Scott B. Vickers, *Native American Identities: From Stereotype to Archetype in Art and Literature* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 107.

Indian -- real or imagined -- often remains the favored stereotype even in the twenty-first century.

While Native Americans were portrayed as nature's uncivilized children, immigrants -- often seeking the bounty of a "new" continent -- were valued for their willingness to help build American infrastructure, at least during eras of prosperity. Ultimately, they faced very divergent prospects. If they looked and behaved according to mainstream mores, they could be included in the body politic at its edges. Conversely, if acculturation was deemed impossible or undesirable, outright group exclusion and cultural genocide was the norm. For those of European descent, at least, the assimilatory power of America generally overshadowed nativism -- except in eras of crisis.¹² Even then, war and its demands often had Americanizing effects on immigrants. Service in the Civil War, for instance, helped to make the Irish "white" in the eyes of many Americans. Similarly, Italian Americans made the transition from ethnic worker to "fully" American during World War II.¹³

COLONIAL AMERICA

Demands of conformity to Anglo-American norms date to the colonial era. Although British possessions on mainland North America emerged as commonwealths founded on the tenets of classical liberalism, multiculturalism was rarely encouraged. Interestingly, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, and other influential political philosophers promoted both "equality and fairness" and "national sovereignty within bounded political communities."¹⁴ Therefore, the "civilized" state could justify

¹²Higham, 20.

¹³Carnevale, 5.

¹⁴John S. W. Park, *Elusive Citizenship: Immigration, Asian Americans, and the Paradox of Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 5.

the construction of "enforceable borders" and the creation of "rules to determine membership" as necessities for protecting the body politic from "savage" influences.¹⁵

In practice, demographic conditions ensured that early British settlements from Georgia to Nova Scotia were tempered by indigenous, African, and European practices. For one hundred years, Indians -- whose population was conservatively estimated at 700,000 at contact -- outnumbered the newcomers. Although immigrants from the Atlantic world totaled only 250,000 by 1700, disease and conquest led to the dispossession of most Native nations. The remarkable human growth of the British ruled polity eased this process. Over the next seventy-five years, their numbers exploded to 2.5 million individuals. While natural increase accounted for much of this growth, almost 600,000 new immigrants arrived. African slaves comprised 48 percent of this diverse group. Although they were an oppressed population, their contributions to colonial material culture and economic development should not be minimized. More central to the extension of "civilization," 217,000 English, Irish, Scots, and Welsh individuals arrived to further the development of the colonies.¹⁶

Conversely, the 85,000 Germans who arrived during this era were alternately welcomed and condemned. In sparsely populated regions, the human capital of the "first mass Atlantic migration" of non-English speaking free aliens generally proved advantageous to economic development.¹⁷ After founding Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1683, 75,000 predominantly Hessian and Palatine Germans moved into farming districts in the Delaware and Susquehanna River valleys.¹⁸ Notable enclaves also formed in the Hudson and Mohawk valleys in New York; the Potomac watershed in Maryland; the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia; and in the Piedmont of North and South

¹⁵Ibid., 11, 34, 38.

¹⁶Aaron Spencer Fogelman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 1-3.

¹⁷Ibid., 2.

Carolina.¹⁹ While necessarily Americanized through participation in the local economies, German culture and German notions of liberty remained prevalent. Emphasizing property rights and a libertarian state, "German-speaking immigrants supported whomever they thought could help them" pursue "land, prosperity, and security." This stance seemed poorly designed, arbitrary, and dangerous to many British subjects.²⁰

Consequently, as populations expanded, German communities and individuals were viewed either as economic competition, or "as a threat to Anglo-American culture."²¹ This was especially true in Pennsylvania where 30 percent of the population was German-speaking by 1775.²² Official concern led to alien registration laws and oaths of loyalty.²³ Additionally, leading politicians -- including Benjamin Franklin -- compared the German presence to swarming as they feared that Pennsylvania would become "a Colony of Aliens."²⁴ In the era of liberalism, then, Germans -- and all others who preferred not to acculturate -- remained "perpetual strangers" in the commonwealth.²⁵

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The American Revolution eased the plight of Germans, on one hand, while thwarting the aspirations of Indians, on the other. Because the war was "fought for empire in the west" as much as it was for independence from Great Britain, restrictive

¹⁸Marianne Sophia Wockeck, "A Tide of Alien Tongues: The Flow and Ebb of German Immigration to Pennsylvania, 1683-1776" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1983), 1, 29.

¹⁹Robert Henry Billigmeier, "Recent German Immigration to America," in Dennis Laurence Cuddy, ed., *Contemporary American Immigration: Interpretive Essays* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 109; and Fogelman, 7.

²⁰Fogelman, 12, 128-32, 151.

²¹Wockeck, 3.

²²Alan Houston, "Population Politics: Benjamin Franklin and the People of North America," Center for Comparative Information Studies, Working Paper 88 (December 2003): <http://www.ccis-ucsd.org/PUBLICATION/wrking88.pdf>, 30.

²³Wockeck, 6.

²⁴Houston, 1, 25.

events in colonial Pennsylvania were soon forgotten.²⁶ Indeed, German speakers responded to American republicanism by constructing a definition of liberty that contained notions of property rights that were quite acceptable to the English-speaking citizens.²⁷ Additionally, the newly reopened trans-Appalachian West required new populations to wrest territory away from Native Americans, and a "complex swirl" of "aliens" was already known for a collective adroitness for "preying on Indians."²⁸ Consequently, European peoples were again welcomed, hailed as components of national prosperity, and encouraged to become Americans.²⁹ Under the new Constitution, Congress was immediately dispatched to "establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization."³⁰ Whether Dutch, Swede, or Saxon, immigrants needed only to live in the country for two years (later extended to five), establish their good character, swear an oath to support the Constitution, and renounce foreign citizenship in order to gain American citizenship.³¹

Despite their presence, immigrant cultures were merely tolerated. The United States remained the province of an Anglo population that established "the rules of the game" from the very beginning.³² It was Native Americans, however, who experienced the full force of America's exclusionary tendencies. Although they were only "fighting for their freedom in tumultuous times," Indigenous nations that sided with the Crown during the Revolution saw long-standing treaties nullified and their lands placed in

²⁵Park, 45.

²⁶Francis Jennings, "The Indians' Revolution," in Alfred L. Hurtado and Peter Iverson, eds. *Major Problems in American Indian History* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1994), 172.

²⁷A.G. Roeber, *Palantines, Liberty, and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 325-26.

²⁸Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 51.

²⁹Yaseem Abu-Laden and Victoria Lamont, "Crossing Borders: Interdisciplinarity, Immigration and the Melting Pot in the American Cultural Imaginary," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 27 (No. 2, 1997): 25.

³⁰U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 8. Although scions of African were present throughout American history, the Constitution minimizes their presence and largely confines them to the status of property. This population is largely outside the scope of this investigation.

³¹Vecoli, 10.

jeopardy.³³ In the war's aftermath, "the acquisition of Indian lands" became national policy.³⁴ Even those supporting the rebellion found no respite in the Constitution of the United States -- a document that mentions Indians only twice. Exclusion is the theme in both cases. Indians are omitted from population counts that determined congressional representation, an indication they were to be barred from the polity. Additionally, for purposes of commercial regulation, they were denoted neither as "foreign Nations" nor as "States," but as a third entity whose status is undefined.³⁵ Finally, the Bill of Rights was silent on indigenes altogether, an omission that left Indians with little or no "protection from the powers of government."³⁶

THE EARLY REPUBLIC

Because Indians both appeared different and looked "at things differently," their experiences were unlike those of even the swarthiest Europeans.³⁷ Additionally, because the Constitution's silence left their legal status in a constant state of flux, they were subject to "the frequent wholesale restructuring" of programs and legislation.³⁸ In the first several decades of the nineteenth century, judicial action necessarily defined Indian land, sovereignty, and citizenship rights.

As population growth spurred encroachment on Indian lands, the legal system became a tool to dispossess Native Americans. Addressing a change in government in *Johnson v. M'Intosh* (1823), Chief Justice John Marshall validated all American land claims made prior to the enactment of the Constitution by insisting that the United States

³²Ibid, 17.

³³Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), xiii; Jennings, 184.

³⁴Calloway, *American Revolution*, xv.

³⁵See U.S. Constitution, Article I, sections 2 and 8.

³⁶John R. Wunder, *"Retained by The People": A History of American Indians and the Bill of Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 213.

³⁷Nichols, 99.

³⁸Wunder, x.

assumed "title to all the lands occupied by Indians" from the British government. Additionally, he asserted that "discovery gave an exclusive right to extinguish the Indian title of occupancy, either by purchase or conquest."³⁹ Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Albert S. Lipscomb echoed Marshall's sentiments in 1832 declaring that "civilized nations" had either to exercise an "equitable mode of acquisition" or leave the continent in its "rude and savage state."⁴⁰

This prejudicial land law rested on the character of Indian peoples who were defined as "fierce savages." This condition made it impossible to govern Native Americans or absorb them into the body politic.⁴¹ Instead, Indians were established as "aliens" in 1831 through *Cherokee Nation v. State of Georgia*. In this action, Marshall ruled that Indian tribes "occupying our territory" were "domestic dependent nations." As such, they were neither fully independent, nor subject to state jurisdiction, rather they existed "in a state of pupilage." This important declaration outlined the paternal attitude the federal government would take regarding peoples who were "gradually sinking beneath our superior policy, our arts and our arms."⁴² Additionally, Marshall's tone suggests it was abundantly "clear to both Indians and whites that the United States dealt with Indians from a position of dominance."⁴³

Federal supremacy was taken to new heights during the Jacksonian era as Native Americans were forced to relocate from their ancestral homelands into Indian Territory - largely the Louisiana Purchase lands west of the Mississippi River. Although the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1832 that Indian nations were the sovereigns of their own

³⁹*Johnson v. M'Intosh*, 21 U.S. (8 Wheat.) 543 (1823).

⁴⁰*Caldwell v. Alabama*, 1 Stew & Potter (Ala.) 327 (1832), in Vine Deloria, Jr., ed., *Of Utmost Good Faith* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1971), 9.

⁴¹See *Johnson v. M'Intosh*.

⁴²*Cherokee Nation v. State of Georgia*, 30 U.S. (5 Peters) 1, 8, reprinted in Colin G. Calloway, ed., *First Peoples: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), 252-55.

⁴³Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and American Indians*, abridged edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), x.

territory, had the right to self government, and that treaties guaranteeing their presence were "the supreme law of the land.," they were moved nonetheless.⁴⁴ This technically illegal process was sanctioned because white Americans "had no notion of a pluralistic society or a divided land occupied in part by European immigrants and their descendants and in part by American Indians adhering to their own customs."⁴⁵

Similarly, prior to 1860, Americans often painted immigrants as problematic, despite their northern European backgrounds. While there were virtually no immigration restrictions, Catholics, who were sometimes indistinguishable from the mainstream population, and Irish people, who were discernible, were the targets of prejudice. Nativists and Know-Nothings presented a united front to maintain the "proper" social makeup of the young nation. Still, Irish and Catholic children born in the United States were automatically citizens. Although even the second generation faced discrimination, indigenous peoples and the scions of enslaved Africans were not even afforded the possibility of inclusion for decades to come.

THE GILDED AGE

After the Civil War, citizenship was finally extended to African Americans through the Fourteenth Amendment, and by 1870 naturalization rights were extended to immigrating blacks. The real focus of federal policy, however, was on Europe. Anticipating a post-war labor shortage, northern and western Europeans were actively recruited by the short-lived National Immigration Board. In this way, desirable aliens were encouraged to join the body politic.⁴⁶

Although there were major shifts in Indian policy, Native Americans were extended no additional rights, remained in legal limbo, and were still generally excluded

⁴⁴*Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S 515 (1832), reprinted in Calloway, *First Peoples*, 255-57.

⁴⁵Prucha, 10.

from meaningful interaction with the mainstream. Still, the Indian Appropriations Act of 1871 was forced through Congress as the "final answer to 'the Indian problem'."⁴⁷

Promoted by humanitarians as reform, this law ended the practice of treaty making, and its passage marked a serious legal challenge to federally-recognized Indian sovereignty, however flawed. Ultimately, its policies proved to be "an especially virulent strain" of colonialism that attacked "every aspect of Native American life -- religion, speech, political freedoms, and cultural diversity."⁴⁸

The federal government's treatment of Indians was not particularly out of line with other developments in the Gilded Age. The rise of American imperialism, scientific racialism, theories of civilization, Anglosaxonism, and Social Darwinism all contributed to a hardening outlook towards many ethnic and racial groups.⁴⁹ These theories also reinforced economic arguments suggesting that immigrants were unnecessary competition for American workers. As such, calls for the legal restriction of certain kinds of European immigration were heard as early as 1878.⁵⁰

Perhaps the greater concern of the era was the "radically foreign" appearance of the new wave of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe." These "inferior peoples" were simply assumed "unassimilable."⁵¹ Furthering inflaming the desires of those preferring people of teutonic origins, "essentialist arguments about 'race'," emerged during this era. This "scientific" discourse divided the world's people into five racial families: Caucasians, Ethiopians, Mongolians, Malays, and Americans. Further

⁴⁶Edith Robbins, "German Immigration to Nebraska: The Role of State Immigration Agents," *Yearbook of German American Studies* 26 (1991): 94.

⁴⁷Prucha, 198.

⁴⁸Wunder, 17. See also Bill Ong Hing, *To Be An American: Cultural Pluralism and the Rhetoric of Assimilation* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 20.

⁴⁹Frank Van Nuys, "'The Stuff From Which Citizens are Made': American Identity and Cultural Debate, 1880-1925" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wyoming, 1997), 2; Higham, 108-09.

⁵⁰Higham 41.

⁵¹Van Nuys, "Stuff From Which Citizens are Made," 15; and Frank Van Nuys, *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002), xi.

delineation of civility and rank were constructed around language families. As a result, many in the United States were relegated into various categories of "lesser" humans.⁵²

Growing concern about the presence of unassimilative populations forced the federal government -- traditionally not involved in the process -- to begin direct supervision of immigration. Not surprisingly, a non-European group was the first to be singled out for exclusion. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. Long perceived as a bane to the western economy, Chinese workers were refused legal entry into the United States largely on emotional and racial grounds. In practical terms, this piece of legislation started federal control of international borders by federal customs agents who were dispatched to monitor the movements of Chinese merchants on the Pacific rim.⁵³ The same year, "criminals, prostitutes, lunatics, idiots, and paupers" were also barred from entry.⁵⁴ To help finance regulatory efforts, those individuals legally admitted were charged \$.50 to enter.⁵⁵

Xenophobic concerns spilled into Indian policy -- a population that could not easily be deported. They could, however, be denied citizenship by the U.S. Supreme Court. In *Elk v. Wilkins* (1884) -- a case originating in Omaha and involving an Omaha Indian -- the court reiterated the constitutional exclusion of Indians and restated their status as pupils. It also determined that "an Indian could not of his own power become a citizen of the United States."⁵⁶ Interestingly, they could achieve human status by disavowing the "central beliefs of a tribal society" and replacing them "with Western European societal and religious values."⁵⁷ This transition was facilitated through allotment schemes promoted by reformers and the federal government. Under allotment,

⁵²Abu-Laden and Lamont, 26-28.

⁵³Susan M. Griffith, "Border Crossings: Race, Class and Smuggling in Pacific Coast Chinese Immigrant Society," *Western Historical Quarterly* 35 (Winter 2004): 477.

⁵⁴Vecoli, 14.

⁵⁵Higham, 43-44.

⁵⁶Deloria, *Of Utmost Good Faith*, 84-85. See text of *Elk v. Wilkins* 112 U.S. 94 (1884), in *ibid.*, 87-92.

Indians, in theory, abandoned communal land-ownership in favor of "competitive individualism" offered by American-styled farming. Included in most treaties negotiated between 1854 and 1871, its wide-scale practice was delayed until 1887 when the General Allotment (Dawes Severalty) Act was passed. In addition to moving onto privately-owned acreage, Indian children were also placed in boarding schools to be thoroughly Americanized. Once the old ways were abandoned, Indians were granted American citizenship and theoretically could become productive American taxpayers. The programs were implemented despite resistance, and they became the bulwark of the new Indian Service until 1930.

Fin de Siècle currents only intensified the desire to either exclude or assimilate "others." The formation of the Bureau of Immigration in 1890 made federal regulations for all immigrants a reality. In 1891, a processing center was constructed on Ellis Island in New York harbor, and federal involvement in the immigration process became permanent. This project is all the more significant as an estimated 40 percent of the population of the United States traces its heritage through Ellis island.⁵⁸ (Its Pacific counterpart -- Angel Island in San Francisco -- opened in 1910.) At this time, polygamists and people with contagious diseases were added to the list of nonentrants, and steamship companies were charged with returning anyone rejected to their point of origin.⁵⁹

Because Anglo-centrics were appalled by the "educationally deficient, socially backward, and bizarre" looking southern and eastern European immigrants, popular movements emerged to urge the bureau to take stern actions to limit their entry.⁶⁰ The most common strains of nativism singled out Roman Catholics and political radicals for

⁵⁷Hing, 21.

⁵⁸Mary Pipher, *The Middle of Everywhere: The World's Refugees Come to Our Town* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), xvii.

⁵⁹Higham, 99-100.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 65.

prejudice and exclusion. Organizations such as the American Protective Association (APA) -- founded in Clinton, Iowa, in 1887 -- focused on guarding America against Papists. Similarly, Henry Cabot Lodge and other prominent New Englanders founded the Immigrant Restriction League (IRL) in 1890.⁶¹ For the better part of two decades, they promoted English literacy tests as viable means to curtail the flow of people.

The popularity of scientific racialism colored the judgment and work of the most learned Americans of the era. John Fiske, a Harvard educated historian, popular lecturer, respected author, and IRL member, was a case in point. Fiske's sense of history suggested that America was at the apex of the grand procession of social development. According to this world view, all human societies progressed through three stages of "barbarism" before evolving into true civilizations. Material culture was the guiding light behind these arguments. "Savages" were defined as peoples who did not make pottery. Those employing pottery entered the first stage of "barbarism." Those engaged in domestic agriculture entered the second phase of barbarism. Civilization began with the smelting of iron and was formerly achieved with the introduction of an alphabet.⁶² Fiske's interest in "inferior" peoples was primarily illustrative as he used indigenous nations at all three phases of barbarism to explain how Europeans advanced millennia before Indians. His work also demonstrated why Native Americans were unable to retain their control of the American continents.

A generation younger than Fiske, Frederick Jackson Turner shared similar views of American exceptionalism and racial exclusion when he constructed his "frontier thesis."⁶³ Turner viewed American history as the "record of social evolution" engraved in the American psyche as the nation marched from the civilized East into the savage

⁶¹Van Nuys, "Stuff From Which Citizens are Made," 17.

⁶²John Fiske, *The Discovery of America*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), 1: 26-32.

⁶³Van Nuys, "Stuff From Which Citizens are Made," 70.

West.⁶⁴ In their new milieu, westerners resorted to Indian-like barbarisms, but they soon reshaped the conquered lands and, in the process, redefined American civilization. In Turner's narrative, economic pursuit rather than material culture was the hallmark of civilization. Self-sufficient Indians were savages, traders were civilizations' pathfinders, ranchers and farmers claimed the land from these unsavory influences, and ultimately the arrival of industrial communities completed the march of progress. Although the Indian had no place in modern civilization, Turner recognized that "American" is a "composite nationality," and consequently celebrates immigrants so long as they support the national mission of grappling with the wilderness in order to strengthen democracy.⁶⁵

THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

The Progressive movement of the early twentieth century was dominated by middle-class moralists who concerned themselves with "solving the problems associated with immigrants, blacks, the poor, and the deviant."⁶⁶ Interestingly, during this era, movements to exclude, to assimilate, and to celebrate diversity competed against each other. Exclusionists continued to concentrate on literacy standards as a measure for allowing only the best and brightest to land in America. Although they were successful enough to get measures passed by Congress, Presidents Cleveland, Taft, and Wilson all vetoed bills containing such provisions.⁶⁷

Assimilationists argued that "true Americanism required strict conformity to Anglo-Saxon manners." Consequently, an American citizenship and an American

⁶⁴Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" *Annual Report, American Historical Association 1893*, reprinted in *Frontier and Section: Selected Essays of Frederick Jackson Turner* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1961), 43.

⁶⁵Ibid., 55.

⁶⁶Van Nuys, "Stuff From Which Citizens are Made," 23.

⁶⁷Higham, 105.

identity were the implicit goal of the naturalization process.⁶⁸ The main socializing agents in this model were the public schools. These local institutions set out to inculcate foreign, lower class, and Indian children in "middle-class values and behaviors."⁶⁹ Led by federal example, this process was tested on Indian children before being applied to immigrants. In 1892, Indian Commissioner Thomas J. Morgan justified the \$2.25 million yearly cost of Indian education as necessary "for the proper discharge of their duties and for the enjoyment of their privileges as citizens."⁷⁰ Largely recruited from allotted families, Indian students were required to cut their hair, speak English, and exchange their given names for American names assigned by their teachers. In this manner, Native Americans faced the eradication of their cultures and languages in the educational system.⁷¹ One of the main lessons was that "diversity led to divisiveness."⁷²

Immigrant children confronted similar expectations as they too saw their names Americanized and "were forced to conform to American patterns of behavior."⁷³ Not surprisingly, most teachers were part of mainstream culture. Their intentions were often noble as they offered pupils opportunity for future progress through education. Unfortunately, these skills were acquired in a way that proved dangerous to "valued traditions."⁷⁴ Clearly, the "common school tradition" weakened ethnicity and became a classroom where students inadvertently learned about "racism" and the American

⁶⁸Jean Costanza Miller, "The Melting Pot Metaphor: Immigration and Identity in Early Twentieth Century American Discourse" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2000), 94; and Van Nuys, "Stuff From Which Citizens are Made," 111.

⁶⁹Vecoli, 18.

⁷⁰"Indian Commissioner Thomas J. Morgan on the Need for Compulsory Education, 1892," in Albert L. Hurtado and Peter Iverson, eds., *Major Problems in American Indian History: Documents and Essays* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1994), 377.

⁷¹Raymond A. Mohl, "Cultural Assimilation *versus* Cultural Pluralism," *Educational Forum* 45 (March 1981): 324-25.

⁷²Robert A. Carlson, *The Quest for Conformity: Americanization Through Education* (Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), 10.

⁷³Mohl, 325.

⁷⁴George E. Pozetta, ed, *Assimilation, Acculturation, and Social Mobility* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), ix.

"socioeconomic" divide.⁷⁵ Interestingly, "the American educational system continues to transmit the core values of the mainstream," and the "educational melting pot" remains "a one-way street."⁷⁶

The metaphor of the American Melting Pot emerged during the Progressive Era, primarily in response to a popular Broadway play written by Israel Zangwill -- a London Jew -- in 1908. Using the experiences of his people as an example, "The Melting Pot" defined the United States as a "multi-ethnic society" that rested on a "unifying ideology" of economic freedom and political democracy.⁷⁷ In practice, however, this "theory" lost all "association with the idea that immigrants could make valuable contributions to a yet finished American culture."⁷⁸ Instead, the metaphor was generally interpreted to mean that immigrants and minorities should look and act as much like the mainstream as possible.

Recognizing that the melting pot ideal favored the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants over all others, liberals proposed the idea of "cultural pluralism." Championed by Horace M. Kallen -- a rabbi and lecturer in philosophy at the University of Wisconsin -- this construction recognized the contributions ethnics and minorities made to the greater society. In a series of impassioned essays in one of the nation's leading periodicals, he argued that an ethnically diverse nation was a stronger nation.⁷⁹ He also averred that immigration was vital to America as it kept a distinct caste system from developing,⁸⁰ but "Kallen's prescription for ethnic pluralism never caught on."⁸¹

⁷⁵Richard D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 165; and Pipher 114.

⁷⁶Mohl, 323, 325.

⁷⁷Miller, 37.

⁷⁸Philip Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 18, 36.

⁷⁹Horace M. Kallen, *Nation*, 18 February 1915, 193.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 194.

⁸¹Mohl, 328.

TWO WORLD WARS

Between 1915 and 1924, American involvement in World War I and the Red Scare produced an all-out assault on heterogeneity.⁸² In an era of intense patriotism, notable public figures such as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson demanded an "[u]nhyphenated America."⁸³ Consequently, foreign traits became both undesirable and sometimes dangerous. As American involvement in the war became imminent, Germans and German Americans were persecuted for their ethnicity. Similarly, Russians and other eastern Europeans were suspected of radical alienism after the Bolsheviks came to power through revolution in 1917. In this cultural environment, literacy tests were finally implemented by the Bureau of Immigration as Congress successfully overrode Wilson's veto.

Immigration restrictions in the 1920s and an almost "tribal" sense of Americanism -- complete with anti-semitism and a reinvigorated Ku Klux Klan -- quieted debate on the diversity issue.⁸⁴ Responding to fear of radicalism and an increase in eastern and southern Europeans at Ellis island, the federal government effectively limited new migrants for the first time ever by passing the Emergency Immigration Act of 1921. This law set quotas on the number of foreign nationals admitted to the country. No more than 3 percent of the expatriate population from any given country as of the 1910 census were allowed to immigrate to the United States. Further restrictions were legislated in 1924 when the National Origins Act reduced quotas to 2 percent. Both these acts clearly favored northern and western Europeans -- the long dominant population of the United States.⁸⁵

⁸²Van Nuys, "Stuff From Which Citizens are Made," 151.

⁸³Higham, 199.

⁸⁴Ibid., 282.

⁸⁵George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 2 vols. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 2: 1165.

Asian immigrants, on the otherhand, were "increasingly held at the frustrated margins of American society" as place of origin and racial characteristics became reasons for exclusion.⁸⁶ Section 3 of the Immigration Act of 1917 placed geographic restrictions on many peoples.

[U]nless otherwise provided for by existing treaties, persons who are natives of islands not possessed by the United States adjacent to the Continent of Asia, situate south of the twentieth parallel latitude north, west of the one hundred and sixtieth meridian of longitude east from Greenwich, and north of the tenth parallel of latitude south, or who are natives of any country, province, or dependency situate on the Continent of Asia west of the one hundred and tenth meridian of longitude east from Greenwich and east of the fiftieth meridian of longitude east from Greenwich and south of the fiftieth parallel of latitude north, except that portion of said territory situate between the fiftieth and the sixty-fourth meridians of longitude east from Greenwich and the twenty-fourth and thirty-eighth parallels of latitude north, and no alien now in any way excluded from, or prevented from entering the United States shall be admitted to the United States.⁸⁷

The barred territories, then, included most of China, all of Vietnam and Indochina, the Indian subcontinent, and Indonesia.

Additionally, the United States Supreme Court racialized naturalization through two important rulings. In *Ozawa v. United States* (1922) the Japanese-born plaintiff averred that he was "white" when compared to Chinese or African Americans and therefore a prime candidate for citizenship.⁸⁸ The court rejected his argument and insisted that only "Caucasians" or Africans were eligible for inclusion. The following year, "Caucasian" status was narrowed to exclude South Asians. In *United States v. Thind*, the court insisted that although Punjabis might technically be "Aryans," the majority of Americans would not recognize them as whites.⁸⁹ In such a social climate,

⁸⁶Park, 130.

⁸⁷Immigration Act of 1917, <http://nth.s.newtrier.k12.il.us/academics/faculty/Hilsabeck/SUMMER/han/immigration%20Act%20of%201917.htm>. The small exception to exclusion was modern day Iran.

⁸⁸See discussion of *Ozawa v. United States*, 260 U.S. 178 (1922), in Park, 122-24.

⁸⁹See discussion of *United States v. Thind*, 261 U.S. 204 (1923), in *ibid.*, 124-27.

legal immigration and citizenship for Asians would be barred "again and again until 1965."⁹⁰

More inclusively, World War I and its aftermath had some positive effects on Native Americans who, in typical fashion, served the United States valiantly during a time of military necessity. An estimated 8,500 Indians enlisted in the armed forces and another 1,500 were drafted. Their service ended a long debate about citizenship as the liberal assimilation policies previously reserved for European immigrants were applied to Indians.⁹¹ While some Indians received citizenship with their allotments, many remained mere wards of the state. In 1919, all those in the services were granted citizenship, and in 1924 all remaining Indians were naturalized.⁹² The Indian Citizenship Act was a concise piece of legislation insisting,

That all non-citizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States be, and they are hereby, declared to be citizens of the United States: *Provided*, that the granting of such Citizenship shall not in any manner impair or otherwise affect the right of any Indian to tribal or other property.⁹³

In many respects, Indian citizenship was a hollow designation. Some states -- Arizona, Maine, and Utah in particular -- took decades to recognize its provisions.⁹⁴ More generally, the Act was viewed as "the ultimate solution" for the creation of responsible and respectable Indians. These new citizens still lacked full constitutional protection, and they were allowed few vestiges of their collective cultural identity. By the 1930s,

⁹⁰Ibid., 130.

⁹¹S. James Anaya, "International Law and U.S. Trust Responsibility toward Native Americans," in *Native Voices*, 156-64.

⁹²Tom Holm, "Fighting a White Man's War: The Extent and Legacy of Indian Participation in World War II," in Peter Iverson, ed., *The Plains Indians of the Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 151-52.

⁹³Indian Citizenship Act, 2 June 1924, reprinted in Deloria, *Of Utmost Good Faith*, 94.

⁹⁴Deloria, *Of Utmost Good Faith*, 94.

few "Indian rights were left" and no "aspect of Indian life was immune from intervention."⁹⁵

Even the Indian New Deal was unable to rectify such a dismal situation. In 1934, John Collier -- Commissioner of Indian Affairs for Franklin Roosevelt -- spearheaded the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA). Calling for local self government, the promotion of Indian civilization, conservation of tribal land through the abolishment of the allotment system, and the creation of Courts of Indian Affairs, this act became the blueprint of policy until roughly 1946.⁹⁶ Changing almost a century of practice, Collier applied First Amendment protections -- especially the right of religious freedom -- to Indians through administrative action. Tribes were also allowed to draft constitutions that gave them the tools to create economic growth and gain political stability. Unfortunately, Collier's emphasis on self determination ultimately created another "paternalistic program for the Indians who were expected to accept it willy-nilly."⁹⁷ Unexpectedly, seventy-seven tribes rejected the IRA outright. Even those who drafted and adopted constitutions -- including Omahas -- found that their full sovereignty rights were not restored. Instead, they created governments by permission that had "a powerful 'Big Brother' looking over their shoulders."⁹⁸ When the Indian New Deal was curtailed at the eve World War II, Indian culture was still not accepted by most Americans.

Paradoxes regarding diversity in American society were remarkable during the Great Depression. On one hand, "cultural democracy emerged as the guiding motif of the artistic and intellectual activities" of the New Deal.⁹⁹ The sculptures and murals on public buildings constructed during the 1930s are evidence of an increasing intellectual comfort with diversity. On the otherhand, nativist rhetoric and action increased

⁹⁵Wunder, 44.

⁹⁶For the full text, see Deloria, *Of Utmost Good Faith*, 66-67.

⁹⁷Prucha, 318.

⁹⁸Wunder, 80.

⁹⁹Vecoli, 21.

dramatically. The National Origins Act was fine tuned during this decade as greater restrictions were placed on nonwhite populations, most notably Filipinos and Mexicans working in the American West.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, isolationism and strict immigration quotas allowed Americans largely to ignore the growing refugee crisis in Europe generated by fascism and nazism.¹⁰¹ More dangerously, the rise of decidedly undemocratic states in Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union caused many Americans to look for fifth columns behind every immigrant and immigrant organization. Some intellectuals even compared the democratic world to Troy on the eve of accepting the Trojan Horse.¹⁰²

Intellectual paranoia gave way to full-fledged patriotism when the United States was dragged into World War II. Ethnic populations, especially those originating in nations at war with America, had oddly divergent experiences. German Americans and German immigrants were spared the assaults they experienced during World War I, and their loyalty was rarely questioned. People with Italian descent were rarely physically assaulted, but they found it necessary to refrain from celebrating their unique cultures and speaking their native tongue. Those with Japanese heritage -- whether immigrant or citizen -- were detained then relocated to isolated camps until the war was over. While racism appears to have been a motivating factor in this heinous policy, skin color was not the only issue. American allies in Asia were rewarded for their efforts. The Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1943, a decision that can be seen as the start of a "twenty-two year legislative process which all but removed race and ethnicity as immigration and naturalization criteria."¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰Roger Daniels, "Changes in Immigration Law and Nativism Since 1924," in Franklin Ng, ed., *Asians in America: The Peoples of East, Southeast, and South Asia in American Life and Culture* (New York: Garland, 1998), 67.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁰²Martin Dies, *The Trojan Horse in America* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1940), 316.

¹⁰³Daniels, 70.

While Americans with German, Italian, Chinese, and Japanese heritages all served admirably in the armed forces, the 25,000 Indians in uniform at war's end represented the largest portion of an ethnic population in the service. Despite the best efforts of indigenous peoples and a friendly press that heralded their achievements, the overwhelming image of Indians remained stereotyped in the movie western. They remained trapped in time as the American public saw Crazy Horse and Geronimo at best, and cigar store Indians and "savages" at the worst.¹⁰⁴ For those individuals in the services, "racial stereotypes" of Indian warriors often "forced Native Americans into precarious assignments."¹⁰⁵ Still, as they were not segregated into all-Indian units, many Native Americans found a degree of acceptance in the military, and their efforts as "Code Talkers" were even celebrated. The significant number of Indian men and women left the reservation for work in war industries, however, largely remained unheralded.

THE COLD WAR AND BEYOND

In order to reward Indians for their service, the federal government promoted a policy of "emancipating" Indians from special laws by ending their status as wards of Congress. Abysmally labeled "termination," eleven tribes and sixty-one bands were liquidated as corporate entities between 1947 and 1967. The entire Indian population was slated for the same fate -- assimilation into the greater American culture -- by 1976. While only 3 percent of the Native American population was actually terminated, the policy had long-lasting effects. For instance, many Indians were relocated into urban areas under the Voluntary Relocation Program only to face chronic underemployment in

¹⁰⁴Holm, 158.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 153.

unfamiliar environments. Additionally, Indians' Fifth Amendment rights of liberty, property, and due process were severely limited.¹⁰⁶

In retrospect, the program was also a red-scare attack on communal lifestyles. Cold War America, however, was even more threatened by foreign radicalism and international communism. The immigration system responded to these concerns by restricting the entry of people seeking economic and religious fulfillment. The McCarran-Walter Act, passed in 1952 over President Harry Truman's veto, made quotas on traditional refugees more rigid than ever before.¹⁰⁷ In their stead, individuals fleeing communism were given preferences. In a sense, "ideology and class" were substituted for race and ethnicity as criteria for successful immigration.¹⁰⁸

Large-scale arrivals of officially recognized political refugees began after the passage of the Displaced Persons Act in 1948. Over a four-year period, 450,000 asylum seekers from communist states in Europe became legal residents in the United States. Ironically, a large number of these were former Nazis from East Germany.¹⁰⁹ The McCarran-Walter Act also allowed the Attorney General "discretionary authority to 'parole' into the United States any alien for 'emergent reasons or for reasons deemed strictly in the public interest.'"¹¹⁰ These efforts were augmented by the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 which allowed 205,000 immigrants from communist nation origins -- all assumed to be persecuted -- to enter the country above and beyond designated quota numbers. In all, 750,000 refugees enter the United States between 1946 and 1965.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶Wunder, 97-105.

¹⁰⁷Miller, 171.

¹⁰⁸Daniels, 70.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 74-75.

¹¹⁰Hing, 26.

¹¹¹Daniels, 78-79.

Developments in Central Europe helped push 678,000 ethnic Germans into the United States between 1946 and 1976.¹¹² Approximately 200,000 of these individuals were *Volksdeutsch* -- ethnic Germans living beyond the pale of the East and West German states, many from dismembered Prussia. While only a tiny fragment of the 16 million displaced Germans, they represented 25 percent of immigration into America in 1952. This movement peaked in 1957 when 45,000 Teutons legally entered the country.¹¹³ By 1961, the erection of the Berlin Wall to stop the "hemorrhaging" of skilled human capital from the Soviet Bloc and improving economic circumstances in West Germany combined to reduce the flow.¹¹⁴

America during the post-war era was not as welcoming to Asian immigrants. Although their exclusion was rescinded in 1943, only 105 Chinese were able to migrate annually -- the quota established in 1924 -- and the total Asian American population stood at a mere 370,000 in 1952. Interestingly, the McCarran-Walter Act only strengthened "the cornerstone of racism under the guise of removing racial barriers."¹¹⁵ International calamity, however, soon eased restrictive impulses. After China "fell" to Mao Zedong's forces in 1949, Indochina became "the 'keystone' to halting communism in Asia." As a result, American monetary and military aid propped up a French colonial effort to control Vietnam. After a decisive Viet Minh victory in 1954, the United States supported the "temporary" partition of the nation at the 17th Parallel. Additionally, American forces ferried 311,000 of the 1 million "boat people" who fled Ho Chi Minh's regime in the North for the relative safety of the South.¹¹⁶ Vietnamese

¹¹²Robert Henry Billigmeier, "Recent German Immigration to America," in Dennis Laurence Cuddy, ed., *Contemporary American Immigration: Interpretive Essays* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 116.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, 111-15.

¹¹⁴Derek Leebaert, *The Fifty-Year Wound: The True Price of America's Cold War Victory* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 2002), 270.

¹¹⁵William R. Tamayo, "Asian Americans and the McCarran-Walter Act," in Hyung-Chan Kim, ed., *Asian American and Congress* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 340-45.

¹¹⁶Leebaert, 106, 162, 167.

immigration to the United States began at this time, although only 30,000 individuals made the journey prior to 1975.¹¹⁷

Following the precedents set during the Eisenhower administration, both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson promoted a liberal immigration policy as a "psychological tool against communism." Reflecting these opinions, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 finally overhauled the system invented in the 1920s. The old quota systems were scrapped in favor of provisions that made 74 percent of total immigrant slots available for family reunification, 20 percent available for occupational preference, and 6 percent reserved for refugees. Although not anticipated by the authors of this legislation, it was immigrants from east Asian nations who benefited most from this legislation as the 20,000 person annual cap represented a great increase from previous eras.¹¹⁸

The 1960s also proved to be a significant but tumultuous decade for indigenous peoples. Indians were included in Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" through the Indian Bill of Rights, passed in 1968. While this Act increased their rights, it still failed to apply full constitutional protection to Native Americans -- a legal expectation all other citizens were afforded.¹¹⁹ This left Indians relying on congressional action. Meanwhile, renewed conflicts regarding corporate versus individual rights, and issue of self-determination made inter- and intra-tribal politics increasingly contentious. Additionally, a generation of Indians raised in cities came of age during this time, and recognizing the successes of the Civil Rights Movement, they took direct action to affirm Indian rights. While not welcomed by all traditionalists, the American Indian

¹¹⁷H. Brett Melendy, "Filipino, Korean, and Vietnamese Immigration to the United States, in Cuddy, 41.

¹¹⁸Asian-Nation: The Landscape of Asian America, "The 1965 Immigration Act," <http://www.asian-nation.org/1965-immigration-act.shtml>.

¹¹⁹See Wunder, 135-40.

Movement (AIM) was formed in 1968 and began fighting for Indian rights using tactics previously unknown.¹²⁰

Out of the turmoil of the late 1960s and early 1970s, President Richard Nixon -- a seemingly unlikely advocate -- lobbied for a more respectful Indian policy. As part of his legacy, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act was passed in 1975; and a period of "Modern Tribalism" emerged. This Act revitalized treaty rights; returned and protected sacred and traditional lands; and restored federal recognition of many terminated tribes by placing them back under federal trust. In short, Indians entered into a "new era of partnership based on mutual respect."¹²¹

The agitation of the era had an interesting effect on European ethnic populations. Many groups who were formerly excluded from the mainstream had become "white" over a period of years. Their acculturation was predicated by assimilative efforts and partially accepted as their economic conditions improved. Among the last groups to reach this position were Jews in general, Italian American, and, more locally, Germans from Russia. This new identity within the mainstream was challenged in the 1960s as national political crisis and racial descent "set off" an ethnic revival. Sanctioning cultural differences, this revival synthesized "family traditions, communal memories, and new elements" as it rippled across communities throughout the United States.¹²²

Some scholars downplay the significance of the revival, and they suggest most groups involved were already largely acculturated and were no longer confronted with economic, political, or geographic separation from the mainstream.¹²³ Still, their efforts may have benefited the newest arrivals, many of whom were fleeing disorder in

¹²⁰Calloway, *First Peoples*, 430.

¹²¹Wunder, 176.

¹²²Gleason, 32; Vecoli, 22; and Kathleen Neils Conzen, David A. Gerber, Ewa Morawski, George Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12 (Fall 1992): 29-30.

Indochina. The original 155,000 refugees fled Vietnam with American assistance when Saigon fell in 1975. Their numbers were soon augmented by immigrants taking advantage of already existing laws. In 1978, the Attorney General authorized admission of 240,000 "boat people" through the "Indochinese Parole Programs."¹²⁴ Alarmed by the high number of arrivals, however, the Refugee Act of 1980 required that the President consult with Congress before admitting refugees, and that the aliens apply for political asylum.¹²⁵ Still, under this act, 475,000 Vietnamese took up lawful residence in the United States by 1990 as between 24,000 and 72,000 entered the country annually.¹²⁶

Indochinese refugees were not the only immigrants to the United States during the 1980s. In fact, the decade witnessed 10 million new arrivals -- the largest influx since the 1910s. Most hoped to gain American citizenship. Responding to a huge Latino migration, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 legalized many undocumented aliens.¹²⁷ Unfortunately, the sheer force of these numbers "triggered a latent xenophobia in the American psyche," and nativism returned during the late twentieth century.¹²⁸

INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

While Asians are not excluded from the new racialism, the major challenge to the "American Way" is generally perceived to be Latin American in origin. In response, organizations such as the American Immigration Control Foundation -- a "non-partisan, non-profit public policy research organization"-- speak out against their

¹²³Hirschman, 415.

¹²⁴Hing, 28; and Charles B. Keely, "The Immigration Act of 1965," in Kim, 539.

¹²⁵Hing, 28.

¹²⁶Keely, 534 and 539. See also Melady, 38-39.

¹²⁷Hing 29; and Walter Nugent, *Into the West: The Story of Its People* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 353.

¹²⁸Vecoli, 15.

perceptions of the "affirmative ethnicity" promoted by the newest immigrants.¹²⁹ Believing that immigrants "threaten the very political integrity of the nation itself," the organization promotes the establishment of English as a national language in an effort to diffuse immigrant bloc politics.¹³⁰ As of March 2003, twenty-seven states recognized English as their official language, and national measures including the proposed English Language Unity Act of 2003 appear reasonably popular. If similar legislation is ever enacted, all educational services would be conducted in English, although public health and safety instruction may remain multilingual.¹³¹ United States policy on language, however has never been particularly well defined as the school systems are the responsibility of local governments whose funds and desires frequently limited and continue to limit some action.¹³²

"Retrenchment and Racism" were also apparent in U.S. Indian policy beginning in the 1980s. During this decade, basic treaty provisions, including hunting and fishing privileges, came under attack, boarding schools and other acculturation programs were strengthened, and Indian communal traditions remained unprotected. Seemingly, Indian sovereignty and constitutional protection remained incompatible. As one legal scholar noted, only the historically-fickle federal government can "prevent full-scale denials to Native Americans of those basic human rights" enumerated in the federal Bill of Rights.¹³³

Indian policy, however, evolves constantly. During William Clinton's tenure in the White House, Indian sovereignty was once again promoted. In 1994, Clinton

¹²⁹Brent A Nelson, *America Balkanized: Immigrations Challenge to Government* (Montgomery, VA: American Immigration Control Foundation, 1994), 17.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, viii.

¹³¹Rob Toonkel, "U.S. English Supports Introduction of English Language Unity Act of 2003, *U.S. English, Inc.*, 31 March 2003, <http://www.us-english.org/inc/news/preleases/viewRelease.asp?ID=14>.

¹³²David E. Lopez, "Language Minorities in the United States," in James R. Dow, ed., *Language and Ethnicity: Focusschrift in Honor of Joshua A. Fishman* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1991), 133.

¹³³Wunder, 213.

directed all agencies within the federal government to operate in a "sensitive manner respectful of tribal sovereignty." As a result, the Department of Justice confirmed that it was committed to "Indian self-governance," Indian "civil rights," and the protection of Indian "religious liberty."¹³⁴ Conversely, President George W. Bush has been virtually silent about Native Americans.

Reflecting centuries of changing policies, images of Native Americans in the early twenty-first century remain dichotomous. On one hand, the National Museum of American Indians opened in September 2004 as a celebration of Native peoples. Not all reviews of the museum have been positive. At least one critic argued that the 800,000 items on display are arranged "ahistorically" and that, combined with the grand building, they simply soothe the "nation's conscience."¹³⁵ While any public facility of this magnitude will necessarily face criticism, its intentions are certainly respectful. Similarly, a recent cover of *New Yorker* magazine appears equally ambiguous. Drawn by counter-culture cartoonist R. Crumb, the cover depicts Indians at Thanksgiving in the twenty-first and seventeenth centuries.¹³⁶ The Native Americans of the past are drawn as confident, content, and healthy. In contrast, the pilgrims appear worried and haggard. The modern Indian, however, resembles a cigar-store statue and even holds a sandwich board announcing a gentrified Thanksgiving meal. In total, Crumb suggests that 400 years of American domination have dramatically reduced the circumstances of the Native population.¹³⁷

Despite such attitudes, Indians and immigrants have a growing presence in twenty-first century America. Native American populations have increased remarkably

¹³⁴U.S., Department of Justice Office of Tribal Justice, "Department of Justice Policy on Indian Sovereignty and Government-to-Government Relations with Indian Tribes," 30 January 2001, <http://www.usdoj.gov/otj/sovtrbtxt.htm>.

¹³⁵Paul Richard, "Shards Of Many Untold Stories In Place of Unity: A Melange of Unconnected Objects," *Washington Post*, 21 September 2004, CO1.

¹³⁶See *New Yorker*, November 29, 2004, cover.

over the last several decades. On the Great Plains, even the counties losing Euro-American populations are gaining indigenous residents. Similarly, immigration shows no signs of slowing. The United States presently hosts 28 million foreign born residents; 863,000 of these are Vietnamese and 650,000 are German.¹³⁸ Since 1990 these numbers have increased predictably with about 10,000 Germans arriving annually and 24,000 to 30,000 Vietnamese coming to the United States each year. This makes Vietnam the seventh largest contributing nation to American immigration totals.¹³⁹

Responding to the influx, Bush declared an immigration system recently placed under the supervision of the Department of Homeland Security "outdated -- unsuited to the needs of our economy and to the values of our country."¹⁴⁰ In his second-term in office, he hopes to simultaneously protect "the homeland while controlling the borders," and to serve the American economy by allowing "temporary workers" to assume jobs American citizens are unwilling to fill. Part of his "compassionate conservatism," the President hopes to protect illegal immigrants from a myriad of abuses. He has also pledged to foster a "reasonable increase in the annual limit of legal immigrants" who will have the option of pursuing citizenship.¹⁴¹

If Bush is successful, the large number of school children who are foreign born or have foreign-born parents -- already 20 percent of all students -- may grow dramatically.¹⁴² These individuals will join young Native Americans in negotiating

¹³⁷Jean Johnson, "Indians Take Center Stage on New Yorker Magazine," *Indian Country Today*, 13 December 2004, <http://www.indiancountry.com/content.cfm?id=1096409996>.

¹³⁸Pipher, 55; and U.S. Census Bureau, "Table 3.1: Country or Area of Birth of the Foreign - Born Population from Europe: 2000," and "Table 3.2: Country or Area of Birth of the Foreign -Born Population from Asia: 2000," <http://www.census.gov>.

¹³⁹U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Fiscal Year 2003 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, "Table 2: Immigration by Region and Selected Country of Last Residence, Fiscal Year 1820-2003," <http://uscis.gov/graphics/aboutus/statistics/IMM03yrbk/2003IMMtables.pdf>; and "Table B: Immigrants Admitted by Region and Top 20 Countries of Birth: Fiscal Years 2001-03," <http://uscis.gov>.

¹⁴⁰George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address, 2 February 2005, trans., Republican National Committee, <http://www.gop.com/News/Read.aspx?ID=5118>.

¹⁴¹"Fair and Secure Immigration Reform," Fact Sheet, 7 January 2004, Republican National Committee, <http://www.gop.com/News/Read.aspx?ID=3745>.

¹⁴²Pipher, 55.

identities that necessarily consider political and intellectual forces that are yet unknown. The only certainties are that immigration and naturalization policies will shift according to these ever changing forces, and that immigrants and Indians will remain social factors of the American experience, as they have for centuries.

CHAPTER 3

WATCHING THE RIVER FLOW:
ETHNICITY AND COMMUNITY IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

The City of Lincoln sits amid the drift hills of southeastern Nebraska just on the wet side of the ninety-eighth parallel.¹ Like most places on the eastern cusp of the Great Plains, the community and its environs receive a modest annual precipitation, in this case, about twenty-eight inches. Because half this total falls between April and July, the area is seasonably lush and able to support a diverse and thriving ecosystem.² Rain runoff and snow melt feed numerous rivers and creeks that dissect the landscape. The high ground that sends the fresh waters of the Big Blue and the Little Nemaha rivers southeast to the Missouri River, also spawns a smaller, brackish system that flows northwest towards the Platte -- Salt Creek. Fed by Rock Creek, Oak Creek, Middle Creek, Haines Branch, Antelope Creek, Dead Man's Run, and Little Salt Creek, the main channel of Salt Creek drains a 1,653 square mile territory.³

Today, a polyglot of peoples -- 232,000 Americans of indigenous, Asian, African, Pacific Island, and European descent -- reside within the confines of this natural basin. Taken together, they comprise a metaphorical river complete with a mainstream and numerous braided side channels. These flows shift with time; they occasionally blend together in the highwater of corporate interest; other times, they remain well within the confines of their own ethnic banks and levees.⁴ Over the years, the greater

¹More precisely, Lincoln sits longitudinally at 96°, 40' west and latitudinally at 40°, 50' north. See Andrew J. Sawyer, ed., *Lincoln: The Capital City and Lancaster County, Nebraska* (Chicago: S.J. Clark, 1916). For a discussion about the 98th parallel, see Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn, 1931).

²High Plains Regional Climate Center, <http://www.hprcc.unl.edu>.

³George Evert Condra, *Geography, Agriculture, Industries of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University Publishing Co., 1934), 47; A.B. Hayes and Sam D. Cox, *History of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska: With Brief Historical Sketches of the State and Lancaster County* (Lincoln: State Journal Company, 1889), 175; "Lincoln's Industrial and Residential Lowlands Flooded," *Lincoln Journal*, 9 May 1950, 10.

⁴See generally, Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Mainstream and Side Channels: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 11 (Fall 1991): 5-20.

system has experienced a series of human floods, droughts, and upheavals that have dramatically altered its condition.

Riparian environments and the communities they support, whether real or allegorical, are necessarily unique. The marshes around Lincoln, for example, are home to the Salt Creek Tiger Beetle -- an insect that grasps its prey in a feline manner. Subsisting on other insects that thrive in a saline environment, it exists nowhere else. Its entire habitat consists of 122 acres of wetlands that remain intact despite modern suburbanization.⁵ Although human populations are infinitely more adaptable than this beetle, the social, political, economic, and cultural milieu people constructed in the Salt Creek basin during the twentieth century was still remarkably distinct. In fact, communities, places, and even regions are "socially constituted entities whose meanings shift as the result of specific social practices."⁶ Lincoln combined American "systemic forces" and discreet community factors in order to construct "a particular local reality."⁷ This public culture formed the mainstream backdrop that all contributing ethnic rivulets confronted as they defined and then redefined their cultural identities.⁸ Existing in a state of intriguing symbiosis, the mainstream chose its course, in part, in response to the demands of its tributaries.

NISKÍTHE K^hE ATHÍ (THEY CAME TO SALT CREEK): AN INDIGENOUS MAINSTREAM

For eons, the Great Plains existed as the center of the universe for indigenous peoples of Caddoan, Athapaskan, Shoshonean, and Siouan stock. Because resources on

⁵"Salt Creek Tiger Beetle -- Action Alert: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Protection for One of America's Most Imperiled Beetles," Xerces Society Endangered Species Program, http://www.xerces.org/Endangered/Salt_Creek_Tiger_Beetle.htm.

⁶Susan Kollin, *Nature's State: Imagining Alaska as the Last Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 19.

⁷Timothy R. Mahoney, "Urban History in a Regional Context: River Towns on the Upper Mississippi, 1840 -1860," *Journal of American History* 72 (September 1985): 339.

⁸Conzen, 14.

the Plains were "abundant, inadequate, and diffuse," an indigenous trading network that covered 500,000 square miles of territory developed.⁹ Because its waters were 28.8 percent salt by weight, Salt Creek became a vital part of this international economy.¹⁰ Omahas, for example, gathered this important nutritional supplement at a variety of places in the basin where waters left a "white saline deposit" on the "grassy banks." Using feathers, they brushed the salt into piles before storing the commodity in bladder bags.¹¹ The fruits of women's labor was either used internally or, if it was surplus, traded for other desirable objects.

Otoes also gathered salt in the basin. In their recorded oral history, they delighted in telling and retelling the legend of the area. As the story goes, a brave warrior married a chief's daughter and they lived happily together, but only for a short while. The unfortunate young woman died before her time. Shortly after her death, her ghost was seen on the valley floor of what is now Salt Creek fighting an old woman. The hag was eventually turned into salt during the course of combat. As most Otoes loved the young woman when she was alive, their salt gatherers beat the ground before taking the mineral in order to wound the dreaded old woman. This practice continued for perhaps centuries.¹²

While Pawnees, Omahas, and other visitors also shared stories of this place, the Salt's basin was commonly recognized as part of the Otoe Nation whose home territory spread from the Big Blue River east to the Missouri; and from the Big Nemaha north to

⁹Elliott West, "Great Dreams Great Plains: Jefferson, the Bents, and the West," in James P. Ronda, ed., *Thomas Jefferson and the Changing West: From Conquest to Conservation* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), 162.

¹⁰Sawyer, 65.

¹¹Alice Fletcher and Francis La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, 2 vols. (University of Nebraska Press, 1911, reprint 1992), 2: 342.

¹²Sawyer, 59.

the Platte.¹³ Because their economy relied partly on horticulture -- women grew corn, beans, melons, and three types of pumpkins -- permanent villages required supplies of fresh water. Consequently, they preferred sites around the Platte River.¹⁴ Making full use of their territory, they gathered salt in the basin, but appear not to have monopolized its boundaries.

European explorers and traders who entered the region as early as the sixteenth century were not particularly interested in salt. For 150 years, Spain's activities in the region were exemplified by glory-seeking adventurers -- men like Coronado and Oñate. By the end of the seventeenth century, Spanish forays onto the Plains had a new mission, to buffer New Mexico from the perceived threats of colonial rivals. In 1720, the ill-fated Villasur expedition was sent to modern-day Nebraska to dislodge a French, Pawnee, and Otoe confederation perceived as hostile to Santa Fe. While the French force was nonexistent, an overwhelming Pawnee victory kept the Spanish off the Plains for another half century.¹⁵

The Spanish defeat allowed the French -- despite their sparse presence -- to claim all territory between the Appalachians and the Rocky Mountains. Even before Villasur, Natchez was the focus of the peltry trade, but his retreat opened the Mississippi and Missouri watersheds for unfettered business. The French policy was to keep the tribes at peace in order to promote trade. By the 1740s, the Illinois Governor granted a fur-trading monopoly stipulating that a string of forts be built to carry out fair commerce with the Indians. By 1763, the traders had penetrated as far as the Platte river.¹⁶

¹³David J. Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 16. An additional swath north of the Platte between the Elkhorn and the Missouri also saw some habitation during early American contact.

¹⁴William Whitman, *The Oto* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 5.

¹⁵A. P. Nasatir, ed., *Before Lewis and Clark: Documents Illustrating the History of the Missouri, 1785-1804*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1952), 1: 1-3; and Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 153.

¹⁶Nasatir, 1: 11, 27, 35, 56.

Otoe, Pawnee, and Omaha territory almost became *terra incognita* after 1763, however, as the Treaty of Paris assigned these domains to Spanish Louisiana. It took almost thirty years for the Iberians to return, and they did so largely to create Indian alliances and stop the advancement of the French, British, and Americans.¹⁷ To this end, the Missouri Company was founded in 1792. With imperial orders in hand, agent J. B. Truteau, began a journey intended to take Spain from St. Louis to the Pacific via the Missouri River. He was instructed to "establish peace everywhere," and to make a thorough list of all the nations he encountered. Ordered to "fix a high price on everything," Truteau was foiled by the Omahas and the Poncas who walked off with most of his trade goods and supplies.¹⁸ Scotsman John MacKay tried again in 1796 and met a similar fate.¹⁹

The Omahas and Poncas had been armed by the British who hoped to use Indian hostility to undercut the commercial interests of their Spanish rivals. Although the British never held a solid claim to territory on the Great Plains, they wandered onto the prairies as early as 1749 as a "conspiracy against the French."²⁰ Unlike the other European empires, they granted no monopolies and allowed their agents to operate freely. Using the Big Sioux and Des Moines rivers as transportation routes, traders connected their posts on the Minnesota River and at Prairie Du Chien to the hinterland.²¹ The British goods were generally of superior quality, and many Missouri River Indians, including the Omahas, became their staunch allies. Spanish traders in the 1790s

¹⁷Ibid., 60.

¹⁸"Clamorgan's Instructions to Truteau, 30 June 1794," in Nasatir, 1: 244-46; and *ibid.*, 83. Jacques Clamorgan was the Director of the Company of the Upper Missouri.

¹⁹Ibid., 93; and "Clammorgan (the Governor of Louisiana) to Carondelet," 12 November 1796, in Nasatir, 2: 426.

²⁰Nasatir, 1: 43.

²¹Thomas Frank Schilz and Donald E. Worcester, "The Spread of Firearms Among the Indian Tribes of the Northern Frontier of New Spain," *American Indian Quarterly* 11 (Winter 1987): 5; and Nasatir, 1: 81.

bemoaned that "they have already indoctrinated the savages so well that one can no longer go to the Mahas [Omahas], Hotos [Otoes], and Poncas."²²

While the Spanish, French, and British greatly altered the lives of the Plains tribes, it was the young United States that eventually detached them from their traditional lifestyles. At the turn of the nineteenth century, only the most astute Indian could have suspected this. Omahas, Otoes, and Pawnees were accustomed to French, Spanish, British, and American traders simply being incorporated into existing trade networks. While European presence and trade goods changed the nature of indigenous economies and societies forever, the Salt Creek basin remained virtually unchanged until 1854.

STREAM CAPTURE: AN AMERICAN MAINSTREAM

In many respects, the Corps of Discovery's entrance onto the Great Plains marked the end of an era as the United States rapidly captured indigenous momentum in the region. In geological terms, these changes amounted to nothing less than stream capture -- a process that "involves one drainage extending its length and area such that it subsumes another drainage."²³ With human societies as well as watercourses, the capturing stream behaves "more aggressively" than the adjacent one.²⁴ As the torrent of European Americans confronted the territory that would become Nebraska, Native constructions of the Great Plains were denied and then lost as the newcomers single-mindedly brought the region into profitable agricultural and industrial production.

²²"Zenon Trudeau to Carondelet, 30 April 1795," in Nasatir, 1: 322; and "Trudeau to Carondelet, 24 April 1794," in Nasatir, 1: 298.

²³Robert H. Webb, Jayne Belnap, and John S. Weisheit, *Cataract Canyon: A Human and Environmental History of the Rivers in Canyonlands* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2004), 50.

²⁴Michael A. Summerfield, *Global Geomorphology: An Introduction to the Study of Landforms* (London: Longman Scientific and Technical, 1991), 410-11, quoted in Kelli Hammond, "Stream Capture: A Look at Natural Thieves," <http://www.geo.msu.edu/geo333/hammond.htm>.

Because indigenous peoples were viewed as "part of nature itself," Americans had few qualms about conquering the "wilderness," removing Indians, and constructing communities that employed the region's natural abundance for the benefit of "civilization."²⁵ For a brief time, however, the federal government attempted to protect Plains tribes from the ravages of contact. Intercourse Acts were passed in 1802, 1822, 1832, and 1834 in order to regulate who could trade with Indian nations. They also were supposed to keep liquor out of "Indian Territory"-- a region designated as all territory west of the Mississippi River, save the states of Missouri and Louisiana.²⁶ The presence of licensed traders did little to improve the situation of Nebraska's first peoples as increased pressure on their territory from other Indians and Americans alike decreased its productivity. Bison, the lifeblood of the economy, "were driven out of much of Nebraska" between 1818 and 1822.²⁷ To make matters worse, the fur trade on the Great Plains died out in the 1840s, and Indians were further isolated and impoverished. Pressure from Brulés and Yanktons pushed Omahas and Otoes into semi-reliance on Americans as both nations congregated near Fort Atkinson until it was abandoned in 1829. As Americans were aware of their plight, the Bellevue agency was established for Omahas, Otoes and Missouriias, and the Pawnees in 1832.²⁸

Change in physical and political circumstances was apparent in the language of diplomacy as American domination became increasingly apparent in treaty negotiations. Pawnees, Omahas, Otoes, and Missouriias all first signed treaties of friendship with the United States and then ceded virtually all their lands. The initial agreements appeared -- at least on paper -- fairly even handed. Otoes, singularly, signed a treaty of "peace and

²⁵William G. Robbins, *Landscapes and Promise: The Oregon Story, 1800-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 25, 45.

²⁶Judith A. Boughter, *Betraying the Omaha Nation, 1790-1916* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 30, 39; and Wishart 45.

²⁷Wishart, 47.

²⁸Boughter, 25; and Richard E. Jensen, "Bellevue: The First Twenty Years, 1822-1842," *Nebraska History* 56 (Fall 1975): 358.

friendship" in 1817 when they accepted "the protection of the United States of America, and of no other nation, power, or sovereign, whatsoever."²⁹ The language of peace was reiterated in 1825 but the Otoe and Missouri tribe, now joined, acknowledged the "supremacy" of the United States and its right "to regulate all trade and intercourse with them."³⁰ Exercising control in the new domain, land cessions began in the 1830s as Otoes and Omahas, in concert, agreed to "for ever cede relinquish and quit claim to the United States" their lands east of the Missouri River.³¹

Pressure to open lands west of the river finally caused the creation of Nebraska Territory on May 30, 1854. Indian confinement was a prerequisite to American movement onto the prairies, and the eastern-most Nations ceded more territory just months prior to the initial land rush. The Otoes and Missourias ceded most of Nebraska, including the salt basin, and moved to a ten mile by twenty-five mile reservation on the Big Blue River.³² Omahas removed to northeastern Nebraska.³³ Pawnees, whose homelands were slightly west of the initial onslaught, followed suit by agreeing to a reservation along the Loup River in 1857.³⁴

In its original incarnation, Nebraska Territory contained 351,588 square miles of land encompassing the present state of Nebraska, the Dakotas west of the Missouri, most

²⁹"Treaty with the Oto, 1817," 24 June 1817, in Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883* (New York: Interland Publishing, 1972), 139. The Omahas signed a treaty of friendship in 1815, see "Treaty with the Makah [sic]," 20 July 1815, in Kappler 115-16. The various bands of Pawnees executed similar treaties in 1818. See "Treaty with the Grand Pawnee, 1818," 18 June 1818, "Treaty with the Noisy Pawnee, 1818," 19 June 1818, "Treaty with the Pawnee Republic, 1818," 20 June 1818, and "Treaty with the Pawnee Marhar, 1818," 22 June 1818, all in Kappler 156-59.

³⁰"Treaty with the Oto and Missouri Tribe, 1825," 26 September 1825, in Kappler, 256-57.

³¹"Treaty With the Oto, Etc., 1836," in *ibid.*, 479-80.

³²See "Treaty with the Oto and Missouri, 1854," 15 March 1854, in *ibid.*, 608-11; and "Treaty with the Confederated Oto and Missouri, 1854," 9 December 1854, in *ibid.*, 660-61. The first treaty ceded the land in exchange for annuities. The second treaty established acceptable reservation boundaries.

³³"Treaty with the Omaha, 1854," 16 March 1854, in *ibid.*, 611-14.

³⁴"Treaty with the Grand Pawnee, 18 June 1818," "Treaty with the Noisy Pawnee, 1818," 19 June 1818, "Treaty with the Pawnee Republic, 1818," 20 June 1818, and "Treaty with the Pawnee Marhar, 1818," 22 June 1818, all in *ibid.*, 156-59; and "Treaty with the Pawnee, 1857," 24 September 1857, in *ibid.*, 764-767. Fortunes dictated that separate bands merge for survival.

of Montana, three-quarters of Wyoming, and one-third of Colorado.³⁵ As evidenced by continued Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe resistance in the West, however, American control was largely imaginary in much of the territory. Even in lands already ceded, settlement rarely moved past the sixth principal meridian -- the original survey line set 108 miles east of the Missouri River -- until after the Civil War.³⁶ As a case in point, the survey of the Salt Creek basin commenced in 1856, but at statehood, its population was only 800.³⁷

Despite the slow growth of the territory, Nebraskans undoubtedly "conceived of their whole history of westward migration as one of continual progress."³⁸ This concept was even embossed on the bottom of the Territorial Seal as a reminder that American settlers were key participants in the march of "Progress." (See figure 3-1.) The two human sources of the idea were on prominent display right above this boldly-printed word. On the left with his long rifle, long pants, thigh length jacket, and wide brimmed hat was the frontiersman. The businessman, wearing a top hat, a waistcoat, a vest, and knee high pants was on the right. The steamboat and the locomotive crossing a trestle represented the importance of modern transportation to the settlement the Great Plains. The territory's founders anticipated that technologically advanced business ventures would be necessary to stimulate Nebraska's growth. The tools that would transform the

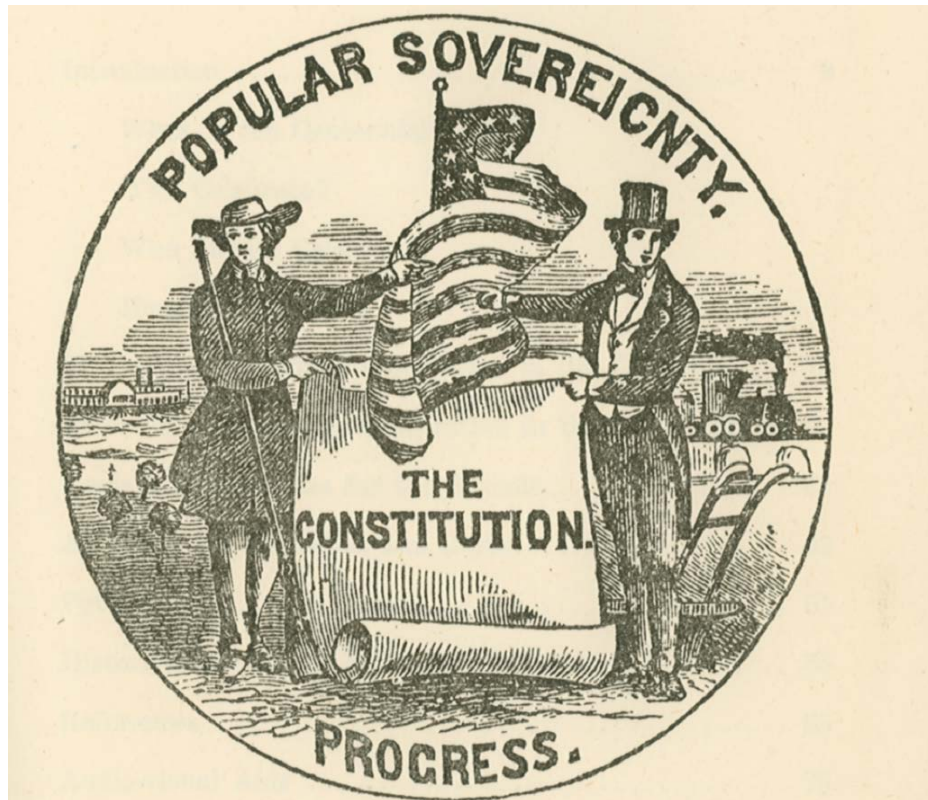
³⁵*Centennial Handbook: Nebraska Territory, 1854-1954* (Lincoln: The Nebraska Territorial Centennial Commission, 1954), 56. The survey in Nebraska Territory was enabled by section 16 of the Organic Act, and work began on November 11, 1854. The grid grew slowly, however, as surveyors were unaccustomed to the open, treeless terrain, and population pressures were not yet intense. The survey reached 140 miles west of the Missouri by 1860, and by statehood it remained only three-eighths completed.

³⁶James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 95; and Andrew R.C. Cayton, "The Story of the Midwest: An Introduction," in Cayton and Susan E. Gray, eds., *The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 10; Vernon Carstensen, ed., *The Public Lands: Studies in the History of the Public Domain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 483; Kansas Society of Land Surveyors, "Public Land Survey System," http://www.ksls.com/public/public_plss.htm; and William H. Beezly, "Homesteading in Nebraska: 1862-1872," *Nebraska History* 53 (Spring 1972): 62-63.

³⁷Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, *Lincoln: Nebraska's Capital City, 1867-1923* (Lincoln: Woodruff Publishing, 1923), 12.; and Sawyer, 111.

³⁸Peter G. Boag, *Environment and Experience: Settlement Culture in Nineteenth Century Oregon* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1992), 141.

Figure 3-1. Seal of Nebraska Territory.



Centennial Handbook: Nebraska Territory, 1854-1954 (Lincoln: Nebraska Territorial Centennial Commission, 1954).

territory into a state were in the background. The plow and the orchard demonstrated that Nebraska was imagined to have potential as an agricultural region.

Mainstream Americans unleashed less tangible aspects of their imaginations on western settlements. Specifically, they imported a "performed culture" of commercial farming and urban commerce into their new homes. The cadastral survey, urban and rural settlement patterns, and land usage models all conformed to these preconceived notions. Ultimately, settlers reconstructed the Plains according to "mental maps" of environments and places they knew from before their arrival. This allowed them to eliminate unprofitable land formations and retain "only those physical features most significant to their lives."³⁹

Early development in the Salt Creek basin was surprisingly industrial as salt and brick production vied for economic dominance. Spread over a twelve mile radius on the main channel's west-side, the significance of the dozen or so salt springs was immediately apparent. Even before the village of Lancaster was plotted in 1863 as the site of a Methodist colony and a women's seminary,⁴⁰ two salt boilers were in operation among the extensive mineral deposits on the flats.⁴¹ Competing for the county seat, Yankee Hill was homesteaded in 1861, and its clay deposits were immediately mined and kilned to produce sturdy building material for the prairie environment.⁴²

While entrepreneurs in Lancaster -- and every other hamlet in the region -- worked tirelessly to make their "community the future hub" of the territory, urban and economic development in the basin needed outside intervention in order to join the greater "flow of goods and people between places."⁴³ As statehood loomed in 1867,

³⁹Ibid., 38, 80.

⁴⁰Federal Writers Project, *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* (New York: Viking Press, 1939), 179.

⁴¹Hayes and Cox, 92-99.

⁴²Federal Writers Project, *Nebraska*, 178.

⁴³James R. Shortridge, *Cities on the Plains: The Evolution of Urban Kansas* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), xiii, 210.

Lancaster was renamed Lincoln after the assassinated President and designated capital city as a means to settle a sectional dispute existing among the established communities on the north and south sides of the Platte River. Amazingly, the new Capital City sought out and obtained four prized eleemosynary institutions -- the seat of government, the penitentiary, the hospital for the insane, and the land-grant state university -- and its growth and prosperity were assured.⁴⁴

A survey began on August 15, 1867, and the compact city plat that emerged encompassed an area of less than four square miles. The business section was purposely smaller than the residential section. Celebrating the city's new calling, space was reserved for the capitol and a state university, and thirty lots were set aside for ten Christian churches of different denominations.⁴⁵ Thomas P. Kennard, a member of the Capital Commission and future governor, nostalgically recalled the valley he surveyed in 1867. First and foremost, he imagined the site as a perfect rail center with corridors along Salt, Rock, Oak, Stevens, and Middle Creeks. Additionally, the mineral deposits provided the perfect additive for salted hay for stock. Finally, with 500,000 acres of federal land transferred to the state, he saw selling lots as a great way to earn money to build a grand capitol.⁴⁶

While this vision may have been perfect hindsight, the boast that "Lincoln is the railroad heart of as rich an agricultural country as exists in the world" was only a slight exaggeration.⁴⁷ Indeed, as "associations between city growth and transportation systems are numerous and intimate," business and population growth paralleled railroad

⁴⁴Jon C. Teaford, *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 31; and Shortridge, 93.

⁴⁵Sister Loretta Gosen, *History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, 1887-1987* (Lincoln: The Catholic Bishop of Lincoln, Inc., 1986), 71.

⁴⁶T.P. Kennard, "Corner of Ninth and P Streets a Historic Spot," *Sunday State Journal*, 16 January 1927, Pioneer Section, 9.

⁴⁷Lloyd Shaw, *Industries of Lincoln* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., 1890), 7.

development.⁴⁸ Five major rail systems established operations in the basin over the next two decades. The Burlington line arrived in 1870 and was immediately vital to local development because "[e]very pound of merchandise that passes into all this vast territory from eastern points of supply, and every pound of grain, and every hog and steer that goes out of the State" went through the Lincoln yards.⁴⁹ Additionally, the Union Pacific entered the market in 1879, the Missouri and Pacific in 1880, the Chicago and Northwestern in 1886, and the Rock Island in 1892.⁵⁰ In total, the yards hosted "forty-two miles of side track, on which 800 men handle from 1,000 to 2,000 cars a day."⁵¹

Lincoln's industrial expansion, however, did not keep pace with its development as a rail hub. Yankee Hill brick maintained a steady business, but their location south of the platted city foiled their hopes of becoming county seat. Additionally, although boosters suggested that several hundred barrels of salt could be manufactured daily at a profit of \$2.45 a barrel, salt ventures remained for only a brief time. Despite sinking 2,000 foot deep shafts in 1880 looking for the source of the basin's salinity, salt production was abandoned in 1886.⁵² The flats themselves soon were impounded as a recreational lake. Both Burlington Beach Resort and later Capital Beach were connected to the city by streetcar and hosted popular amusement parks.⁵³

More successfully, at least in the short run, Lincoln Pottery Works produced salt glazed pottery along the banks of Salt Creek between 1880 and 1902. This establishment crafted local salt and clay into salable goods using the latest technology

⁴⁸Shortridge, 96.

⁴⁹As a conglomerate, the Burlington system has been known as the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, the Burlington and Missouri River, and, more recently, the Burlington Santa Fe. See, Shaw, 43-44.

⁵⁰Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, 8.

⁵¹Hayes and Cox, 12.

⁵²Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, 12; Hayes and Cox, 92-99; and Federal Writers Project, *Nebraska*, 179 and 182.

⁵³Federal Writers Project, *Lincoln City Guide* (Lincoln: Woodruff, 1937), 119.

transferred from the industrial east. The finished pottery -- all utilitarian -- was sold to a thriving regional market.⁵⁴ Finally, Lincoln attempted to compete with Omaha for regional dominance over agribusiness. In the 1880s, two stockyards -- Nebraska Stock Yard Company and Nebraska Packing and Provision Company -- opened on the western edge of town.⁵⁵

While industrial growth was, in retrospect, tentative in the Capital City's first decades, the prevailing atmosphere of speculation encouraged impressive population increases. A boom began on February 18, 1868, with the arrival of David Lincoln Butler Breede, the first "white child born in Lincoln."⁵⁶ Already under its first corporate charter, the community boasted 7,300 citizens by 1875 when it became the second largest city in the state. Paralleling growth in Nebraska, which had 452,000 residents in 1880, Lincoln expanded to 13,000 the same year. As the state surpassed 1 million in 1890, Lincoln -- now under its second charter -- became a "[Fir]st Class City" with a population of over 55,000.⁵⁷ The community was governed by an elected mayor and twelve councilmen, two from each of six wards.⁵⁸

All this growth was celebrated by a citizenry who played crucial roles "in the popular politics of place making" by creating "links between places and peoples."⁵⁹ Like many communities on the Great Plains, Lincoln maintained its frontier-era ethnic composition for over 100 years. The 1860 Census recorded a distinctly native-born "American" population that migrated from Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois,

⁵⁴Peter Bleed and Christopher M. Schoen, "The Lincoln Pottery Works: A Historical Perspective," *Nebraska History* 71 (Spring 1990): 34, 36, 44.

⁵⁵Richard G. Sherman, "Charles G. Dawes, A Nebraska Businessman, 1887-1894: The Making of an Entrepreneur," *Nebraska History* 46 (September 1965): 202.

⁵⁶*Sunday State Journal* [Lincoln, NE], 16 January 1927, 2.

⁵⁷Jay Amos Barrett. *Nebraska and the Nation* (Lincoln: J.H. Miller, 1898), 61. For Lincoln population statistics see, Sawyer, 111; Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, 8; and Baltensberger, 245. First Class Cities had populations of 50,000 or more.

⁵⁸League of Women Voters, Publication XV, Part IV, January 1963, 7-8.

⁵⁹Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (February 1992): 12.

Iowa, Indiana, and Missouri.⁶⁰ These early arrivals built small empires in their images and made Lincoln comfortable for other people of their ilk. Interestingly, they were very cognizant of their accomplishments. On July 4, 1882, twenty-five local dignitaries even formed an Old Settlers' Association to celebrate "the work of erecting this splendid commonwealth on the site of the coyote's den, and making way for the flying palace car in place of the Indian trail of 1860."⁶¹

The people they displaced, on the other hand, were mythologized rather than celebrated. For instance, the name Nebraska translates from its Siouan language roots (similar in both Otoe and Omaha) as "water that is flat" and describes the area's most notable geographic feature -- the Platte River. While they kept the title, they generally ignored both the sublimeness of aboriginal description, and the people behind it. The Otoes and Missourians -- who remained "blanket Indians" -- experienced declining populations.⁶² Confined to a poorly-administered reservation, their numbers decreased from 600 in 1860 to 464 by 1872.⁶³ Finally, in 1881 the last remnants of this nation removed to Oklahoma after years of increasing poverty in their former homeland.⁶⁴

With the original inhabitants removed, a rather ahistorical remembrance of their presence was celebrated. Otoe agent Albert L. Green and Omaha District Court Judge James W. Savage suggested that Coronado and his party passed through the salt flats of Lancaster County in the sixteenth century.⁶⁵ After reviewing the Spanish conquistador's journals, they determined that the "kingdom of Quivera, with Tartarrax the hoary-headed

⁶⁰League of Women Voters, 3.

⁶¹Hayes and Cox, 352.

⁶²Albert Lamborn Green, quoted in Richard E. Jensen, ed., "Agent to the Oto: The Recollections of Albert Lamborn Green," *Nebraska History* 69 (Winter 1988): 179.

⁶³Jensen, 169.

⁶⁴Wishart, 60, 103, 200.

⁶⁵Albert L. Green, "Reminiscences of Gage County," *Nebraska Pioneer Reminiscences* (Daughters of the American Revolution), 112.

ruler of the realm," was an Otoe settlement located along the Platte River.⁶⁶ While modern scholarship suggests Quivera was a Caddoan settlement in modern central Kansas, fiction was more interesting than fact. The more spectacular tale was seized by theatrical agents Robert McReynolds and L.M. Crawford who convinced the city of Lincoln that the "story of King Tartarax might be adopted, in some way, to produce at least a fine spectacular parade and effect." Ultimately, in 1889 the Fourth of July parade featured local men dressed as Indians and Spaniards as the imagery of conquest intertwined with patriotism in a truly interesting pageant.⁶⁷ A true version of the original inhabitants had already been washed from memory as the local stream of ethnicity had changed dramatically in these forty-five years.

EINE ÜBERSCHWEMMUNG DER V_ÖLKER (A FLOOD OF [GERMAN] PEOPLE): "OTHERS" AND THE MAINSTREAM

While Native American ethnicity was being drowned in ahistorical eddies, Lincoln by 1890 was bracing itself for a deluge of foreign-born residents. Their arrival, like the early summer floods that roared down the unimpounded Oak and Antelope Creek watersheds, added volume to a mainstream reeling from the drought of Depression. Interestingly, these *Volks Deutsch* -- ethnic Germans from outside national boundaries -- immigrants were viewed with caution and suspicion rather than welcome. While most peoples of Teutonic origin were tolerated in frontier Nebraska, especially if they were *Reichs Deutsch* -- ethnics born within the Germans nation state -- the Volga Germans were ignored at best and racialized at worst. Their experiences were typical of a growing ethnic intolerance in Lincoln during the Gilded Age and the Progressive era.

⁶⁶Hayes and Cox, 17-21; See also Western States Historical Company, *History of the State of Nebraska: Counties, Cities, Towns, and Villages* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1882).

⁶⁷Hayes and Cox, 174 and 340-43; James L. McKee and Arthur Duerchner, *Lincoln: A Photographic History* (Lincoln: Salt Valley Press, 1976), 33.

Pushed by economic uncertainty, linguistic and social retrenchment, and political disfranchisement; and pulled by promises of reestablishing prosperity and freedom; 750,000 Volga Germans immigrated into the United States between 1874 and 1914.⁶⁸ Only a trickle of the total torrent -- 6,500 individuals -- settled in Lincoln.⁶⁹ Like floods, this movement was cyclical, but the metaphorical surges had rationales beyond the variances in weather. Uncertain about abandoning home and family, only about thirty immigrants a year arrived in the basin between 1872 and 1885. However, because opportunity in the new milieu was bright between 1886 and 1892 as the storm clouds of famine rolled across the Russian Steppes, the number of annual arrivals multiplied by factors of three to five. The Depression of 1893 briefly quieted the flow as few arrived again until 1898 when the true onslaught began. Over the next fifteen years 100 to 576 individuals arrived each year with over 3,000 coming between 1909 and 1913.⁷⁰

In the greater demographic sense, Volga German immigration -- almost entirely comprised of large, young family units -- was a blessing to Lincoln. It helped to counteract both the town-building bust that occurred on the Great Plains after the winter of 1886-87 that ended the cattle boom and the Depression of 1893 which caused population trends to retreat.⁷¹ Indeed, Lincoln was no longer a "First Class City" as its population was only 44,000 in 1910. The final burst of immigration and the remarkable birth-rates of Volga Germans helped the population recover to 55,000 -- its 1890 level -- by 1920.⁷²

⁶⁸Hattie Plum Williams, *The Czar's Germans: With Particular Reference to the Volga Germans* (Lincoln: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1975), 3-4; David J. Miller and Lydia A. Miller, account of visit to cousins in Alma-Ata, Kazakstan, 21-23 July 1967, in William F. Urbach Papers, RG 1497.Am, Box 1, Folder 2, NSHS; and Gerda Stroh Walker, *Die Welt-Post Index, Vol. I, 1916-21* (Boulder, CO: Joshua Sky Walker, 1998), iv.

⁶⁹Hattie Plum Williams, "A Social Study of the Russian German Population" (Ph.d diss., University of Nebraska, 1915), 8.

⁷⁰Williams, "Social Study," 17; and Hattie Plum Williams, "The History of the German-Russian Colony in Lincoln" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1909), 84.

⁷¹Walter Nugent, *Into the West: The Story of Its People* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 115-16.

⁷²Edward F. Zimmer and Abigail B. Davis, "Recovered Views: African American Portraits, 1912-1925," *Nebraska History* 84 (Spring 2003): 62.

Rather than encouraging immigration and population recovery, the established tendency for racialization and segregation of individuals outside the Anglo-American mainstream prevailed. Discrimination was especially poignant among Lincoln's small Jewish and African American populations. Arriving as early as 1860, Reformed and Conservative Jews constructed communities that revolved around their synagogues. Anti-Semitism, while not constant, emerged on regular intervals until at least the late 1970s.⁷³

African Americans -- whose population in 1890 stood at 1,360 or about 2 percent of Lincoln's total -- probably fared worse as they were long marginalized in Nebraska. While few Blacks were held as slaves, Nebraska Territory was largely envisioned as a white man's place and the legislature considered -- but did not pass -- bills to exclude all African Americans from the territory in 1859 and 1860.⁷⁴ Even the motto "Equality Before the Law," which was adopted with statehood on March 1, 1867, was more a suggestion than a reality.⁷⁵ While not initially subject to residential segregation, as Sheridan Park and other elite neighborhoods developed around 1910, local compacts and whites only covenants excluded people on racial grounds.⁷⁶ Additionally, because their population was small, the development of Black businesses and a Black professional class was deterred, as African Americans in Lincoln became largely an underclass of workmen and cleaning women.⁷⁷ This situation was exacerbated by population contraction. In 1893, the Depression reduced the numbers of

⁷³Ophira Bahar, "The Lincoln Jewish Federation," *Memories of the Jewish Midwest* 6 (Winter 1990): 29; and Rebecca Rosenbaum, "Interview with Rabbi Harry Joltt in Miami Beach, Florida, April 21, 1992," *Memories of the Jewish Midwest* 9 (Spring 1994): 25-26.

⁷⁴James B. Potts, "Frontier Solons: Nebraska's Territorial Lawmakers, 1854-67," *Great Plains Quarterly* 12 (Fall 1992): 282.

⁷⁵Other possibilities debated in the legislature were "Equal Rights for All," and "All Men Are Equal Before the Natural Law." See generally Albert Watkins, "Genesis of the Great Seal of Nebraska," *Nebraska History and Record of Pioneer Days* 3 (January-March 1920).

⁷⁶Zimmer and Davis, 63.

⁷⁷Dennis N. Mihelich, "The Formation of the Lincoln Urban League," *Nebraska History* 68 (Summer 1987): 65; and Lila Gravett Scrimsher, "The Diaries and Writings of George A. Matson, Black Citizen of Lincoln, Nebraska, 1901-1913," *Nebraska History* 52 (Summer 1971): 135.

Lincoln Blacks to 800, and their population continued to decline reaching a nadir of 733 in 1910.⁷⁸ Ultimately, racial exclusion reached its high-water mark in the 1930s as "prejudice and hard times" made housing and employment situations difficult.⁷⁹ By this Depression, Lincoln's Blacks, Mexicans, Jews, and Italians were confined to the city's Third Ward.⁸⁰

Over in the First and Second Wards, Volga Germans -- culturally rather than physically distinct -- were noted for maintaining "their own customs" and for being a distinct "racial element of the city" through the Great Depression.⁸¹ Inclined to stay among kith and kin, they settled in the Salt Creek flood plains. Interestingly, their presence was clearly known, but rarely acknowledged in official circles. This was the case even during the frequent floods that inundated their urban communities.⁸² On August 12, 1889, for instance, the numerous "little cottages" in the flats were "partly submerged, though generally the water only covered the first floor but a few inches."⁸³ The plight of the families affected was acknowledged, but they were not officially identified as Volga Germans. Again during the record flood of 1908, families were "rescued from their homes," but remained anonymous otherwise.⁸⁴ In 1914, the flooding of Antelope Creek at 20th and "K" streets -- then a thinly populated area -- was given a great deal of attention while newspapers generally ignored the plight of those along Salt Creek.⁸⁵ This pattern held true through the 1930s. People scavenging the town dump -- then just west of the North Bottoms -- were celebrated because "their meager earnings

⁷⁸Zimmer and Davis, 62; and John Anderson, "Lincoln, Nebraska, and Prohibition: The Election of May 4, 1909," *Nebraska History* 70 (Summer 1989): 194.

⁷⁹Dennis N. Mihelich, "The Lincoln Urban League: The Travail of Depression and War," *Nebraska History* 70 (Fall 1989): 313.

⁸⁰Mihelich, "Formation of the Lincoln Urban League," 64.

⁸¹Federal Writers Project, *Lincoln*, 46.

⁸²Significant flooding occurred in 1881, 1885, 1900, 1902, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1914, 1923, 1942, 1947, and 1950. See *Lincoln Journal*, 24 May 1950, 1.

⁸³Hayes and Cox, 175-76.

⁸⁴"Flood in the West Bottoms: Salt Creek Reaches From the Lake to the Viaduct," *Nebraska State Journal*, 8 June 1908, 2.

out there enable them to keep off relief." The dump divers included William Keller of "West Lincoln," H. Jurgens, and Victor Gablehouse of 1062 Y. More than likely, these were Volga Germans from the bottoms although their ethnicity was not mentioned.⁸⁶ This flood of humanity was largely ignored even when calamities dictated some sort of acknowledgment.

MEANDERING TOWARDS MATURITY: COMMUNITY GROWTH TO 1940

While Lincoln and all of Nebraska were adversely affected by regional drought and national economic depressions in the 1890s and 1930s, the community and state managed to grow at modest rates. Indeed, like many cities on the Great Plains, Lincoln achieved "[S]ocial and political maturity" in the early twentieth century.⁸⁷ Like a mature river -- "characterized by wide flood plains and meandering streams" -- the city filled the better part of Salt Creek valley by 1939.⁸⁸ In the process, mainstream Lincoln was able to command the physical ordering of space and dictate community norms and values.

Despite the intentions of early boosters and settlers, Lincoln was, in many ways, typical of America's second tier cities during this era. It was the state's administrative and educational center rather than an economic powerhouse. Nonetheless, it was home to some small industries, and it was integrated into a regional, if not national complex of communities.⁸⁹ The Depression of 1893, however, was a bane to the earliest non-railroad enterprises. Lincoln Pottery Works, for example, closed its doors for good and

⁸⁵See *Ibid.*, 28 May 1914, 4.

⁸⁶"The People Make Meager Living from What Others Discard," *Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star*, 3 April 1938, 9B.

⁸⁷Carl Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), xviii.

⁸⁸"Aging Rivers," Center for Science Education, [http://cse.cosm.sc.edu/erth_sci/Erosion/ AgeRiver.htm](http://cse.cosm.sc.edu/erth_sci/Erosion/AgeRiver.htm).

⁸⁹Timothy R. Mahoney, "The Small City in American History," *Indiana Magazine of History* 99 (December 2003): 321-22.

was not replaced.⁹⁰ Similarly, the trend towards economic "stringency" saw the city's nascent meat packing industry consolidate, and the two local slaughterhouses merged into the Lincoln Packing Company.⁹¹ In fact, consolidation and contraction became the norm for most industries located in Lincoln throughout the twentieth century.

Rather than competing with Omaha or Kansas City, Lincoln satisfied itself with being the "wholesale center for Beatrice, Hastings, York, Crete, Fairbury, and other cities" to its south and west.⁹² The Capital City also positioned itself as the proud center of an agrarian hinterland. Home of the State Fair since 1884, Lincoln celebrated Nebraska's position as one of the top five agricultural states in the union.⁹³ But most importantly, boosters championed the community as a center of higher learning as they contended Lincoln's "greatest industry is her schools and colleges."⁹⁴ The University of Nebraska opened its doors in 1871, and by the end of the 1930s housed 8,000 to 9,000 students.⁹⁵ Additionally, Union College, Nebraska Wesleyan, and Cotner College were all founded in Lincoln's suburbs during the *fin de siècle* era. All three of the private schools remained vibrant institutions through the 1920s, and Union College and Wesleyan remain important centers of learning in the twenty-first century.⁹⁶ The greater community, then, was more in the business of manufacturing citizens rather than implements, and a thriving service industry grew around the schools and around state agencies.

Still, Lincoln, as a capital city, was not always viewed favorably. Some construed the town as a "damn, bloodsucking parasite. Don't produce nothing, just

⁹⁰Bleed and Schoen, 34, 36, 44.

⁹¹Sherman, 202; and Nugent, 115-16.

⁹²Bradley H. Baltensberger, *Nebraska: A Geography* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 245.

⁹³Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, 78.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 10 and 43.

⁹⁵Federal Writers Project, *Nebraska*, 177.

⁹⁶Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, 69.

living off the capitol and the university."⁹⁷ Others focused on the city's "reputation for dullness and lethargy" that was punctuated only by a few months of activity surrounding the legislative session. Despite such criticisms, Lincoln struggled forward as a "distinctive urban world unto itself."⁹⁸ Like many communities on the Great Plains and beyond, the city projected itself as a "big city with the small town feel."⁹⁹

Within this milieu, two distinct groups competed for economic and political domination. On the one hand, "a small booster elite" of merchants and lawyers constructed a mercantile city centered around downtown business blocks. On the other, moral reformers sought control of the community.¹⁰⁰ The latter group guided Lincoln's development as a thriving, progressive, middle-class city with a reputation as an orderly community by the 1890s.¹⁰¹ For these upstanding citizens, the city was "built on strong moral character cultivated through self-discipline, hard work, marriage, genteel living, and civic involvement."¹⁰²

Although delayed by a faltering economy, Progressive reform impacted Nebraska beginning in 1907. The state soon adopted primary elections, child labor laws, bank guaranty laws, and the non-partisan election of judges. State legislators also wrangled with railroad regulations, women's suffrage, and prohibition.¹⁰³ The Civic League, formed in Lincoln in 1909, encouraged adoption of the latter issue which became a contested scheme alternately voted in and out until national prohibition in 1919.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷See Mari Sandoz, *Capital City* (Boston: Brown and Little, 1939), 6. These were the words of character Asa Bruce Harcoot.

⁹⁸Teaford, 30; and Mahoney, "Small City," 328.

⁹⁹Mahoney, "Small City," 320.

¹⁰⁰Timothy R. Mahoney, "The Great Sheedy Murder Trial and the Booster Ethos of the Gilded Age in Lincoln," *Nebraska History* 82 (Winter 2001):168.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 163, 166.

¹⁰²Ibid., 167.

¹⁰³Frederick C. Luebke, "The Progressive Context of the Nebraska State Capitol: The Collaboration of Goodhue and Tack," *Great Plains Quarterly* 15 (Fall 1995): 228.

¹⁰⁴Anderson, 187.

Interestingly, class, ethnicity, and religion split the vote on this issue.¹⁰⁵ Native-born, middle-class Methodist and Presbyterian citizens were generally dry. Foreign-born and working-class residents tended to vote wet.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, city government underwent revamping as a commission plan was attempted between 1912 to 1917, but most voters and residents preferred a mayoral system. A permanent system was agreed upon in 1917 when Lincoln achieved home rule surrendering its legislative charter. At that time, six strong councilmen overshadowed the mayor as they served staggered four-year terms and maintained the power to appoint city administrators.¹⁰⁷

For businesses and community leaders alike, modern improvement was the order of the day. Oftentimes these ends were met through business and governmental cooperation. For example, the Burlington Railroad built the first "O" street viaduct in 1893 as a means to ease traffic congestion around the rail yards. A partner to this construction, the city agreed to maintain the structure.¹⁰⁸ Other enterprises, such as the municipal waterworks founded in 1885, for example, were public utilities. Still others, such as a street railway company, were rational mergers of numerous smaller companies who confronted the great expense of modern technology and efficiency.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the gas company, the electric company, and the telephone exchange were all launched as private concerns.¹¹⁰ The latter utility demonstrated that efficiency in this era could still easily be locally owned. Similarly, the Lincoln Telephone Company was established in 1903 with a capacity of 10,000 lines. Its founders capitalized on the fashion "to denounce big business" and arranged a fifty-year franchise with the city fathers. Their

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 190.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 192.

¹⁰⁷League of Women Voters, 7-8.

¹⁰⁸McKee, 53.

¹⁰⁹Sawyer, 148.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

early goal was to connect the University Place, Havelock, Normal, College View, and Belmont communities to the central exchange.¹¹¹

These villages, along with Havelock -- a suburb of Burlington mechanics -- were lured closer and closer into the orbit of the central community throughout the 1910s. In 1921, the state legislature permitted Lincoln to annex its suburban areas. Over the next decade Normal, University Place with its population of 4,100, Bethany with about 1,000 citizens, College View and its 2,400 residents, and finally Havelock and its 4,000 people joined Lincoln.¹¹² They were undoubtedly encouraged by access to public facilities including a modern sewage plant that eliminated the need to dump raw sewage into Salt Creek in the northeastern sector of town. Annexation brought Lincoln's population in 1930 to 66,180.¹¹³

While population increases reflected only annexation during the 1920s, the decade still proved to be an era of remarkable growth and continued modernization in Lincoln. Housing was dramatically improved as neighborhoods platted in the late 1880s were finally developed. 1925 was the peak year of home construction as 670 houses were completed.¹¹⁴ Surprisingly, the building continued at modest levels during the Great Depression as neighborhoods near Antelope Creek were developed. These modest subdivisions encouraged incremental growth even in hard times as the city's population increased to 79,592 by 1940.¹¹⁵

The building boom also changed the skyline of Lincoln and the symbolism of the entire state as a new Capitol was constructed between 1922 and 1932. Part of a trend to build skyscrapers, this new high-rise -- which relied heavily on Volga German laborers -

¹¹¹William D. Torrence, "The Great Independent: The Lincoln Telephone Company, 1903-1908, *Nebraska History* 51 (Fall 1970): 340-46.

¹¹²McKee, 34-35; Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, 69.

¹¹³*Lincoln Sunday Journal & Star*, 26 April 1959, 6C.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*; and Federal Writers Project, *Nebraska*, 176.

¹¹⁵Federal Writers Project, *Nebraska*, 176.

- was a sign of mainstream progress.¹¹⁶ As it necessarily represented the history and hopes of an entire state, the Capitol's architecture mixed conservative and modern elements.¹¹⁷ Symbolically, it included classical Greek and Biblical references, depictions of heroic frontierspeople, and imagery from Nebraska Native American cultures.¹¹⁸ Interestingly, the juxtaposition of Indian and pioneer icons in the completed structure permeated mainstream identity. (See Figure 3-2.)

Although the thin tower itself represented the essence of male fertility, its message is enhanced by powerful Indian and European American symbols. Portraying heavy rains, eight thunderbirds grace the Capitol's dome.¹¹⁹ "The Sower" -- a statue of a white man sewing grain -- stands atop these symbols thereby linking the two cultures while proclaiming the agrarian agenda as dominant. Relief sculptures on the North entrance reiterate this change.¹²⁰ Large bison -- the base of Nebraska Indians economy - - adorn the stairways. Over the door, a wagon and a family of pioneers led by an American Eagle are moving west. Embossed nearby are the words "Honor the Pioneers who broke the sods that men to come might live." Again, "civilization" replaced indigenous economies.

Similarly, just outside the city limits Pioneers Park -- a 600 acre park donated to Lincoln in 1928 -- celebrated both the settlers for which it was named and Native Americans.¹²¹ Elk and bison statues grace its two entrances, and small herds of both

¹¹⁶Abbott, 78.

¹¹⁷Eric Scott McCready, "The Nebraska State Capitol: Its Design, Background, and Influence," *Nebraska History* 54 (Fall 1974): 327.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 374.

¹¹⁹Thunderbirds are pan-Indian symbols. For a discussion on the extent and importance of these icons to various nations, see Gerald Musinsky, "Thunder Bird," http://www.pantheon.org/articles/t/thunder_bird.html. For a discussion of Omahas and thunderbirds, see Fletcher and La Flesche, 1: 218 and 2: 457.

¹²⁰Entrances facing the four cardinal directions recall both the American grid system and Indian ideas of completeness and perfection.

¹²¹See Richard K. Sutton, "Ernst H. Herminghaus: Landscape Architect," *Nebraska History* 66 (Winter 1985): 372-91.

Figure 3-2. Sower and Thunderbirds on the Nebraska State Capitol.



animals are enclosed in large natural habitats. On a hill just above the park's main picnic ground and athletic field, *Smoke Signal*, a large sculpture that depicts and honors Indians is on prominent display.¹²² In 1935, Omahas, Winnebagos, Poncas, and Sioux camped *en masse* in the park to help dedicate the monument, proof again that ethnic groups in the past were easy to honor.

Generally, Lincoln in the 1920s honored pioneers by expropriating Indian devices. In 1927, the *Sunday State Journal* typically included a "Pioneer Section." Illustrations in the section featured a large stacked steam engine at the Lincoln railroad station. There is a athletic steed and rider also on prominent display. Most individuals are depicted as males in wide-brimmed hats. The few women wear fashionable hats and narrow waisted dresses.¹²³ Indian names, however, were common throughout the community. Wayuka cemetery, the communities largest, reportedly derives its name from Dakota *Wanka*, meaning "he rests, or he lies down."¹²⁴ Additionally, Indian Village, one of the city's many 1920s subdivisions, named its streets Otoe, Pawnee, Dakota, Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, and Nemaha. This subdivision was just one of many that allowed mainstream homeowners to spread across their residential valley.

STREAM REJUVENATION: POST-WAR EXPANSION

Despite the availability of residential space during the 1930s, growth in Lincoln, like most places in the nation, was relatively flat. The mass mobilization of World War II and the economic boom in its aftermath, however, started a new chapter in the story of western cities. These physical and systemic changes can be likened to stream rejuvenation, a process caused by "constant movement on the earth's crust" that raises a stream's headwaters above their old levels. In many such events, flood plain meanders

¹²²Federal Writers Project, *Lincoln*, 68.

¹²³See, for example, *Sunday State Journal*, 16 January 1927, section 6, 1

Figure 3-3. City and State Population and Population Growth.

	Lincoln	Percent Change	Nebraska	Percent Change
1860	800		29,000	
1870	2,500	213%	123,000	324%
1880	13,000	420%	452,000	267%
1890	55,000	323%	1,000,000	121%
1900	37,000	-33%	1,059,000	6%
1910	44,000	19%	1,066,000	1%
1920	55,000	25%	1,300,000	22%
1930	66,000	20%	1,370,000	5%
1940	82,000	24%	1,313,000	-4%
1950	100,000	22%	1,325,000	1%
1960	129,000	29%	1,411,000	6%
1970	150,000	16%	1,483,000	5%
1980	172,000	15%	1,539,000	4%
1990	200,000	22%	1,584,000	3%
2000	225,000	13%	1,710,000	8%
2005	232,000	3%		

Sources: *Nebraska Bluebook* (Lincoln: Nebraska Legislative Council); U.S., Census Bureau.

¹²⁴Penelope Chatfield, "Wyuka: A 'Rural' Cemetery in Lincoln, Nebraska," *Nebraska History* 63 (Summer 1982): 186.

become terraces as a revitalized and dynamic valley begins its trek towards maturity anew.¹²⁵ In Lincoln, modernization, immigration, and movement from rural to urban areas dominated this rejuvenation process.

Interestingly, Lincoln's boom started with a fizzle, as -- like Austin, Texas, and Topeka, Kansas -- the community lost population between 1939 and 1943. This was generally attributed to the departure of college men to the armed forces and a migration of workers to the shipyards in Pacific rim cities. The years between 1945 and 1955, however, proved to be a "'revolutionary' decade" when "local growth machines" all across the West reemerged from the slumber of the Depression.¹²⁶ Lincoln's population increased to 100,000 by 1950 and reached 129,000 a decade later.¹²⁷ These gains helped establish a general pattern of growth that persisted the rest of the century.

Pondering whether the Cold War "transformed or deformed" the American West, many scholars attribute the astounding growth of the era to two overarching patterns: military industrial development and the construction of interstate highways.¹²⁸ While not the only engines of expansion, the post-war West became increasingly urban as 80 percent of its residents lived in communities of 60,000 or more¹²⁹ Western growth was not a uniform project. Truly astounding development occurred on the Pacific coast and around the Dallas-Ft. Worth metroplex. Economic and demographic expansion on the eastern cusp of the Great Plains was more modest, but Lincoln, Omaha, Fargo, Sioux Falls, Topeka, Lawrence, Kansas City, Tulsa, and Oklahoma City all posted marked increases.¹³⁰

¹²⁵Center for Science Education.

¹²⁶Abbott, 13, 39.

¹²⁷"Lincoln Almanac," *Lincoln Sunday Journal & Star*, 29 January 1961, F1.

¹²⁸Kevin J. Fernlund, ed., *The Cold War American West, 1945-1989* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 2.

¹²⁹Ric Dias, "The Great Cantonment: Cold War Cities in the American West," in Fernlund, 71.

¹³⁰Abbott, xiv.

Like most western communities, Lincoln successfully enlisted the "metropolitan-military complex" by obtaining \$57 million in defense contracts between 1940 and 1950.¹³¹ These gains were short-lived and modest, however, and they did not make up for the demise of railroads as the community's largest employer and link to the outside world.¹³² Replacing rail transport by 1960, Interstate 80 became the new artery that connected Lincoln to Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, and national markets.

The interstate highway system accelerated centralization in most communities. Omaha, for instance, pinned its growth to intercity highway development and federally sponsored urban renewal projects and initiated an era of rapid economic expansion and urban sprawl. Voters in Lincoln rejected urban renewal schemes in 1962 and refrained from building expressways through or around the city during the 1960s, 1970s and beyond.¹³³ Consequently, "peripheral commercial development" was fairly modest and the community retained "much of the appearance of small-town America," including a city core that was increasingly dominated by entertainment establishments.¹³⁴ Still stressing its educational and governmental roles through the 1990s, Lincoln remained an important second tier city.¹³⁵

Urban growth on the Great Plains was largely fueled by rural people from the region moving to larger areas in search of economic opportunity. Lincoln's post-World War II population growth illustrates this trend. Between 1950 and 1990, its local population raced to 200,000 people, a 100 percent increase. The state as a whole, however, posted a modest growth rate of 19 percent as it advanced from 1.3 million to 1.58 million residents during the same period.¹³⁶ Despite the subtle beauty of the salt

¹³¹Ibid., 6 and 10.

¹³²Shortridge, 282.

¹³³League of Women Voters, 10.

¹³⁴Baltensberger, 265-67.

¹³⁵Abbott, 155.

¹³⁶Kevin Allen Leonard, "Migrants, Immigrants, and Refugees: The Cold War and Population Growth in the American West," in Fernlund, 37; and Baltensberger, 93.

basin and the surrounding prairies, many Americans still viewed the Great Plains as a fly-over region, with the growth in Plains cities necessarily coming at the expense of the community's former hinterland.

Population increase and physical expansion amplified the city's progressive and conservative political dichotomy. For at over half of the twentieth century, Lincoln politics were dominated by a handful of "Conservative reformers and boosters" who continued, "anachronistically, to employ a closed personalized style of elite leadership."¹³⁷ Under their leadership, the city favored "pay as you go" government, and civic improvements, while desirable, were constrained by budget issues.¹³⁸ In 1962, a "strong mayor-council" plan was adopted that essentially remade city government, now guided by a chief executive and seven council members more responsive to public concerns.¹³⁹ While the Charter of 1917 remained basically intact, pro-business and pro-neighborhood candidates chased each other in and out of office.¹⁴⁰

Among the most important planning issues in the post-war era for both factions were flood control in the Salt Creek system and the expansion of available housing. In the immediate aftermath of the war, housing in Lincoln was at a premium. Expansion of the corporate limits and a building boom fueled by Federal Housing Authority and Veterans Administration initiatives made home ownership a possibility for many families.¹⁴¹ New housing developments soon pushed the city's boundaries outward in all directions, a trend that continues in the twenty-first century.

¹³⁷Mahoney, "Sheedy Murder," 179.

¹³⁸See, for example the "Pay as you Go Speech" delivered by long-time Lincoln City Clerk Theopolis Herman Berg. Berg Papers, RG 2631.Am, Box 1, Series 2, File 2, Nebraska State Historical Society.

¹³⁹League of Women Voters, 7-8.

¹⁴⁰See *Charter of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska* (Lincoln: s.n., 1938); *Charter of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska* (Lincoln: s.n., 1955); and *Charter of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska, 2005*, <http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/attorney/charter/pdf>.

¹⁴¹Dias, 72, 74.

As the city expanded, storm sewer runoff and increased pavement exacerbated the flooding possibilities of Salt Creek and its tributaries. Additionally, the Volga German population, long ignored in their enclaves, had growing political clout. Reconstruction of the basin actually began in 1928 when the main channel was straightened and dredged between Oak Creek -- which joins the mainstream on the very north side of town -- and the intersection with the Platte to reduce flooding.¹⁴² Lincoln reemphasized its commitment to improving the basin after a disastrous 1950 flood. Immediate action included installing "banked" levees and deepening the main channel.¹⁴³ Additionally, plans to control flooding at the top of the drainage were designed.¹⁴⁴ By the late-1960s, fourteen dams were in place on the tributaries; one of them, Holmes Lake, was even within city limits.¹⁴⁵ While successfully reducing wide-scale flooding, the new reservoirs, all within twenty miles of town, served as recreational outlets for growing mobile populations.

As the salt basin was rarely considered post-card beautiful even by its long-term residents, natural features were rarely used to bolster civic pride. Instead, a community identity was constructed that included a "paradoxical balancing of past and future."¹⁴⁶ Certainly the substantially altered physical environment of the basin was lauded. Additionally, history remained vital to Lincolnites who were poised to enjoy three centennials that celebrated the founding of Nebraska Territory in 1954, the city in 1959, and the state in 1967. Public pageantry and pioneer imagery were central on all of these occasions.

¹⁴²*Lincoln Journal*, 25 May 1950, 1.

¹⁴³Katherine Schmall, interview by Steve Larisk, transcript, 16 September 1980, folder AV 437.18, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, Nebraska State Historical Society, 6.

¹⁴⁴*Lincoln Journal*, 29 May 1950, 1.

¹⁴⁵League of Women Voters, 3.

¹⁴⁶Carl Abbott, *Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 10.

The city founding celebration is most noteworthy because of a friendly debate to determine when the community was actually created: in 1859, 1863, or 1867.

Lincolniters appealed to a panel of historians who determined 1859 was the most appropriate date as the area's earliest American settlers met under an elm tree in Antelope Creek Valley that summer and selected Lancaster as the county seat.¹⁴⁷ Consequently, in 1959, the Lincoln Centennial Corporation arranged for a week of celebrations in early May, including Religious Heritage Day, Commerce and Industry Day, Community Day, Cultural Day, Historical and Recognition Day, Youth Day, and, most popularly, Western Day.¹⁴⁸ Local businesses joined in the festivities. and the National Bank of Commerce, for instance, offered "Modern 1959 Electric Banking in 1859 Old Fashioned Dress." Men preferred top hats and tails -- garb certainly not seen in frontier Nebraska, while women preferred sun bonnets and calico dresses. Clearly not concerned with accuracy, the photo of the bank staff included a 1910s automobile.¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, the mid-century celebrations included little mention of ethnic or indigenous heritages.

Despite great civic pride, local improvements did not enrich the lives of all non-mainstream groups. For many, life barely improved throughout the post-war era. The working poor, for instance, remained in substandard housing as Lincoln was unable to acquire federal housing projects because it was not a major defense center.¹⁵⁰ Additionally, every day discrimination remained a reality for African Americans and other peoples of color. Never segregated by statute, residential covenants remained a reality into the 1960s until ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. Even obtaining automobile insurance was an ordeal as only eighteen of ninety-three insurance

¹⁴⁷"Why 1959? Experts Approve Date Choice," *Lincoln Evening Journal*, Centennial News section, 5 May 1959, 2; see also *Nebraska State Journal*, 16 January 1927, section 6, 2.

¹⁴⁸Lincoln Centennial Corporation, "Calendar," Marie Sandoz Preservation Project, University of Nebraska Libraries, Box 16, Folder 4, Item 1.

¹⁴⁹*Lincoln Sunday Journal & Star*, 26 April 1959, 3C.

agencies covered black Lincolmites.¹⁵¹ In many ways, Lincoln was an unfriendly place and, like many other western cities, the community remained culturally conservative and almost aggressively white. Interestingly, the small number of local ethnics also protected white progressivism as segregated neighborhoods were small and confined and almost out of sight. As a result, a racially charged atmosphere never really developed.¹⁵² Unfortunately, the rejuvenation enjoyed by many city residents did not flow in an even stream to all Lincoln citizens.

DÒNG SUỐI UỐN KHÚC: BRAIDED STREAMS (OF PEOPLE)

While Lincoln was at the heart of a "white Christian state," overt racism was never "pervasive," although it certainly existed as a current just under the surface.¹⁵³ By the end of the Cold War, Lincoln -- although almost 90 percent of residents listed themselves as white -- began to resemble a braided river of ethnicity.¹⁵⁴ "Like most braided rivers, a single dominant channel can generally be distinguished," but the "creeks are active enough to divert the river from a straight down-valley course."¹⁵⁵ The side channels included Indians returning to the salt basin in search of different commodities and new peoples from all around the world seeking social and economic freedom.

After a century and a half of struggling to survive, Native peoples in Nebraska experienced their own population boom in the post-World War II era. Figure 3-4 demonstrates this impressive growth as it strengthened over time. Job growth in cities,

¹⁵⁰Mihelich, "Lincoln Urban League," 309, 312.

¹⁵¹Ibid., 313.

¹⁵²For a discussion on these issues, see Abbott, *Portland*, 13 and 99.

¹⁵³Mary Pipher, *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), 331-32.

¹⁵⁴U.S., Census Bureau, "Lancaster County, Nebraska Census Data," <http://www.HomeTownLocator.com/CountyCensusData.cfm?SCFIPS=31109>.

¹⁵⁵B.R. Rust, "Structure and Process in a Braided River," in Peter G. Johnson, ed., *Fluvial Process: Cueillette et Analyse des Données* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1975), 89, 91.

general unemployment in Indian Country, and federal policies encouraged many of these Indians to move away from the homes their ancestors had known since the 1850s.

Figure 3-4. Total Indian Population in Nebraska.¹⁵⁶

YEAR	POPULATION	CHANGE
1950	4,000	
1960	5,500	38 %
1970	6,600	20 %
1980	9,100	38%
1990	12,400	27%
2000	14,900	17%

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Congress abandoned nineteenth century policies designed to make Indians into mainstream farmers and determined that life on the various domestic dependent nations was hopeless.¹⁵⁷ Termination and Voluntary Relocation were advanced to alleviate long-standing problems, and in concert, they encouraged mass urban emigration. Termination policy began with a resolution stating that the BIA should be abolished, and Indians should be "freed from federal supervision" and given the same protection of laws as other American citizens. While Omaha Nation was never terminated, Public Law 280 transferred jurisdiction on Indian lands to the

¹⁵⁶Leonard, 39; and U.S., Census Bureau, "Table 2. American Indian and Alaska Native Population for the United States, Regions, and States, and for Puerto Rico: 1900 and 2000," *The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2000* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2002), 5.

¹⁵⁷James B. LaGrand, *Indian Metropolis: Native Americans in Chicago, 1945-75* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 46-47, 55. Former policy was initiated by the Dawes Act (1887) that essentially divided tribally held land into individual farms. Omahas were allotted individual plots as a pilot program in 1883.

states of Nebraska, California, Minnesota, Oregon, and Wisconsin.¹⁵⁸ Instead of parity with the mainstream, however, this change created lawless conditions on Omaha Nation as Nebraska never allocated funds or staffing to successfully administer their additional charge.

Although never formalized by federal legislation, Voluntary Relocation "took its place beside termination" as part of efforts to assist Native Americans. Military service convinced mainstream policy makers that Indians could compete in a modern economy and the best course of action was to recruit individuals to leave Indian Nations for cities so far away that commuting back and forth would be impossible.¹⁵⁹ Beginning on the overcrowded Navajo Nation in 1948, the program expanded to Oklahoma, New Mexico, California, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado by 1951. Between 1952 and 1970, 100,000 Indians were relocated to thirteen urban centers around the United States at the cost of over \$15 million. While precise relocation records were not kept, cities in Nebraska were not official destinations and recruitment on Omaha Nation was not widespread.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸See, Termination Resolution 1953 (67 US Statute b132) and PL 280 1953 (67 US Statute 588), in William N. Thompson, *Native American Issues: A Reference Book* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1996), 152-53; and David R.M. Beck, "Developing a Voice: The Evolution of Self-Determination in an Indian Urban Community," *Wicazo Sa Review* (2002): 120.

The untenable situation created by PL 280 was undone in 1969 through a bill of retrocession. Never fully in control, the State of Nebraska removed itself from affairs on Omaha Nation and federal control was reinstated. While conditions in Indian Country generally improved under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, termination and relocation officially ended in 1973 during Nixon the administration. Beginning an era of more enlightened Indian policy, numerous federal initiatives favored Native sovereignty and revitalization. Significant Acts included the Indian Financing Act of 1974 (88 US Statute 77), Indian Self-determination and Educational Assistance Act of 1975 (88 US Statute 2203), American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (92 US Statute 469), Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (93 US Statute 721), Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 (103 US Statute 1336), and Native American Languages Act of 1990 (104 US Statute 1153). See, Thompson 154-56.

¹⁵⁹Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press 1986), 134-36.

¹⁶⁰Peter V. Snyder, "The Social Environment of the Urban Indian," in Jack O. Waddell and O. Michael Watson, eds., *The American Indian in Urban Society* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), 207; Kenneth R. Philp, "Termination: A Legacy of the Indian New Deal," *Western Historical Quarterly* 14 (April 1983): 188; Elaine M. Neils, *Reservation to City: Indian Migration and Federal Relocation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Department of Geography Paper No. 131, 1971), 76, 84; and Donald L. Fixico, "The Relocation Program and Urbanization," in John R. Wunder, ed., *Native Americans and the Law: Constitutionalism and Native Americans, 1903-1968* (New York: Garland, 1996), 245-47.

The relocation movement peaked in 1957.

Consequently, migration into Lincoln started as a mere trickle. While few in number, Native Americans lived among other ethnics in the Russian Bottoms as early as the 1930s.¹⁶¹ In 1960, the combined total of Native Americans in Lincoln and the city of Omaha had increased to almost 500, and then blossomed to over 3,000 twenty years later.¹⁶² Although probably underreported, the U.S. Census listed 1,196 Indians in Lincoln in 1990 and 1,599 in 2000.¹⁶³ Lincoln's urban Indians, then, are a sizable fraction of the state-wide population and a visible braid in a multi-ethnic flow.

In addition to many Native Americans, Lincoln -- following a trend where "First World cities are being filled with Third World populations" -- is again home to many immigrants.¹⁶⁴ In fact, the community was one of the top twenty cities for refugees from Asia, Africa, and Europe as low unemployment rates and "relatively low cost of living" encouraged U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement to select Lincoln as "preferred community" for new arrivals.¹⁶⁵ Consequently, 5,200 immigrants in 1990 and 13,000 in 2000 relocated in Lincoln, almost 6 percent of its population.¹⁶⁶

In many respects, Indochinese "refugees" -- people "coerced into leaving" by "powerful military and political opponents" -- were the advance guard of this greater movement.¹⁶⁷ Displaced through activities sponsored by the United States government during the Southeast Asian wars, Vietnamese entered the country in small numbers beginning after the fall of Saigon in 1975, and then came in increasingly larger aggregates until relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were normalized in

¹⁶¹Mihelich, "Formation of the Lincoln Urban League," 64.

¹⁶²Baltensberger, 70, 82.

¹⁶³US, Census Bureau, "Table 8: Race and Hispanic Origin," *Population and Housing Characteristics for Census Tracts and Block Numbering Areas, Lincoln, NE MSA* (Washington, DC: GPO: 1993), 18; and US Census, "Table 6: Population and Selected Categories of Race, 2000," *Nebraska: 2000: Summary Population and Housing Characteristics* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2002), 145.

¹⁶⁴Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 188.

¹⁶⁵Pipher, 6.

¹⁶⁶Federation for American Immigration Reform, "City Fact Sheet: Lincoln, Nebraska," <http://www.fairus.org/Research/Research.cfm?ID=1063&c=9>.

1996.¹⁶⁸ Since then, immigration has continued in a more traditional fashion as newcomers sought both economic opportunity and the chance to be reunited with their extended families. In 1990, the American Vietnamese population was around 700,000 -- half of them in California. In 2000, this total was about 1.2 million.¹⁶⁹ Hosting the thirty-fifth largest urban community of Vietnamese in America, Lincoln is presently home to about 4,000 individuals.¹⁷⁰ Like the Volga Germans a century earlier, many Vietnamese took employment in the lower end of the labor market.¹⁷¹

As most immigrant populations moved out of their initial work patterns -- especially if they were white -- they were also expected to shed their ethnic identities and join the mainstream, but the ethnic revival of the 1960s and 1970s largely changed this pattern. Adding to the multi-channeled stream, 93 percent of Nebraska's population listed an ethnic identity, or multiple ethnicities, in 1977. "German Russians" -- a designation that includes both Volga Germans and Black Sea Germans -- represented the fourth largest group in the state.¹⁷² *Reichs* German, Czech, and Swede were identities also proudly proclaimed.

While "the end of the Cold War also seems to have contributed to increased ethnic tensions in much of the West,"¹⁷³ Lincoln as a corporate entity was already prepared to help diffuse racial and ethnic prejudices. For instance, Doug Bereuter, the long-time U.S. Representative formerly from Nebraska's First District, commended forty

¹⁶⁷Paul Rutledge, *The Role of Religion in Ethnic Self-Identity* (New York: University Press of America, 1985), 6.

¹⁶⁸Leonard, 30

¹⁶⁹Abbott, *Metropolitan Frontier*, 87; and U.S., Census Bureau, "Table 4. Asian Population by Detailed Group: 2000," *Asian Population: 2000* (Washington, D.C.: GPO): February 2002, 9

¹⁷⁰The 2000 US Census listed 3,774 Vietnamese in Lincoln and a total of 6,364 in Nebraska. See US Census, "Profile of Demographic Characteristics: Nebraska," http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000US31&qz_name=DEC_2000_SF1; and Vietnamese Studies Internet Resource Center, "Top 50 U.S. Metropolitan Areas by Vietnamese Population," <http://vstudies.learnabouthm.org/top50usmetar.html>.

¹⁷¹Leonard, 30.

¹⁷²Baltensberger, 76; and J. Allen Williams, Jr., David R. Johnson, and Miguel Carranza, "Ethnic Assimilation and Pluralism in Nebraska," in Frederick C. Luebke, ed., *Ethnicity on the Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 212-13.

years of activities by the Lincoln Interfaith Council on the House floor in 1991. An organization comprised of sixty-two divergent religious congregations, the Council worked, and continues to work, for tolerance in the community. Originally the Lincoln Council of Churches, large numbers of Buddhists, Muslims, and Baha'is in the community prompted a name change in 1989. Over the years, the Council has been involved in programming at the Lincoln Indian Center, the Asian Community and Cultural Center, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Lincoln/ Lancaster County Refugee Resettlement Task Force. Bereuter and the Council both noted that "Lincoln is fast becoming a global village," and, as a result, tolerance is vital.¹⁷⁴

In a similar vein, an Equal Opportunity title was added to the Lincoln City Charter in 1973. The continually-updated Title 11 boldly states that "It is the policy of the City of Lincoln to foster equal opportunity" and to "protect, preserve, and perpetuate all constitutional rights."¹⁷⁵ In law, at least, all people are protected from violations of their human rights as well as housing and employment discrimination.

Nebraska's official history has also been opened to a broad array of people, although not without some resistance. The Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) was founded in 1878 in order to "safeguard and interpret Nebraska's past and make it accessible in ways that enrich present and future generations."¹⁷⁶ Interestingly, relationships with Native Americans -- the first Nebraskans -- were often contentious. Pawnees had to take the Society to court in order to achieve repatriation of remains excavated from ancient burial sites. The Society was initially reluctant to cooperate and

¹⁷³Leonard, 31.

¹⁷⁴Doug Bereuter, "Lincoln Interfaith Council Observes 40th Anniversary in 1992," speech to U.S House of Representatives, 26 November 1991, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?r102:E26NOI-A263>.

¹⁷⁵See Lincoln, Nebraska, "Lincoln City Charter, 2005," <http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/attorney/charter.pdf>.

even sought a Declaratory Judgment in 1990 to determine whether they were required to open their records to the Pawnees. After years of wrangling, the parties reached an amicable agreement in 1994.¹⁷⁷ In the meantime, Indians -- beginning with Charles E. Trimble in 1991 -- were selected to serve on the organization's board. Trimble went on to be president of the NSHS from 1995 to 1997.¹⁷⁸

While official words and actions do not necessarily represent the wishes of the entire mainstream population, Lincoln has grown more inclusive over the course of its history. Diversity is now often celebrated. In many instances, however, historical ethnicity is easier to recognize than present constructions. Neighborhoods, Inc., for instance, is a local non-profit organization working to encourage home ownership in Lincoln's core. As part of their mission, they produce and disseminate information describing the histories and amenities of various neighborhoods. The North and South Bottoms are noted for their distinct heritage and Volga Germans are highlighted as major contributors to early Lincoln. Conversely, the description of the Malone neighborhood, the long-time home to many African Americans, mentions neither ethnicity nor group contribution.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, information regarding the Hartley and Clinton neighborhoods highlights the existence of "specialty shops along 27th Street" without mentioning the Vietnamese proprietors who run these establishments or their largely Vietnamese clientele.¹⁸⁰ Although Neighborhoods, Inc., is likely barred from discussing the ethnic

¹⁷⁶James E. Potter, "Twenty-five More Years: The Nebraska State Historical Society, 1979-2003," *Nebraska History* 84 (Spring 2003): 19.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 26.

¹⁷⁸Ibid., 32

¹⁷⁹See generally, Neighborhoods, Inc., at <http://www.neighborhoodsinc.org/heart/neighborhoods>.

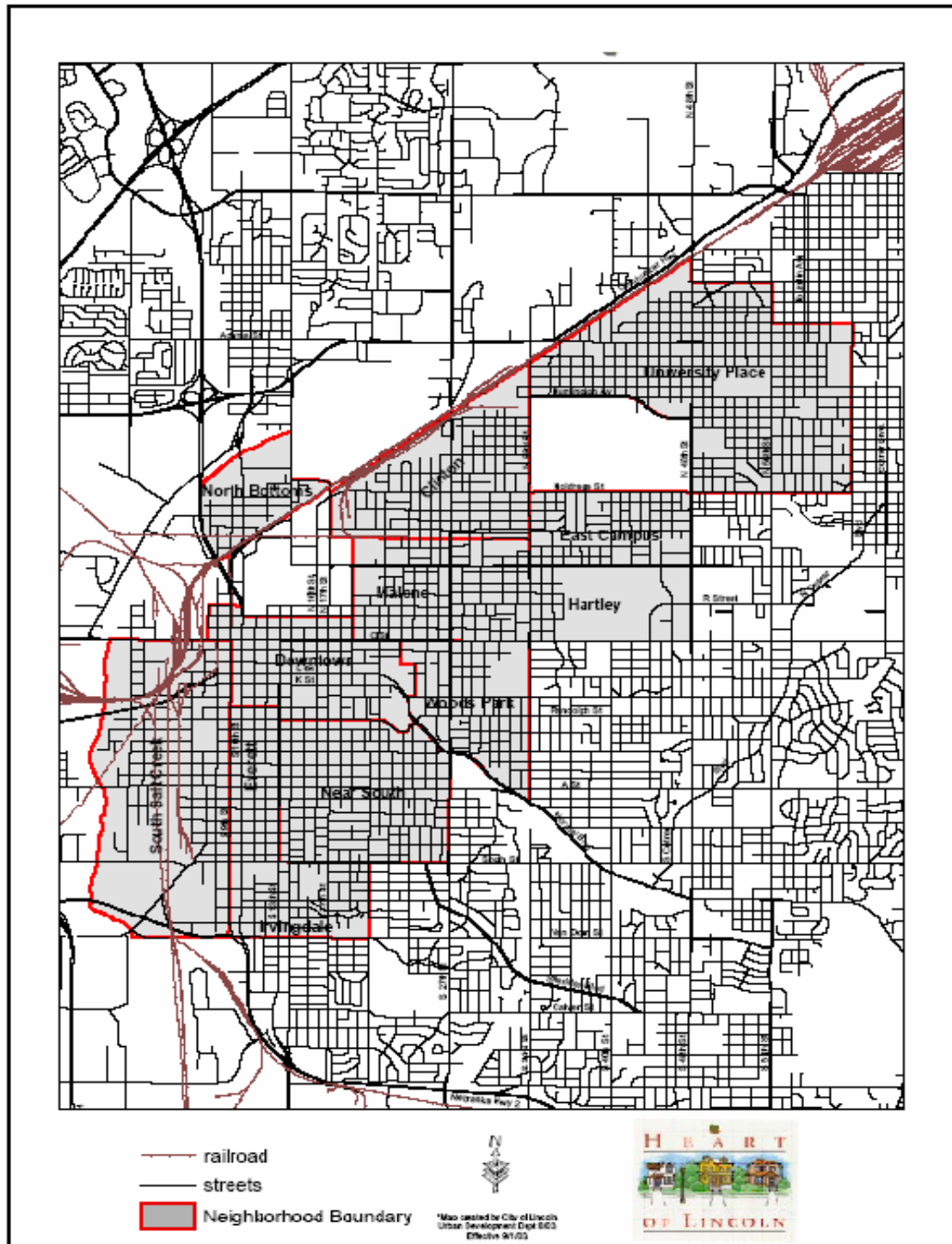
¹⁸⁰Hartley History, Neighborhoods, Inc., http://www.neighborhoodsinc.org/heart/neighborhoods/Hartley_history.htm.

and racial composition of these areas, diversity is not yet valued enough to be discussed without trepidation.

Still, the river fits nicely into its braided course as Vietnamese, African Americans, Indians, Iraqis, Sudanese, Bosnians, and Volga Germans all continue to contribute to their city. Diversity, at present, is seen by many as a benefit to the social climate and culture of the community. This belief recalls the era when Indigenous peoples were the mainstream, and many nations shared resources in the salt basin. While not unfamiliar with conflict, Native Americans accepted diversity when "others" accepted Indian worldviews. Once the valley became an American space in the nineteenth century, however, tolerance declined. Over the course of 100 years, Volga German immigrants and African Americans were politically and economically marginalized in Lincoln. Native Americans, on the other hand, were mythologized as a noble, vanishing race until they returned during the post-World War II expansion only to be labeled troubled alcoholics. This era also witnessed rapid gains for some sections of the population and offered hope for social justice for all community members. Movements to this end, like the slack flow of Salt Creek in the summer, were sometimes painfully slow. Still, the currents and eddies of ethnicity churn on in the twenty-first century. Where the waters lead next remains unknown.

SECTION II
URBAN VILLAGERS:
COMMUNITY BUILDING AND IDENTITY
CONSTRUCTION

Figure II-1. Map of Lincoln Neighborhoods.



CHAPTER 4

LIFE IN THE RUSSIAN BOTTOMS:
COMMUNITY BUILDING AND IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION AMONG
GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

Henry J. Amen was born in 1876 in Frank, Russia, an ethnically German agricultural colony on the Volga River. He immigrated to Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1888 where he apprenticed with an uncle before opening his "main street" grocery in the heart of the South Russian Bottoms in 1902. At this "hustling and bustling store," German-speaking customers were "treated right," and their money bought "the full value of the best wares."¹ Amen also served his community as a steamship ticket agent, a mortgage and personal banker, a home insurance agent, a landlord who provided reasonable rents, and the bookkeeper for the Ebenezer Congregational Church. He lived several doors up the street from his business until he built his dream house eight blocks away in 1918 where he and Barbara Amen raised their seven children.²

Like the first small group of 150 to 200 Volga Germans that settled on the southwest edge of Lincoln, Amen and his family experienced near-constant discrimination. The 5,000 distinctly native-born "Americans" already inhabiting this small, western city considered the squatters of 1876 an impediment to local development. Negative stereotypes were only strengthened as the immigrants sponsored their friends and families to join them in increasing numbers until 1913. In the interim, a near-continuous flow of "peasants" arrived in sheepskin coats, felt boots, wide-brimmed hats, and black shawls -- garb they donned even in the scorching heat of summers on the Great Plains.³ Because mainstream Lincolnites were uncomfortable with the immigrants'

¹Amen advertisement, *Die Welt-Post*, 29 May 1924, 7, translation by author.

²"Ledgers, 1904-1948," Henry J. Amen Papers, series 1, volumes 1, 2, and 3, Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS), Lincoln; and *Lincoln* [NE] *Evening Journal*, 10 July 1975, 1; and 11 July 1975, 4.

³Hattie Plum Williams, "The History of the German-Russian Colony in Lincoln" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1909), 92; Mary Lynn Tuck, "*Sekundarseidlung einer Ausseninsel (Norka-Wolgabeit) im Lincoln, Nebraska: Bestimmung der Sprachlichen Urheimat*" (Ph.D. diss., University of

collective appearance, language, and social habits, they derisively called them "Rooshians," "dirty Rooshians," or "dumb" Russians.⁴

Aware but rarely fearful of these prejudices, Lincoln's Volga Germans built two urban villages along the flood plains of Salt Creek and began adapting to the local culture.⁵ The South Bottoms emerged in the late 1870s as the first arrivals erected permanent structures. Responding to demographic trends, construction of the North Russian Bottoms began in 1888 as railroad maintenance personnel moved closer to the Burlington roundhouse, then located two miles from the first settlement. (See Figure 4-1.) Combined, the two enclaves housed 6,500 people by 1915, and while migration slowed to a trickle as the result of war, revolution, and American immigration restrictions, natural increases rapidly built an even more impressive population.⁶ An estimated 8,000 individuals lived in the Bottoms in 1920, as many as 12,000 in 1925, and perhaps one-third of Lincoln's population lived in the urban villages by 1940.⁷

Nebraska-Lincoln, 1983), 348, and Aina Sirks, "A Study of a Nebraska German Dialect" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1956), 13.

Early censuses of Lincoln suggest the community was dominated by settlers from Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, and Missouri. For a brief synopsis, see *A Handbook of Government: Lincoln and Lancaster County, Nebraska* (Lincoln: League of Women Voters, 1968), 3.

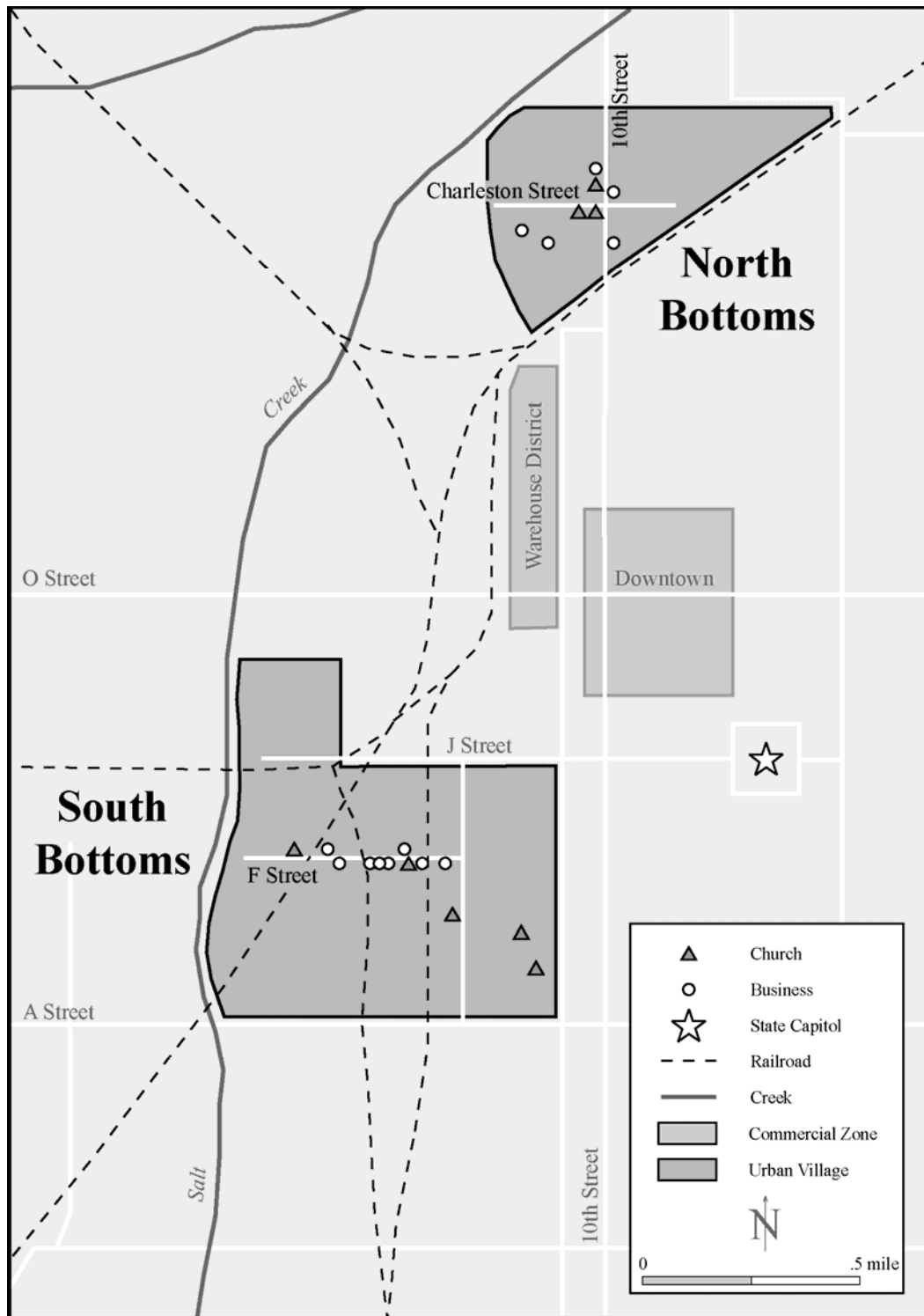
⁴Hattie Plum Williams, "A Social Study of the Russian German Population" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1916), 8; George Schiller, "From Volga-German Heritage to Proud American," *American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Journal* 21 (Spring 1998): 23; and Esther Darauer, interview by Kathy Fimple, transcript, 16 February 1981, folder AV1.437.05, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 14. See also John Loos and Alex Loos, *The Migrant Beet Fielders: Germans from Russia* (Lincoln: by authors, 1975), 14; and Roger L. Welsch, "Germans From Russia: A Place Called Home," in *Broken Hoops and Plains People: A Catalogue of Ethnic Resources in the Humanities: Nebraska and Thereabouts* (Lincoln: Center for Great Plains Studies, Curriculum Development Center, 1976), 203.

⁵Because immigrants rarely totally abandon their sending cultures, adaptation or acculturation are preferred terms in this essay rather than assimilation which often connotes merging completely into the mainstream. See Nazli Kibria, *Family Tighrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 19.

⁶Hattie Plum Williams, *The Czar's Germans: With Particular Reference to the Volga Germans*, eds. Emma S. Haynes, Philip B. Legler, and Gerda S. Walker (Lincoln: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia [AHSGR], 1975), 218.

⁷Walker, iv; *Die Welt-Post*, 9 March 1925, 7

Figure 4-1. Map of North and South Russian Bottoms in 1925.



As the two communities grew, their residents negotiated new identities that combined aspects of their old and new milieus. As identity formation never relies solely on self ascription,⁸ the cultural designations the immigrants invented necessarily responded to the laws, norms, and economic structures they encountered in their new homes.⁹ Wage labor and urbanization, for instance, often moved urban villagers closer to mainstream standards. Stimulus from within the enclaves, however, frequently mitigated such changes.¹⁰ Ultimately, identity shifts were unavoidable, variable, and never absolute.

During the first fifty years of German Russian settlement in Lincoln, particular, cosmopolitan, and transnational factors combined to create complex and overlapping ascriptions.¹¹ Enhancing their connection to the past, the immigrants imported aspects of performed culture from their old environments.¹² Specifically, language, physical ordering of space, work rhythms, and nostalgia for the places they left behind were all retained by significant portions of the population. These habits and artifacts were altered by the urban villagers' associations with the Burlington Railroad, the sugar beet fields of the Great Plains, American constitutional law, and *Die Welt-Post* -- a German-language newspaper. Additionally, reactions to new events in the old Volga colonies, including World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the years of famine that followed these

⁸Paul Rutledge, *The Role of Religion in Ethnic Self Identity* (New York: University Press of America, 1985), 46; and John Lauritz Larson, "Pigs in Space; or What Shapes America's Regional Cultures," in Andrew R.C. Cayton and Susan E. Gray, eds., *The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 77.

⁹Karen Leonard, "Changing South Asian Identities in the United States," in Maxine Seller and Lois Weis, eds., *Beyond Black and White: New Faces and Voices in the U.S. Schools* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 165; John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 8; and Philip Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 124, 127, 139.

¹⁰David Bibas, *Immigrants and the Formation of Community: A Case Study of Moroccan Jewish Immigration to America* (New York: AMS Press, 1998), 2-3; and Richard D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 38.

¹¹Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth, eds., *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 3.

¹²See, Peter G. Boag, *Environment and Experience: Settlement Culture in Nineteenth-Century Oregon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 38, 80, 141.

upheavals, drew great concern and occasionally led to cooperative action. Over the course of five decades, the immigrants affiliated themselves with their villages of origin, their two communities in Lincoln, ethnic Germans from Russia, ethnic Germans from all over Europe and the Americas, European immigrants battling for rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution, and Volga German nationals.

The second fifty years, 1926 to 1976, brought increased prosperity to Lincoln's ethnic neighborhoods and a gradual acceptance of the urban villagers by the greater population. As both enclaves experienced mass exodus during the 1960s and 1970s,¹³ many second and third generation Volga Germans allowed their ethnic identities to lapse into dormancy. In their new homes scattered across the city, they largely adapted to prevailing mainstream identities. The generation that came of age in the 1960s and 1970s, however, reexamined the heritage and revitalized of their aging relatives. As the nation experienced an "ethnic revival," the scions of Lincoln's Volga population helped construct an international German from Russia identity.

THE FOUNDING GENERATION

The Amens and their neighbors were the advance guard in Lincoln of an ethnic-German diaspora from the Volga basin that began in 1874 with an orderly emigration to the Great Plains and the Pampas of South America. These peoples very presence in Russia recalled an earlier migration into the "ragged, semiarid southeastern frontier" of the Romanov domain.¹⁴ Responding to Czarina Catherine II's promises of religious freedom and self-rule, 23,000 to 30,000 Teutons left war-torn western Germany between

¹³Walker, iv.

¹⁴James Long, *The German-Russians: A Bibliography of Russian Materials with Introductory Essay, Annotations, and Locations of Materials in Major American and Soviet Libraries* (Santa Barbara, CA: Clio Books, 1978), 3.

1763 and 1767 and took up residence in the central Volga River valley.¹⁵ Here the colonists provided the Crown a "buffer" against bandits and "raiding" Tartar tribes of the region until conditions became untenable.¹⁶ Although they built large, prosperous communities, the impetus to leave their homes was provided by Czar Alexander II whose Russification projects included the gradual revocation of privileges granted to foreign colonists.¹⁷ Familiar with grasslands environments, many disgruntled Volga Germans saw the young city of Lincoln, Nebraska, as a new field of opportunity and the North and South Bottoms as safe havens for a beleaguered population. These communities spawned new identities.

Particularism

Two ascriptions -- villager and *Volger* -- coexisted in the ethnic enclaves as nostalgia for specific Russian colonies and a shared heritage born in Saratov and Samara provinces emerged as central components of identity construction in Lincoln. While the urban villagers hailed from all 104 of the original Volga colonies, 60 percent of them migrated from Norka, Frank, Balzer, Huck, Beideck, and Kukkus. (See Figure 4-2.)

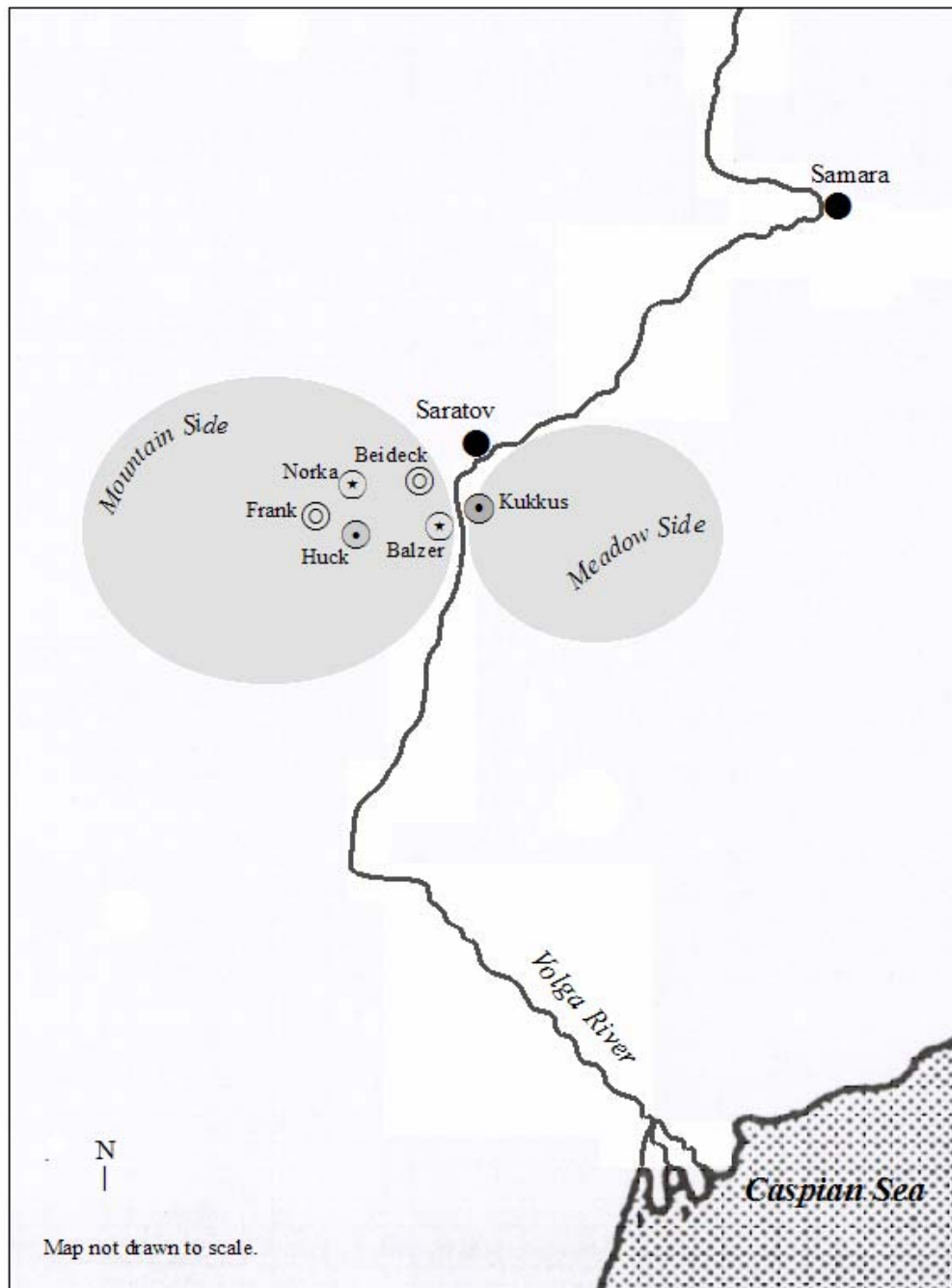
¹⁵Among other things, the immigrants to Russia were guaranteed freedom of religion; long-term, no-interest loans to build homes and churches; a thirty year tax exemption; and perpetual exemption from military conscription and troop quartering. See, "Manifesto -- Concerning Permission of all Foreigners Immigrating to Russia to Settle in Whichever Provinces they Desire and the Rights Granted to Them," trans., James W. Long, in *Germans from Russia in Colorado*, 9-13.

Estimates on immigrant populations vary slightly as the accuracy census records is disputed. See, Hale, 3; Rock, 70; and Williams, *Czar's German's*, 98.

¹⁶Long, *German-Russians: A Bibliography*, 3; and Williams, *Czar's Germans*, 115-18.

¹⁷Although Catherine's (1762-1796) use of social and economic incentives to encourage immigration was repeated in the Black Sea basin by Alexander I (1801-1825) in 1804, the perpetual privileges granted by royal manifestoes were easily rescinded. Indeed, the first "systematic policy against the Germans in the empire" was unveiled in the 1855. Both Alexander II (1855-1881) and Nicholas II (1894-1917) found their privileges a bane to the modernization of the empire, especially after the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 created huge demands for land redistribution. In 1871, German colonists were placed on a par with all other subjects in the Romanov realm, and by 1874, universal conscription -- a call that included ethnic Germans -- was implemented. Aware of the historic agreement, the crown gave Volga Germans a ten year window to emigrate unhindered. Kenneth W. Rock, "Colorado's Germans from Russia," in *Germans from Russia in Colorado*, 72; Williams, *The Czar's Germans*, 162; Pauline Dudek, "The Germans from Russia," *Journal of Genealogy*, April 1979, 26; and Igor Pleve, trans. Richard Rye, "Beginning of Volga German Emigration to America," *American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Journal* 20 (Fall 1997): 25.

Figure 4-2. Map of Volga River Sending Colonies.



- ⊙ Lutheran Colonies
- Reformed Colonies
- ★ Predominantly Reformed Colonies

Favoring the largest of these places, the immigrants named the South Bottoms the *Franker Boden* and the North Bottoms the *Norkaer Boden*.¹⁸ Identities were further subdivided as residents from the other colonies preferred to live as close to each other as possible. *Balzerers*, for instance, lived among *Balzerers*, and *Huckers* lived amidst *Huckers*. Because populations were often small and the ethnic enclaves were surrounded by mainstream neighborhoods, "several villages combined into one larger settlement," and a more inclusive *Volger* identity also developed.¹⁹

The *Volger* identity was largely an expression of continued German solidarity in North America. In Russia, cultural unity was prevalent because the colonies were "islands of Germandom surrounded by a sea of Slavs."²⁰ Jealousy of teutonic privileges was intense among Russian populations. Consequently, the colonists who arrived from Hesse, Rhineland, the Palatinate, Saxony, Württemberg, and Switzerland learned to support each other.²¹

Still, particular religious, economic, and linguistic practices encouraged the colonists to identify with the "closed corporate communities" they lived in.²² Village loyalties were further strengthened by the underdeveloped infrastructure of the Russian provinces that made travel and communication arduous. Consequently, most colonists viewed their German-speaking villages as the center of their worlds, and few ventured beyond home and fields.

This curious development was partly the result of Catherine's directives regarding settlement patterns. To encourage unity, the enlightened despot assigned Catholics, Mennonites, and Protestants to separate communities; she further divided the Evangelicals by denomination. Thus Lutherans and Reformed Christians, in theory,

¹⁸Williams, *Czar's Germans*, 218.

¹⁹Sirks, 64. See also Ropes-Gale, 12; and Williams, "Social Study," 8.

²⁰Rock, 71.

²¹Stumpp, *Immigration from Germany to Russia*, 22.

lived apart, their only common thread was a royal "Instruction" that made church attendance mandatory.²³ In practice, Frank and Beideck were Lutheran colonies, Kukkus and Huck were almost exclusively Reformed, and Balzer and Norka were predominately Reformed. Interestingly, 7 percent of Norka's original citizenry was Lutheran, but this population gradually merged with the Reformed majority. Conversely, one-third of Balzer's founders were Lutherans, and they remained so over the years.²⁴

Even in Balzer, however, the economic and political effects of the "mir" system supported both village unity and community isolation. This organizational scheme evolved in Russia during the seventeenth century as the Crown -- which maintained ultimate title to all farm lands -- sought a way to anchor its formerly mobile peasantry. Over the course of seventy years, most Russian farmers were assigned to self-governing agrarian communes as serfs, a move that created a stable tax base and a pool for military conscription. Local autonomy allowed German colonists to avoid both service and servitude, but they chose to adopt the "mir" system from their Slavic neighbors around 1800. Originally, land was distributed to families in plots of uniform size regardless of household numbers. As populations expanded dramatically in the late-eighteenth century, colonists charged their elected officials with the task of redistributing land in shares according to periodic censuses of adult males.²⁵ Once this system was in place,

²²Timothy J. Kloberdanz, "Plainsmen of Three Continents: Volga German Adaptation to Steppe, Prairie, and Pampa," in *Ethnicity on the Great Plains*, 59; and Williams, *Czar's Germans*, 101.

²³Hale, 1-6; and Williams, *Czar's Germans*, 100, 126, 194. This was a largely Protestant population. Hale suggests 80 percent of the villages were Evangelical Christians, 13.5 percent were Catholic and about 4 percent were Mennonites. Williams avers that 28 percent of the Volga population was Catholic in 1874.

²⁴Sergej Terjochin, *Deutsche Architektur an der Volga* (Berlin: Westkreuz Verlag, 1993), 44; Jacob Volz, *Commemorative Review of the Balzer Reunion, August 1938*, trans. Hildegard Keller Schwabauer (Lincoln: Boomer's Advertising, 1938), 4; Herb Femling, "Balzer History: 'Goloi-Karamisch' in Russian," <http://www.femling.com/gen/balzer/balzlist.htm#History%20of%20the%20Balzer%20Colony>; and "Norka: A German Colony in Russia," <http://www.volga.germans.net/norka/>.

²⁵Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 198-99; Isaac A. Hourwich, *The Economics of the Russian Village* (New York: AMS Press, 1892, reprint 1970), 19, 25; Volz, 4; and "Ende des Wolgadeutschen Staatswesens in Rußland," (The End of the Volga German State in Russia), *Die Welt-Post*, 23 October 1941, 7.

The first land grants were more than sufficient to sustain the original population. By the late nineteenth century, intense cultivation, land overuse, and population growth made conditions tenuous.

family patriarchs encouraged marital endogamy and high birthrates as methods to protect and increase their allotments. As a result, centripetal forces soon dominated the Volga German villages.²⁶

The seclusion of the Volga colonies was so complete that linguists describe them as "speech islands." Residents of these communities fused divergent, archaic German dialects and a handful of Russian nouns into distinct vernaculars not spoken beyond community borders.²⁷ Speech patterns in Balzer, for instance, betrayed origins from the Palatinate region. Only eighteen miles away, Norka residents produced and preserved a dialect dominated by Hessian structures. While mutually understandable, all *Volgers* recognized villages of origin through word usages and accents.²⁸

Village separatism was reinforced by the limitations of the Volga infrastructure which deterred both inter- and intra-provincial contact. The mighty Volga River divided two distinct German-speaking populations. Most Lincoln immigrants (76 percent of the population) came from Saratov Province which was on the hilly west-side of the river. Because the land was not particularly fertile, industry developed in the region during the mid-nineteenth century. Industrial units, however, tended to be confined to households and a great deal of production and income merely supplemented agricultural pursuits. Still, Saratov immigrants in Lincoln thought of their peers from the less-developed "Meadow Side" as country cousins.²⁹ Enjoying flatter and more fertile environments, colonists in Samara Province lived in smaller communities and were unfamiliar with industry. Cross-river contact was surprisingly minimal, and even inter- provincial

Balzer, for instance, grew from 479 to 11,000 between 1772 and 1912. Their land allotment, however, remained 18,000 acres (about 28 square miles).

²⁶Kloberdanz, 59; and Williams, *Czar's Germans*, 101.

²⁷These dialects were remarkably productive and reflected many influences. By 1871, Turkish, Polish, Yiddish, French, Romanian, and Georgian words had been documented in the Volga colonies. See Karl Stumpp, *Fremdes Wortgut in der Umgangssprache der Russlanddeutschen* (Marsburg Germany: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1978), 295. In Lincoln, many English words, "das Basement," for example, crept into the dialect. See *Die Welt-Post*, 8 June 1916, 8.

²⁸Williams, "Social Study," 12; Tuck, 17; and Sirks, 11, 65.

communication was barely more frequent. This was partly due to the conditions of the roads. As late as 1906, it took two days by wagon to travel the forty miles from Norka to the provincial capital.³⁰ While distances between villages were often half that, at least as the crow flies, railroads did not serve the hinterland and the muddy highways were rarely direct. Under such conditions, the village "protected the Volga German from the outside world and the colonist reciprocated by remaining loyal to its values and traditions."³¹

This faithfulness to tradition was best observed in Lincoln's German Protestant churches that were "jammed" to "the rafters" as often as three days a week. Never questioning Catherine's attendance mandates, residents used churches as community anchors and social focal points. From these institutions, German language was maintained in Lincoln through 1926, and beyond, as school children generally attended "German School" on Friday evenings, "Confirmation School" on Saturday morning, and Sunday School. While instruction was Bible-based, they also learned "how to read, write, and speak German."³² Even in Russia, however, standard German -- the language of Luther's Bible -- was a central part of religious instruction and worship. Its usage was reinforced by ministers who were rarely native sons of the Volga colonies. Even though the language of the clergy was a cosmopolitan influence, the culturally conservative *Volgers* preferred to use the "*Wolga Gesangbuch*" (the Volga Hymnbook) for both

²⁹Williams, "History," 59; Williams, "Social Study," 9; and Sirks, 7.

Fifty-nine of the original Volga colonies were in Saratov and forty-five were in Samara.

³⁰Christine Kaiser, interview by Tuck, 309-11, translation by author.

³¹Kloberdanz, 59. The railhead was in the city of Saratov.

³²Katherine Alles, interview by Stan Talley, transcript, 19 November 1981, folder AV1.437.04, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 9; Reinholdt [Rudy] D. Amen, interview by Stan Talley, transcript, 2 February 1981, folder AV1.437.03a-1, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 5; Leah Beideck, interview by Jo Miller, transcript, 4 August 1980, folder AV1.636.20, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 10; and Henry Reifschneider, interview by George S. Round, transcript, 20 July 1980, file 8/16/5, Love Library Special Collections, Lincoln, Nebraska, 13.

Lincoln was the base for Protestant *Volgers* both as a settlement and as a stopping-off point. Topeka, Kansas, served the same purpose for Catholics. Mennonites tended to avoid cities.

worship and social singing. This hymnal became so familiar that a new edition was printed and marketed by the Wolga Book Company in Chicago in 1916.³³

Ironically, while religion and language could sometimes unite *Volgers*, particularism remained apparent in church-based settlement patterns. The relatively late growth of the North Bottoms in the 1910s allowed for an orderly distribution of worshippers along village lines. (See Figure 4-3.) Perhaps vital to these divisions, virtually all the Kukkus people -- the only sizable village in Samara to send emigrants -- settled in the newer urban village and worshipped exclusively at Salem Congregational and St. John's Evangelical churches. True to the religion of their sending culture, most *Norkaers* remained at Immanuel Reformed Church, the North Bottom's oldest house of worship. All three congregations expanded in regular intervals that corresponded to the growth of the community. The available baptismal records demonstrate the general fecundity of the *Volgers* who enjoyed birthrates of 60 per 1,000. In the greater community, 25 births per 1,000 was the norm.³⁴ While not wealthy people, they supported the church generously and erected substantial structures. The old frame Salem Church, for example, was razed by the community in 1916 and replaced by a larger "sturdy" structure with a "brick veneer" and a "dignified" stone foundation.³⁵

Residents in the South Bottoms were equally church conscious. Rudy Amen (Henry and Barbara's son) noted that "our people dug down deep" to support the construction and maintenance of five congregations.³⁶ Splits according to village of origin and Protestant sect were equally apparent in this neighborhood. The two Lutheran organizations in the South Bottoms maintained a liturgy full of ceremony -- a practice

³³Williams, "History," 64; Volz, 8; and Wolga Book Company advertisement, *Die Welt-Post*, 19 October 1916, 10.

³⁴Williams, "Social Study," 48. These are statistics for 1914.

³⁵Pastor R.C. Herholz, "Die neue Kirche der Salems-Gemeinde zu Lincoln, Nebr." *Die Welt-Post*, 8 June 1916, 8, translation by author.

³⁶Reinholdt Amen, 5.

Figure 4-3

GERMAN-RUSSIAN CONGREGATIONS IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA:
POINT OF ORIGIN AND CONFIRMED MEMBERSHIP,
1891-1928

NORTH BOTTOMS					
CHURCH	MOST COMMON	FIRST VILLAGE	OTHER VILLAGES	MEMBERSHIP 1913	MEMBERSHIP 1925
Immanuel Reformed	Russia	Norka	Huck	330	634
Salem Congregational	Russia	Kukkus	Norka, Huck, and Frank	unavailable	325
St. John's Evangelical	Russia	Kukkus	Norka and Balzer	260	400
SOUTH BOTTOMS					
CHURCH	MOST COMMON	FIRST VILLAGE	OTHER VILLAGES	MEMBERSHIP 1913	MEMBERSHIP 1925
First German Congregational	Russia	Norka	Frank	130	365
Zion Congregational	Russia	Frank	Beideck	350	575
Ebenezer Congregational	Russia	Balzer	Frank, Beideck, and Norka	not founded	75
Friedens Evangelical Lutheran	Russia	Frank	Balzer, Huck, and Beideck	400	525
Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran	unavailable	unavailable	unavailable	70	500

SOURCES: *Immanuel Church Official Record*, "Konfirmaion Register, 1895-1924," and "Trau Register, 1892-1920;" *Gemeinde-Buch -- Salem der Deutschen Ev. Kong. Gemeinde, 1901-67*; *Kirchenbuch der Evangelischen Johannes Gemeinde, 1907-67*; *Ersten Deutschen, Kongregationalen Gemeinde, 1899-1919*; *Ebenezer United Church of Christ Minute Book, 1915-1928*; and "Records," German Evangelical Congregational Zion Church 1900-1966, Series 2. All available in Nebraska State Historical Society Archives, Lincoln, Nebraska. For membership censuses, see *Hoye's City Directory of Lincoln* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., 1891-1922); *Lincoln City Directory* (Lincoln: Lincoln Directory Company, 1909-1910); *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1911-1925).

disdained by Reformed practitioners.³⁷ Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran -- whose records are not available -- had a thriving congregation and hosted an important Saturday German school; breaking the general pattern of particularism, it welcomed students from other local congregations, especially Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church. More in line with developments in most other parishes, Friedens was dominated by *Frankers* who hailed from the largest Lutheran Volga colony. Perhaps designed to attract minority faith *Balzerers*, the structure itself is an architectural clone of the Third Evangelical Reformed Church in Balzer, Russia.³⁸ Although the presence of *Huckers* is not readily explainable, *Beideckers* were a logical addition to the parish.

The other three institutions in the neighborhood were German Congregational churches which were simply not present in the Volga colonies. Almost exclusively a German Russian organization in the western United States, the denomination comfortably housed Lutheran, Reformed, Evangelical, and Presbyterian Christians.³⁹ The leap from the doctrines of the Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church -- which began in South Germany and Scotland respectively -- to English Congregationalism was not a great one as all three were Calvinist faiths that celebrated the "revelation of Christ" and focused on biblical text rather than ritual.⁴⁰ Despite this connection, the real draw of Congregationalism in Lincoln appears to have been local autonomy. The urban villagers simply wanted to worship in their own fashion without

³⁷Lucas Vischer, "The Reformed Tradition and its Multiple Facets," in Jean-Jacques Bauswein and Lucas Vischer, eds., *The Reformed Family Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 2.

³⁸National Parks Service (NPS), "South Bottoms Historic District: Information Prepared by the Nebraska State Historical Society," Lincoln: NSHS, 1986, item 7, description 30; and Williams, "History," 94. Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran was sometimes listed under its German spelling -- Immanuel -- but appears in this essay in a consistent form to differentiate it clearly from Immanuel Reformed Church in the North Bottoms.

³⁹William G. Crystal, "German Congregationalism on the American Frontier," http://www.ucc/aboutus/histories/chap_5.htm.

⁴⁰Vischer, 2 and 15. See also Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 490-93.

direction from a synod run by *Reichs* Germans (immigrants from within the borders of the united German empire) or Americans.

Although they all belonged to a single denomination, the South Bottoms' division into multiple Congregational churches was remarkably contentious. Finally able to locate a minister in 1889, First German Congregational was the only church in the neighborhood for over a decade. Consequently, all *Volgers* attended. Zion Congregational appears to have taken the *Frankers* --at least those not affiliated with Friedens -- and the *Balzerers* away from First German in 1900 and left mostly *Norkaers*. Similarly, Ebenezer Congregational was dominated by *Balzerers* who broke away from Zion in 1915. (See Figure 4-3.) Interestingly, Rudy Amen -- the son of a *Franker* -- belonged to Ebenezer where "they served communion both Lutheran and Reform" rather than in a manner dictated by any synod.⁴¹ While true to the inclusive nature of German Congregationalism, developments within in these three institutions indicated that church members were more concerned about village and neighborhood affiliations than they were about theology when choosing a parish.

Avoiding the tensions in the churches, the general ordering of space and construction of houses in the Bottoms relied primarily on shared old-world patterns. Because the Volga colonies were planned communities, residents were comfortable with symmetrical urbanscapes that focused economic activities around a town center built on a main street.⁴² Consequently, the grid in Lincoln was a familiar template, and construction of linear business districts on F Street and on North 10th Street seemed almost organic. Additionally, immigrants imported a vernacular architecture that synthesized central European and Russian components. In Lincoln, two basic types of one-story, rectangular houses were built: *Semelanka* were small structures that were one

⁴¹Reinholdt Amen, 5-6; and Alles, 9.

⁴²Terjocin, 20.

room wide and two or three rooms deep; and *Kolinistenhausen*, also narrow and deep, generally had six rooms. Summer kitchens, gardens, and domestic animals -- chickens and cows -- were all fixtures on the lots.⁴³ In Lincoln as in Russia, "order, system, and economy of arrangement characterized the homes" of the urban villagers.⁴⁴

Compact settlement patterns developed to meet economic needs in the Bottoms. Existing lots -- standard size was 50 feet by 142 feet in both enclaves -- were frequently subdivided, and many houses were built on parcels that were only 25 or 35 feet wide. While narrow, these properties accommodated the profiles of the preferred structures. Similarly, high neighborhood population density reminded residents of life along the Volga; indeed, it was one of the reasons people emigrated. Throughout the nineteenth century, many of the Russian colonies experienced exponential demographic growth while village plats rarely changed.⁴⁵ (See Figure 4-4.)

While the urban villages seemed crowded to visitors from mainstream Lincoln, this condition did not cause undue concert among *Volgers* who valued extended family unity more than personal space. In the most traditional families, sons remained part of a patriarchal family economy until they were at least twenty-one, and daughters stayed home until age eighteen or until they married. Even after matrimony, the oldest son sometimes continued living in the household and eventually took over ownership of a business and the home from his parents. Consequently, an average of six persons lived

⁴³Michael Koop, "German-Russians," in Dell Upton, ed., *America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups that Built America* (Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1986), 130; Madeleine F. Panarelli, "Influences on Early Twentieth-Century Bungalow Housing in Lincoln, Nebraska" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1981), 5; and U.S., National Park Service, "Significance Sheet," *National Register of Historic Places--Nomination Form, History of the South Bottoms, 1986* (Lincoln: NSHS, 1986), 11, 15-16, 18.

Summer kitchens were rectangular outbuildings used for food preparation during the warm months and storage during the winter. While many still stand in the Bottoms, they have been converted into workshops, tiny apartments, or oddly shaped garages.

⁴⁴Williams, "History," 58.

⁴⁵U.S., National Park Service, "Significance Sheet," 11; Pleve, 25-26.

Figure 4-4.

POPULATION GROWTH IN SIX VOLGA COLONIES, 1772-1912

VILLAGE	1772 POPULATION	1912 POPULATION
Norka	957	14,236
Frank	525	11,577
Balzer	479	11,110
Huck	380	9,600
Beideck	360	7,054
Kukkus	181	3,796

SOURCE: Karl Stumpp, *The Immigration from Germany to Russia in the years 1763 to 1862*, trans. Joseph S. Height (Lincoln: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1978), 67-73.

in each of these dwellings, and many four-room homes in the Bottoms housed a dozen residents.⁴⁶

This intimate use of space created opportunities rather than squalor as multiple incomes facilitated home ownership. This practice too was imported from the Volga region where "the colonists' concept of freedom was psychologically associated with the ownership of land." In Lincoln -- where farming was an uncommon occupation -- as in Russia -- where the individual only owned "the land upon which his house" stood -- this relationship was expressed through the purchase of city lots. By the mid-1920s, about 90 percent of the enclaves' adult population held titles to their own homes, and the few renters were generally young couples just starting out.⁴⁷ In the South Bottoms, Henry Amen often aided the home-buying process by writing multiple \$500 mortgages and allowing borrowers to repay him at about \$30 a month. Mortgages tended to be "Paid in Full" within seven to thirty-six months.⁴⁸

As homes were established and business thrived in the urban villages, "residents didn't have to go to town for anything." In the *Franker Boden*, for instance, the Amens shared the commercial strip with at least six other merchants, all of whom served the local residents exclusively. (See Figure 4-1.) This was convenient as most of the "people couldn't speak the English language very well."⁴⁹ Even those who could were poorly treated by most Lincolnites when they ventured into the mainstream, and consequently they preferred to shop and socialize within the confines of their neighborhoods. Insularity remained a common feature of life in the Bottoms, and divisions even existed between the two enclaves as residents in the *Norkaer* and *Franker*

⁴⁶Conrad Kruse, interview by Molly Collins, transcript, 1 September 1980, North Bottoms Neighborhood History Project, folder AV 1.636.10, NSHS, Lincoln, 3; and Williams, "Social Study," 23-27.

⁴⁷Rock, 71; and Ropes-Gale, 10.

⁴⁸Amen papers, "Ledgers 1914-1930," series 1, reel 1, NSHS.

⁴⁹Daraue, 1.

Boden rarely interacted. As long-time resident Jacob Reifschneider recalled, it just "wasn't very good for a boy from the South to come down and court a girl from the North."⁵⁰

Despite such bravado, urban villagers were drawn together by necessity and by choice. Safe within their enclaves, they invented exclusive and inclusive identities that were based on their heritages in the Volga colonies. As local populations swelled, families consciously segregated themselves into church congregations based on village of origin where they were free to speak their distinct dialects and practice their unique customs. Here they considered themselves *Balzerers* and *Kukkusers*. Simultaneously, performed cultural practices connected urban villagers in both Bottoms to a shared *Volger* identity. As a group, they stood out from the mainstream because they sang from the same German-language hymnal, built homes from similar mental blueprints, eschewed debt, favored home ownership, and valued large, extended families.

Cosmopolitanism

The natural tendency towards particularism within the urban villages was not absolute, however, nor were the enclaves ever completely isolated. In fact, residents of the Bottoms were in near-constant contact with the mainstream, and, consequently, they necessarily grappled with the cosmopolitan worlds of work and regional, national, and international politics. Interestingly, political discussions were generally filtered through a vibrant German-language newspaper that helped inform the immigrants about these and other issues. Through these worldly influences, *Volgers* confronted national German American and regional German Russian identities.

⁵⁰Jacob Reifschneider, interview by Molly Collins, transcript, 2 September 1980, folder AV1.636.22, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 22.

Work took urban villagers out of their communities, exposed them to mainstream culture, and revealed the dynamic tension that existed between economic patterns born in the old and new milieus. Formerly agrarian people, *Volgers* in Lincoln secured positions as laborers, small business people, and migrant workers in the sugar beet fields of the Great Plains. These unfamiliar occupations were accepted readily by most immigrants, including Anna Schwindt Giebelhaus and her family, as most had left the Volga colonies because they "couldn't make it there."⁵¹ As a young woman of seventeen, Giebelhaus anticipated moving to a land where roasted pigs ran about the streets with forks and knives already stuck into their backs.⁵² Once in the new milieu, the work ethic she imported from Norka helped keep food on the table for the family of fifteen children she started three years after her arrival.

Anna and Jacob Giebelhaus -- both *Norkaers* from the North Bottoms -- typified *Volgers* who opted to work as wage laborers in Lincoln. Their jobs introduced them to the English language and to relatively mobile life in America. After her birth family took up residence in a small structure on a subdivided lot on Charleston Street in 1902, Anna found a position as a maid at Hotel Lincoln. There, she learned English in six months from the other "girls" who worked with her. Unlike her mainstream coworkers, she relinquished most of her wages to her family until she married in 1905. Like most *Volger* women, she left the labor force after matrimony to work in the home. Fortunately, wages from Jacob's job with the Burlington Railroad -- the single largest employer of men in the Bottoms -- were sufficient to support their rapidly growing family. His employment took them all to Wyoming and back, but the couple remained connected to the North Bottoms and the German Reformed Immanuel Church virtually

⁵¹Anna Schwindt Giebelhaus, interview by Gertrude Schwindt, transcript, 16 July 1980, folder AV1.636.06, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 1.

⁵²Giebelhaus, interview by Tuck, 316, translation by author.

their entire adult lives.⁵³ This connection was critical for Anna who outlived her husband by forty years and was ultimately celebrated, along with eight of her peers, as one of the last known speakers of the Norka German dialect. In their time, they all probably shopped for groceries at Konrad Brehm's or Fred Reifschneider's stores on 10th Street, the North Bottom's main drag.⁵⁴

Although they were entrenched in the German-speaking community, merchants in both enclaves also interacted with mainstream society on a regular basis. They certainly purchased their stock from English-speaking wholesalers and meat packers. Henry and Rudy Amen made even larger concessions to the prevailing business climate by keeping their books in English from 1902 on. The customers they served, however, were universally immigrants, and dealings with this population had unique rhythms. In May 1915, for example, the Amens advanced groceries to forty-five South Bottoms families that were heading to the beet fields and then carried these debts until the farm hands returned in the fall.⁵⁵ This practice was universal in the grocery business throughout the *Volgers'* first fifty years in Lincoln.

For most urban villagers, seasonal work in the sugar beet fields was their introduction to life on the Great Plains. In fact, the majority of families in the North Bottoms reported working at least two seasons in beets.⁵⁶ Yearly migrations were especially attractive to newcomers as it "fit into a lifestyle" imported from the Volga colonies. In the old country, a form of "nomadic" agriculture was practiced by the mid-nineteenth century as villages annexed distant plots to support their large populations. Bound by economic interests (each resident owned a portion of all public buildings) and

⁵³Giebelhaus, interview by Schwindt, 1; Giebelhaus, interview by Tuck, 316, translation by author.

⁵⁴Henry Reifschneider, 23.

⁵⁵"Groceries -- Beet Fields." Amen papers, series 1. Forty-three families repaid their tabs within a week of each other in November 1915. The remaining two paid down the debt over several months.

tradition, families migrated to far-flung fields for the entire summer but returned to the village after harvest.⁵⁷ Similarly, the agrarian calendar allowed for periods of very hard work followed by winters of relative leisure. Finally, as everyone over three could work in the fields, large families were a boon in the beet industry, and many recruiters sought Germans from Russia out specifically.⁵⁸

Beet-field labor was not only compatible with traditional patterns, it was also a contact point for mainstream economic elements. Organized recruitment, legal contracts, and modern transportation were all part of this industry. Serving both the sugar beet companies and the itinerant labor force, agents -- often merchants or pastors -- established long-term relationships with field workers whenever possible. They even visited families with good work histories each spring seeking contract renewals. In order to avoid dissatisfaction from either party, transportation arrangements, work, and living conditions were all specified within the contracts; additionally, dispute mediation was handled by the sugar beet company representatives rather than farmers themselves. Before the work season began, train cars for the "beet-field specials" were left under the 10th Street viaduct adjacent to the North Bottoms, and along the 4th Street spur tracks in the South Bottoms. Families were allowed an entire week to load the necessary equipment for their sojourns.⁵⁹ To assure a steady supply of labor, advertisements -- "*Achtung, Zuckerrüben-Arbeiter!*" (Attention, Sugar Beet-Workers!) -- were circulated as handbills and also appeared in newspapers typically from January to April.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Giebelhaus, interview by Schwindt, 3-12; Sirks, 13; Tuck 20; Williams, *Czar's Germans*, 204; and Ropes-Gale, 19. Most commonly, migration was to western Nebraska, eastern Colorado and Wyoming, northern Iowa, and the Red River Valley in North Dakota and Minnesota.

⁵⁷Henry Reifschneider, 16; and Williams, *Czar's Germans*, 159.

⁵⁸See, for example, the Great Western Sugar Companies advertisement ("*Rüben-Arbeiter gesucht!*"), *Die Welt-Post* 1 April 1920, 2.

⁵⁹See generally, Loos; and Harold Stoll, "Beet-field Summer: Windsor, Colorado," *American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Journal* 15 (Spring 1992): 6-10.

⁶⁰See Sheridan Sugar Company advertisement in *Die Welt-Post*, 8 April 1920, 8.

Die Welt-Post -- a German-language weekly published in Lincoln beginning in April 1916 -- not only connected urban villagers to a world of work, it introduced them first to a German American identity and then to a more exclusive German Russian identity.⁶¹ Civic mindedness naturally led the newspaper's editors to report on armed conflict in Europe. Subsequently, the politics of war introduced Lincoln's urban villagers to a nation that felt threatened by displays of Germanness. On the one hand, persecution and repression encouraged solidarity among all types of Germans and other ethnics across the Great Plains. On the other, war strengthened German Russian pride and particularism.

Perhaps attempting to overcome the perceived incompatibility between *Volks* Germans -- ethnic Germans from outside the empire -- and *Reichs* Germans, *Die Welt-Post* traced its journalistic roots back to the "Viennese Revolution" of 1848 and purported to be "the most widely circulated German Weekly in the West." Echoing the chauvinism common in the German-language press, the first issue's editorial salutation heralded Lincoln as the "approximate midpoint of Germanness in America." Celebrating a population of 8,000 served by thirteen congregations, the editors undoubtedly hoped to cross boundaries as they welcomed all with "German blood," whether from "Germany, Russia, Austria or Switzerland," and suggested that the "hearty German language" creates "good public spirit."⁶²

During its first year of publication, the newspaper optimistically expressed the shared German American hope that U.S. involvement in the conflagration was not imminent. As late as December 1916, headlines responded to President Woodrow

⁶¹Published through 1982, *Die Welt-Post* was absorbed by the Omaha Tribune Company (Val and, later, William Peter's German-language newspaper combine) in April 1919. It continued to serve the greater Lincoln-Volga community.

⁶²*Die Welt-Post*, 22 February 1917, masthead; and George Heinze, "Un das Publicum!" *Die Welt-Post*, 13 April 1916, 1, translation by author. See also Williams, "History," 93; and James M. Bergquist, "The German American Press," in Sally M. Miller, ed., *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 145-46.

Wilson's efforts to construct diplomatic "peace without victory" by announcing "Peace Moves Ever Nearer." The editors also attacked war boosters, such as Theodore Roosevelt, who was accused of "farting into the war horn" for talking about forming a volunteer army.⁶³ These proclamations were especially popular among urban villagers who, despite their Russian birthplaces and their forebearers' oaths to the Czars, accepted loyalty to the German empire rather than the Romanov domain. This development was especially telling of a powerful German identity as none of the Volga colonies received immigrants from a united Germany. Still, as urban villagers applied for U.S. citizenship, many relinquished allegiance to the Kaiser, not the Czar.⁶⁴

This view of the war and the world was not shared by all *Volgers*, however. Many had served in the Russian army before emigrating, and many more had relatives doing so.⁶⁵ Aware of the pro-ally sentiments among a portion of their readership, the tone of the paper's reporting stressed a preference for peace, but it also expressed an ultimate loyalty to the United States. In February, headlines announced "War Stands in View! Wilson Breaks with Germany?" The text of this article respectfully focused on Wilson's speech to Congress as he described German violations of neutral nations' rights on the high seas. After the formal declaration of war on April 4, 1917, editors carefully translated Wilson's war message into German, an action which allowed readers to judge circumstances for themselves. Subsequent articles displayed the American flag and focused on Wilson's calls for all Americans to make common cause.⁶⁶

Despite balanced reporting and a general loyalty to the United States, "almost incomprehensible" attacks on "people of German ancestry and German culture" --

⁶³"Frieden Rückt immer Näher (Peace Moves ever Closer)," *Die Welt-Post*, 28 December 1916, 1, translation by author; and *ibid.*, 8 February 1917, 1, translation by author.

⁶⁴Williams, *Czar's Germans*, 179. A united Germany emerged in 1871, almost 100 years after the Volga colonies were founded.

⁶⁵Alles, 11.

ranging from renaming sauerkraut "liberty cabbage" to distributing propaganda demonizing Germans -- were perpetrated across the country.⁶⁷ In the Bottoms, residents were treated to "burning crosses," "bodily abuse," and property vandalism as "mob spirit" was common in Lincoln and throughout the state.⁶⁸ In many respects the war reignited long-running American suspicions about German Americans whose cultural chauvinism was expressed through opposition to any sort of prohibition, support of American neutrality, retention of the German language, and, in the case of Mennonites, pacifism. As a result, Wilson's insistence that America was fighting the German state not the German people often fell on deaf ears.⁶⁹

Hysteria moved in official circles as well. As soon as war was declared, Nebraska's Committee for Public Information mandated that German-language presses begin disseminating propaganda supporting the American war effort. For *Die Welt-Post*, this included displaying the motto, "America 1st" on its masthead in English, and publishing "What Can I Do to Help My Country Win the War?" -- a nine-point pledge authored by the Nebraska State Council of Defense. While the typical reader was becoming "a shining example in the service of this land," ever more restrictions were placed on German-language newspapers.⁷⁰ In October 1917, the United States Congress passed the Trading With the Enemy Act which required German-language papers to file translations of stories relating to the war with the U.S. Post Office and to obtain licenses to continue publishing. Duplicating federal efforts, Nebraska mandated that "Foreign

⁶⁶*Die Welt-Post*, 8 February 1917, 1, translation by author; "Kriegszustand ist mit Deutschland erklärt! (State of War is Declared with Germany)," *ibid.*, 5 April 1917, 1; and "Der Präsident erläßt Aufruf and Volk (The President Declares the Cry of the People)," *ibid.*, 19 April 1917, 2.

⁶⁷Paul Finkelman, "German Victims and American Oppressors: The Cultural Background and the Legacy of *Meyer v. Nebraska*," in John R. Wunder, ed., *Law and the Great Plains: Essays on the Legal History of the Heartlands* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 38.

⁶⁸Letter from William Urbach to Mr. White, 6 April 1918, William F. Urbach Papers, MS3542, "Correspondence," box 1, series 1, folder 1, NSHS, Lincoln.

⁷²Welsch, 210; and Frederick C. Luebke, "Legal Restrictions on Foreign Language in the Great Plains States, 1917-1923," in Paul Schach, ed., *Languages of Conflict: Linguistic Acculturation on the Great Plains* (Lincoln: Center for Great Plains Studies, 1980), 9.

language newspapers, magazines, periodicals and books" submit copies with translations to the Council of Defense beginning in the spring of 1918. This "superpatriotic and powerful" organization found a voice for their agenda in the *Lincoln Star*. The figurative war against German language and culture was also waged in Lincoln schools as the Nebraska Education Association supported an Americanization agenda. The "clamor was in fact much ado about very little," as few Lincoln schools -- including Haywood School in the North Bottoms and Park School in the South Bottoms -- instructed students in German.⁷¹

The generally moderate stance most urban villagers held regarding the war and the intangible "Russian factor" actually made conditions in the Bottoms better than in many German enclaves. *Die Welt-Post* was one of the few newspapers exempted from printing English translations of war news, and while many German-language churches were forced to close during the war, Friedens, whose minister had "influence," and First German (and perhaps the others) remained open.⁷² In many cases, Volga heritage -- but not Russian culture -- was reclaimed and a German-Russian identity was advanced in the war's aftermath. By early 1919, *Die Welt-Post* had abandoned German Americanism and positioned itself as "biggest, best, and cheapest newspaper for the German Russian in America."⁷³ In reality, this had been the mission of the paper from its inception. While the *Die Welt-Post* provided international and national news, a great deal of space was reserved for church happenings in the Bottoms, letters and news from the Volga colonies, and information by and for residents who were temporarily out of their

⁷⁰*Die Welt-Post*, 13 September 1917, 1; and *ibid.*, 18 October 1917, 4. "America 1st" remained a standard until January 22, 1922.

⁷¹Nebraska, State Legislature, "Sedition Act," *Laws and Regulations Passed by the Legislature of the State of Nebraska*, 36th (Extraordinary) Session, March 26-April 8, 1918 (Lincoln: Secretary of State, 1918), Chapter 5, Section 6, 39; Bergquist, 148-49; and Luebke, "Legal Restrictions," 5-7.

⁷²Darauer, 14, Gerda Stroh Walker, *Die Welt-Post Index, 1916-1921* (Boulder, CO, 1998), 242; and Katherine Schmall, interview by Steve Larick, transcript, 16 September 1980, folder AV1.437.18, South Salt Creek Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 8.

⁷³Motto on masthead. See, for example, *Die Welt-Post*, 2 January 1919, 1, translation by author.

communities, most of whom were spread out along the Burlington trunk lines in the towns of Friend, Sutton, Harvard, Hastings, Bayard, and Scottsbluff.

The end of the war, however, did not end attacks on German Americans who were already saddled with a reputation for political "radicalism;" or German Russians, especially after the rise of the Soviet Union and the failure of democracy in Europe. Rather than returning to "normalcy," urban villagers were caught in the Red Scare that permeated America during the immediate post-war years. This event amplified the xenophobia that already existed before the war and heightened calls for Americanization of immigrants.⁷⁴

In Nebraska "turning 'imps' into citizens would require prohibiting them from learning the language of their parents or ancestors."⁷⁵ The Siman Act, passed in April 1919, was to be the vehicle for this transformation. It insisted that "No person, individually or as a teacher, shall in any private, denominational, parochial or public school, teach any subject to any person in any language other than the English Language," unless a student had successfully completed the eighth grade. Violation of the statute was a misdemeanor punishable by "not less than Twenty-five (\$25) dollars, nor more than One Hundred (\$100) dollars," or up to thirty days in the county jail. As an "emergency" existed, the act went into effect immediately.⁷⁶

Not surprisingly, the state's actions were also treated as an emergency by most ethnic populations who began a protracted fight against violations of their constitutional rights. The day after the bill was signed into law, *Die Welt-Post* labeled the action "un-

⁷⁴Legal language restrictions, of course, were not peculiar to this era. Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan had all passed mandatory English education laws in the late nineteenth century. Oklahoma and New Mexico even included English language instruction clauses within their constitutions in the early twentieth century. By 1903, fourteen states required English instruction, but also kept provisions for foreign language instruction in the upper grades. This number increased only slightly over the next decade as seventeen states had such laws in 1917. In 1918, however, twenty-one states passed language laws. See Luebke, "Legal Restrictons," 2, 11; and Finkelman, 34-35, 40-41.

⁷⁵Finkelman, 37.

American" and Nebraska as the most "intolerant state in the entire union" as they decried constraints on their "citizenship and religious rights." In defense of their community, merchants in the South Bottoms even joined together to place a full-page advertisement in *Die Welt-Post* praising urban villagers for buying war bonds and serving as soldiers. They proclaimed "You want [nothing] but to be a patriot."⁷⁷

Allying themselves with other European-born groups, residents of the Bottoms watched the four-year debate over language rights closely. *Die Welt-Post* subscribers, for instance, may have read Nebraska Attorney-General Clarence A. Davis's defense of this "Americanization Program" with skepticism. Although he assured them that the Siman Act did not effect foreign language usage in Sunday, Saturday, or after-school church lessons, he also promised that any "attempt to evade" the program by "teaching other things under the guise of religious instruction, will be prosecuted without leniency."⁷⁸ Similarly, readers learned of attempts by the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church and various Catholic congregations to gain a temporary restraining order against the law on the grounds that many "German or Polish speaking" families would find it impossible to instruct their children in the basics of religion and culture "only in the English language." It was clear to all involved, however, that further court action would be forthcoming. Many ethnic citizens and many prominent legal scholars believed their efforts would eventually prove the Siman Act unconstitutional.⁷⁹

The cause celebrity in this effort was Robert T. Meyer, a *Reichs* German immigrant and a teacher at Zion Parochial School in Hamilton County, Nebraska.

⁷⁶Nebraska, "An Act Relating to the Teaching of a Foreign Language in the State of Nebraska," *Laws, Resolutions, and Memorials Passed by the Legislature, 1919*, 37th Session, (Lincoln: Secretary of State, 1919), chapter 249, 1019.

⁷⁷"Das Unfreie Nebraska," (Unfree Nebraska), *Die Welt-Post*, 10 April 1919, 4, translation by author; and *ibid.*, 17 April 1919, 5.

⁷⁸See "Attorney General Davis Interprets School and Language Laws," *Die Welt-Post*, 8 May 1919, 5. The full text of his opinion was published in English.

⁷⁹"Das Siman Schulgesetz gerichtlich angefochten," (The Siman School Law Judicial Appeal), *Die Welt-Post*, 18 May 1919, 5; Letter of Viggo Lyngby, attorney, to Edward P. Smith, Mayor of the City of

Meyer, despite the concerns of his superiors, conducted a German Bible class during a designated recess period. A clear stretch of state law, on May 25, 1920, he was confronted by the Hamilton County Attorney, admitted instructing fifth-graders in the German language, and was soon fined \$25 as prescribed by statute for his actions. Meyer appealed to the Nebraska Supreme Court on the grounds that his religious freedoms had been violated, but the conviction was upheld. The majority opined that the "baneful effects of permitting foreigners" to raise "and educate the children in the language of their native land" was "inimical to our own safety" as a society. Perhaps emboldened by the dissenting opinion that insisted the Siman Act was "the result of crowd psychology" caused by World War I, the case was immediately appealed to the United States Supreme Court.⁸⁰

Anticipating difficulties in the judicial system, the Nebraska legislature acted to preempt decisions even before the Nebraska Supreme Court decision. Passed in April 1921, the Norval-Reed Act superseded and strengthened the Siman Act. Most importantly, English was "declared to be the official language of the state." Additionally, discriminating "against the use of the English language" for virtually any purpose became unlawful. Responding to concerns about religious freedom -- Norval's original intention -- the act allowed foreign-language religious instruction on the Sabbath and similar instruction at any time in the home. Finally, the authors included a clause that declared all sections of the act independent, and they averred any court decision would affect only the sections specifically ruled unconstitutional.⁸¹

Omaha, on behalf of Danish Americans, *ibid.*, 29 January 1920, 3; and "Der Kampf Gegen das Simangeseß" (The Fight Against the Siman Law), *ibid.*, 11 September 1919, 8.

⁸⁰*Meyer v. State* (1922), 107 Nebraska Reports 657; and Donald Hickley, Susan A. Wunder, and John R. Wunder, "*Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923)," manuscript for *Nebraska Moments*, 2nd ed., unpaginated.

⁸¹Nebraska, "An Act to Declare the English Language the Official Language of this State," *Nebraska, Session Laws Passed by the Legislature of the State of Nebraska, 1921*, 40th Session, (Lincoln: Secretary of State, 1921), Chapter 61, 244-45.

In *Meyer v. State of Nebraska* (1923), the United States Supreme Court coupled the Nebraska dispute with cases originating in Iowa and Ohio, and it left little of the Norval-Reed Act intact. After providing an eloquent, but very general discussion of the nature of liberty as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment, the Court determined that the "protection of the Constitution extends to all, to those who speak other languages as well as to those born with English on the tongue." Attempts to ban language instruction simply exceeded "the limitations upon the power of the state." In effect, this Supreme Court action ended an era of language restriction.⁸² After the decision was announced, German-language instruction and worship in the Bottoms' eight congregations continued with renewed vigor.

Over the years, Lincoln's urban villagers -- both in times of liberty and years of constraint -- negotiated usable identities in response to a variety of economic and social possibilities. The German American label was briefly attractive, but the split among *Reichs* Germans and *Volks* Germans combined with mainstream xenophobia to make this designation generally unpalatable. While a German Russian specification was perhaps more comfortable and more accurate, intolerance and legal repression encouraged a pan-ethnic front as a means to retain religious and social freedoms. As internal crises passed, however, external forces redirected the attentions of most residents in the Bottoms.

Transnationalism

Transnationalism allowed Lincoln's urban villagers to reconnect with their former Russian homes and promote a Volga German (*Wolga-Deutsch*) identity. In fact, by their fiftieth anniversary in America, residents of Lincoln and Sutton, Nebraska, began to construct their ethnic communities as "Volga German colonies" in the United

⁸²*Meyer v. State of Nebraska* (1923), 42 Supreme Court 625; and Luebke, "Legal Restrictions," 16.

States.⁸³ Powerful transnational sentiment -- which had always been present in these enclaves -- was responsible for this new designation. It was strengthened and promoted by the return of autonomous government in Saratov and Samara in the late 1910s and by famine in the region in the early 1920s.

Migration, whether supervised by Romanov or Soviet officials, was never a one-way affair. While the overwhelming movement during the early twentieth century was to the United States, a few "birds of passage" returned to the Volga provinces. Armed with new capital from work in the beet fields of the Great Plains and American citizenship that exempted them from taxation and military service, this population often bought land, resumed farming, and rebuilt their lives in traditional, yet more affluent, manners. World War I -- which also saw ethnic Germans living within the Russian Empire vilified -- and the Russian Revolution largely ended this practice while reducing immigration into America to a trickle. Those who did arrive were generally fleeing Bolshevism. Still, wealthy travelers began to visit "Russia" as early as May 1920. These trips were expensive and while this sort of tourism attracted hundreds of consumers, most Volga Germans on both continents remained close to their homes.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, interest in the Volga colonies among Lincoln's urban villagers was at an all-time high as it appeared that Catherine's promise of self-rule and ethnic preservation might be fulfilled through revolution. Fortuitously, Czar Nicholas II's abdication in March 1917 spared ethnic Germans throughout Russia from draconian orders to confiscate all German-owned livestock and agricultural surpluses in order to

⁸³"Jacob Bender in Sutton, Neb., gestorben," (Jacob Bender of Sutton, Neb., has died"), *Die Welt-Post*, 22 November 1928, 3.

⁸⁴Pleve, 26; and John Dietz, interview by Reva Allen, transcript, 11 November 1980, folder AV1.437.06, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 8. For advertisements for Russian travel and article about trips sponsored by Val Peter's travel agency, see *Die Welt-Post*, 13 May 1920, 3; *ibid.*, 25 March 1925, 3; and *ibid.*, 27 February 1930, 7.

support the Russian war effort.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, the Volga colonies were soon embroiled in the Russian Civil War. The Socialist Revolutionaries -- revivals of the Bolsheviks and sometimes allies of the Mensheviks -- established their base of power in the city of Samara in June 1918. Successive military campaigns plodded across the Volga provinces throughout the growing season before the "Greens" were successfully dislodged in November.⁸⁶ Although Vladimir Lenin established the Autonomous Commune of Volga German Workers in October 1918, subsequent engagements of "White" and "Red" armies precluded any real stability in the colonies.⁸⁷ Peace and relative contentment did not return until 1924 when an 18,000 square mile area became the Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic -- the first self-governing ethnic region within the Soviet Union. The seventeen years this political entity existed were celebrated as a reprise of 100 years of German "cultural superiority" in a Slavic region.⁸⁸ The population of 800,000 that lived in the republic in 1931, however, owed a debt to Volga Germans in America.

The Volga colonists were emaciated by famine between 1921 and 1923 as man-made and natural forces converged to create true disaster. Life in a semi-arid environment had taught Volga residents to store large food reserves, but these caches became impossible to maintain. Bolshevik forces were already fighting the Greens along the Volga when they began "compulsory grain requisitions" in May 1918.⁸⁹ Paying the toll that financed "war communism," German settlers were especially hard hit as grain

⁸⁵Marlette Schnell, "Volga Land," <http://www.fp.calgary.ca/schnell/volga%20Land.htm>; and W. Bruce Lincoln, *Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 49.

⁸⁶Geoffrey Swain, *The Origins of the Russian Civil War* (New York: Longman, 1996), 8, 146, 168.

⁸⁷Conrad Brill, "Excerpt from *Memories of Norka*," <http://www.volgagermans.nt/Volga%20Revolution.htm>, 1; and Schnell.

⁸⁸Brill, 1; and "Ende des Wolgadeutschen Staatswesens in Rußland," (The end of the Volga German State in Russia) *Die Welt-Post*, 23 October 1941, 7.

⁸⁹Moshe Lewin, "The Civil War: Dynamics and Legacy," in Diane P. Koenker, William G. Rosenberg, and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Party, State, and Society in Civil War Russia* (Indiana University Press, 1989), 414, 408; and Lincoln, 61-65.

stores and local livestock in the Autonomous Commune were frequently commandeered by the Red Guard between 1918 and 1919.⁹⁰ Levies continued through 1920 as the Red Army's expansion from 2.5 to 5 million men drained "an entire nation's resources."⁹¹ Even as the Bolsheviks consolidated power in 1921, severe, widespread drought already touched 25 million Soviet citizens and lingered relentlessly for three seasons. With no reserves left, an estimated 75 percent of the Meadow-Side population was on the verge of starvation by 1921 as the fields yielded less than the seeds planted.⁹² The Mountain-Siders were only slightly better off.

Galvanized by the plight of their relatives, 120,000 Volga German Americans raised \$1 million for relief during the three-year famine. In Lincoln, the money was funneled through churches, and individual contributions were proudly reported in *Die Welt-Post*. The American Volga Relief Society (AVRS) then worked in conjunction with Herbert Hoover's American Relief Association to help feed and cloth families in most of the Volga colonies.⁹³ Pride among the urban villagers for their ability to help was apparent throughout this process, and the developing Volga German identity was based on action and compassion.

Interestingly, the relief organization that evolved into "a brotherhood of Volga Germans" remained vital even after crisis in the Soviet Union subsided. Boasting the motto "All for one," the fifth annual conference of the AVRS was held in Lincoln between June 23 and 27, 1926. Significantly, the event also marked the fiftieth anniversary of German Russian settlement in the United States. While hundreds of conventioners traveled back and forth between Lincoln and Sutton for picnics, prayers,

⁹⁰Haynes, *History of the Volga Relief Society*, 28, 30, 54; and Brill, 1.

⁹¹Lincoln, 362.

⁹²Haynes, *History of the Volga Relief Society*, 54; and Lincoln 465.

⁹³Haynes, *History of the Volga Relief Society*, 87-88; "American Volga Relief Society Letters and Documents," NSHS, http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/treasures/volga_relief.htm; and Samuel Sinner, "Famine in the Volga Basin, 1920-1924, and the American Volga Relief Society Records," *Nebraska History* 78 (Fall 1997): 134.

and general revelry, the organization promoted a Volga German agenda. Specifically, they sought to reestablish a commitment to German language by inviting "famous speakers" to orate in "our mother tongue," promote the general prosperity of Volga Germans everywhere, find the ways and means to help them wherever possible, rekindle old friendships and make new acquaintances, and celebrate the Golden Jubilee in an "appropriate manner."⁹⁴

The Lincoln celebration was a both an immediate and a long-term success. In 1926, attendance was large and spirits were high. In subsequent years a strong Volga German identity was promoted on numerous occasions. By the end of the decade, this ascription was so widespread that *Die Welt-Post* even declared itself "The organ of the Volga Germans" and proclaimed to be the "best newspaper" for this ethnic group in America.⁹⁵

Whether they called themselves *Franker*, *Volger*, German American, German Russian, or Volga German, the identities Lincoln's urban villagers constructed were complicated, convoluted, and rarely exclusive. Indeed, as the founding generation negotiated particular, cosmopolitan, and transnational influences, they often ascribed to more than one label at any given time. Particularism remained especially powerful as the original Russian village had long-standing emotional power. For example, relief pledges during the famine were generally made to help specific Volga colonies, and the organizations dispensing aid were bound to direct contributions to the appropriate places. The tendency towards insularity actually spawned separate relief groups in Portland, Oregon; Fresno, California; Greeley, Colorado; and Lincoln, Nebraska, as the four large enclaves of Volga German immigrants only worked well together when imminent

⁹⁴"Einladung an alle Wolgadeutschen Amerikas zur fünften Konferenz und der Feier des Goldenen Jubiläumus der Einwanderung der Wolgadeutschen in Lincoln und Sutton, Nebr.," (An Invitation for all Volga German American to the fifth Conference and the Golden Anniversary of the migration of Volga Germans to Lincoln and Sutton, Nebr.), *Die Welt-Post*, 26 May 1926, 5.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 12 April 1928, masthead. This motto remained until 1959.

starvation dictated cooperation.⁹⁶ Similarly, while largely a cosmopolitan influence, *Die Welt-Post* appealed to "readers from Norka, Huck, Frank, Beideck, Mohr, Grimm, Lawe, and etc." directly when they needed additional funding to survive a five-fold increase in the price of paper.⁹⁷

The cosmopolitan discussion surrounding language rights -- which involved *Die Welt Post* -- was both inconclusive and confusing to many of Lincoln's urban villagers. While this particular local newspaper remained a vital organ of communication, 244 of the nation's 522 German-language publications folded between 1917 and 1920.⁹⁸ German-speaking communities remained "fearful of repression." Clearly, most celebrated the final *Meyer* decision, but they may not have been certain that harassment from the mainstream was over as they had seen legislated tolerance and intolerance come and go. Six years before the Siman Act, Nebraska passed the Mockett Law that allowed foreign-language instruction beginning in the fourth grade upon parental demand. While controversial, the Nebraska Supreme Court upheld the statute in 1916.⁹⁹ The legislature disregarded the judiciary in 1919 when it passed the Siman law.

Even after its repeal in 1923, the shift to English continued in churches, the foreign-language press, and schools throughout the lives of the next generation. Interestingly, while *Volgers* had large enough populations to demand German instruction under Mockett, students even before the war "couldn't talk German in school" because both parents and teachers "insisted" that English was the language of secular learning.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶Haynes, *History of the Volga Relief Society*, 11, 12, 84.

⁹⁷F.R. Lorenz, "Ein Ernstes Wort an Unsere Leser!" (An Earnest Word to our Readers), *Die Welt-Post*, 22 July 1920, 8, translation by author.

⁹⁸Finkelman, 48, 50; and Bergquist, 150.

⁹⁹Luebke, "Legal Restrictions," 3 and 11; Finkelman, 40-41. See *State ex rel. Thayer v. School District* (1916) 99 Neb 338.

¹⁰⁰Conrad Kruse, interview by Molly Collins, transcript, 1 September 1980, folder AV1.636.10, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 7; and John Schwindt, interview by Molly Collins, transcript, 19 July 1980, folder AV1.636.07 a and b, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 16.

Residents in the Bottoms, it appears, were already keenly aware that they and their children had one foot each in two different worlds.

Still, neither the keen awareness of national events nor the fascination for village of origin deterred residents of the Bottoms from maintaining a sense of transnationalism. Even as church congregations split along village lines, most members listed their place of birth as "Russia," those listing a specific village were in the minority. (See Figure 4-3.) The Volga German identity was also strong enough to connect Lincoln's urban villagers to three continents, not just two. In 1927, for instance, *Die Welt-Post* encouraged residents to celebrate the Fiftieth Jubilee of "Volga-German" settlement in Argentina.¹⁰¹

Despite fifty years of changes inside and outside the Russian Bottoms, residents in 1926 still belonged to their communities. As Jacob Reifschneider recalled, "it was all one nationality, one type of people, and you feel like you've got family all around."¹⁰² From their ethnic enclaves some urban villagers -- however they defined themselves -- continued traveling to the beet fields each season, and others kept working hard as local laborers. In the process, Volga Germans began to take on many of the trappings of middle-class Nebraska, and mainstream businesses were anxious to provide them with a variety of goods and services. Empowered by economic advances, political and social changes soon followed. During the next fifty years, the identities of residents in the Russian Bottoms were further transformed by a new set of influences.

"WE BECAME AMERICANIZED"¹⁰³: THE SECOND FIFTY YEARS

Lincoln's German urban villages remained distinct and vibrant ethnic oases between 1920 and 1950 as continued neighborhood cohesion assured that denizens could

¹⁰¹*Die Welt-Post*, 25 August 1927, 3.

¹⁰²Jacob Reifschneider, 22.

avoid the "total alienation" they so often experienced in the American mainstream. Ultimately, ethnic communities persisted during these decades as the combined population of the Bottoms increased dramatically. Despite growth in structures to match these numbers, the neighborhoods began to disperse after World War II; indeed, both enclaves faded to mere shadows of their former selves during the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁰⁴ Physical contraction was preceded by changes and abandonments of performed culture, and the once proud Volga German identity slipped into dormancy during the Russian Bottoms' second fifty years. The younger people even became "embarrassed by their Germanness."¹⁰⁵

Economic and Political Advancement

Interestingly, both identity shift and community contraction can be attributed, in part, to markedly improved circumstances within the enclaves. Overt prejudice against the urban villagers largely subsided by the mid-1920s as memories of World War I, the Red Scare, and battles over language were obscured by an intoxicating era of prosperity. While Lincoln's Volga Germans were still racialized by the mainstream, they clearly realized an improved position within the greater community. They reinforced this trend by maintaining their niche as ready and reliable laborers. Ultimately, wage increases led to increasing economic power, and remarkable demographic growth translated into greater political influence, even during the Great Depression.

Initially, these gains were made largely without threatening the status quo. As most urban villagers made acceptable livings working as beet-field hands, domestics, railroad men, and construction workers, higher education was rare until the 1950s. Indeed, only a handful of German-Russian students attended the University of Nebraska

¹⁰³Henry Reifschneider, 14-15.

during this era despite their enclaves' close proximity to this institution.¹⁰⁶ As they had done in the 1910s, the majority urban villagers "went to the sugar beet fields" throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In fact, their increased numbers -- the beet-field specials originating in Lincoln often pulled twenty-five coaches and twenty-five box cars -- aided this industry's expansion.¹⁰⁷

Because physically demanding "stoop" labor was required to tend the fields, most mainstream workers spurned this form of employment. Volga Germans, on the other hand, had no qualms about accepting such toil and even used it to help establish their status as "white people." While they shared the beet fields with Mexican and Japanese immigrants, the ethnic Germans were the preferred hands in the business even though their contracts required each person to tend ten acres compared to the twelve to fifteen acres the other groups were expected to maintain. For many land owners and sugar beet companies, racial exclusion became more important than squeezing profits from their workers. These attitudes allowed Volga Germans to recast their identities in a favorable manner without taking on additional labor. Happy with their elite status, they were not especially tolerant of their non-white coworkers. The itinerant urban villagers distanced themselves from other workers and "just didn't let them interfere" with their daily business.¹⁰⁸

In Lincoln, this workplace independence was less beneficial to the urban villagers as the national railroad Shopman's Strike of 1922 separated Burlington employees into "scab" and unionist camps. The strike itself was the culmination of decades of wage and hours disputes. As both Lincoln and Havelock -- the Capital City's

¹⁰⁴Karel B. Bicha, "The Survival of the Village in Urban America: A Note on Czech Immigrants in Chicago in 1914," *International Migration Review* 5 (No. 1, 1971): 73-74

¹⁰⁵Welsch, 203.

¹⁰⁶Green, 3.

¹⁰⁷Conrad Kruse, 5; and J. G. (George) Dering, interview by Jo Miller, transcript, 7 July 1980, folder AV1.636.02 a and b, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 18-19.

railroad suburb -- had extensive repair and maintenance facilities, many local families were effected. Agitation in these communities continued through 1923 and 1924, and, ultimately, the Burlington Railroad appealed to the National Guard for assistance and blacklisted strikers. While the strike heightened tension between mainstream and urban village workers, it also divided Volga Germans among themselves as most unionists never returned to the shops. The resulting rifts within the Bottoms subsided slowly over the course of the next decade.¹⁰⁹ Fortunately, the strike occurred at the same time work on the new State Capitol began and many otherwise displaced workers started ten years of employment on this public works project.¹¹⁰

While even boom-time employment was tenuous, Volga Germans were increasingly praised by the mainstream community for their resourcefulness and industry. Nebraska Governor Adam McMullen in his address to a group of Golden Jubilee delegates, for instance, described Lincoln's urban villagers as "new citizens whose energy, frugality and industry helped to build up and maintain a magnificent country of peaceful homes and great enterprises."¹¹¹ Indeed, by 1926, his words accurately described the rapidly improving conditions in the Bottoms.

Necessitated by population growth and made possible by the habit of saving money, new housing was common in both urban villages in the 1920s. As a rule, it was notably larger, more substantial, and patterned after American structures. Those electing to remain in their older dwellings often raised their foundations and dug basements. The added indoor space allowed residents to convert summer kitchens into storage and

¹⁰⁸Marie Elizabeth Dittenber Schmidt, interview by Molly Collins, transcript, 11 August 1980, folder AV1.636.17, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 6.

¹⁰⁹John Wertz, interview by Mark Beech, transcript, 26 September 1980, folder AV1.437.19 a & b, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 8; John Dietrich, interview by Lolly Wehrli, transcript, 10 November 1980, folder AV1.437.21, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 12-13; Alex Kahler, interview by Stanley Talley, transcript, 25 February 1981, folder AV1.437.12, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 10; and Colin J. Davis, *Power At Odds: The 1922 National Railroad Shopmen's Strike* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 154-55.

¹¹⁰Kahler, 8.

garage spaces. The expansion of neighborhood stores and a penchant for modern living encouraged the last vestiges of rural life to disappear from city neighborhoods, and fewer and fewer Volga Germans kept livestock on their properties.¹¹²

Similarly, church improvements continued throughout the 1920s. In the South Bottoms, First German constructed a new building on the west end of "main street" in 1920. Ebenezer, already on the edge of the enclave, razed its initial structure and started a brick building in July 1927. That same summer, Zion broke ground on 9th and B, pushing the very limits of the community eastward. Across town, a dispute about ministers at St. John's Evangelical caused the congregation to split in two. The new church, also called St. John's Evangelical, erected its house of worship just four blocks away from the old. As of January 1928 the North Bottoms supported four thriving congregations.¹¹³

To aid this building boom, city improvements were finally extended into the enclaves. Water and sewage arrived in the early 1920s, and the fully plumbed bathroom -- formally the sign of an Americanized family -- became the new standard.¹¹⁴

Additionally, the mud streets and wooden sidewalks were gradually replaced by cement and asphalt throughout the course of the decade.¹¹⁵ Although the city dump -- the bane of the North Bottoms -- was not filled and sold until 1948, the substandard conditions of

¹¹¹*Die Welt-Post*, 24 June 1926, B1.

¹¹²John Blum, interview by Stanley Talley, transcript, 13 October 1980, folder AV1.437.04, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 5; Marie Beltz, interview by Sandra Schmidt, transcript, 25 July 1980, folder AV1.636.19, North Bottoms Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 43; Darauer, 7; and John Schwindt, interview by Molly Collins, transcript, 19 July 1980, folder AV1.636.07 a and b, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 5.

¹¹³*Die Welt-Post*, 28 July 1927, 8; *ibid.*, 19 January 1928, 8; *ibid.*, 9 February 1928, 4; and Andrew Beltz, interview by Sandra Schmidt, transcript, 25 July 1980, folder AV1.636.19 and b, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 3.

¹¹⁴Williams, "Social Study," 31.

¹¹⁵Andrew Beltz, 33; Alles, 10; Giebelhaus, interview by Gertrude Schwindt, 10; Schlegel, 10; and John Schwindt, 5.

the first fifty years of settlement in both Bottoms were largely ameliorated by the joint efforts of citizens and government.¹¹⁶

Mainstream businesses -- attracted by a "thrifty" population that earned "good wages" -- also courted trade with Volga German consumers during the 1920s.¹¹⁷ They offered the urban villagers modern commercial goods. Advertisements for washing machines, gas water heaters, pianos, phonographs, telephones, and automobiles began appearing in the pages of *Die Welt-Post* in the early 1920s, and they soon became a regular feature. Over the next several decades, a symbiotic ethnic buyer and mainstream seller relationship developed. The newspaper encouraged this association by publishing an "Honor Roll of Lincoln business houses." The editorial staff then urged "the Volga German people of Lincoln" to patronize the honorees, who were also advertisers.¹¹⁸

Always anxious to curry favor in the community, *Die-Welt Post* began displaying "Lincoln's emblem of middlemen and manufacturers" as part of its contribution to the Chamber of Commerce's "Link up with Lincoln" campaign.¹¹⁹ The business community responded by inviting Volga Germans to the Second Annual Greater Lincoln Exhibition at the University Coliseum in March 1928. While the invitation was printed in German in *Die Welt-Post*, "Progress" -- the theme of the exhibition -- was chiseled into a stone facade in English by a muscular workman. The advertisement also featured a locomotive and workers raising a skyscraper -- two intimately familiar sights for many Volga Germans.¹²⁰ Although they remained laborers in an increasingly middle-class society, their contributions to the mainstream were readily recognized and their consumer dollars eagerly courted.

¹¹⁶Marie Beltz, 51.

¹¹⁷*Die Welt-Post*, 29 March 1925, 7.

¹¹⁸"German Buyers Guide," *ibid.*, 1 February 1934, 9.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 1 January 1925, 1, translation by author.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 8 March 1928, 6.

In the Bottoms and in the community at large, however, economic progress was derailed by the Great Depression. Available work contracted in the urban villages as the Capitol was completed in 1932, mainstream households who formerly hired domestic help necessarily retrenched, and workers who remained with the railroad were often laid off for years on end. Consequently, everything in the Bottoms appeared "more or less rundown" during the 1930s. Still, while a few families lost money through risky investments, the habit of avoiding debt and paying cash allowed the resilient Volga Germans to hold their own economically.¹²¹ Many families who had moved up the economic ladder in the 1920s returned to the beet fields to make ends meet. They often made "a pretty good livin' with it," sometimes even enough "buy a little better house."¹²² While urban villagers certainly accepted relief and New Deal employment schemes, their close-knit families and communities still remembered the poverty of the early years in Lincoln and managed to survive with dignity and even grace.

Although times were hard financially, Volga Germans in Lincoln began flexing their collective political muscle during the 1930s. Always a cosmopolitan force, *Die Welt-Post* began encouraging its readers to vote for "German" candidates early in the decade. Through the pages of this organ, City Council candidates, such as Paul Doerr, courted votes by promising to update water and light facilities in the Bottoms.¹²³ Admonishing urban villagers to "do your duty" by going to the polls, Henry Amen made an unsuccessful run for the council in 1933.¹²⁴ Always persistent, he was finally elected to the post in 1937 and served until 1943. Amen was so trusted by his constituents that they also elected him to the Board of Trustees of Sanitary District 1 where he served as

¹²¹Lydia Schneider Robinson, interview by Kay Rapkin, transcript, 9 November 1980, folder AV1.437.20, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 7; Peter Krieger, Jr., interview by Eugene Wehrli, transcript, 25 November 1980, folder AV1.437.22, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 7; Conrad Kruse, 16; John Beltz, 26.

¹²²John Kapeller, Jr., interview by Anna Baker, transcript, 30 June 1980, folder AV1.636.05, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 10.

¹²³*Die Welt-Post*, 27 April 1933, 5.

chair for fifteen years in an era when storm drainage was still a vital issue for the urban villagers.¹²⁵ Attempting to form a coalition among ethnic and mainstream voters, Amen went on to run for mayor in 1943. Campaigning in both German and in English, he stressed his city government and business experiences. Additionally, he reminded the city that three of his sons were serving in the armed forces. The city was not ready for an ethnic mayor, however, and, while Amen garnered almost 3,000 votes, he lost by a landslide to Lloyd Marti who garnered 8,500.¹²⁶

Amen's patriotism, although strengthened by his sons' actions, was never questioned during any of his campaigns. This was yet another indication of wide scale acceptance of the Volga Germans. Even debates about war in the late 1930s and early 1940s raised little ire in the mainstream despite *Die Welt-Post's* suggestion that Hitler's unification of the German peoples through *Anschluss* was a peaceful movement, and its position that America should never go to war again.¹²⁷ Even after World War II was underway, the urban villagers were largely spared the harassment they experienced in the 1910s. This was due, in part, to their insistence that they not "be out-done by other citizen groups" in their support of the war effort.¹²⁸ Additionally, following the attack on Pearl Harbor all of Val Peter's newspapers averred that "time for political disagreement about international affairs has passed" and that "all American citizens of German blood" needed to "stand behind their government."

Not surprisingly, Lincoln's urban villagers singled the Japanese out as the arch-enemies of the United States rather than the Germans.¹²⁹ This action was tempered by their experiences in the beet fields and by the general predisposition of mainstream

¹²⁴Ibid., 27 April 1933, 1.

¹²⁵*Lincoln Evening Journal*, 9 July 1975, 1.

¹²⁶*Die Welt-Post*, 29 April 1943, 8; and *ibid.*, 13 May 1943, 8.

¹²⁷See, for example, *ibid.*, 6 October 1938, 7; *ibid.*, 10 November 38, 7.

¹²⁸"We Are All Americans, Standing United in the Defense of Our Country," *ibid.*, 11 December 1941, 1.

America during the 1940s. While anyone with Japanese heritage was vilified, prejudice against German Americans rarely surfaced during this era, and when it did, cooler heads generally prevailed. The *Lincoln Star*, for example, ran a letter to the editor that denouncing German-language choir music in Lincoln and suggested they turn "the program over to the Japs." The editors responded somewhat uncharacteristically stating, "we have been through all that . . . no good can possibly come out of a controversy over language."¹³⁰ It seems mainstream acceptance had come a long way in twenty years.

Contractions of Performed Culture

Tolerance towards the Volga Germans slowly increased throughout their second fifty years in Lincoln. The urban villagers, however, were rapidly becoming acculturated into the mainstream. In fact, between 1926 and 1976, most aspects of their performed culture -- including family structure, music, language, and church organization -- were either greatly transformed or lost entirely. With each new decade the focus of community and individual lives moved farther away from the old churches and neighborhoods. Even the once proud Volga German press was on the brink of extinction.

Still, *Die Welt-Post* remained the "Organ of Volga Germans" until 1959, but its survival depended on Val Peter's practice of consolidating ailing Volga German papers into the Lincoln publication. The process began in 1927 when *Die California Post* -- which served Fresno, Sanger, Dinuda, and Biola -- was discontinued as an independent entity and assigned a page or two in each publication of *Die Welt-Post*.¹³¹ By 1930, the scope of local reporting expanded from Lincoln, Omaha, and western Nebraska, and it

¹²⁹See for example, *Ibid.*, 23 November 1944, 1; *ibid.*, 30 November 1944; and *ibid.*, 5 June 1945, 2.

¹³⁰"As to Language," *Lincoln [NE] Star*, 10 March 1942, reprinted in *Die Welt-Post* 26 May 1942, 7.

¹³¹Haynes, *History of the Volga Relief Society*, 40; and *Die Welt-Post*, 17 November 1927, 1.

began to focus also on Volga German enclaves in eastern Washington, Michigan, North Dakota, and Idaho -- all sugar beet regions.¹³² By World War II, news items from Kansas City and Denver were also receiving regular ink, presumably at the expense of formerly separate papers.¹³³

While Peter launched *Deutsch-Amerika*, an illustrated pan-German American newspaper, in 1935, as a general rule, the German-language press in the United States receded with the passing of the generation born around 1900.¹³⁴ Dialect distinctions among German speakers were rarely discussed by 1960 and even *Die Welt-Post* became simply "An American Newspaper printed in the German Language." For the next two decades, the paper focused on international and European news without mentioning the enclaves formerly so important to the readership.¹³⁵ Circulation steadily declined until only 527 subscriptions were active in 1976.¹³⁶ Peter's *Omaha Tribune* empire was down to its last eight newspapers in 1982 when a Winnipeg concern bought the vestiges of this formerly huge combine and consolidated into a single paper.¹³⁷ The Volga German press in the United States had finally run its course.

Other cherished practices -- all of them central to life in Saratov and Samara -- were also on the brink of disappearing. One of the most telling signs of acculturation was a shift in family structure. In the Volga colonies as well as in the Bottoms for the first fifty years, the family hierarchy had "strong patriarchal overtones." Originally designed to strengthen the household economic unit, sons and daughters in Lincoln's most conservative families generally relinquished their wages to the family head until

¹³²See, for example, *ibid.*, 2 January 1928.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 21 September 1944, 5.

¹³⁴See, for example, *ibid.*, 14 February 1935, 1.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 13 July 1950, 1; *ibid.*, 17 April 1959, 1; *ibid.*, 5 May 1961, 1; 28 May 1982, 1.

¹³⁶Lubomyr R. Wynar and Anna Wynar, *Encyclopedic Directory of Ethnic Newspapers and Periodicals in the United States*, 2nd edition (Littleton, CO: Littleton Unlimited, Inc., 1976), 85.

¹³⁷Bergquist, 151.

they were twenty-one. Additionally, they often married in accordance with their parents wishes. Both of these practices were holdovers from the mir system.¹³⁸

Arranged marriages had little meaning in Lincoln from the very beginning of settlement. Instead, patriarchs preferred that their children marry within the ethnic community. Consequently, weddings remained a joining of the bride and groom and a symbolic joining of their families as well. Paying homage to economic tradition, Anna Giebelhaus recalled that the groom bought the bride's dress, and that the bride bought the groom's shirt.¹³⁹ The families then split the cost of feeding and entertaining the reception party.

These costs were significant as wedding receptions were often three-day events that required food, music, and a large tent with a wooden dance floor.¹⁴⁰ The first day of the celebration was fairly subdued and focused on the church ceremony and a celebration for immediate family. Subsequent events featured general revelry that reinforced the community hierarchy. Day two was set aside strictly for the older generation so if "they wanted to make fools of themselves they could do it without the younger people seeing them." Similarly, on the final day the young people could play without the watchful eyes of their elders. By the mid-1920s, however, the urban villagers "became Americanized and cut it down to one day."¹⁴¹ The need to maintain age-based appearances had largely dwindled.

The demise of prolonged wedding celebrations was also the beginning of the end for vernacular music within Lincoln's urban villages. Indeed, by 1945, the command "*spielen sie ein polka*" (Play us a polka) was rarely heard as wedding receptions or house

¹³⁸Sallet, 81.

¹³⁹Giebelhaus, interview by Gertrude Schwindt, 7.

¹⁴⁰Beideck, 7.

¹⁴¹Henry Reifschneider, 14-15; and Jacob Reifschneider, 13-14.

parties; and community dances fell out of use.¹⁴² The formerly familiar sounds of fiddle and accordion that were used to drive the dancers' figures were replaced by commercial music from within the mainstream.¹⁴³

Interestingly, the polkas and waltzes imported from the Volga colonies demonstrated that traditions, especially musical ones, are in a state of "constant reinvention and reinterpretation."¹⁴⁴ Rather than being a folk dance, polka -- named after a Polish woman -- emerged in the metropolitan centers of Western Europe in 1844. Like the waltz, its use of eye contact and synchronized movement expressed gender relationships unknown in either courtly or peasant dances.¹⁴⁵ Its exact migration across Europe is not fully documented, but polka and waltz were the dominant dance and music forms in the Volga colonies by 1870. In order to suit the needs of the community, they were adapted to fit on the *Geige* (fiddle), *Hackbrett* (hammered dulcimer), and *Dudelsack* (bagpipes).¹⁴⁶ Both musicians and dancers preferred polkas with complicated melodies and a unique ending that gave "people some time to stop" at the "big house weddings."¹⁴⁷ Rather than the familiar "oom-pah" sound, the use of the older instrumentation that favored a prominent melodic line must have produced an almost ethereal sound.¹⁴⁸

In Lincoln, instrumentation for these rigorous dances initially reflected old-world patterns as two violins, a hammered dulcimer, and a cello were the mainstays. The music soon experienced "conflict between the strict retention of traditions as they existed

¹⁴²Adolph Lesser, "Looking Back: A Lifetime of Memories and Music," *American Historical Society of Germans from Russia* 24 (Summer 2001): 2; Brian A. Cherwick, "Polkas on the Prairies: Ukrainian Music and the Construction of Identity" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 1999), 50.

¹⁴³Giebelhaus, interview by Gertrude Schwindt, 7

¹⁴⁴Cherwick, 10.

¹⁴⁵Charles Keil and Angeliki Keil, *Polka Happiness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 9-11.

¹⁴⁶Sallet, 84-85

¹⁴⁷Elizabeth Feuerstein Wertz, interview by Jo Miller, transcript, 1 July 1980, folder AV1.636.01, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 17.

in their previous homelands and adaptation of these traditions to fit the norms of their new environments."¹⁴⁹ Although Saturday evening dances remained a popular diversion through the 1920s, couples were waltzing and "two-stepping" to music played on mandolin, violin, and piano.¹⁵⁰ To create more drive, accordions were soon added as additional rhythm instruments, and by the 1930s, they captured the melody line as well. The airy and archaic *hackbrett* had lost its place in the ensemble.¹⁵¹

During the World War II era, the Volga German Polka was renamed the Dutch Hop as musicians and dancers were anxious to appear patriotic.¹⁵² Although the musicians played established musical forms, this was a new and vibrant sound because they used accordions backed by brass instruments. While Lincoln's urban villagers were certainly familiar with this modified musical form, the hot-bed of Dutch Hop was the Volga German colony in and around Greeley, Colorado, where the polkas are still enjoyed by young and old alike. Residents of the Bottoms on the other hand appear to have allowed vernacular music as an identity marker to lapse even prior to the war.¹⁵³ Interestingly, while polka offered resistance to mainstream culture among Polish Americans, Tejanos, "Papago-Pima Indians," and some German Russians, this was by no means a universal experience. Influenced by more modern trends, many urban villagers turned to Lincoln's public ballrooms and swing music as new forms of recreation.

Sacred music, on the other hand, lingered in a far more recognizable form as the old hymns were sung on a regular basis by first and second generation Volga Germans until the late-1960s. Because most individuals were not trained to read music, the Volga German hymnal printed just the words. Singers followed the piano or organ

¹⁴⁸A good example of hammered dulcimer, although in a religious context, can be found in Paulyne Langhofer and Robert Meter, *How Great Thou Art*, produced by artists, date unknown. Available at AHSGR.

¹⁴⁹Cherwick, 2.

¹⁵⁰Elizabeth Feuerstein Wertz, 17.

¹⁵¹Lesser, 2.

¹⁵²*Ibid*, 2.

accompaniment and then memorized and repeated the familiar melodies throughout the courses of their lives. Stable musical forms, however, were threatened by a shift in language. As Jacob Volz -- a lead organizer of the Volga Relief Society -- observed, the "second generation speaks only partly the German Language, but the third generation speaks only English."¹⁵⁴ Consequently, sacred music necessarily became Americanized.

Language change in sacred singing and in all other aspects of church life was gradually accepted throughout the congregations in the Bottoms as they were "faced with the choice of either losing the youth or introducing the English language."¹⁵⁵ For a while, the two tongues overlapped. Friedens, for instance "had German completely until 1931." They switched the Sunday School over to English at that time. Luther League -- an organization for teenagers -- followed suit later in the decade, and finally by the mid-1950s the congregation was unable to find a German-speaking minister.¹⁵⁶ At Emmanuel, the confirmation class of 1934 was comprised of five youngsters tested in English and three examined in German, but even this latter group was already writing in the American script. At Zion, sermons were delivered in English by the late 1920s while hymns remained German.¹⁵⁷ Immanuel introduced separate English-language services in the 1930s, but maintained worship in German at a different hour.¹⁵⁸ The dual-language congregation lingered into the post-World War II era in both the urban villages. When First German celebrated their sixtieth anniversary in 1948, they marked the event with an English service at 2 p.m. and a German one at 7:30 p.m.¹⁵⁹ German-language services, although far less frequent, lived on in every church until the early 1960s.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵³Cherwick, 22; and Keil and Keil, 3.

¹⁵⁴Volz, 15.

¹⁵⁵Sallet, 109.

¹⁵⁶Darauer, 7.

¹⁵⁷John Dietz, 9.

¹⁵⁸Adam Green, interview by Gertie Schwindt, transcript, 22 July 1980, folder AV1.636.13, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 3, 10.

¹⁵⁹*Die Welt-Post*, 30 September 1948, 8.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 19 May 1961, 2.

The language shift was not the only change in church life during this era of contraction. Secular self-help organizations -- American Forward and the North Lincoln Welfare Society -- emerged in the 1920s and became a new social focus for many urban villagers. Virtually unknown in the Volga colonies, these associations pulled interest and energy away from the churches. Interestingly, this shift was caused partly by religious fervor generated from within Volga German tradition and partly by external demands.

The Welfare Society was the secular offspring of Salem Congregational Church's Neighborhood House. Moving to its present location -- 1430 North 10th Street -- in 1927, the hall and organization hosted wedding receptions, dances, and boy scout meetings that were no longer welcomed in the churches.¹⁶¹ Venue change was necessitated by the strict preferences of pietist revivalists who were called the "brotherhood" or the "brethren." Preferring a "priesthood of all believers" over trained clergy, this lay movement stressed "emotional experience rather than a preset adherence to form" within the church. Influencing the German-speaking world since the seventeenth century, pietism emerged in many of the Volga colonies around 1870; was transported to Sutton, Nebraska, in 1887 from Norka, Huck, and Balzer; and spread to Lincoln soon thereafter.¹⁶² Its passion emboldened followers to intervene with established routines and social norms. Interestingly, it appears the North Bottoms was much more affected by the brethren than their sibling neighborhood.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Henry Hugerader, interview by Jo Miller, transcript, 4 August 1980, folder AV1.636.15, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 11, 15; Beideck, 13; and Welsch, 213.

¹⁶²See generally, Paul Koehler, "The German Brotherhood: 272 years of History from the Volga River in Russia, USA, Canada, South America, and Siberia," *Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia* 27 (Winter 2004): 7-20; and Ronald J. Gordon, "The Rise of Pietism in 17th Century Germany," <http://www.cob-net.org/pietism.htm>.

¹⁶³Molly Schlegel, interview by Gertrude Schwindt, transcript, 29 July 1980, folder AV1.636.03, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 7; and Crystal, online.

In the South Bottoms, secular organization was initially an expression of German Russian patriotism during World War I. The prototype of American Forward was founded in 1917, and it sponsored numerous parades and civic events through 1918. Revived in 1922 and incorporated in 1925, it promoted "the general welfare, friendliness, fellowship, social and moral improvements" of its members until 1974. This association boasted 600 men as well as a 350-member women's auxiliary, but it generally met in rented space and members' basements until 1951 when the organization bought the Emmanuel property at 745 D Street.¹⁶⁴

The Emmanuel Lutheran congregation was happy to relinquish title to the building as they had already moved a mile south of the Bottoms, and as if to sever the old ties, they joined the Missouri Synod -- a typically *Reichs* German organization. Perhaps anticipating wide-scale change and an eventual exodus from the Bottoms when they moved in 1950, members of this important parish were not the only ones who experienced significant sociological, theological, and demographic changes in the post-World War II era.

In the long run, reactions against cultural conservatism and denominational upheaval led to the reordering of all surviving churches in the urban villages and simple dissolution for others. Anachronistically, most churches in the Bottoms retained their old-world gender relationships well into the 1950s. This was most visibly demonstrated by seating arrangement where men and women sat on opposite sides of the aisle. In the original St John's, for instance, adult males were on the right and adult females on the left. Children sat either in the front or in the balcony depending on the practices of the specific congregation.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴Letter from William Urbach to Mr. White; Walker, iv; Welsch, 213; and "American Forward Group Nearing 25th Anniversary," *Lincoln Sunday Journal & Star*, 20 May 1954, 2D. See also *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* for the years 1925 to 1975.

¹⁶⁵Henry Reifschneider, 29; and Mollie Lebsock Maul, interview by Molly Collins, transcript, 5 August 1980, folder AV1.636.14, North Bottoms Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 14.

Spatial separation reinforced the patriarchal family hierarchy. The greatest expression of this practice was demonstrated in Brotherhood meetings where women were forbidden from speaking.¹⁶⁶ While such arrangements were acceptable to the oldest or most conservative community members, young American-educated urban villagers preferred to focus on family unity rather than social segregation. Additionally, no longer tied to their neighborhoods through language and custom, many young people "just got away from" belonging to churches altogether.¹⁶⁷ With little interest in tradition, many established practices faded away. The old prayer meetings at Immanuel Reformed Church, for example, finally "died out" around 1972.¹⁶⁸

These events were some of the last survivals of a performed culture that was already lapsing by 1940. Shifts in language use, family structure, and community entertainment were all readily apparent -- especially among the younger urban villagers. Greater tolerance by the mainstream made ethnic cohesiveness more a choice than a necessity. Economic and demographic changes caused by American involvement in World War II only accelerated the rapid acculturation already underway.

Contractions of Community and the Volga German Identity

The Volga German enclaves, their institutions, and the unique identities they protected became markedly less distinct in post-war Lincoln. While church was always a central component of life in the Bottoms, the very denominations residents chose to affiliate with were undergoing dramatic changes. By 1940, Congregational seminaries were engaged in a "big language fight" about "whether they should stay German or

¹⁶⁶Schlegel, 7; and Crystal, online.

¹⁶⁷George Kruse, interview by Molly Collins, transcript, 1 July 1980, folder AV1.636.18, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 18.

¹⁶⁸Kapeller, 14.

become English."¹⁶⁹ When English won out, Lincoln's churches were largely unable to find German-speaking ministers. German Congregationalism fell on hard times after this decision, and in 1957 they merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Churches -- two other old German-language stalwarts -- and the Christian Church to form the United Church of Christ (UCC).¹⁷⁰

Although none of the Congregational churches in the urban villages abandoned the old label until the late 1960s, contraction was evident long before then. In the North Bottoms, Salem Congregational merged with the second Saint John's -- who adopted Lutheranism in 1956 -- to become Faith UCC in 1967. The new parish claimed the Salem building and sold the other to a Latvian church which housed some of Lincoln's Cold War immigrants. The original St. John's Evangelical Church switched to Congregationalism in the late 1950s, and just before their building was razed, they too joined Faith. Surprisingly, Congregational churches in the South Bottoms experienced little turmoil during the denominational shift. Ebenezer and Zion quietly joined the UCC in 1970 and 1975 respectively.¹⁷¹ Ignoring the tide of change, First German -- apparently housing the scions of its original congregants -- remains Congregational in the twenty-first century.

The retention of Volga German congregants was not universal for the other five surviving churches in the Bottoms. Immanuel Church -- the North Bottoms oldest congregation -- remains very connected to its past, although in 1980 it finally dropped "Reformed" from its name.¹⁷² Conversely, Friedens Lutheran still stands as a landmark in the South bottoms and still serves some of the "children and grandchildren" of its

¹⁶⁹Rev. Edward O. Berreth, interview by Jo Miller, transcript, 7 July 1980, folder AV1.636.04, Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 4.

¹⁷⁰Sheryl D. Vanderstel, "United Church of Christ in Indiana," <http://www.connerprairie.org/HistoryOnline/ucc.html>.

¹⁷¹Robinson, 1. See *Polk's Lincoln City Directory*, 1969-1976.

founders, but most of its current members do not live in the neighborhood and are not tied to the congregation through family tradition.¹⁷³ They simply prefer the intimacy of a small structure and spiritual community. Ebenezer and Zion have experienced similar developments.

Demographic change in the Bottoms in the 1950s was not just a church-based issue. Physical and emotional movement away from the urban villages was predicated, in part, on an identity shift that favored, once again, German Americanism. The transition from Volga German to German American was encouraged by a change in transnational ties. The end of the Volga German ASSR in 1941 and the exile of its citizens into central Asia virtually erased links to the Volga colonies and their citizens. Interestingly, Lincoln's urban villagers transferred their need for connection to people in "*die Alten Heimat*" (the old homeland).¹⁷⁴ Echoing the generosity of the Volga Relief campaigns, aid in the forms of food, money, and supplies was funneled to Germany and Austria. While news from Russia was virtually absent, travel to the American controlled zones in Germany was available by fall 1946.¹⁷⁵ To many young urban villagers, the old world had shifted. As one *Reichs* German Lincolnite noted, "they don't put that Russian in there no more lately."¹⁷⁶

The geographic change in homeland happened during an era of emotional and physical movement within Lincoln's urban villages. In an era expanding possibilities, marital exogamy was a common way of realizing a more mainstream identity. Out marriage in the Bottoms began in large scale in the 1940s as local soldiers and sailors

¹⁷²Mollie Lebsock Maul, 8; and Andrew Beltz, interview by Sandra Schmidt, transcript, 25 July 1980, folder AV1.636.19, North Bottoms Neighborhood Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 5. See also *Polks City Directory* for 1925 through 1980.

¹⁷³Melanie Feyerher, "Home Sweet Home: Settlers Found Sense of Community Through Churches," *Daily Nebraskan*, 13 January 2005, 10.

¹⁷⁴*Die Welt-Post*, 28 August 1948, 14.

¹⁷⁵See for example, *ibid.*, 22 August 1945, 3; *ibid.*, 12 September 1946, 2.

¹⁷⁶Alma Buettenback, interview by Mark Beach, transcript, 29 September 1981, folder AV1.437 a and b, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 5.

often came home with brides from around the United States and even from around the world.¹⁷⁷ Local women also found their options were expanding. Wilma Alles, for instance, wed Airforce pilot Keith Reed who was from outside the community.¹⁷⁸ He appeared unconcerned that his bride lived below 10th Street -- an area long considered undesirable by many Lincolniters.

Other young urban villagers chose education and relocation as paths to end this pattern of discrimination.¹⁷⁹ As Katherine Schmall recalled, "the kids get education, they move out, they moved out and our people passed away."¹⁸⁰ The Schmalls, with the exception of Katherine who was retired and widowed in 1965, showed this propensity for movement. The family owned three adjacent lots on West F Street between 1920 and 1950, but only Katherine remained in the South Bottoms fifteen years later.¹⁸¹ Similarly, the Lebsocks, a large merchant family who maintained business and residences in the Bottoms through 1950 closed their stores and moved several miles away from the old neighborhood. Henry and Barbara Amen remained in the home they built in 1918, and, while three of their six surviving children remained in their neighborhood of birth in 1965, Rudy -- who was still running the family business -- moved further out into south Lincoln and commuted to work.

Patterns in the North Bottoms were very similar. The Schwindts established nine households in the urban village by the 1920s. While still very connected to Lincoln in 1965, they maintained just two residences in the old neighborhood. The Reifschneiders, moved east and south over time. Not always going far, many young families in the post-war era moved north into the Belmont neighborhood.¹⁸² Here, they were able to find good housing -- a scarce commodity in the immediate post-war era. Additionally, like

¹⁷⁷Clara Wertz, 21.

¹⁷⁸*Die Welt-Post* 18 January 1945, 4.

¹⁷⁹Darauer, 14-15.

¹⁸⁰Schmall, 5.

¹⁸¹See *Polk's Lincoln City Directory*, 1920-1965.

many Americans in the automobile age, children raised in the Bottoms moved on to the far flung corners of the United States. Two of Emma Dinges's offspring, for instance, moved west to Arizona and Idaho and those remaining in Lincoln did not live in the Bottoms.¹⁸³

Developments among the neighborhood merchant houses also illustrates the growth and decline of German Russian ethnic communities in Lincoln. In the North Bottoms, the Reifschneider family -- which maintained several businesses -- and George Maser and Sons dominated the 10th Street grocery trade. Hergenrader's garage was close by as were a drug store, barber shop, and beauty parlor -- all owned by mainstream Lincolniters. Virtually all of these establishments were in place by the mid-1920s and remained vibrant until the early 1960s when they declined and finally disappeared.¹⁸⁴

Although they all relied on urban villagers as their clientele, they necessarily modernized over the years. The small, behind-the-counter grocery stayed in the community until 1935, as evidenced by the longevity of Konrad Brehm's little store on Y Street. Ultimately, these were replaced by large establishments that displayed their goods on shelves.¹⁸⁵ Covering nearly an entire city block, the "Cash and Carry" was pioneered by Philip Reifschneider in 1925. At the time, this new enterprise on 10th and Charleston was celebrated as a "Volga German" accomplishment by the entire community, and customers flocked to the store.¹⁸⁶ As this identity declined, however, so too did loyalty to the local mercantile. Maser's closed its doors in 1966. The Reifschneider IGA remained in the family until about the same time, but was sold to a mainstream grocer who continued operations until 1980. By then, only one grocery, a

¹⁸²George Kruse, 15.

¹⁸³Emma Dinges, interview by Stanley Talley, transcript, 20 February 1981, folder AV1.437.07, South Salt Creek Oral History Project, NSHS, Lincoln, 5.

¹⁸⁴Jacob Reifschneider, 7.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 7.

¹⁸⁶"Lincoln's neueste Geschäfts-Ecke," (Lincoln's newest business corner), *Die Welt-Post*, 1 March 1925, 5.

filling station, and a drugstore remained in the vicinity.¹⁸⁷ These were soon replaced by a national gas station, a minimart, and several restaurants that are more often closed than open.

Across town, the F Street merchants enjoyed a similar era of expansion that largely continued through the Depression before declining from 1950 to roughly 1970. The grocery trade was dominated by the Amens -- who diversified throughout the 1920s, the Lebsacks, and the Lebsocks who all shared the commercial strip with numerous coal dealers, fuel sellers, and a realtor. As in the North Bottoms, this main street business district slowly contracted over the course of twenty years, and its original proprietors exited completely when the Amens' store closed in 1971. As the German-speaking population that needed their services scattered, a plumbing business, an electrician, and a small food processor took over the store fronts, and the foot traffic and human vibrancy faded from the streets and sidewalks.

The decline of main street hustle and bustle and the ascension of modern residential rhythms in both the North and the South Bottoms represented an amazing paradox. Social, economic, and political gains achieved by urban villagers between 1920 and 1950 served to weaken the cohesiveness of their enclaves rather than to strengthen them. It was during this era that cosmopolitanism triumphed over particularism and transnationalism; ultimately, the ethnic communities and the Volga German identity collapsed as a result.

As the twentieth century progressed, connection to the Volga colonies and their traditions became increasingly difficult to maintain. United States immigration policy and Soviet emigration policy combined to squelch outside movement into the Russian Bottoms. As a result, the German-speaking population slowly subsided. In Lincoln,

¹⁸⁷Henry Reifschneider, 24; See also *Polk's Lincoln City Directory*, for business listings, 1925-1986.

there were approximately 4,000 Russian-born residents in 1920, 2,500 in 1940, and only a handful in 1965.¹⁸⁸ Aspects of performed culture waned as experience with the old villages was lost. The shift in language loyalty illustrates this point. The children and grandchildren of the founding generation first transferred loyalty away from village dialects and towards standard German -- the language of church and the press. Large-scale acceptance of English gradually crept into the community both as a matter of state and federal policy, but more importantly as a matter of convenience beginning in the 1920s. This move was finalized by the collapse of German Congregationalism in the 1950s and the decline of the German language press. As early as World War II, any option but English was merely an artifact.

If they did not learn English at home, the younger generations -- all products of natural increase -- learned it in the public schools. These institutions also introduced urban villagers to the material benefits of mainstream society. Intent on achieving parity with their schoolmates, Volga Germans first modernized their own neighborhoods and then moved beyond their confines. Hard work had rewards, but it they often came with a price -- the loss of cultural uniqueness.

SURVIVALS, REVIVALS, AND A NEW GERMAN FROM RUSSIA IDENTITY

By the mid-twentieth century, the scions of the Volga diaspora in Lincoln had largely abandoned the behaviors of their old Russian villages and accepted mainstream cultural practices in their stead. It is a mistake, however, to assume that they were "assimilated" into the greater American society. In many respects, immigrants merely

¹⁸⁸Bicha, 73-74; Welsch, 203; Walker, iv; *Die Welt-Post*, 9 March 1925, 7; Samuel Sinner, "Famine in the Volga Basin, 1920-1924, and the American Volga Relief Society Records," *Nebraska History* 78 (Fall 1997): 134; H.K. Sawyers, *Five Volga-German American Houses: South Bottoms Historic District* (Lincoln: Railroad Transportation and Safety Project, 1986), 8; and Richard Sallet, *Russian German Settlements in the United States*, trans., LaVern J. Rippley and Armud Bauer (Fargo: Institute for Regional Studies, 1930, reprint 1974), 44.

"adapt" to their new settings.¹⁸⁹ While adaptation is often quite thorough, pieces of the old performed culture often remain. The most prominent survival among Lincoln's former urban villagers were the foodways passed down from mother to daughter even among families who married outside their ethnicity. Interest in these traditions was handed down quietly until the ethnic revival of the 1970s revitalized a sense of uniqueness among a population who began calling themselves "Germans from Russia."

The Ethnic Revival and the Invention of a German from Russian Identity

Because so little remained of the immigrants' performed culture by 1970, the existence of an "official" community in Lincoln -- one that retained the original language, rituals, and other cultural practices -- was virtually impossible. Rather, the ethnic revival encouraged the creation of a "symbolic" community -- one that shared a "biological connection to ancestors" as well as some level of cultural participation.¹⁹⁰ This new community of Germans from Russia included not only Volga colonists, but also ethnic Germans who first settled in the Black Sea region, the Ukraine, and Volhynia at the request of the Czars, and then came to the Americas. Their substantially different experiences are described and celebrated by the American Historical Society for Germans from Russia (AHSGR), the revival's champion and most effective voice.

AHSGR was organized in Greeley, Colorado, in 1968, "exclusively for educational scientific, religious, and charitable purposes."¹⁹¹ Although it moved its international headquarters to Lincoln in 1973 to take advantage of available financial resources, its mission of fostering the "discovery, collection, preservation, and dissemination of information related to the history, cultural heritage and genealogy of

¹⁸⁹Kibria, 19.

¹⁹⁰Cherwick, 5.

¹⁹¹American Historical Society of Germans from Russia International (AHSGR), "Revised Bylaws, adopted July 8, 2004," Article II: Purposes, <http://www.ahsgr/bylaws.htm>.

Germanic Settlers in the Russian Empire and their descendants" remained constant.¹⁹²

Intriguingly, distinct cosmopolitan, particular, and international¹⁹³ influences combined to produce a German from Russia identity that is celebrated today in the North American West, the grasslands of South America, Germany, and several former Soviet Republics.

For Lincoln's Germans from Russia, transnational ties were often hampered by international politics. Because Soviet Premier Josef Stalin believed that ethnic Germans were a threat to national interests during Hitler's eastern expansion, the residents of the Volga German ASSR were exiled to central Asia beginning in 1941. Contact with their American relatives during this era was all but impossible. While Soviet policy towards ethnic Germans softened after Stalin's death in 1953, most Volga villagers remained in Kazakstan and Siberia as their former holdings were reassigned to ethnic Russians.

Interestingly, a handful of Volga Germans returned to Saratov and Samara beginning in 1957.¹⁹⁴ As of 2003, they number about 23,000 -- the approximate population of the region in 1767.¹⁹⁵

Intent to reconnect with their roots, some AHSGR members visited their extended families in Asia during the late 1960s, despite difficulties caused by the Cold War. Emboldened by their growing organization and by a less oppressive Soviet regime, many joined the international lobby for the reestablishment of the Volga-German

¹⁹²Gary Seacrest, "German Russian Group Plans to Build new Headquarters," *Lincoln Journal*, 24 October 1979, 29; George G. Bruntz, *Children of the Volga* (Ardmore, PA: Dorrance & Co., 1981), 110-11; and AHSGR Homepage, <http://www.ahsgr.org>.

The Amen Family donated space for the original Lincoln headquarters and then deeded the necessary land for construction of the new headquarters building. While Lincoln residents and businesses donated money to construct the new museum, Germans from Russia throughout North America were equally generous. In their typical manner, the new museum was built without credit and debt.

¹⁹³Internationalism replaces transnationalism at this time as transnationalism requires persistent contact and involvement with the sending culture. The dispersment of the Volga colonies changed this relationship, and the sending culture evolved as a historical artifact. See generally, Elliott R. Barkan, "America in the Hand, Homeland, and Heart: Transnational and Translocal Immigrant Experiences in the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 35 (Autumn 2004): 331-54.

¹⁹⁴Lyudmila Koretnikova, "A Typical Volga-German Life Story," *Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia* 28 (Summer 2005): 15.

¹⁹⁵Lyudmila Koretnikova, "The Migration of Germans from Russia," *Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia* 28 (Summer 2005): 11.

Republic. An estimated 2.1 million ethnic Germans whose ancestors settled in Russia during the eighteenth and nineteenth century were to be welcomed in this imagined entity. While optimism for the project abounded in the late 1980s, Russian President Boris Yelstin "declared in 1992 that there would not be a republic on the Volga." Consequently, 600,000 ethnic Germans immigrated back to Germany between 1994 and 2004.¹⁹⁶

This modern movement connected diverse populations -- including the original 23,000 Volga Germans, 80,000 Black Sea Germans who settled in southern Russia between 1804 and 1845, 30,000 Germans who emigrated to the Ukraine between 1830 and 1865, and 150,000 Volhynia Germans who made their original journey between 1865 and 1875 -- to a homeland they left centuries earlier.¹⁹⁷ This amazing ethnic solidarity was already part of the German from Russia identity promoted by AHSGR. Their mission includes connecting all ethnic Teutons who presently or formerly settled within Russian territory.

This cosmopolitan attitude is reinforced by the architectural design of its headquarters and museum. Located at 631 D Street on land donated by the Amen family, the building duplicates the shape of a Black Sea German Russian combined house and barn. Although it is a modern structure, its finish resembles puddled clay on a stone foundation typical of the region.¹⁹⁸ As no such buildings -- either in form or materials -- were imported from the Volga colonies, the building is architecturally out of place in Lincoln's South Bottoms. Still, it is a fine facility that is in keeping both with the with the society's mission and with an identity that transcends the city and the Volga

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 11.

¹⁹⁷Samuel D. Sinner, *The Open Wound: The Genocide of German Ethnic Minorities in Russia and the Soviet Union, 1915-1949 -- and Beyond* (Fargo: Germans from Russia Heritage Collections, 2000), xi-xii, xxv, 1-9.

The 2.1 million figure is the estimated German-Russian population as of 1989. Because the old colonies were already assigned to ethnic Russians, the Soviet government was unable and unwilling to resettle them in the Volga basin.

colonies. Interestingly, the museum's out buildings -- including a small chapel complete with Volga German hymnals, a summer kitchen, and an old general store and cobbler shop -- would have been familiar to Lincoln's urban villagers in both form and function, especially because they include packed "beet boxes" that contain the tools and supplies for sugar beet workers.

The sculpture on the front lawn of the headquarters further reinforces the organization's themes of inclusiveness and tradition. (See Figure 4-5.) Actually a replica of the sculpture, "German from Russia Pioneer Family," originally carved by Pete Felten, it represents all German émigrés.¹⁹⁹ It depicts a man, a woman, and two children dressed in clothing that was typical of settlers on the Russian steppes. Gathered around a plain cross (rather than the Catholic Cross with a crucified Christ), it "personifies the moral, physical and religious strengths of those Germans who first left their homes to settle the far reaches of the Russian Empire."²⁰⁰ Echoing the importance of family and gender separation of the old congregations, males are on the viewers left and females on their right.

Despite the powerful imagery of the headquarters, cosmopolitan notions of inclusion often meet the particularism of village, region, and nation within the organizational structure of AHSGR. Although it is an international organization, twelve of its thirteen districts are solely within the United States. All of Canada and "all countries outside the U.S.A." are relegated to a single entity. Most other districts are a series of states clustered into rather artificial regions -- for example, the California district includes Hawaii. As settlement patterns favored prairies and plains, Nebraska, Colorado, and Kansas -- states with the largest German Russian populations -- comprise

¹⁹⁸Koop, 130.

¹⁹⁹Felten was a contributor of many sculptures to the Kansas State Capitol Building.

²⁰⁰AHSGR, Homepage, <http://www.ahsgr.org/>; and "German for Russia Pioneer Family, <http://www.ahsgr.org/statue.htm>.

Figure 4-5. American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Headquarters with "German from Russia Pioneer Family" in foreground.



separate districts. Nebraska is further broken down into four chapters, one of them being Lincoln.²⁰¹

The Lincoln chapter was already 300 strong in 1971, just three years after its founding. Partly as a result of its success in organizing, the chapter hosted the AHSGR's second international convention.²⁰² Gerdi Stroh Walker was typical member from this era. Born in 1946, she was among the younger generation -- often the grandchildren of the community founders -- who were interested in tracing their backgrounds and genealogies.²⁰³ After hours of interviewing relatives and using the resources at the headquarters, she was able to trace her family back to 1748 when they still lived in Germany.

Reinforcing the particularism of the genealogist, the village remains an essential feature of the AHSGR. In fact, each German Russian colony is assigned a "Village Coordinator" who is charged with communicating "with all persons who share the same village heritage."²⁰⁴ At the annual convention, an entire evening is set aside for "Village Night." This event helps coordinate the "sharing of family group records, maps, individual and family histories, video and audio tapes of memories, trip experiences, and other village information."²⁰⁵ Some of the organizations have published books and articles about their ancestral homes, and many are in the process of gaining access to GEDCOM format databases to aid genealogical research.

Lincoln's six main contributing villages are well represented in this system. Norka currently boasts a newsletter as well as an extensive website. Frank, Balzer, and Huck all formerly had newsletters, but have replaced them with websites. Biedeck

²⁰¹AHSGR, "Bylaws," Article VI, 3; and "ASHGR CHAPTERS," <http://www.ashgr.org/chapters.htm>.

²⁰²*Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star*, 13 June 1971, 1F.

²⁰³Patty Beurtler, "Walker Tracing Family Origin," *Lincoln Star*, 19 June 1975, 24.

²⁰⁴"Villages," <http://www.agsgr.org/villages.htm>.

²⁰⁵Program, "36th Annual International Convention, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, August 15-21, 2005," AHSGR, 13; and Villages," <http://www.agsgr.org/villages.htm>.

maintains a newsletter, rather than an internet source. Kukkus appears active and is the subject of a book published by the Fresno chapter, although information is not available online or via a newsletter.²⁰⁶

Interestingly, particularism and internationalism have begun to fuse in the modern German from Russia mentality. Four of the organization's nine standing committees look back to either Russia or to Germany for inspiration. The Genealogical Research Committee facilitates family research and the Archives Committee concentrated on materials from Russia and other former Soviet Republics. In a similar vein, the Historical Research Committee encourages cooperation among "national and international archives" whether they be academic or governmental institutions. They are especially interested in the "Aussiedler program" and gathering information about recent immigration from Russia back to Germany. The Folklore/Linguistics Committee is charged with collecting and preserving "traditional customs, beliefs, tales, expressions, and teachings of Germans from Russia" and well as recording their dialects.²⁰⁷

Survivals

In Lincoln, village dialects and folk tales of the immigrants largely vanished in the early 1980s as the last members of the founding generation passed away. Germans from Russia and community organizations instead rely on portions of the local heritage that are still available, especially the built spaces in the North and South Bottoms. While still living neighborhoods with extant housing and graceful church steeples, the two communities are generally portrayed as part of the past. For example, the North Bottoms Historical Marker sits at the base of the 10th Street viaduct that spans the Burlington yard. Located directly across the street from Immanuel Church, the monument explains

²⁰⁶<http://www.volgagermans.net>.

that ethnic Germans settled in Russia in the eighteenth century and then moved to the Great Plains for jobs and land in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. They settled in the Bottoms to take advantage of "diminished land values." Additionally, the third paragraph explains:

The North Bottoms ethnic enclave developed its own businesses, social groups, churches, and schools. Small houses on long narrow lots followed either old world models or new American styles. In the backyards, chicken coops, tiny barns, and summer kitchens recalled the old country agricultural community. Descendants have largely dispersed throughout Lincoln and the nation, but the North Bottoms reminds us of the old "urban villages" immigrants built in a new land.²⁰⁸

Similarly, because it was the "largest and probably most homogeneous ethnic neighborhood within the state" of Nebraska, the South Bottoms was designated a National Historic District in 1986.²⁰⁹ This move allowed residents to take advantage of the Historic Preservation Act passed in 1966 and claim federal tax benefits.²¹⁰ As part of the process, the old ethnic enclaves became museum pieces in a complex, modern urban world.

Interestingly, because revivalists often stress "conservation, preservation, [and]restoration" living traditions are often ignored.²¹¹ Fortunately, the foodways of Germans for Russia have been retained in Lincoln and beyond. North Dakota State University and Prairie Public Television even produced a documentary celebrating part of the Black Sea German tradition, a kind of "soul food" in 2000. *Schmeckfest* celebrates noodle soup (*Knoephla*), schnitzel, schnapps, and Easter breads shaped like birds that

²⁰⁷AHSGR, "Bylaws," Standing Rule II, 11-15. The remaining five committees focus on the business of running an international organization.

²⁰⁸The North Bottoms Historical Marker, 10th Street viaduct, Lincoln, Nebraska. Placed by the Nebraska State Historical Society, UCC Faith and Immanuel Church, date unknown.

²⁰⁹NPS, "South Bottoms Historic District," item 7; NPS, "South Bottoms Historic District National Registration of Historic Places Register Form;" and NPS, "Significance Sheet," 1.

²¹⁰Alan Mayne, "City as Artifact: Heritage Preservation in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Policy History* 5 (No 1., 1993): 168.

²¹¹Cherwick, 11.

have been prepared on the Dakota prairies since they were homesteaded. Church groups, in this case to the accompaniment of an accordion player, still feed entire communities during holidays.²¹²

The passion for food is preserved in Lincoln as well. The annual ASHGR soup dinner, for instance, is held at the Welfare Society Hall in the North Bottoms at the end of February. The 2005 event featured a chicken soup containing homemade noodles, dumplings, and broth. Accompanied by rye bread and a variety of desserts, long lines -- complete with jokes about soup lines from individuals who lived through the Depression -- and an overcrowded hall attest to the continued popularity of the old dishes, especially among elderly or middle-aged Germans from Russia.²¹³ These events remind Lincolmites that when the urban villages were still vital communities, "Every Sunday was noodle soup."²¹⁴

It is quite possible that recipes from this feast were taken from *Küche Kochen* (Kitchen Cooking), a popular cookbook published by AHSGR. Initially released in 1973, it has sold at least eleven printings and is still available from the AHSGR store.²¹⁵ The intriguing aspect of this particular publication is that most of the submissions list the colony of origin for each recipe. Perhaps because it was compiled in Lincoln, recipes from Frank predominate. Still, diversity in origin is noted in simple words. Dumplings, for instance, are referred to as glöss, dampfnoodla, glace, glaze, klase, pirogen, and platshintina -- words that recall dialects of both German and Russian. The runza -- a low-budget cabbage, onion, and ground beef pastry -- is listed as cabbage burger,

²¹²*Schmeckfest: Food Traditions of the Germans from Russia*, written and produced by Bob Dambach and Michael M. Miller, Prairie Public Television and North Dakota State University, 2000, videocassette.

²¹³Author, Field Notes, AHSGR Soup Supper, Welfare Society Hall, 18 February 2005.

²¹⁴George Kruse, 9.

²¹⁵*Küche Kochen* (Lincoln: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1973). There are a plethora of cookbooks. See, for example, *Das Essen Unsrer Leute* (AHSGR: unknown, 1976); and Nelly Däs, trans Alex Herzog, *Cookbook for Germans from Russia* (Stuttgart, Germany: Landmanschaft der Deutschen aus Russland in Stuttgart, reprint, Fargo: Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, 2003).

krautburger, kraut baraks, bierochs, ranzen, and zweifel and kraut.²¹⁶ Most of these names were eclipsed after the founding of Runza® Restaraunt in 1949.²¹⁷ The signature sandwich of this long-lived local chain often puzzles visitors to Lincoln, but to many area expatriates the Runza is the essence of home. Despite such ubiquitousness, the wide-variety of names used in the cookbook are intentional as the project is dedicated "to the loving memories of our Great-Grandmothers, Grandmothers, and Mothers who diligently and faithfully preserved our heritage," or more aptly, heritages as Germans from Russia, even those living only forty miles apart, were a remarkably diverse collection of peoples.²¹⁸

Preservation is not only the watchword of the committee that edited this cook book, it is the key concept to understanding the ethnic revival in Lincoln and the German from Russia identity that accompanies the movement. Food aside, actual survivals from the era of immigration are minimal in the twenty-first century. Consequently, revivalists congregate around a symbolic community that revolves around AHSGR, a tireless advocate for this new ethnic ascription. Locally, the organization's headquarters building serves as a gathering point for many volunteers and social groups that live in and around Lincoln. Internationally, its archive and library make it a center for historical and genealogical research.

While ASHGR membership includes scholars and students, it is largely comprised of elderly individuals and aging baby boomers who work on tracing their family trees.²¹⁹ Certainly noble pursuits and in keeping with the idea of preservation, the general lack of young people might indicate that the revival generation and its German from Russia identity is as temporal as the founding generation and their *Volger*

²¹⁶Loos and Loos, 88.

²¹⁷<http://www.Runza.com/franchise.htm>. Founded in Lincoln, there are presently 63 stores scattered across Nebraska, Iowa, Colorado, South Dakota, and Kansas.

²¹⁸*Küche Kochen*, i.

²¹⁹James Leiker, conversation with author, San Antonio, Texas, 8 June 2005.

ascription. Still, the revivalists have prepared a historical base should future generations wish to pursue their heritage.

At the center of the image, they created is the idea that Germans from Russia were community builders.²²⁰ The organization's location in the South Bottoms neighborhood -- where all five of their old churches are still visible -- serves to remind even the casual tourist of the contribution the Volga German immigrants made to Lincoln. Perhaps as the children of the baby-boomers age, they too will tire of mainstream consumer culture and search for the roots in the old neighborhoods in the North and South Russian Bottoms.

CONCLUSIONS

Still, the revival community in Lincoln would probably seem quite foreign to Anna and Jacob Giebelhaus and the other urban villagers who used the Norka dialect and maintained a performed culture nurtured in the Volga colonies. Additionally, the neighborhood they once knew remains extant, but instead of hosting homeowners and families, 74 percent of its houses are rented -- mostly to college students.²²¹ Demographic change in the North Bottoms happened slowly, but by the time Sam and Willard Giebelhaus left to serve in the United States armed forces in 1941,²²² the multiple identities used by their parents already seemed dated, and many young urban villagers preferred ascriptions that cast them as part of Lincoln's mainstream.

The acceptance of the Volga Germans as Americans was hastened by contributions to the war and the war economy during the 1940s. Their flow into the mainstream was first directed by sociologist Hattie Plum Williams in the 1910s.

²²⁰Gwen Nobbe, "Determination, Pride Brought from Old Land," *Lincoln Sunday Journal-Star*, 13 June 1971, 6F.

²²¹Deena Winter, "Have 'The Bottoms' Hit Rock Bottom?" *Lincoln Journal-Star*, 16 October 2005, online.

Interestingly, Williams's work on the German Russians, which included both her M.A. thesis and her Ph.D. dissertation, never rejecting the racialism of the Progressive Era. She contended that the urban villagers' designation as Russian displayed the "ignorance, prejudice and misunderstanding" of most Lincolmites. Rather than being the "lowest type of labor" or the "most hopeless political factor in the city," these people were indeed Germans, she argued, and worthy of respect. Ironically, they went from being Russian to German in popular sentiment just in time for continued harassment during World War I.²²³

Between the wars, the urban villagers remained in their two institutionally complete neighborhoods and provided the muscle and know how to keep the city clean and connected to the outside world. In addition, community founders produced the next generation whose adaptation into the mainstream was increasingly thorough. After World War II, many Volga Germans continued to frequent the Amens' store which remained "a pivotal place" for the "hard-working, industrious ethnic community it served."²²⁴ Others -- especially younger people -- moved out of the Bottoms and scattered throughout the Lincoln metropolitan area. The ways of the immigrant community were not lost altogether, however. Ralph Giebelhaus, for instance, remained active in America Forward, a South Bottoms patriots organization, during the 1950s and 1960s. Still connected to his roots in the 1970s, he became an officer in AHSGR.²²⁵

He was joined in that organization by Ruth Amen -- daughter of Barbara and Henry. Born in 1910 in the old family home on F street, she saw her relatives define themselves alternately as *Frankers*, *Volgers*, and *Volga Deutsch* before starting her

²²²"Veterans of World War II," Interline, City of Lincoln Parks and Recreation, <http://ne.lincoln.gov/city/parks/parks/Parks/Veterans/bricks.htm>.

²²³Williams, "Social Study," 7-8; and Dena Markoff, "Beet Hand Laborers of Sugar City, Colorado, 1900-1920," in *Germans from Russia in Colorado*, 96.

²²⁴*Lincoln Evening Journal*, 11 July 1975, 4; *ibid.*, 9 July 1975, 1.

²²⁵*Ibid.*, 9 July 1975, 1; *ibid.*, 11 July 1975, 4; and *Giebelhaus Family Chronicles, 1994* (Spruce, Alberta: Parkview Studios, 1994), 346-49.

education as a music teacher, While her career took her to the public school system in Monroe, Michigan, the Camp Fire Girls national headquarters in New York City, and the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, she never lost touch with home. When Amen returned to Lincoln in 1968 to supervise teacher training at Nebraska Wesleyan University, however, she witnessed a marked decline in the old neighborhood. Many residents -- including her parents -- had even left Ebenezer Church and were attending services at First Plymouth Congregational Church, a mainstream congregation in the prestigious Mount Emerald neighborhood. While her father, who died in 1975, was never embarrassed by his heritage, the era of separation had passed and urban villagers had largely integrated into life in greater Lincoln. Pride in their ancestry was merely dormant during this era, and the Amens soon championed the Germans from Russia identity. Although the effort extended beyond the family, the Amens helped make Lincoln the international headquarters of the AHSGR in 1971, served as its officers into the 1980s, and even donated the property where the present museum sits. When Ruth Amen died in January 2002, the new ascription was strong enough to host particular movements even among its members in Lincoln.²²⁶

This organization championed a new and inclusive identity that celebrated the immigrant generation as community builders. Its local museum and headquarters -- rather than locally-owned businesses -- serves as a community center for Lincoln's Germans from Russia. This new ascription, while clearly a regeneration of ethnicity,

²²⁶*Lincoln Journal & Star*, 28 January 2002, online; *Sunday Journal & Star*, 12 June 1983; *Lincoln Evening Journal*, 7 July 1973, 4; *Detroit [MI] News*, 19 January 2002, online; and Ruth Amen folder, American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Archives, Lincoln, Nebraska.

never signified "a return to 'authentic' old world cultures."²²⁷ Instead it is the current incarnation of a series of flexible identities that have served to define an ethnic population for 130 years.

²²⁷Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration in the Formation of American Identity," *History Teacher* 30 (November 1996): 22.

CHAPTER 5

FROM THE BIG VILLAGE TO THE URBAN VILLAGE:
OMAHAS IN LINCOLN

Already in the prime their lives, Charles D. and Elizabeth Saunsoci Stabler migrated from Omaha Nation -- *Umóⁿhoⁿ móⁿzhoⁿ thóⁿ* -- to Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1941. Accepting a recruiter's offer to work on the Burlington Railroad during World War II, they remained in the Capital City throughout the post-war era to take advantage of mainstream economic and educational opportunities. Never a glamorous proposition, the entire family worked seasonally in the sugar beet and potato fields of western Nebraska until 1954, and Charles labored in construction jobs the remainder of the year. Part of a very small founding generation of Omaha urban villagers in Lincoln -- they knew only four other Indian families in the early years -- the Stablers actively taught Omaha language and culture to a younger generation who lived in distinct, but dispersed enclaves. Parents of six, grandparents of twenty-nine, and great grandparents of many more, they imported the "Omaha Way" into a new milieu and helped maintain it by hosting and participating in local dances, pow-wows, and various other Omaha "doings."¹

Not strangers to close living quarters, the Stablers' relatives -- all Omahas address each other as "relatives" -- historically congregated with other Omahas in large villages of up to a thousand residents for large portions of the year. While this practice ended with American colonization, Omaha oral history recounts this form of urban living as well as visits to the salt basin that surrounds present-day Lincoln. Despite this familiarity, the Lincoln area became a foreign environment after Omahas negotiated the boundaries of their present reservation in 1854. The journey from Omaha Nation back

¹Linda Ulrich, "Stablers Proudly Live Their Indian Heritage," *Sunday Journal-Star*, 20 April 1980, 1D; Mark J. Swetland, ed., *Umoⁿhoⁿ iye of Elizabeth Stabler: A Vocabulary of the Omaha Language* (Macy, NE: By the editor, 1977), vi-vii.

into the salt basin took about 100 years. Omahas who moved into Lincoln beginning in the mid-twentieth century necessarily entered "an alien culture of the white American mainstream." As former tribal chair Rudi Mitchell suggested, "In no way did the American urban life develop out of the aboriginal people of the midwestern plains tribes."²

Ironically, although "this country was their native home," their experiences of learning to live in cities was comparable to other immigrants from outside the United States. While they were American citizens eventually entitled to free movement, Omahas arrived from a separate state -- albeit a "domestic dependent nation"³ -- and they faced "racism, social discrimination, fear, cultural alienation," and the threat of the "loss of their native identity," just as Volga Germans had and Vietnamese would.⁴ In many respects, identity issues superseded all other intellectual considerations among most urban Indian populations.⁵ Omaha urban villagers constructed ethnic enclaves and began adapting to the new and foreign culture by navigating particular, cosmopolitan and transnational forces in the search for a stable identity.

A very salient "Omaha" identity was supported by a particular "cultural ideal" called the "Omaha Way." This time-honored concept was central to community construction among Lincoln's indigenous urban villagers. Essentially a pattern of respectful behaviors handed down from generation to generation, the Omaha Way was continually taught and reinforced by all members of the tribe long before migration into the Capital City. Never stagnant, it evolved from ancient woodlands origins, found a

The Stablers were both born around the turn of the twentieth century.

²Rudi L. Mitchell (Omaha), "A Comparative Study of Stressful Life Events among Native American Reservation and Urban Members of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska" (Ed.D. diss., University of South Dakota, 1987), 20-21.

³See Chapter 2, footnote 42 for a discussion of this concept.

⁴Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), x, 2-3. See also Mark Anthony Rolo (Bad River Ojibwe), dir., *Indian Country Diaries: A Seat at the Drum*, American Public Telecommunications and Adanvdo Vision, 2005, film.

home on the Great Plains, and rambled through linearly-organized mainstream society amazingly in tact.⁶

Part of a shared indigenous circular philosophy, the Omaha Way sought "cultural balance" -- balance between sky and earth elements of Omaha cosmology and balance between Native and mainstream worlds.⁷ Inherently flexible, the Omaha identity was legally redefined by cosmopolitan forces throughout the twentieth century and appears to have been reconstructed to include urban dwellers. Additionally, the Omaha Way -- despite encounters with racism -- incorporated an "American" identity that was negotiated through contact with the United States military.

Omahas -- urban villagers and nationals alike -- were part of a transnational population that held dual citizenship in both sending and receiving cultures.⁸ Because the 100-mile physical distance between Macy and Lincoln was comparatively manageable, Omaha identity in the Capital City was constantly reinforced by contact with the Omaha Nation.⁹ Part of two-way exchange, mainstream influences exported by urban villagers also modified behaviors in the sending culture. While distinctions between the populations were often blurred, divisions still developed as nationals often maintained that urban villagers modified the Omaha Way in accordance to mainstream preferences. Additionally, a "Pan-Indian" identity was a recognized part of urban Indian

⁵Barry M. Pritzger, *Native America Today: A Guide to Community Politics and Culture* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 51.

⁶Speech by Mitchell Parker (Omaha), Gourd Dance, Lincoln Indian Club 35th Annual Powwow, Lincoln Indian Center, 5 August 2005; and Mark Joseph Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n): I Speak Omaha -- I am Omaha" (Ph.d. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2003), 22.

⁷Donald L. Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World: American Indian Studies and Traditional Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2003), xii; and Elaine M. Nelson, "Eunice Woodhull Stabler, Omaha Indian Writer, 1885-1963" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2004), 5, 11, 22.

⁸Omaha Nation sovereignty was increasingly recognized throughout the era of urban emigration. Recent significant developments have given Omaha Nation a police force -- an organization only established in 1970s, and an even more recent right to arrest lawbreakers on tribal lands "regardless of race." See, "Heineman Signs Cross-Deputization Agreements with Omaha, Winnebago," *Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs Newsletter*, Summer 2005, 1.

⁹Macy is an unincorporated village that is the administrative and population center of Omaha Nation. At the time of this writing it housed the Tribal Council, Omaha Nation Public School, Carl T. Curtis Health Center, tribal police and courts, a number of churches, and tribal housing projects. Macy is an abbreviation of Omaha Agency.

life beginning in the 1950s. While the urban villagers were sensitive to this identity, tribalism and the Omaha Way were never subsumed by this ascription.

Omaha Nation's status as a state within a state dictated a 150-year history of intense mainstream influence on the Omaha Way when emigration began. Consequently, particular and cosmopolitan forces were often overlapping, but no influence was great enough to allow "assimilation." Reflecting mainstream traditions, most Nebraskans throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries upheld the "conviction that Indian cultures must give way to what they believed were the more 'advanced' and 'civilized' cultures derived from Europe."¹⁰ Conversely, Nebraska's original inhabitants maintained the Omaha Way was "far more sophisticated than any other culture" in defining "how a human being should live."¹¹ Still, the Omaha Way was never monolithic and for every Omaha living in Lincoln, "the confrontation of a native identity versus mainstream assimilation became an individual experience occurring in the an urban environment."¹²

COMMUNITY

The Omahas presence in Lincoln was significant because it represented the majority of the Indian population in the city, and because it was a substantial portion of total Omaha enrollment. Additionally, although they make up 1 percent of the United States' population and similar numbers within Lincoln, "Indians have created dynamic urban communities."¹³ By preference, "they liked to live near other members of their

¹⁰Robin Ridington, "Omaha Survival: A Vanishing Indian Tribe that Would Not Vanish," *American Indian Quarterly* 11 (Winter 1987): 43.

¹¹Hollis Davies Stabler (Omaha), in Junior League of Lincoln Literary Project, "Transcript of Film Recordings of Omaha Indians," April 1976, Love Library Archives, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 94.

¹²Fixico, *Urban Indian Experience*, 7.

¹³David R.M. Beck, "Developing a Voice: The Evolution of Self-Determination in an Indian Urban Community," *Wicazo Sa Review* (2002): 117-18.

tribe."¹⁴ Reasonably distinct Omaha urban villages developed as early as 1950. Because populations were never large enough to allow neighborhood homogeneity, and inter-city movement was necessary as home ownership was uncommon, these "tribal communities" tended to be clusters of extended kinspeople.¹⁵ Dispersed congregations reminded urban villagers of age-old, comfortable living patterns and served as the Omahas day-to-day link to traditional cultures.¹⁶ Community based organizations developed to facilitate interaction and provide social services to the urban villagers, and, ultimately, the Lincoln Indian Center emerged as the primary anchor of a growing community.

Demography

Lincoln's urban villages formed and prospered in an era of general population recovery among Indians across the continent and among Omahas specifically. Never a large nation, Omaha historic numbers -- probably about 3,000 individuals -- were decimated by disease and economic turmoil in the nineteenth century. Once confined to their modern political boundaries, populations grew slowly, increasing from approximately 1,200 in 1886 to 1,400 by 1924.¹⁷ By 1966 their numbers approached

¹⁴Fixico, *Urban Indian Experience*, 127.

¹⁵Reportedly, one-half the Omaha population in Lincoln changed address annually. See, Margot Pringle Liberty, "The Urban Reservation" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1973), 29.

¹⁶Fixico, *Urban Indian Experience*, 5.

¹⁷"Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940," *National Archives Microfilm Publications* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965), Roll 311, 62; and Bureau of Indian Affairs, "Census: Omaha, 1915-1925" (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1965), Roll 124, 732.

Population statistics, whether census figures, enrollment numbers, or estimates from other sources vary widely and are often different even within particular agencies. Self-reporting and inclusion of Indian mixed with "other" categories further complicate the issue. Population estimates are still useful as a point of reference, but accuracy cannot be ascribed to these statistics. Most probably, federal and local governments underestimate Omaha and Indian populations. Urban Indians probably overstate populations. To date, the author has not examined official tribal enrollment documents.

2,600 and then blossomed growing to 4,000 in 1992, 5,600 in 2000, and to approximately 6,000 in 2005.¹⁸

Omahas were part of a post-war trend that saw rapid urbanization of indigenous populations. A mere 7 percent of Native Americans lived in mainstream cities in 1940. This percentage doubled by 1950, and redoubled by 1960. Between 1970 and 1990, it teetered around 50 percent, and by 2005, 66 percent of "Indian people lived dispersed throughout cities."¹⁹ Similar developments were seen in Nebraska. (See Figure 5-1.)

Figure 5-1.
Estimated American Indian Populations in Lincoln, Nebraska,
and the United States, 1930-2000

	Lincoln	Nebraska	Nebraska Urban	United States
1930	5	3,256	NA	362,000
1940	2	3,401	NA	370,000
1950	75	3,954	1,003	377,000
1960	360	5,545	1,971	523,000
1970	530	6,624	3,013	827,000
1980	920	9,145	4,718	1,418,000
1990	1,300	12,410	6,732	2,045,000
2000	1,600	14,896	9,700	2,476,000

SOURCES: U.S. Census; Onyema G. Nkwocha, *Health Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Nebraska* (Lincoln: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, 2003); and William N. Thompson, *Native American Issues: A Reference Book* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1996), 162.

¹⁸Margot Liberty, "Population Trends among the Present Day Omaha Indians," *Plains Anthropologist* 20 (August 1975): 225; Christiana E. Miewald, "The Nutritional Impacts of European Contact on the Omaha: A Continuing Legacy," *Great Plains Research* 5 (February 1995): 76; Mni Sose Intertribal Water Rights Coalition, Inc., "Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, Community Environmental Profile," <http://www.mni.org/>; and American Indian Relief Council, http://www.airc.org/res_omaha.cfm?ep=8+ec=5; and Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, "Profile," <http://www.omahatribeofnebraska.com/profile.html>.

In Lincoln, Indian population statistics show consistent increases during the same time periods. Not always distinguishable from the greater Indian population, Omahas were always in the majority in Lincoln. The best available information placed them at 85 percent of the city's total Indian population in 1970.²⁰ Assuming the Omaha majority has remained reasonably constant, the permanent Omaha population in Lincoln could easily have been over 1,000 in 2000.

Despite the mobility necessitated by a renting population, urban Omaha communities were remarkably stable and their residences generally long-term. Some early post-war arrivals -- by 1956 there were 105 Omahas from thirty-three families living in Lincoln -- clustered in the west end of the South Russian Bottoms. Although the housing vacated by Volga Germans was probably affordable, the urban villagers soon moved north and east, and by the early 1960s Omahas reclustered in the Near South and Malone neighborhoods.²¹ By the early 1970s the Clinton, Hartley, and Malone neighborhoods hosted growing Omaha populations whose enclaves were "composed of a small, stable" family groupings that had been in the community ten years or longer.²² (See Figure 5-2.)

Growth throughout the 1970s and 1980s favored town quadrants adjacent to the Lincoln Indian Center. By 1990, the largest Omaha concentrations -- although "Indians" were identified in virtually every census tract in town -- remained in the three core

¹⁹Alan L. Sorkin, *The Urban American Indian* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1978), 10; and Brenda Norell, "Urban Indian Summit Mirrors Population Shift: Families and Identity are the Focus of New Coalition to Assist Urban Indians," *Indian Country Today*, 16 February 2005, 1A, 6A.

²⁰Margot P. Liberty, *Preliminary Report: A 1970 Census of the Indian Community of Lincoln, NE* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Anthropology Department, 1970), unpaginated.

²¹Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 39; and Allen Richard Longwell, "Lands of the Omaha Indians" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska, 1961), 33.

The exact locations of Indian households was not always clear as census block analyses use the descriptor "non-white" populations in the 1940, 1950, and 1960 Censuses. In 1970 they counted "Negroes" separately, but not Indians. Early arrivals in the South Bottoms in the 1940s and early 1950s included Charles and Elizabeth Stabler, Clyde and Lillian Sheridan, Frank and Evelyn Sheridan, Oliver Saunsoci, Shirley Cayou, and William and Alberta Canby. See, for example, *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1947). Successive volumes yield a pattern.

²²Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 7, 39; and Liberty, *Preliminary Report*.

Figure 5-2. Map of Core Omaha Urban Village in Lincoln, Nebraska.



neighborhoods but had expanded to adjacent neighborhoods to the northwest and northeast. Over the next decade, Indian populations generally increased in these same tracts, and in the Near South neighborhood.²³ Significantly, a city block by city block schematic demonstrates marked tendencies for Omahas and other Indians to congregate in tight clusters within each referenced neighborhood.²⁴ Many residents from the South Russian Bottoms in the early years and their families have more recently ended up in the Clinton-Malone-Hartley complex.²⁵

In general, long-term residency was hampered by low levels of home ownership among Omaha urban villagers. Of 246 core neighborhood units that housed 676 individuals in 2000, just twenty-nine structures -- or about 12 percent -- were owner occupied.²⁶ These percentages were presumably much lower during the Omahas' early years in Lincoln. City directories suggest that residents who had been in town since the 1950s began buying homes in the early 1990s, but rarely before.²⁷

Community Centers

In addition to congregating next to family and friends, Omaha urban villagers formed community-based social organizations that allowed them to stress Omaha

²³See, Lincoln City Planning Department, "Table 8, Total Change in Native American Population, 1990-2000 -- Lancaster County," <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/databank/census/natpopch.pdf>; *ibid.*, "1990 Census Tract Map: City of Lincoln and Vicinity," <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/census/amls/ctmap90.a.ml./plan/census/ctmap90.rbaII>; and *ibid.*, "2000 Census Tract Map: City of Lincoln and Vicinity," <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/plots/amls/ctmap2000.a.ml./plots/georef/refbase/rtl/ctmap2000.rba>.

²⁴See, U.S. Census Bureau: American FactFinder, ""TM-P004C. Percent of Persons Who Are American Indian and Native Alaskan Alone: 2000," http://factfinder.census.gov/ThematicMapFramesetServlet?_lang=en&-_MapEvent=...

²⁵This group included extended members of the Canby, Sheridan, and Stabler families. The Saunsocis lived in Clinton in the 1970s but moved farther afield thereafter. The Cayous generally moved northwest of central Lincoln. See *Polk's Lincoln City Directory*.

²⁶City of Lincoln, Urban Development Department, www.lincoln.ne.gov. These statistics originally compiled by U.S. Census and formatted in information specific to the Everett, Hartley, Malone/Hawley, Clinton, North Bottoms, South Salt Creek, Woods Park, Downtown, Near South, East Campus, Havelock, and University Place Neighborhoods. Lincoln's newer neighborhoods were not considered in the scope of the Urban Development Department.

²⁷William and Alberta Canby, Shirley Cayou, Lorenzo and Eva Stabler, Bernard and Loraine Vance were among this group.

identities. They partly duplicated patterns at Omaha Nation which was home in the late 1950s to fourteen community-based groups. Many of them sponsored dance lodges, themselves early twentieth-century adaptations that secretly protected Omaha religious and cultural functions then under sustained attack by the U.S. government and missionaries.²⁸ Duplicating comfortable patterns, the Roofer's Union and various veterans organizations served as centerpoints among Omaha men in the early years. More inclusively, the Lincoln Indian Club was established in 1952 as "an inter-tribal organization" by the few Indian families who lived in the Capital City at that time. They dedicated themselves to "sponsoring traditional gatherings including handgames, dances and meals."²⁹ The club boasted 250 mostly Omaha members by 1970. They remained active and largely Omaha in the twenty-first century and have six events -- culminating with the Annual Indian Club Pow-wow -- planned in 2006.³⁰

Organizations that focused on social activities did not meet all of the urban villagers' needs, however. The stress of relocation and the relative poverty of urban Omahas forced many to congregate in and around the City Mission and the Salvation Army -- both located downtown -- during the first three decades of residence in Lincoln.³¹ While they were able to access social services from these institutions, they were necessarily confronting mainstream processes that may not have understood Indian worldviews.

²⁸*Omaha Community Council News*, November 1958, 3. The organizations included Minute Women, Friendly Club, War Mother's Club, Big Crazy and Group One, Group 2, Group 3, Old Original Native Church Group, Blackfeet and Group 12, Group Eight, First Reformed Church, Junior Council W.S.H., and Reorganized Church of LDS.

²⁹"Lincoln Indian Club History," Program, Lincoln Indian Club Traditional Pow Wow, 6-7 August 2005. Five of seven officers listed on the program were Omahas as were many of the listed members.

³⁰Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 12, 117; Arthur M. Harkins, Mary L. Zeyman, Richard G. Woods, *Indian Americans in Omaha and Lincoln* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Training Center for Community Programs, 1970), 34; and "Lincoln Indian Club Events *Tentatively* Scheduled for 2006," flyer, January 2006.

³¹Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 36.

Serving as an anchor for the Omaha community, the Lincoln Indian Center was incorporated in May 1969 and in full operation by 1971.³² Its nine purposes were:

1. To establish a continuing program which will help the American Indian help himself.
2. To help the American Indian adapt to urban life.
3. To make the American Indian aware of the available services in education, employment, housing, hospitalization, alcohol treatment and rehabilitation, credit unit financing and membership.
4. To organize and create arts and crafts industries and develop job opportunities through the center.
5. To help in any way possible the American Indian both on and off the reservation.
6. To combat juvenile delinquency among American Indians.
7. To encourage sports programs among American Indians such as, but not limited to, baseball, football, track, and boxing.
8. To help eliminate prejudice and discrimination.
9. To defend human rights of the American Indian, guaranteed by law.³³

Its board of directors was required to be Indian, but it was open to all. Initially funded by mainstream religious organizations -- including the City Mission, the Reconciliation Task for the Disciples of Christ, and the Nebraska Conference of the United Methodist Church -- full Indian control was assured by the passage of the Native American Programs Act in 1974. Consequently, the City of Lincoln added funding for more essential services, such as WIC and substance abuse programs administered by Indians for Indians.³⁴

Like individuals within the Omaha community, the Indian Center had several homes before it moved into its permanent facilities. Originally housed at 9th and "O" Streets in a downtown storefront, additional space was required by a growing population.

³²"Tribal Member Recognized for His Role in the Development of the Lincoln Indian Center, *OmahaTribe.com*, 6 November 2005, <http://www.omahatribe.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=23>.

There were forty urban Indian centers open in the United States by the end of 1960s. In addition to social centers, they also actively promoted Native American economic and political advancement. See Fixico, *Urban Indian Experience*, 129; and Sorkin, 107-110.

³³Sorkin, 110.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 111; Gracie McAndrew, "Nutritional Hazards Corrected," *Lincoln Star* 4 March 1977, 9; and "Absorbing of Center is Opposed," *Lincoln Star*, 25 February 1977, 3.

The search for a new home proved problematic. Forced into temporary quarters at 243 South 20th Street, the Lincoln City Council approved a nearby site at 24th and N in 1977. Part of Antelope Park made vacant by the destruction of an aging municipal swimming facility, there was great neighborhood concern that "Indians in the area have had a negative impact on the neighborhood and the center would increase this impact."³⁵ The present site for the center weathered similar criticisms, but as the North Russian Bottoms was already largely rental property, approval was imminent. Blessed by Charles Stabler -- who also a Road Man in the Native American Church -- the new Lincoln Indian Center opened at 1100 Military Road in April 1980.³⁶

It was always conceived as "a place that Indians could come to for their needs such as employment, food, health services or just to be around other Indians."³⁷ It soon hosted most of the community gatherings in the area. From this venue, handgames, pow-wows, various dances, and funerals were among the important events that allowed Omahas to stay connected to the Omaha Way. Sometimes mired in static inertia, other times dominated by vitality and hope, the Lincoln Indian Center appeared poised to continue championing Native issues in the twenty-first century. Wanting to get the center "on the front lines" of community development, Clyde Tyndall (Omaha) assumed the directorship in May 2005.³⁸ With a history in tribal government and economic development, he hoped to "expand the Indian Center's role as a viable human service agency" while refashioning its programs to become engines for economic development.³⁹

Using the Indian Center as a base for most of their tenure in Lincoln, Omaha urban villagers built small but stable enclaves within mainstream neighborhoods. The

³⁵Gordon Winters, "Indian Center Park Site Approved," *Lincoln Star*, 16 August 1977, 18.

³⁶*Lincoln Journal*, 14 April 1980, 9. See also, *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* for 1971, 1978, and 1980.

³⁷Oliver Saunsoci, Jr., in "Tribal Member Recognized," online.

³⁸Jonnie Taté Finn, "Indian Center Taps Tyndall," *Lincoln Journal-Star*, 13 May 2005, 1B.

³⁹"Former NCIA Commissioner Clyde Tyndall Appointed Lincoln Indian Center Executive Director," *Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs Newsletter*, Summer 2005, 3.

success of early arrivals encouraged others -- largely kinspeople -- to follow and a burgeoning population gathered in the Capital City. While a ""significant portion" of tribal enrollment moved to Lincoln, through their communities they "retained a large degree of traditional values"⁴⁰ Specifically, they constructed identities that focused on "cohesion in both the extended family and a strong emphasis on generosity and reciprocity."⁴¹

PARTICULARISM: THE OMAHA WAY

Omaha identity was negotiated in Native space even before the nation migrated into Nebraska. Literally *Umoⁿhoⁿ* means "upstream people" or "against the current," and the name was formed in response to separation from the Quapaws -- "downstream people" -- at the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Together with their other cognate nations, the Osages, Kansas, and Poncas, they were part of the *Dhegiha* group of Siouan people who, according to stories of origins, were once a unified entity that lived either in the upper Ohio River valley or near the Great Lakes.⁴² Their reasons for migrating have not survived, but it appears Osages and Kansas went their own ways at the junction of the Missouri and the Mississippi rivers, and Poncas were still with Omahas as they entered Nebraska sometime early in the eighteenth century.⁴³

Deeply concerned with "relationships and community" that extended beyond human beings, Omaha identity was entrenched in the living Nebraska landscape long

⁴⁰Fixico, *Urban Indian Experience*, 44.

⁴¹Miewald, 95.

⁴²Alice C. Fletcher and Francis LaFlesche, *The Omaha Tribe*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 1: 70. Omahas recognized they once "lived near a large body of water in a wooded country where there was game."

⁴³John Ludwickson, "Historic Indian Tribes: Ethnohistory and Archaeology," *Nebraska History* 75 (Spring 1994): 137; Donald David Ross, "the Omaha People," *The Indian Historian* 3 (Summer 1997): 19; and Dale Rittenning, "Adaptive Patterning of Dhegiha," *Plains Anthropologist* 38 (November 1993): 261. Material culture, including single-ply moccasin soles and bandoleer-style game bags, supports the idea of an eastern woodlands genesis.

before the arrival of mainstream America.⁴⁴ Circular notions of time and space remain central in the Omaha cosmos. Although vexing to the colonial worldview, in "Indian time" the circumstances and essence of events matter far more than the chronology of happenings.⁴⁵ Augmenting this ever expanding historical reservoir, adherence to distinctly Omaha social structures, connections to place, and the development of performed cultures -- religion, music and dance, and language -- had deep-seated and ancient meaning to modern Omahas. Always adaptable, Omahas learned to live on the Great Plains and then amid American culture. Cultural practices evolved continuously, and the mainstream was often used to "enrich" Native heritage.⁴⁶ Consequently, the majority of twentieth-century Omaha behaviors imported into Lincoln's urban villages where somewhere between traditional and white ways.

Social Structures

Omahas -- urban villagers and nationals alike -- survived historically "as communities of relations."⁴⁷ Kinship systems remained central to the maintenance of the Omaha Way in mainstream cities. Despite the disruption of ancient traditions, a working knowledge of clan and interpersonal relationships was imported into Lincoln by the urban village's founding generation, and much of this knowledge remained intact in the early twenty-first century.⁴⁸

Family and clan status descended from an era of intense centripetal force that bound Omahas together when they established their nation in Nebraska. Complex

⁴⁴Fixico, *American Indian Mind*, 7.

⁴⁵Ibid., xii.

⁴⁶Nelson, 2.

⁴⁷Robin Ridington and Dennis Hastings, *Blessing for a Long Time: The Sacred Pole of the Omaha Tribe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), xx; see also Fixico, *Urban Indian Experience*, 41.

⁴⁸Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 142; and Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n)," 22. See also R.H. Barnes, *Two Crows Denies It: A History of Controversy in*

relationships were established through blood, marriage, ceremony, ancient custom, and proximity in the tribal circle -- the *húthuga*. Part of a gendered world, Omaha Nation consisted of five clans from the feminine earth moiety -- *Wézhíⁿshte* (elk), *Íⁿkésabe* (black shoulder of the buffalo), *Hóⁿga* (leaders), *Thátada* (to the left of the leaders), and *Kóⁿze* (Kansa) -- and five more from the masculine sky moiety -- *Móⁿthíⁿkagaxe* (earth maker), *Tesíⁿde* (buffalo tail), *Tapá* (head of the deer), *Íⁿgthézhíde* (red buffalo calf dung), and *Íⁿshtáthuⁿda* (flashing eyes or lightening). Each clan had specific ceremonial responsibilities that produced such interdependence that permanent division became increasingly unlikely.⁴⁹ Additionally, a mixed blood clan -- originally formed to accommodate the children of unions between French men and Omaha women -- emerged in the late eighteenth century.⁵⁰ Because the clans were elaborately interconnected, deep knowledge of their full traditions was fading by the 1970s as the last bilingual generation passed. Nonetheless, clan status and knowledge of extended family relationships remained part of twenty-first century culture as the "public and private use of correct kin terms" remained in circulation.⁵¹

Gender patterns common in urban villages were also imported from Omaha Nation and have deep roots in antiquity. Just as the *húthuga* had separate male and female halves, men and women were assigned separate tasks in the Creation Story.⁵²

Omaha Sociology (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 124. Barnes includes an extended discussion about kinship terms, 124-54.

⁴⁹James Owen Dorsey, *Omaha Sociology* (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1884, reprint 1970), 220, 252; Ridington and Hastings, 112; and Fletcher and LaFlesche, 1, 141, 142-195.

⁵⁰Liberty, "Urban Reservation, 97, 99. Clan membership was patrilineal, and while Omahas were an accepting nation, a new entity was needed to absorb a portion of the population.

⁵¹Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n)," 22. Interestingly, family ties were so prevalent during the allotment years that clan members tended to congregate in grouped allotments. Migrants to Lincoln appear to have come largely from homesteads on the very western fringe of Omaha Nation where *Íⁿkésabe*, *Thátada*, and *Tapá* were common. See, Mark J. Swetland, "'Make-Believe White-Men' and the Omaha Land Allotments of 1871-1900," *Great Plains Research* 4 (August 1994): 210; and Margaret Mead, *The Changing Culture of an Indian Tribe* (New York: Capricorn, 1932, reprint 1966), 33. Not surprisingly, mainstream family names were clan specific as well.

⁵²Fletcher and LaFlesche, 1: 71-72. Men for instance were instructed how to make tools and women tended the hearths.

Contributions to the community were based on gender division but the value assigned the tasks was inherently equal. Women historically made the day-to-day decisions in their homes, prepared meals, protected traditions and religious items, gardened, and raised children. Men concentrated on hunting, raiding, and military protection. In the modern mainstream society, these tasks were replaced by earning livings as construction laborers, roofers, drivers, factory and warehouse workers, and mechanics. Women, when in the job market, were often employed as hairdressers and laundresses.⁵³

Also imported values, Omaha urban villagers maintained great respect for their elders and for the overall health of their communities. The most able served their community by working at children's homes, as community organizers, and in positions at the Lincoln Indian Center. Interestingly, in these situations younger urban villagers took on leadership roles formerly reserved for elders.⁵⁴ While situations sometimes changed, respect for the wisdom of age generally did not. Elders, especially women, continued to play important roles as "agents of cultural survival."⁵⁵ Additionally, the salience of Omaha identity often increased as individuals matured. Those experimenting with mainstream spirituality came back to the Native spiritual practices, for instance, and many who denied their heritage as youth began examining Omaha identity and celebrating the Omaha Way.⁵⁶

⁵³Nineteenth century divisionas are discussed in David J. Wishart, *An Unspeakable Sadness: The Dispossession of the Nebraska Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 19-21; Twentieth century occupations were gleaned from the city directory. See for example, *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1943).

⁵⁴Matthew Sheridan (Omaha), in Sylvia Lee, "The Indian Way: Keeping it Alive in Mid-America," in *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow* (Department Report no. 7, School of Journalism, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1971), 17.

⁵⁵Walter T. Kawamoto and Tamara C. Cheshire, "Contemporary Issues in the Urban American Indian Family," in Harriet Pipes McAdoo, ed., *Family Ethnicity: Strength in Diversity* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), 97.

Place

Omahas were "deeply rooted in the soil of Nebraska" by the eighteenth century and remained so into the twenty-first.⁵⁷ Once on the Great Plains, they claimed a territory from the Platte to the Niobrara and from the Missouri to the headwaters of the Elkhorn. From this 35,600,000-acre area, they traveled for food and trade as far east as the Mississippi River, as far south as the Kansas River, and as far west as the Rocky Mountains. (See figure 5-3.) They established "Big Village," their most famous residence around 1775 on a creek just north of the modern Omaha Nation. Omaha Creek's flood plain was lined with cottonwoods and willows, a convenient source of fuel and materials for construction of earth and timber lodges. It also contained fertile soil, and the Omahas boasted a 483-acre garden. Here, women cultivated "mother" corn, beans, melon, and squash in "grandmother" earth.⁵⁸

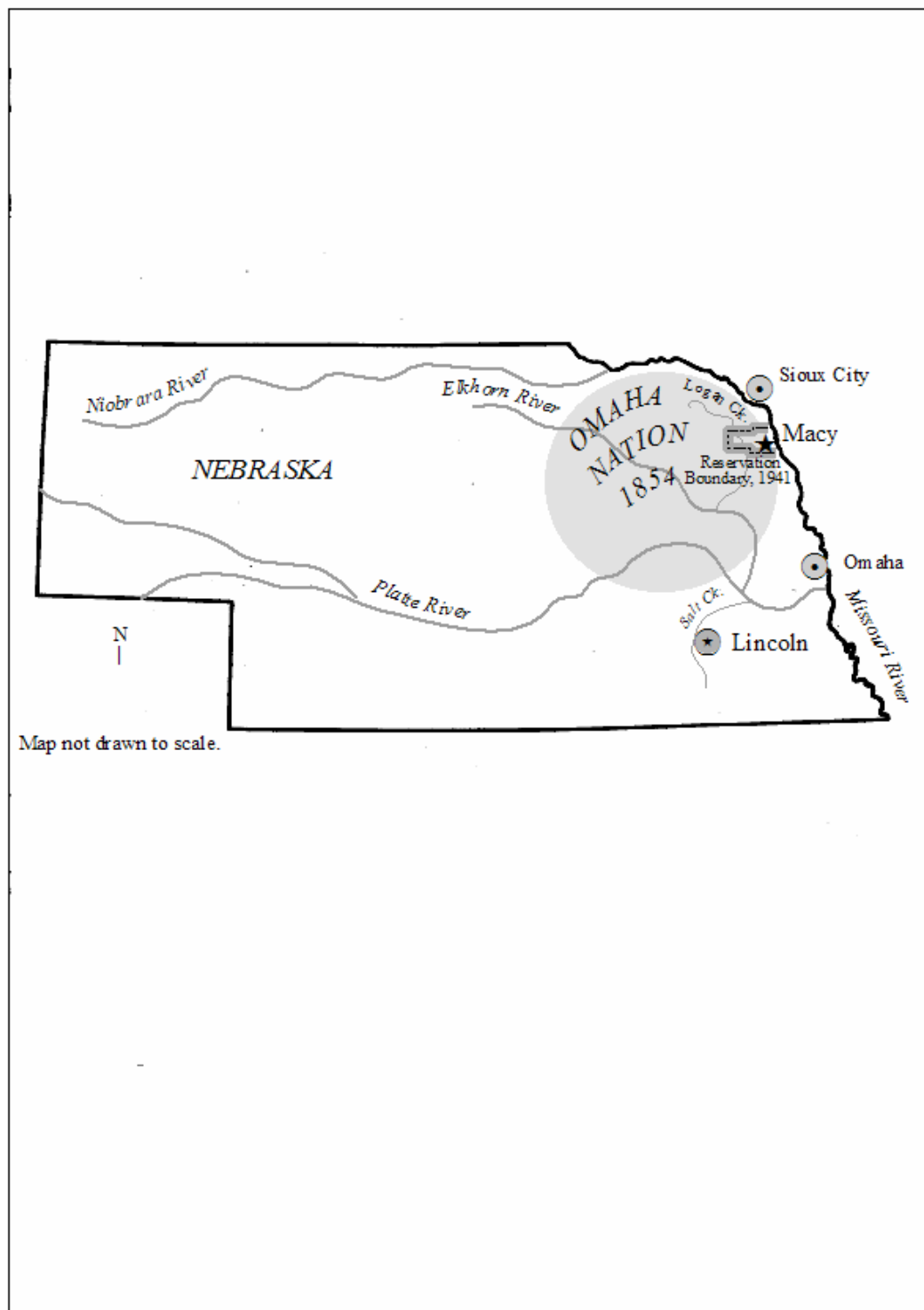
Big Village was the center of an economic cycle based both on hunting and horticulture known as the "Omaha Round" until the tribe moved 100 miles down the Missouri River to escape epidemics and Brulé Sioux raids. Corn was planted in May when the village was full. After tending the crop until its establishment in June or July, almost the entire nation -- save the infirm and a handful of guardians -- swapped earthlodges for tipis and left for the summer buffalo hunt. The hunt was necessary for meat and social well-being as the tribe's most important rituals were performed away

⁵⁶Author, Field Notes, conversation with Barry Webster, Omaha Tribal Council Member, Omaha Council Chambers, 6 October, 2005; See also Paula Porter Bennett, "Wisdom Great and Small: Omaha Indian Grandmothers Interpret Their Lives" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1996), 255-56.

⁵⁷Eunice W. Stabler (Omaha), *How Beautiful the Land of My Forefathers* (Wichita, KS: By Author, 1943), 7.

⁵⁸Fletcher and LaFlesche, 1, 36, plate 21; 2, 605; John M. O'Shea and John Ludwickson, *Archaeology and Ethnohistory of the Omaha Indians: The Big Village Site* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 2, 5; Alice C. Fletcher, *Lands in Severalty to Indians: Illustrated by Experiences with the Omaha Tribe, Proceedings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Volume XXXIII* (Salem, MA: Salem Press, 1885), 6-7; and "History of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa," *Nebraska Indian Community College Catalogue, Academic Year 2005-2007*, 6.

Figure 5-3. Map of Omaha Nation and Surrounding Area.



from their "permanent" home. They returned to the village in time for a September harvest and rested through October. November and December were spent in small bands hunting deer and fowl in the river bottoms. The tribe reassembled in January and hunted buffalo again through March. In April, they returned to Big Village to restart the cycle.⁵⁹

Intense bonds to their land encouraged a tradition of skillful diplomacy that ultimately protected a modicum of their territory even in the onslaught of an expanding United States. As celebrated on the modern Omaha Nation flag -- a modern device with an ancient history -- a "Heritage for Peace" with the United States began with a treaty of friendship in 1815.⁶⁰ To satiate American demands for territory, Omaha diplomats ceded claims to lands east of the Missouri River in 1830 and 1836. Omaha acumen was again employed in 1854 when the creation of Nebraska Territory required further land cessions. Demanding the privilege of choosing a suitable site in a small corner of their old domain, Omaha Nation removed to a 302,800 acre tract (an area approximately thirty miles by forty-five miles) in the Blackbird Hills of northeastern Nebraska.⁶¹ Situated just miles south of Big Village, they continued to live in nucleated villages while successfully adapting American farming techniques to fit into an economy that still favored communalism.⁶²

⁵⁹O'Shea and Ludwickson, 7.

⁶⁰Judith A. Boughter, *Betraying the Omaha Nation, 1790-1916* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998, 30, 39; Wishart, 45; and Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, "Quarterly Stated Meeting, April 15, 2004" (Macy: NE: Tribal Administration, 2004), front cover. The flag -- and many other Native Nation standards -- can also be view online at The Indian Museum of North America, <http://www.crazyhorse.org/museum/flags/index.shtmls>. The modern Omaha flag contains a central circular element with the names of the seven clans -- arranged roughly in their positions in the *húthuga* -- that sent representatives to the traditional tribal council. A war bonnet in the center of the red circle which is placed on a field of white. "Against the Current," "Umo^{ho}," "The Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa" and "Heritage for Peace" are all in black. This flag's historic predecessor is not described in ethnographic reports although it is clear most Plains tribes carried national banners.

⁶¹"Treaty with the Sauk and Foxes, etc., 1830," in Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883* (New York: Interland Publishing, 1972), 305; "Treaty With the Oto, Etc., 1836," *ibid.*, 479-480; and "Treaty With the Omaha, 1854" *ibid.*, 611-14.

⁶²Wishart, 102 and 117. Omaha Nation is situated geographically at 42.6 degree North Latitude and 96 degrees 21 minutes West Longitude. See OmahaTribe.com.

The Omaha Way, however, was disparaged by the federal government which was determined "to do what is best for the Indians according to white norms." Their policies were especially dangerous because they dealt with all "Indians from a position of dominance."⁶³ Consequently, land loss was unavoidable, and Omahas were enticed into ceding the northern portion of their reservation to displaced Winnebagos in 1865.⁶⁴ The same treaty included provisions for allotment of communal land to individuals. Concerned about forcible removal to Indian Territory in Oklahoma -- already the fate of Otoes and Missouris, Pawnees, and Poncas -- Omahas first exercised allotment provisions in 1871 and then again in 1883 as a relatively unpopular method of maintaining residence in their beloved territory.⁶⁵

Prior to allotment, Omaha particularism focused briefly on conflicts regarding adaptation to the new mainstream, and members of the tribe reorganized themselves into three distinct villages. Living just north of Decatur, Nebraska, "woodeaters" were individuals who chose to enter the American economy by chopping and selling wood to steamboat companies. Residing next to the Presbyterian Mission, "Make-Believe-White Men" were a "progressive" group wishing to advance their nation by including some American ways. Finally, a traditionalist group -- "those who dwell in earth lodges" -- congregated just south of present-day Macy.⁶⁶ The underlying causes of these divisions were largely resolved by 1883, and allottees generally chose lands adjacent to their own kinspeople. Ultimately, 1,194 individuals were allotted 75,931 acres and another 55,000 acres was reserved for the Nation. About 25 percent of the personal parcels were located

⁶³Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and American Indians*, abridged edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), x.

⁶⁴"Treaty With the Omaha, 1865," in Kappler, 872-73; and Benjamin Hollowell, ed., "Quaker Report on Indian Agencies in Nebraska, 1869," *Nebraska History* 54 (Summer 1973): 181.

⁶⁵Wishart, 161; Norma Kidd Green, "The Make Believe White Man's Village," *Nebraska History* 56 (Summer 1975): 245; Richmond L. Clow, "Taxing the Omaha and Winnebago Trust Lands, 1910-1971: An Infringement of the Tax Immune Status of Indian Country," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 9 (No. 4, 1985): 2; and Boughter, 104.

along Logan Creek in the western portion of the Omaha Nation. Dominated by members of *Mkésabe*, *Thátada*, and *Tapá* clans, this sector appears to be the cultural hearth of the generation that founded Lincoln's urban villages, although all clans presently have local representatives.⁶⁷

Clan and family solidarity may have been rekindled by allotment, but village structure and self-sufficiency were interrupted by an American impulse to assimilate Indians. The end result was dispossession and poverty. After homesteads were assigned to individuals and families, "surplus" lands were sold to land-hungry American settlers, and Thurston County -- initially comprised entirely of Indian territory -- was created by the Nebraska State Legislature, on March 29, 1889. Arguing that Omahas used county services, they were illegally taxed by county officials. The need to pay these levies and a general unfamiliarity with commercial farming encouraged Omahas to lease land to mainstream farmers. When Omahas received clear title on their allotments under the Burke Act in 1906, the last vestiges of land protection were eliminated, and land-loss became endemic. By 1912, 90 percent of the land described in the earliest fee patents was in the hands of Euro-Americans. By the end of World War II, Omahas owned a mere 10 percent of their original reservation and three-quarters were landless.⁶⁸

While land holdings would begin to increase again in the 1950s, this nation of less than 30,000 acres housed the sending culture for migration into urban America. Despite catastrophic losses, all Omahas remained tied to their land. Twentieth-century tribal leaders even suggested that "If every inch of their Omaha land was gone, these

⁶⁶Swetland, "Make--Believe White-Men," 217-18; Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e-Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n)," 16; Francis LaFlesche, *The Middle Five: Indian School-boys of the Omaha Tribe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963), xix.; and Wishart, 120.

⁶⁷Swetland, "Make--Believe White-Men," 217-19; and Liberty, "Urban Reservation, 97, 99.

⁶⁸Boughter, 136, 139; Clow, 7, 15; Janet McDonnell, "Land Policy on the Omaha Reservation and Forced Fee Patents," *Nebraska History* 63 (Fall 1982): 399, 401, 406-07, 409; and Miewald, 94.

The Burke Act was designed to limit abuses on Native American land. The original federal trust status of twenty-five years was lengthened unless an allottee was issued a certificate of competence by the

poor people would stay where it used to be and the ones who went to the cities would keep coming back to where it used to be."⁶⁹ Similarly, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, tribal leaders still connected Omaha identity to a land base around the nation.⁷⁰ Alive with spiritual meaning and filled with ancestral graves, the land was indeed "precious" to Omahas.⁷¹

Religion

In addition to an intense connection to the land, a shared sense of spirituality was central to Omaha identity. Recognizing no separation of church and state, social structures, individual lives, and government "were founded upon religion."⁷² Omaha doctrines proved remarkably adaptable as belief structures were fundamentally altered since 1854. Spirituality, however, remained a central factor of individual and community life, and religious forms stayed connected to Great Plains traditions. Ultimately, the Omaha Way survived in urban America as a series of ceremonies and prayers.⁷³

The Omaha Creation Story records that in the "beginning all things were in the mind of *Wakón*da." For a time, all creatures were "spirits," but people wanted a home. They tried living on the sun and then the moon but were dissatisfied. Descending from the sky, Omahas came to the earth to live in water before finally emerging onto land where they were given food, fire, and clothing. Significantly *Wakón*da -- the Omaha Creator -- was seen as a "mysterious life power permeating all natural forms and forces

local agent. Those deemed capable -- most Omahas fell into this category -- received fee patent to their land (clear title) and the trust period ended.

⁶⁹Alfred Wayne Gilpin (Omaha), "The Community Development Plan of the Omaha Tribe," *Omaha Community Council News*, August 1958, 2.

⁷⁰Author, Field Notes, conversation with Barry Webster.

⁷¹Eunice Stabler, 8.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 43.

⁷³Ridington and Hastings, xx.

and all phases of man's conscious life." All things owned and practiced by Omahas were gifts from this Creator.⁷⁴

The gift most central to Omahas as they made their way through their annual Round was *Umóⁿhoⁿxtí* -- known in English as the "Real Omaha," the "Venerable Man," or, simply, the Sacred Pole. Considered a living being perhaps dating to the sixteenth century, this icon is a two-and-a-half meter long cottonwood branch cut from a tree that burned at night without being consumed by flames. Wrapped in hide and wearing a scalplock, the Sacred Pole was the center of the most significant religious ceremonies until the late-nineteenth century. He represented "a common yet moveable center shared by all" Omahas whose cohesion depended on communal living patterns.⁷⁵

Because religious practices were so intimately connected to a social and economic system that traveled across the Great Plains, maintenance of traditional beliefs was strained by life on the reservation. Finally, as buffalo hunting was discontinued after 1876, the annual renewal ceremony -- which required that the Sacred Pole was anointed in bison blood -- lapsed. Several generations later, mainstream observers described the Omaha Way as a "broken culture" because many rituals and behaviors had been abandoned or replaced.⁷⁶

The underlying spirituality of the Omaha people, however, was already transferred to religions with meaning to twentieth-century conditions. Christianity brought them "new doctrines of faith, and all its teachings" gave Omahas "hope for a future."⁷⁷ While contact with mainstream missionaries created practicing Mormons, Dutch Reformed Christians, Methodists, and Presbyterians, the most influential

⁷⁴Fletcher and LaFlesche, 1: 70; 2: 570-71, 597; and Eunice Stabler, 44. The cosmic portion of the Creation story was recorded by the Pebble Society. Emergence from water was recorded as part of the Creation Story shared by all Omahas. It is possible that some or all of the clans had their own creation stories as well.

⁷⁵Ridington and Hastings, xvii, 54.

⁷⁶Ibid., 234, 243; and Mead, xii.

⁷⁷Eunice Stabler, 55.

denomination eventually was the Native American Church (NAC). Its rituals allowed Omahas to celebrate the creative power of *Wakóⁿda* in a modern adaptation.⁷⁸

Cofounded in 1906 by Quannah Parker (Comanche), the NAC tailored Christian doctrine to fit "typical Plains religious attitudes."⁷⁹ While the church employed familiar ceremonial items such as sage, cedar, and eagle feathers, it centered around peyote -- a component of pre-Columbian rituals among some tribes on the Southern Plains -- which was ingested as a sacrament. The "mild hallucinatory state" it produced allowed Indians to "reconnect to their spiritual traditions."⁸⁰ Worshippers attended meetings that began Saturday evening and ran to noon on Sunday. Sitting around a hearth in a specially arranged tipi, they drank peyote tea and sang and prayed to the rhythm of a hand-held drum. While the rituals were often new in form, many prayers had deep traditions.⁸¹ Depending on their religious leanings, participants reportedly saw the faces of "Jesus" or their "relatives."⁸²

The "Peyote Road" was given to the Omaha Nation during the winter of 1906-07 by Otoes visiting from Oklahoma.⁸³ Immediately seen as "a good culture way," the remnant forms of older religions were replaced rapidly.⁸⁴ An estimated 50 percent of the tribe adopted the religion by 1911. By the 1930s, the NAC was the most vital denomination among Omahas, and by the 1950s an estimated 90 percent of the Nation's residents adhered to its doctrines. Observers reported that Omaha Tribal Council

⁷⁸Suzette Turner (Omaha), in "Transcript of Film Recordings of Omaha Indians," 4.

⁷⁹Weston La Barre, *The Peyote Cult*, 5th ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 66, 113. See also Melvin R. Gilmore, "The Mescal Society Among the Omaha Indian," *Publications of the Nebraska State Historical Society* 19 (1919): 163, 165.

⁸⁰Benson Tong, "Allotment, Alcohol, and the Omahas," *Great Plains Quarterly* 17 (Winter 1997): 28. See also La Barre, 7, 58.

⁸¹Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 37.

⁸²Francis LaFlesche, "James Mooney and Francis La Fleschè (Omaha) Testify About Peyote, 1918," in Alfred L. Hurtado and Peter Iverson, eds., *Major Problems in American Indian History* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1994), 359.

⁸³Malcolm J. Arth, "A Functional View of Peyotism in Omaha Culture," *Plains Anthropologist* 7 (October 1956): 25.

members were often active in the NAC in the 1950s and 1960s.⁸⁵ Surprisingly tolerant, the State of Nebraska, unlike many other states, never whole-heartedly prosecuted peyotism and in 1921 formally recognized the NAC.⁸⁶ Protected across the United States by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978), NAC boasted 200,000 members nationally at the close of the twentieth century.⁸⁷ By 1975, about 45 percent of Lincoln's urban villagers reported they attended NAC meetings on a regular basis.⁸⁸

NAC and Protestant denominations tended to have overlapping memberships as exclusivity was not an inherent Omaha religious trait.⁸⁹ The Lincoln Indian Community Church -- an "interdenominational and inter-tribal" organization -- demonstrated the flexibility of Omaha spirituality. Sponsored by seven churches, its stated mission is to "respect, affirm and integrate the spiritual values of the American Indian people" with "the essentials of the Christian Faith." Omaha urban villagers and their families attended services weekly at the organization's offices in the Lincoln Indian Center.⁹⁰

"Doings": The Importance of Music and Dance

The most cogent events that reinforced the Omaha Way among Lincoln's urban villagers were community "doings." Participation in handgames, Gourd Dances, and pow-wows fostered "an inner world of continuity, where old clan ties, communal values,

⁸⁴Susan Freemont (Omaha), interview transcript, April 1994, in Paula Porter Bennett, "Wisdom Great and Small: Omaha Indian Grandmothers Interpret Their Lives" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 1996), 147.

⁸⁵Arth 25; Mead 98; Sherry L. Smith, "Francis LaFlesche and the World of Letters," *American Indian Quarterly* 25 (Fall 2001): 597; and Wesley R. Hurt, "Factors in the Persistence of Peyote in the Northern Plains," *Plains Anthropologist* 5 (May 1955): 26.

⁸⁶Tong, 29; Earl Dyer, "They Pray All Night: Indian Church Ideas Christian," *Lincoln Star*, 21 December 1962, 1. While fourteen states had laws making ritual peyote illegal by the early-1960s, Nebraska never enacted such prohibitions.

⁸⁷Pritzger, 279.

⁸⁸Liberty, "Population Trends," 226. The sample size was 98 and polled nearly equivalent numbers of national and Lincoln residents.

⁸⁹Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 113.

⁹⁰Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, "Lincoln Indian Comity Church," <http://www.interchurchministries.org/ministries/native/licc.htm>. Reformed, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal,

and traditional beliefs and meanings" were reaffirmed.⁹¹ In addition to allowing the Indian minority a place and time to function as the majority, events also gave participants opportunities to practice the time-honored values of generosity and reciprocity.⁹² These concepts were so central to the Omaha Way that there were many words for "thank you" in the Omaha language but no word for "please," as giving was an honor and a duty.⁹³ Besides redistributing wealth to those most needing it, gift reciprocity allowed urban villagers to "sacrifice" for the good of the community. Although designed for social enjoyment, doings were the vehicles of sacrifice and the prime methods of exposing children to proper Omaha behaviors.⁹⁴

Handgame -- an ancient gift from the Otoes -- was an important form of recreation imported into the urban village.⁹⁵ More popular in Lincoln than at Omaha Nation, community members generally attended multiple events annually in the 1970s, and interest remained high over the next three decades.⁹⁶ Family or organizational hosts provided the initial stake for the competition as well as food for the accompanying feast. Held in honor of specific events or individuals, those in attendance socialized, ate, danced, and made their own monetary offerings to the event and their community.⁹⁷

Rife with complicated meanings and ritualistic components, handgame was simple to play and designed for participants of all ages. Two players at a time hid stones in their hands. A feather carrier was assigned to guess which hands the stones were in.

Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ and Methodist organizations comprised the seven.

⁹¹Colin G. Calloway, ed., *Our Hearts Fell to the Ground: Plains Indian Views of How the West Was Lost* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 28.

⁹²Miewald, 113.

⁹³*Wibthaho*ⁿ is the root word for "thank you." It is conjugated to recognize relationships.

⁹⁴Speech by Dean Whitebreast, Master of Ceremonies, Lincoln Indian Club Traditional Pow-wow, 6 August 2005, unpublished.

⁹⁵Mark Awakuni-Swetland, *Dance Lodges of the Omaha People: Building from Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 45.

⁹⁶Liberty, "Population Trends," 226; Lee, 17.

⁹⁷Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n)," 200.

Score was kept according to the success of the stone hiders.⁹⁸ When the game was on, the singers sitting around the drum at the center of the arena warbled. The music stopped when the feather carrier correctly identified both stones and play changed sides. The competition to win four of seven sets was established by geography; those sitting on the eastside of the circle played against those on the west. As the stones circulated clockwise around the room, all interested community members were offered a chance to hide the stones.⁹⁹

At the end of each set, two individuals on the losing side received rattles from the headman and led a dance clockwise around the drum. The rattle carriers' families and friends showed their affiliations by offering a sacrifice -- usually a dollar or two by the twenty-first century -- and falling into step behind them.¹⁰⁰ After the rattles were collected, round dances based on a simple, but elegant sliding step ensued. Additionally, singers often performed proprietary songs as further reinforcement of kinship ties. These tunes were sung with the expectation that all family or clan members present would enter the dance arena.

As demonstrated by handgame, music, dance, and community were all intricately connected within the Omaha Way. In the nineteenth century, dances were divided into three categories: the sacred, "those that are connected with bravery and war," and those for social pleasure.¹⁰¹ While sacred dances were less common in the post-World War II era, the other two classes demonstrated cultural borrowing and changing traditions inherent in modern Omaha life.

⁹⁸Four was always significant as it marks the number of cardinal directions and signifies completion in the Indian cosmos.

⁹⁹Author, Field Notes, Lincoln Indian Club Handgame and War Dance, 8 March 2003, Lincoln Indian Center; University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Omaha Language Class Handgame, 25 April 2003, Lincoln Indian Center; and Awakuni-Swetland Family Handgame, 24 April 2004, Lincoln Indian Center.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Awakuni-Swetland, *Dance Lodges*, 12; Dorsey, 342.

Some "war dance" events and their hosting organizations had long connections to Omaha history. The *Hethúshka* society, for instance, was active for eons before declining late in the nineteenth century.¹⁰² The dance style it developed, however, remained well known and the society was eventually revived by veterans of the U.S. armed forces in order to "keep alive the memory of historic and valorous acts."¹⁰³ These warriors were honored by the American Folklife Center in 1985 and went to Washington, D.C., to receive copies of an album of Omaha songs originally recorded on wax cylinders in the 1890s.¹⁰⁴

Interestingly, Lincoln's urban villagers were more apt to participate in the Gourd Dance and be members of the accompanying Tiah Piah Society -- another organization revived by servicemen after World War II. Commonly performed by Omaha veterans, this war dance and its host society were gifts from the Kiowa Nation in 1970.¹⁰⁵ Dressed either in military fatigues or an ensemble consisting of a blue and red blanket, a feather fan, and a ceremonial belt, the men sounded "gourd" rattles and danced clockwise around the drum.¹⁰⁶ Modeling traditional gender behaviors, women, even those who served in the armed forces, danced in place on the outside edge of the arena.

The *Hethushka* and Tiah Piah societies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries recalled intricate patterns of behavior and social organization of bygone days. While the war dance formerly required a give away of horses and goods, the urban villagers continued giving away blankets and other items and feeding all the guests. Similarly, pow-wows were a reassertion of an ancient ceremony known as *Hédewachi* -- the

¹⁰²Fletcher and LaFlesche, 2: 459-61.

¹⁰³Ridington, 47.

¹⁰⁴"Omaha Indian Music," American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammam/amhtml/>.

¹⁰⁵Benjamin R. Kracht, "Kiowa Powwows: Tribal Identity Through the Continuity of the Gourd Dance," *Great Plains Research* 4 (August 1994), 264; and Tom Holm, "Fighting a White Man's War: The Extent and Legacy of American Indian Participation in World War II," in Peter Iverson, ed., *The Plains Indians of the Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 160.

¹⁰⁶Author, Field Notes, Veterans Day Gourd Dance, 11 November 2002, Lincoln Indian Center.

festival of joy.¹⁰⁷ Cherished by all Omahas, gifting and feasting behaviors remained vital in annual pow-wows held at the Lincoln Indian Center and at Omaha Nation.

Pow-wows were actually "a contemporary form with a historical past."¹⁰⁸ Still driven by the "heart beat of Mother Earth," participants dance to the drum as they have for millennia and still give thanks for the accomplishments and successes of the previous year. Pow-wow still meant "going home" as Omahas formerly returned from their summer buffalo hunt in August and presently regroup both in Lincoln and in Macy during that month as well.¹⁰⁹ The modern pow-wow, however, was largely a secular, Pan-Indian event that emerged when "religious dances" were suppressed or driven underground by BIA policies between 1889 and 1934. The few surviving dance forms that were revitalized during the 1950s were frequently performed out of context as "fancy" contest dance styles became the norm. Athletic and beautiful, the *Hethushka* set new standards for pow-wow dancing as it spread across the Northern Plains by World War I, and then across the Southern Plains after World War II.¹¹⁰ By the mid-1950s, "non-Indian concepts of competition and prize money had become increasingly important, ushering in the age of professional dancers who traveled a national circuit."¹¹¹

Traveling from pow-wow to pow-wow, multiple dance categories were available for both men and women. Some dancers performed traditional figures, while others preferred modern styles that include powerful kinetic movement and juried competition. Significantly, women's roles at pow-wows have increased steadily since World War I. Active in planning and participating in modern events, they no longer danced around the

¹⁰⁷John Turner (Omaha), in "Transcript of Film Recordings of Omaha Indians," 78; and Awakuni-Swetland, *Dance Lodges*, 52, 79.

¹⁰⁸Tara Browner, *The Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 145.

¹⁰⁹Nettie Grant Sikyta, placard at "Pow Wow Plains," exhibit, Great Plains Art Collection, 15 December 2002, Lincoln, Nebraska; Hollis Davies Stabler (Omaha), in "Transcript of Film Recordings of Omaha Indians," 21; and Whitebreast.

¹¹⁰Kracht 257-65; Browner, 29. Commissioner John Collier ended the ban during the Indian New Deal.

edge of the arenas. In events like jingle dress dancing and the shawl dance, women took center stage.¹¹²

All dancers donned "regalia" to individualize their expressions while honoring family, personal, and tribal traditions. Regalia decoration included many traditional elements -- including eagle staffs, feather bustles, buckskin, and bear claws -- as well as modern influences -- American flags, military unit insignias, and snuff can lids. Part of a living culture, the symbolism portrayed in these adornments were powerful indications of the synthesis between Omaha past and Omaha present.¹¹³

To traditionalists, pow-wow atmosphere changed from a celebration of thanksgiving to something akin to a carnival right around the time mass migration from Indian Nations to urban areas began. These developments bewildered former Omaha Chairman Alfred Gilpin who was skeptical about the new ambiance that permeated spectator behavior, dance styles, and characteristics of modern dance regalia.¹¹⁴ Even as Omaha Nation marked the 201th anniversary of its fall pow-wow in 2005, urban villagers in Lincoln sought a more traditional and distinctly Omaha experience in their pow-wows.

The Lincoln Indian Club pow-wow -- held annually since 1976 -- was unique because it alternated between "traditional" and "contest" formats. Traditional pow-wows were "geared more toward teaching the younger generation to dance and drum."¹¹⁵ In essence, they reinforced the Omaha Way and allowed participants to "go back to roots, back to our history."¹¹⁶ Part of an age old protocol, adults at such events asked

¹¹¹Browner, 31.

¹¹²Ibid., 50, 53.

¹¹³Tom Tidball, "Pow Wow Plains."

¹¹⁴Ken Gray, "Indian 'Disheartened' by Changing Customs," *Lincoln Star*, 22 August 1973, 13.

¹¹⁵Paraphrasing Barb Smith (Omaha) Lincoln Indian Club Cultural advisor, in Jonnie Taté Finn, "Preparing for Powwow, With Eye Toward Sky: Lincoln Indian Club Erects Four Tipis for This Weekend's Traditional Powwow," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 4 August 2005, 1B.

¹¹⁶Carrie Wolfe (Omaha), President of Lincoln Indian Club, in Finn, "Preparing for Powwow," 1B.

their relatives in attendance to forgive their children for lack of decorum and urged them to instruct lovingly the novice dancers as they learned how to participate properly.¹¹⁷

Omaha elder Alberta Canby confirmed this attitude in her role as cultural advisor to the Lincoln Indian Club, averring, "We're here to help the young members learn about powwow tradition."¹¹⁸

Language

Alberta Canby was also active in preserving and teaching Omaha language -- a central component of the Omaha Way. Her efforts, however, merely augmented important cultural concepts that were "increasingly rendered in English language." A century of intense mainstream efforts to obliterate indigenous tongues left its mark on all Omahas. By the twenty-first century, urban villagers heard their language in occasional speeches by community elders and in the songs that permeated most secular and religious gatherings.¹¹⁹ Many listeners did not understand the words, and despite prevailing attitudes that linked language with cultural retention, fluency in Omaha was increasingly uncommon both in Lincoln and in Omaha Nation.¹²⁰

Language loss -- largely a twentieth-century phenomena -- was widespread among Native peoples. At least one-third of indigenous tongues in the United States had 100 or fewer speakers in 1990. "Linguistic genocide" was institutionalized by nineteenth-century missionaries and boarding schools. By 1910 most Omahas had a good grasp of English. Although English as a first language was challenged by the

¹¹⁷Mitchell Parker (Omaha), speech, Gourd Dance at Lincoln Indian Club 35th Annual Powwow, Lincoln Indian Center, August 5, 2005.

¹¹⁸Alberta Canby (Omaha), in Finn, "Preparing for Powwow," 1B.

¹¹⁹Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n)," 22; Author, Field Notes, Veterans Day Gourd Dance; La Barre, 66.

Interestingly, NAC meetings were conducted in English, the organizations *lingua franca*. Songs and prayers were specific to each nation and were reportedly rendered in Omaha.

architects of the Indian New Deal of the 1930s, it continued to be unofficial policy as long as the schools remained open, and by World War II the population was largely bilingual. Movement into cities, contact with the mainstream economy, and the influence of popular culture only decreased Omaha language usage.¹²¹ While Omaha Community Council meetings were generally conducted in Omaha in the early 1960s, children of the era were already speaking English at home.¹²² Language atrophy was more severe among urban villagers than their national counterparts. Although self-reported, one-third of nationals claimed Omaha as a first language in 1972, while all respondents in a similar survey in Lincoln reported English as a first language, although many claimed Omaha as a second tongue.¹²³ Despite language decline, young and old alike bemoaned that "young ones don't speak" Omaha any more.¹²⁴

Still, Omaha -- a tongue that is both musical and "forceful and virile" -- has not been abandoned.¹²⁵ Part of the *Dheiga* Siouan language family, it reflected Indian worldviews that were expressly concerned with the "minutiae of relationships."¹²⁶ Typically, Omahas center action rather than actor. Single verbs often stand as complete

¹²⁰Judi M. gaiashkibos, (Ponca/Santee), Executive Director, Nebraska Commission of Indian Affairs, interview by author, 31 October 2005, Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs Offices, Lincoln, Nebraska.

¹²¹James Crawford, *At War With Diversity: US Language Policy in an Age of Anxiety* (Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2000), 52-53, 57-58.

¹²²Rory M. Larson, "Acculturation Terms in Omaha" (M.A. thesis: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2005), 37, 75, 190; Bennett, 193-95; Earl Dyer, "Indians Determined to Solve Own Problems," *Lincoln Star*, 1 March 1960, 1.

For narratives on nineteenth century English acquisition, see, Phillips G. Davies, "David Jones and Gwen Davies, Missionaries in Nebraska Territory, 1853-1860," *Nebraska History* 60 (Spring 1979): 83; Valarie Sherer Mathes, "Susan LaFlesche Picotte: Nebraska's Indian Physician, 1865-1915," *Nebraska History* 63 (Winter 1982): 502; Norma Kidd Green, "The Presbyterian Mission to the Omaha Nation Tribe," *Nebraska History* 48 (Autumn 1967): 277; and Wishart, 122, 231.

¹²³Liberty, "Population Trends," 226; Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 44.

¹²⁴Freemont, in Bennett, 144; Hollis Davies Stabler, in "Transcript of Film Recordings of Omaha Indians," 97.

¹²⁵Fletcher and LaFlesche, 2: 606. See also James Owen Dorsey, "Omaha and Ponka Letters,:" *Bureau of Ethnology Bulletin 11* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1891). Strictly an oral language, Omaha was assigned an orthography by ethnologist James Owen Dorsey in the late nineteenth century. He went on to teach some Omahas to read and write, and he published a number of their personal letters. It is unclear how widespread the practice of writing was. Fletcher and LaFlesche simplified Dorsey's system in the early twentieth century, and most Omaha remains recorded in variation of this format.

sentences as object and subject are often contextual. *Uné*, for instance, can mean "she is searching for it." Adding a syllable changes the relationship. *Uáne* can be glossed as "I am searching for it." Complexities in verb conjugation encouraged Omahas to train their children rigorously allowing no slips "to pass uncorrected."¹²⁷ Instruction focused on concise pronunciation to impart a desired communication as errors in syllable accents could dramatically alter meanings.¹²⁸

By speaking Omaha, urban villagers and Omaha nationals "nurtured relationships with family, friends, and the natural world."¹²⁹ Consequently, a great deal of prestige was attached to Omaha language, and few English words were added to its vocabularies. It remains one of the official languages of Omaha Nation in the early twenty-first century, despite a dearth of speakers.¹³⁰ In 1994, it was estimated that only 1 percent of all Omahas spoke their language fluently, and interestingly, about one-half lived outside of Omaha Nation.¹³¹ Fortunately, Lincoln in the twenty-first century was one loci for a movement to reclaim the language.

Because speaking Omaha "emotes strength" to most twenty-first century Indians, many tribal members "wished to see it carried forward."¹³² A few remaining fluent speakers and a number of "hesitant speakers" -- mostly who spoke as children -- were enlisted to preserve the language.¹³³ These efforts were supported by most of the tribe, state and federal policies, and three institutions of learning.¹³⁴ While a return to fluency

¹²⁶Denny Gayton (Hunkpapa Lakota), "There is No Alternative to Tribalism," paper presentation, 11 November 2005, Native American Graduate Students Symposium, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

¹²⁷LaFlesche, xvii.

¹²⁸Fletcher and LaFlesche, 2: 606.

¹²⁹Charles Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (New York: Norton, 2005), 329-30.

¹³⁰Larson, 7; Mni Sose Intertribal Water Rights Coalition, Inc., online.

¹³¹Travis Cleman, "Keeping alive in a language and a culture," *Lincoln Journal-Star*, 26 August 2004, 1A; and Mark J. Awakuni-Swetland, "ELF Omaha Language Curriculum Development Project, <http://sapid.ling.yale.edu/~elf/Awakuni.html>.

¹³²Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n)," 88, 130.

¹³³Larson, 76.

¹³⁴United States Congress passed Native American Language Acts in 1990 and 1992, see Crawford, 61-62. The Nebraska legislature passed LB 475 in 1999 which proclaimed the "Teaching

may not be assured by these efforts, some components of an important cultural marker will certainly survive. Elders were bemused by some of these developments and declared, "If the government left us alone maybe we could all talk Indian."¹³⁵

Fortunately, since 1995 strong efforts have been made to revitalize the language. The school system in Macy has been a key player in the movement. Its goals were explicit:

The Mission of the Umonhon Nation Public School, through positive interaction with the Omaha tribal community, is to provide a student-centered education in a safe and respectful learning environment allowing our students to strengthen Native American traditions yet flourish in other cultures.¹³⁶

This philosophy was largely made possible by the Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, which allowed local control of education and redirection of funds as deemed appropriate. In Macy, this included the acquisition of a full-time Omaha culture and language teacher -- Vida Sue Stabler. She conducted her work at all grade levels in consultation with a group of fluent elders. Similarly, the Macy and Sioux City campuses of Nebraska Indian Community College offered Omaha language courses under the tutelage of Elizabeth Saunsoci (Omaha) and linguist Ardis Eschenburg -- an adopted member of the tribe.¹³⁷

Language instruction also occurred in Lincoln. Elizabeth Stabler conducted language classes at the Lincoln Indian Center in the mid-1970s. Twenty-five years later her adopted Omaha grandson, Mark Awakuni -Swetland -- with the assistance of tribal elders -- inaugurated an Omaha language program at the University of Nebraska. While the program has met with mixed approval in Omaha Nation as many tribal members demanded "complete ownership of the Omaha language," a number of mainstream and

American Indian languages is essential to the proper education of Indian children." See Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n)," 187.

¹³⁵Suzette Turner, 62.

¹³⁶Umonhon Nation Public School Welcome Page, http://macyweb.esu1.org/about_school.htm

¹³⁷Cleman, 2A: Nebraska Indian Community College, <http://www.thenicc.edu>.

Omaha students alike have completed the two-year sequence.¹³⁸ Additionally, Emmaline Walker Sanchez (Omaha), an instructor with the University's program, started a community education class in 2004 that has proved popular with urban villagers.

The interest these courses generated in recent years has helped strengthen traditional respect towards elders, especially those who maintained the old knowledge. The number of fluent speakers, however, continued to decline as virtually all students were learning Omaha as a second language. Many American Indians in Nebraska believe that efforts to restore Native languages will ultimately be successful, but will happen slowly. Organizations such as NICC seem to be making giant strides, but as the Executive Director of Nebraska Commission of Indian Affairs noted, since "it took them [mainstream Americans] 100 year[s] to steal our culture one can't expect us to be fluent speakers in one generation."¹³⁹

Unlike Omaha language, the Omaha Way was retained and nurtured in Lincoln's urban village. Spiritually intense connections to the Nebraska landscape, native religious practices, ancient social structures, and the love of music and dance remained central to urban Omahas between 1940 and 2005. Intriguingly, aspects of performed culture imported into Lincoln were already influenced by mainstream forces even during the founding generation's journeys back into the old salt basin. Modifications of the Omaha Way continued throughout their sojourn in the Capital City, but oftentimes, the Lincoln population proved more culturally conservative than their Omaha national relatives.

¹³⁸Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n)," 188.

¹³⁹Judi M. gaiashkibos, e-mail to author, 31 October 2005.

COSMOPOLITANISM

Because Omahas had "such wealth of tradition and culture," they were able to survive the onslaught of "the white man's civilization" for decades in both the Omaha Nation and Lincoln's urban villages.¹⁴⁰ Mainstream influences that they confronted during the era of migration fundamentally changed Omaha identities, however. Never abandoning their primary ascription and tribal loyalty, what it meant to be "Omaha" was redefined by cosmopolitan forces that insisted on measuring Indianness through parentage rather than cultural constructions. Ultimately, Omahas internalized blood quantum dictates although tribal membership criteria remained flexible and continued adapting to new circumstances. Urban villagers, many who moved for economic and educational opportunity, confronted the worlds of work and school in Lincoln with mixed success. In many instances they were reminded that they were Indians by the mainstream and adaptation in the new milieu was not necessarily easy. Still, Omahas were proud "Americans," although they interpreted this ascription to fit into the Omaha Way.

Omaha Blood

The very notion of what it meant to be Omaha was influenced by mainstream forces. In Native American culturescapes, identity depended on kinship ties, and individuals belonged first to a family, then to a clan, and then to a nation. Although blood descent may have been desirable, Omahas had mechanisms to adopt outsiders into their fold both as individuals and as groups.¹⁴¹ The creation of the half-breed clan to accommodate children with French fathers demonstrated the flexible nature of the Omaha cosmos. Tribal membership depended largely on a willingness to practice the

¹⁴⁰Eunice Stabler, 8.

Omaha Way. This sort of self-definition began to dissipate by 1854 when Omahas reluctantly accepted their status as members of a "domestic dependent nation."¹⁴²

Ultimately, annuity payments, land allotments, and land claims settlements all required proof of tribal identity. As a result, the legal definition of "Omaha" was dictated by the BIA and revolved around lineage, place, and eventually blood quantum.¹⁴³ Between 1854 and 1934, enrollment in Omaha Nation generally required direct lineage to an individual who removed to the Blackbird Hills with the tribe. In many respects, being Omaha was place based. This connection remained after the Nation approved its Constitution in 1936, but the Indian New Deal expanded tribal affiliations to include persons of "Indian descent" recognized by a tribe, descendants of an Indian living on a "reservation," or individuals with 50 percent or more Indian blood.¹⁴⁴

Over the next twenty years Omaha tribal membership was defined as individuals appearing on the census roll as of April 1, 1934, children born in Omaha Nation, and children residing there who were approved by the Tribal Council. Anyone leaving Omaha country for a period of five years could have their membership terminated.¹⁴⁵ Blood quantum was not included in Omaha identity until 1954 when the Constitution was amended to include children with one-half Omaha blood and individuals whose father would have been eligible for enrollment.¹⁴⁶ The "one quarter of Omaha blood"

¹⁴¹A. Irving Hallowell, "American Indians, White and Black: The Phenomenon of Transculturalization," *Current Anthropology* 4 (December 1963): 523, 527-28.

¹⁴²See, David R. Edmunds, "Native American Voices: American Indian History, 1895-1995," *American Historical Review* 100 (June 1995): 733-34; and Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsman of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), ix-xi, 30.

¹⁴³The Supreme Court in *United States v. Rogers*, 4 How. 567 (1846) suggested "some Indian blood" was a necessity. Forty years later they allowed tribes to determine the criteria for citizenship, see *Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians v. United States and Cherokee Nation*, 117 US 288 (1886).

¹⁴⁴William T. Hagen, "Full Blood, Mixed Blood, Generic, and Ersatz: The Problem of Indian Identity," *Arizona and the West* 27 (Winter 1985): 317.

¹⁴⁵Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, "Constitution and Bylaws of the Omaha Indian Tribe of Nebraska, approved March 30, 1936" (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1936), Article 2, section 1; and Article 2, Section 5.

¹⁴⁶Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 26.

requirement first appeared in 1961 when an Indian Claims Commission settlement made \$1.2 million available for disbursements to tribal members. Eventually, \$750 per capita payments went to individuals who met this criteria with no regards to residence.¹⁴⁷ This led to a Constitutional Amendment that defined tribal membership as "all living persons whose names appear on the official roll of the tribe" as of September 14, 1961, and, for those born after that date, "aboriginal blood of the degree of one-fourth or more."¹⁴⁸

In this manner, place was removed from the official description and Omahas were free to emigrate to cities without fear of losing their birthrights. Generations raised outside of Omaha Nation could also maintain tribal status. Conversely, while Omahas continued to adopt people into their culture, the Omaha Way no longer provided full recognition of these neophytes. Modern Omahas largely accepted imposed definitions of their ethnicity and were not considering a return to kin-based traditions.

Intriguingly, discussions of membership criteria remained in the twenty-first century. A recent survey on the Omaha Nation website provided four options for membership: one-eighth blood quantum, lineal descent, "consolidation of all Native blood," and the status quo -- one-quarter blood quantum. Although only twenty-three individuals responded, the blood quantum options tied with seven votes each.¹⁴⁹ This discussion may be more than academic as gaming operations have produced per capita payments since the 1990s, and reducing the blood quantum requirements would necessarily spread payments around.

¹⁴⁷"Omahas Awarded Judgment," *Lincoln Star*, 7 September 1961, 17. The judgment was part of an Indian Claims Commission -- an organization established in 1946 -- action originally filed as case 225 in 1951. Omahas alleged that the conditions of the 1854 treaty were not carried out in good faith, and were eventually awarded money for 5 million acres of territory ceded to the United States in 1854 at \$.20 and acre. Because the land was worth \$1.50 an acre at that time, a settlement of \$2.9 million was received. Much of this money was distributed in \$750 per capita disbursements. Six years later, each enrolled member received an additional \$270 when Case 138 -- stemming from the 1830 treaty -- was settled for \$1.75 million. See Wishart, 238-242; and Mark R. Sherer, *Imperfect Victories: The Legal Tenacity of the Omaha Tribe, 1945-1995* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 48, 72.

¹⁴⁸Omaha Nation, "Constitution & Bylaws of the Omaha Tribe as amended November 18, 2003," Article II, Sections 1 and 2.

¹⁴⁹"Omaha Enrollment Survey," OmahaTribe.com, survey closed 5 January 2006.

Work and School

Significantly, access to money -- whether from work or entitlement schemes -- remained a central concern among most Omahas wherever they chose to reside. In Lincoln, urban villagers often discovered their skills translated poorly into the world of work and many remained consistently underemployed. Cultural priorities often dictated greater comfort with seasonal or temporary employment patterns. Similarly, mainstream schools were rarely designed for Indian worldviews and educational success was rare in the early years, although it became increasingly common as the twentieth century progressed. These internal factors were exacerbated by a persistent racism emanating from mainstream individuals and institutions.

New arrivals in Lincoln found "Survival was the first rule of order," and they "needed to find work."¹⁵⁰ As the Volga Germans had done, most Omaha urban villagers accepted work on the railroad, in migrant farm worker camps, and performing tasks most in the mainstream no longer wished to do. Clearly on the bottom rung of the economic ladder, Omahas worked primarily as unskilled or semi-skilled laborers throughout their sojourns in Lincoln.¹⁵¹ Even in the 1990s with increasing access to education, many remained on public assistance to make ends meet.¹⁵² Interestingly, urban Indians nationwide even in the twenty-first century had over twice the unemployment rates of mainstream citizens and nearly four times as many lived in poverty.¹⁵³

Still, movement away from Omaha Nation was often a rational economic decision.¹⁵⁴ Assimilatory pressures and land allotment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries created a spiral of poverty in the homeland. Land holdings were chiseled down

¹⁵⁰Oliver Saunsoci, Jr., in "Tribal Member Recognized," online.

¹⁵¹Listings of twentieth and twenty-first century occupations were available in the city directory. See for example, *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City, Polk, 1973).

¹⁵²Bob Reeves, "Tribe Members, Reservations Benefit from Casinos," *Lincoln Star*, 31 December 1993, archives file [*Lincoln Journal Star* library].

¹⁵³National Urban Indian Family Coalition, <http://www.nuifc.org/facts.htm>.

¹⁵⁴Sorkin, 39.

to a total of only 28,000 acres. By the mid-1950s, only seven Omahas farmed. Heirship issues on remaining parcels made individual farming operations almost impossible. Additionally, casual labor in adjacent markets was squelched by post-war agricultural and demographic change. While farm employment remained the number one source of jobs in the region, demand for workers dropped 42 percent between 1940 and 1960, and the entire population of Thurston County contracted. In 1959 the medium income in Nebraska was \$6,203, but only \$3,570 for residents in Thurston County. It was undoubtedly significantly less among Omahas. Unemployment in the homeland -- even after widescale emigration -- averaged 60 to 80 percent through the mid-1980s, and life expectancy was a mere 48 years as poverty and adult onset diabetes were common conditions.¹⁵⁵

One federal response to this dire situation was to recruit young Omahas into relocation schemes while they were attending boarding schools. Nearly ubiquitous experiences among Omaha youth, the boarding school era began in 1879 when Carlisle Indian Institute was opened in Pennsylvania and lasted until 1978 when Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act.¹⁵⁶ As Omaha Nation housed only an elementary school until that time, many students in the 1950s and 1960s attended secondary programs at Flandreau, South Dakota, Haskell, Kansas, and Wahpeton, North Dakota. As late as 1971, ninety Omaha children were enrolled in boarding schools in the Dakotas and in

¹⁵⁵Gilpin, "Community Development Plan," 1-2; "Initial Overall Redevelopment Plan," 11, 16, 20; *Omaha Community Council News*, June 1959, 4; Deborah Davis Jackson, *Our Elders Lived It: American Indian Identity in the City* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 33; Longwell, 96; Miewald, 78, 93-95; Beck 119; and Hollis D. Stabler, *No One Ever Asked Me: The World War II Memoirs of an Omaha Indian Soldier*, ed., Victoria Smith (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 3-10.

¹⁵⁶James E. Officer, "The American Indian and Federal Policy," in Jack O. Waddell and O. Michael Watson, eds., *The American Indian in Urban America* (Boston: Brown, Little and Company, 1971), 35; and Suzan Shown Harjo, "The American Indian Experience," in Harriet Pipes McAdoo, ed., *Family Ethnicity: Strength in Diversity* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), 66.

Oklahoma.¹⁵⁷ These institutions and the Aberdeen, South Dakota, area BIA -- whose territory includes Omaha Nation -- became departure points for employment and training services made possible by Public Law 959 (1956). This act -- first implemented in 1958 with a class of 397 -- provided vocational training to individuals all across Indian Country. By 1972, a total of 35,500 Native Americans received some sort of mechanical education and job placement assistance. Many Omahas petitioned officials in Aberdeen to receive training and were placed in cities both in Nebraska and in more distant locations. Still others relocated to Lincoln, Omaha, and Sioux City on their own without training.¹⁵⁸

Even with vocational training, economic problems remained acute among Lincoln's urban villagers, though they were slightly better off than their relatives in and around Macy. In 1971, for instance, two-thirds of urban villagers were gainfully employed.¹⁵⁹ This very comparative prosperity was duplicated in 1989 as 41 percent of "Indians" in Lincoln lived below the poverty level compared to 62 percent of the population in Omaha Nation.¹⁶⁰

Living outside of Native space, however, urban villagers necessarily confronted racism on a regular basis. Omahas were constantly reminded they were racially different from the mainstream.¹⁶¹ While many employers and individuals recognized them as

¹⁵⁷*Omaha Community Council News*, April 1959, 4; *ibid.*, October 1959, 1; "School Students Home for Summer Months," *ibid.*, April/May/June 1961, 2; "Omaha Tribal Agency Open house is Friday," *Lincoln Journal*, 1 October 1971, archives file.

¹⁵⁸Donald L. Fixico, "The Relocation Program and Urbanization," in John R. Wunder, ed., *Native Americans and the Law: Constitutionalism and Native Americans, 1903-1968* (New York: Garland, 1996), 249, 253; Elaine M. Neils, *Reservation to City: Indian Migration and Federal Relocation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Department of Geography Paper No. 131, 1971), 168; Peter V. Snyder, "The Social Environment of the Urban Indian," in Jack O. Waddell and O. Michael Watson, eds., *The American Indian in Urban Society* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), 219; Officer, 53; and U.S. Department of Commerce, Omaha Redevelopment Committee, Omaha Indian Reservation, Nebraska, "Initial Overall Economic Redevelopment Plan, Omaha Redevelopment Area" (Washington, D.C.: Area Redevelopment Administration, 1963), 25-26.

¹⁵⁹Nancy Sullivan, "The City: Land of Dim Promise," in *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska School of Journalism, 1971), 26.

¹⁶⁰US Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics: Nebraska, 1990 CP-2-29* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1993), 30, 37.

¹⁶¹Author, Field Notes, conversation with Barry Webster.

"steady, reliable, and able people," age-old stereotypes persisted and a significant portion of Lincoln's population saw all Indians as "shiftless, dirty, lazy, unreliable, and drunken."¹⁶² These sentiments were well known among urban villagers as discrimination was even more common in Thurston County than in Nebraska's cities.¹⁶³ As good race relationships were "indispensable to the success of the Omaha people's move toward self-sufficiency" and Omaha urban migrants' well-being, the "We Shake Hands Program" was inaugurated in 1957.¹⁶⁴ A combined effort of Omaha nationals, urban villagers, and mainstream volunteers from Lincoln and the city of Omaha, the program was promoted by the American Association of Indians in 1960 as one effort to "improve relations between Indians and their neighbors in the Great Plains."¹⁶⁵

The explicit goal of all Omahas in the era of emigration was "to find our place in America."¹⁶⁶ A spirit of official racial cooperation remained in Lincoln throughout the remainder of the twentieth century as mainstream individuals were generally welcomed at Omaha doings and encouraged to interact with their neighbors in the urban village. Despite these offerings, negative images of Omahas prevailed when locations for the Lincoln Indian Center were being debated in the 1970s. Similarly, few Indians were employed by mainstream institutions, and law enforcement and social welfare organizations often seemed remote and hostile to Omahas.¹⁶⁷ Consequently, Omahas committed to aiding their relatives found other channels for their goals. Frank Sheridan, for instance, moved to Lincoln in 1946 after getting out of the service. A graduate of

¹⁶²Robert Agee, "Many Omahas Now Omahans: Indians Leave Reservation, but Their Problems Pile Up," *Omaha World-Herald Magazine*, 1 July 1956, 16G.

¹⁶³James B. LaGrand, *Indian Metropolis: Native Americans in Chicago, 1945-75* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 119.

¹⁶⁴Gilpin, "Community Development Plan," 2-3.

¹⁶⁵"Indians Determined to Solve Own Problems," *Omaha Community Council News*, January/February 1960, 3; "Maha's Make Great Strides in Development Program," *Omaha Community Council News*, August/September/October 1961, 7; "Omaha-Lincoln Groups Aid in Canning Project," *Omaha Community Council News*, July/August/September 1960, 8; Earl Dyer, "Colorful Indian Pow-wow shows Merging of Old and New," *Lincoln Star*, 19 August 1959, 1.

¹⁶⁶Pauline Tyndall (Omaha), in "Omaha Tribe 'Coming Closer' through Shake Hands Project," *Lincoln Star*, 26 January 1959, 3.

Walthill High School, he served as a youth worker at the Salvation Army Community Center and as the Indian Center's Student Council and Recreation Director. In this capacity he worked closely with Lincoln Public Schools in educating and retaining Omaha students.¹⁶⁸

Sheridan pursued these matters because he knew "there is some Indian students out there in them schools that's got the talent to do anything the white man's got."¹⁶⁹ Indeed, education was one of the motivations for urban migration; and by the late 1950s, Indians living in cities were already ahead of their rural counterparts in schooling.¹⁷⁰ Success was again relative, and although urban villagers on the average completed 10th grade in 1971 compared to Omaha Nation's 8th grade average, they remained undereducated.¹⁷¹ Many Omaha students in the public school system found it difficult to go to classes "on a day-to-day basis amidst a lot of people who are not Indians." Additionally, urban children, at least in the 1970s did not always have a positive Indian identity -- making success in any endeavors less likely.¹⁷²

It was clear to all Omahas that those who left school would find few jobs and no vocational training.¹⁷³ Fortunately, by the end of the twentieth century Lincoln's Omaha urban villagers began to shed their "transient" label that perpetuated the reputation that they "can't keep up in classes."¹⁷⁴ Indeed "Native American" enrollment in Lincoln Public Schools remained fairly consistent in the 1990s with between 350 and 400 students enrolled in almost equal numbers from kindergarten through grade 12 -- a total

¹⁶⁷Harkins, et al., 29-30.

¹⁶⁸Frank Sheridan (Omaha) in "Transcript of Film Recordings of Omaha Indians," 76, 91, 96.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 96.

¹⁷⁰LaGrand, 100; and Peter Iverson, "Building Towards Self-Determination: Plains and Southwestern Indians in the 1940s and 1950s," *Western Historical Quarterly* 16 (April 1985): 170.

¹⁷¹Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 32, 40; and Liberty, "Preliminary Report," unpaginated.

¹⁷²Reuben Snake, "Urbanization of the American Indian: One Man's View," in Gretchen M. Bateille, David Mayer Gradwohl, and Charles L.P. Silet, eds., *The World Between Two Rivers: Perspectives in American Indians in Iowa* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1979, reprint 2000), 90.

¹⁷³U.S. Department of Commerce, "Initial Overall Economic Redevelopment Plan," 25-26.

¹⁷⁴Agee, 16G.

of about 1.3 percent of the school aged population. Many of them were active in Native American clubs and caucuses established by the school district within their particular schools.¹⁷⁵ In the early twenty-first century, Stablers, Sheridans, and other Indian children were frequently broadcast as honor roll students during the early-morning television news school interests segments. Similarly, a small but vibrant cadre of Omahas enrolled at the University of Nebraska.

American Identity

Despite discrimination in the worlds of school and work, Omahas -- urban and national -- incorporated an American identity into their cosmos. Partly based on ties to land and a history of peace with the United States, its most obvious manifestation was a proud tradition of military service. Young Omaha men -- and eventually young women as well -- enthusiastically enlisted in the armed forces as *wanó'n'she* (soldiers) in order to reestablish their traditional roles as defenders of their nation.¹⁷⁶ The military also provided financial and educational opportunities generally not available in the urban villages or Omaha Nation. Interestingly, this American identity was formed by Native preferences as Omahas constantly sought to "maintain a balance between tribal custom and society in general."¹⁷⁷ It consciously excluded nineteenth and twentieth century economic, political, and social efforts to assimilate Omahas into the mainstream society.

American identities were celebrated as part of the Omaha Way at dance events as regalia was often rife with military components and opening ceremonies always contained nationalistic references. By their very nature, Gourd Dances had distinct martial airs and many dancers entered the arena in uniforms rather than regalia. At pow-

¹⁷⁵Charles D. Novak, *Lincoln Public Schools 2001-2002 Statistical Handbook* (Lincoln: LPS District Office, 2001), 26-27; and Lincoln Public Schools, <http://www.lps.org>.

¹⁷⁶Awakuni-Swetland, *Dance Lodges*, 56, 64.

¹⁷⁷Dennis Hastings (Omaha), in "New Morrill Hall Exhibit Traces Long History of the Omaha Tribe," *Sunday Journal Star*, 23 February 1992, archives file.

wows, where regalia was more common and more elaborate, veterans often included unit insignias and flag references rendered in bead work or embroidery. As women emerged as veterans, their jingle dresses were often adorned with shell casings rather than rolled snuff can lids.¹⁷⁸

Ceremonial openings of Omaha Gourd Dances and pow-wows always included displays of patriotism and respect for veterans. Color guards -- generally consisting of the American flag, the POW/MIA flag, and the Omaha Nation flag -- flag songs, and honor songs preceded most events.¹⁷⁹ As a general rule, dancers respectfully followed the flags into the arena and positioned themselves to hear the Omaha flag song. Flag songs were unique to each Indian nation and served the same purpose as the national anthem in mainstream culture.¹⁸⁰ Participants and spectators remained standing and at attention through an honor song dedicated to veterans at the event. After the honor song, the guard placed the colors next to the announcers' stage, saluted the flags, and exited the arena. At that point, all were then at ease and the event was underway.

The Omaha flag song dates from 1918 when it was presented to World War I veterans for meritorious service. At that time, the colors of the American flag were reinterpreted to fit into an Omaha worldview. Red represented "Indians," white stood for the color of the "ghost of the NAC," and Blue signified the "world of darkness."¹⁸¹ These Omaha warriors were part of the force of 12,000 soldiers to serve in the "Great War" and were among the first in a long line of *wanón'she* over the next eight decades.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸Author, Field Notes, Veterans Day Gourd Dance, 11 November 2002, Lincoln Indian Center.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.; and Field Notes, Lincoln Indian Club 35th Annual Pow-Wow.

¹⁸⁰Whitebreast.

¹⁸¹John Turner, 1-2. In the mainstream cosmos, red represented hardiness and valor, white was indicative of purity, and blue stood for vigilance, perseverance and justice. See, "The Blazon of the Great Seal of the United States and Charles Thomson's Remarks and Explanation," <http://www.greatseal.com/symbols/blazon.html>.

¹⁸²U.S. Department of Defense, "20th Century Warriors: Native American Participation in the United States Military," <http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/nativamerican01/warrior.html>

While military iconography and service to the United States had particular meaning to Omahas, they were also part of a pan-Indian philosophy that punctuated developments among Native Americans throughout the twentieth century. The 190,000 Indians that donned uniforms demonstrated "the highest record of service per capita" of any ethnic group in the United States.¹⁸³ The importance of this shared sacrifice cannot be underestimated. Service in World War I, for instance, was rewarded by full Indian citizenship in the United States. Indian Nations mobilized 23,000-25,000 warriors during World War II -- a full one-third of all able-bodied Indian men aged 18 to 50.¹⁸⁴ Their involvement helped bring mainstream attention to poverty among Indians and also increased intertribal contact. The 10,000 Indians who served in Korea and the 42,000 in Vietnam were almost universally volunteers. Their continued service through conflicts in Iraq has earned Indians great praise. The Defense Department even recruited Indian soldiers by suggesting the "requirements for successful military service -- strength, bravery, pride, wisdom -- match those of the Indian warrior."¹⁸⁵

This American identity existed comfortably within the Omaha Way as individuals took on military service having every intention of returning to the dance arena with new adornments on their regalia. Similarly, mainstream education and urban employment -- despite obstacles in obtaining them -- have not altered fundamental Omaha behaviors or values. Those succeeding often work to benefit the general plight of their relatives. Still some cosmopolitan forces have made fundamental inroads on what being Omaha means. Historically, Omahas had methods to adopt outsiders into their society, and, ironically, despite stated desires to assimilate Indians, the mainstream had no such procedures.¹⁸⁶ The modern use of blood quantum as a way to determine

¹⁸³Ibid.

¹⁸⁴Sorkin, 25; and LaGrand, 32.

¹⁸⁵"20th Century Warriors," online.

¹⁸⁶Hallowell, 523, 527-28.

tribal membership originated in the mainstream but was stamped on Omaha consciousness out of economic necessity.

TRANSNATIONALISM

The movement to define Omaha ethnicity by blood rather than residence facilitated comfortable emigration from the homeland. Since World War II, movement between Omaha Nation and urban America has been fluid, and Omahas established a transnational community. Even tribal leaders traveled between sending and receiving cultures. Eleanor Saunsoci Baxter, the tribal chair in 2005, moved to Lincoln as a child in the mid-1950s with her family who came in search of gainful employment. She grew up, was educated, and spent the first several decades of her working life among Lincoln's urban villagers. Baxter returned to Omaha Nation in 1993 with her own family and renewed a relationship with a place to which she was still deeply connected. In her words, "Today I am home."¹⁸⁷ Similarly, former Council Member Clyde Tyndall lived in Omaha Nation during his years of involvement in tribal government. He moved back to an urban village in Omaha, Nebraska -- his original home -- and served as that city's representative on the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs for eleven years. Migrating again, he was named Executive Director of the Lincoln Indian Center in May 2005.¹⁸⁸

Intriguingly, Omaha cultures in Omaha Nation, Lincoln's urban village, and population centers in Omaha and Sioux City, were all remarkably similar largely because the roads to and from Macy were so frequently traveled. While clearly some acculturation to mainstream ways was necessary among long-term urban dwellers,

¹⁸⁷Benjamin Tompson, "Historic Firsts in Tribal Election," 10 November 2005, <http://www.OmahaTribe.com>; and *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1956). See consecutive years of directory.

¹⁸⁸"Former NCIA Commissioner Clyde Tyndall Appointed Lincoln Indian Center Executive Director," *Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs Newsletter*, Summer 2005, 3.

commitment to the Omaha Way was intense. The depth of these connections was not always acknowledged by Omaha nationals, however, and a rift between the populations became readily apparent. Interestingly, all Omahas were also influenced by an international Pan-Indian identity, although for most, it never emerged as their main ethnic ascription.

Omaha migration to mainstream cities was not without precedent as a few pioneers were already in motion after World War I. Eunice and George Stabler -- both highly educated through the boarding school system -- were among a small population that moved their families around the Great Plains to keep them out of crippling poverty.¹⁸⁹ Actually proto-urban Indians, their presence in cities was advocated by Dr. Carlos Montezuma (Yavapai) -- a founding member of the Society of American Indians -- in the 1910s and 1920s.¹⁹⁰ While these populations appeared almost insignificant (see figure 5-1), they constructed a pattern for teaching their children the Omaha Way by making frequent summer pilgrimages to Macy so their children could learn to dance. Their son, Hollis D. Stabler, brought his own children "home" each year from his residence in Wichita, Kansas. In this way, he allowed them to experience "the good part of being Indian in today's world," without being "scarred by the dependent poverty that affected so many of our people."¹⁹¹

Perhaps less adventurous than the Stablers, other Omahas took casual labor outside Omaha Nation for several weeks at a time during the 1920s and 1930s. While they made appearances in Lincoln, generally they returned home.¹⁹² A few Omahas, although officially identified only as "Indians," resided and worked in Lincoln before World War II. Census returns listed twenty-five Indians in Lancaster County and five in

¹⁸⁹See, Hollis D. Stabler, 10-24.

¹⁹⁰Beck, 135-36. For a discussion on Montezuma, see Peter Iverson, "Carlos Montezuma and the Fort McDowell Yavapai Community," *Journal of Arizon History* 22 (Winter 1981): 415-26.

¹⁹¹Hollis D. Stabler, 137.

¹⁹²Mead, 55.

the city in 1930, and twenty-three in the county and two in the city in 1940. Block data placed most in the Yankee Hill district, then a suburban area that hosted a large brick factory and the stockyards.¹⁹³ Early post-war arrivals who settled in the west end of the South Russian Bottoms would have had access to employment in the brickyards and social contact with any remnants of the Yankee Hill enclave.¹⁹⁴

Sometimes described as "transient" and other times as "commuters," Omaha migrants could just as easily have been called "birds of passage" as their work in urban areas was intended to ease life after returning to the sending culture.¹⁹⁵ While transnational travels remained common, sojourns in cities during and after World War II tended to be longer. During the war when wages were especially good, Susan Freemont and her sister worked in Omaha at the Fontanelle Hotel laundry. They shared a "bi-i-ig" apartment with relatives and lived fairly comfortably. Like many in her generation, Freemont moved back to Omaha Nation permanently after she married.¹⁹⁶ Perhaps concerned about tribal enrollment or anxious to raise their offspring in their own childhood homes, childrearing was often a life changing event that brought individuals home. Others returned to be "better off."¹⁹⁷ Although work was more plentiful and better paying in mainstream cities, high rents, poor housing conditions, and lack of access to health care pushed many back to Omaha Nation.¹⁹⁸

While a stable urban population emerged in the 1950s and expanded thereafter, the "Commuter Phenomenon" never dissipated. The dual pulls of employment in the

¹⁹³U.S. Census, "Table 25: Indians, Chinese, Japanese, By Sex for Counties, and for Cities 10,000 to 100,000," *16th Census of the United States: Population, Volume II, Characteristics of Population, part 4, MN to NM* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1943), 648; and "Composition of Rural Nonfarm Populations, by Counties, 1940," in *ibid.*, 652.

¹⁹⁴Early arrivals in the South Bottoms in the 1940s and early 1950s included Charles and Elizabeth Stabler, Clyde and Lillian Sheridan, Frank and Evelyn Sheridan, Oliver Saunsoci, Shirley Cayou, and William and Alberta Canby. See, for example, *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1947). Successive volumes yield a pattern.

¹⁹⁵Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 7.

¹⁹⁶Freemont, in Bennett, 166.

¹⁹⁷Norma (no last name given), in Bennett, 214-15.

¹⁹⁸Sorkin, 63, 83.

city and family on the Nation had Omahas driving back and forth.¹⁹⁹ Although probably an overstated population, former Indian Center director Marshall Prichard (Ponca) estimated that the city's stable Indian population of 1,600 was augmented by an additional 1,600 to 2,000 seasonal workers in the early 1980s.²⁰⁰

A transnational Omaha Nation has not always been easy to envision. Former tribal Chair Alfred Gilpin, for instance, observed that "Some of the people went away to the cities where uneducated men could find work and never came home again. But many go away and come home over and over again for it is hard to be Omahas anywhere except where the tribe is."²⁰¹ Gilpin's thoughts were reiterated and extrapolated upon by subsequent tribal chair Rudi Mitchell who suggested that not only was Omaha Nation still considered "home," but that those entering "the dominant society with hopes of finding better employment, higher education goals, and a better way of life to raise their families" actually "attempted to be assimilated" by the mainstream.²⁰² Consciously or unconsciously, both leaders raised the issue of a pernicious rural and urban split among Omahas.

Divisions among urban villagers and Omaha nationals may have decreased over time as demographic shifts favored urban living, but there was still a sense that someone "was not a real Indian" unless they grew up in Indian territory.²⁰³ In this vein, movement into cities was actively discouraged in the 1950s by tribal pressure aimed at keeping "members from 'going white'."²⁰⁴ Nationals still suggested that their urban relatives were somehow more "assimilated" in the twenty-first century.²⁰⁵ On the other side of this cultural divide, some urban villagers began to see Omaha Nation as a vital center for

¹⁹⁹Liberty, "Urban Reservation," 7.

²⁰⁰Ulrich, "Stablers," 1D.

²⁰¹Gilpin, "Community Development Plan," 2.

²⁰²Mitchell, 168.

²⁰³gaiashkibos.

²⁰⁴Longwell, 28.

²⁰⁵Author, Field Notes, conversation with Barry Webster.

ceremonial purposes -- especially at pow-wow time -- and a place to receive health care.²⁰⁶ Because so many of their relatives also lived in Lincoln, most other trips to Macy were more about business than visiting.²⁰⁷

The split was also apparent in economic benefits accrued from tribal membership. The issues surrounding the 1960s era ICC claims were relived with the advent of casino gambling. CasinOmaha -- necessarily established on Blackbird Bend in Iowa -- became the brightest star in Omaha Nation's economic picture when it opened in 1994.²⁰⁸ While its profits have varied as competition from other outfits has increased, the casino and the legal fortitude necessary to open it have increased the tribe's collective self-esteem and encouraged many members to reexamine their heritage.²⁰⁹ Additionally, revenues have brought infrastructure development to Omaha Nation and economic benefit to all enrolled Omahas. While all tribal members receive per annum payments, urban villagers maintained, "We're being neglected out there in that city world." From their viewpoint, money held back for governmental functions and endowments was spent on high Council salaries and nepotism rather than an even disbursement.²¹⁰

Monetary woes have exacerbated long-term political issues among urban dwellers, but as a population they have little say in tribal government. Indeed, enrolled members living outside of Omaha Nation were generally disfranchised from tribal elections. According to the 1936 and 2003 Constitutions, eligible voters needed to "have maintained continuous residence" in Omaha Nation for the six months immediately

²⁰⁶Jackson, 155.

²⁰⁷Author, Field Notes, conversation with Omaha elders, Horticulture Project Open House, 3 August 2005, Agronomy East Campus Experiment Station, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

²⁰⁸Mitchell, 17-18. CasinOmaha, at the time of this writing, was the largest employer on Omaha Nation, followed by the federal government. Casino gambling was made possible by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 (103 US Statute 1336). Despite issues of sovereignty, Nebraska prohibited Las Vegas-style gambling. After legal wrangling, the facility was opened in Iowa on land Omaha Nation regained after lengthy political and legal maneuvering.

A good account of efforts to regain Blackbird Bend is found in Scherer, 89-114.

²⁰⁹Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n)," 38.

preceding the date of an election.²¹¹ Similar requirements were necessary to serve on the Council.

Despite such divisions, urban villagers remained distinctly Omaha even when presented with an appealing "Pan-Indian" identity that was prevalent in other urban area. The marked shift away from tribal identities and towards an international one that "focused on a larger, more diverse group of Indians" was virtually a continent-wide development that emerged among urban Indians in the 1950s. In the process, "a particularly Indian form of identity politics emerged," one fueled by Indian pride and insistent upon self-determination.²¹² This sort of Pan-Indianism was especially intense in the large urban communities of Natives that formed as the result of Relocation-era policies.²¹³ Before consolidation, tribal peoples in Los Angeles and Phoenix, for instance, were part of an "invisible minority" in their new milieus and distances to their relatives in the old places were necessarily traveled infrequently.²¹⁴ Although disassociation with sending cultures was the norm, "assimilation" was an unacceptable option. Urban isolation was only a temporary conditions as "prejudice and discrimination by non-Indian" neighbors served to unify Indians under a new nationalistic banner.²¹⁵ Additionally, intermarriage among various Indian ethnicities invented a new people, "urban Indians."²¹⁶

The maintenance of a unique Omaha identity among Lincoln's urban villagers appears in conflict with scholarship that suggests that urban Indians view themselves

²¹⁰Darwin Phillips (Omaha), in Bob Reeves, "Tribal Government Hears Complaints," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 15 January 1994, archives files; See also "Off Reservation Indians seeking In-Tribal Voice," *Sunday Journal and Star*, 22 October 1961, 1B.

²¹¹Omaha Constitution, 2003, Article 5, Section 1; and Omaha Constitution, 1936, Article 5, section 1.

²¹²LaGrand, 2, 203.

²¹³See Chapter 3 for a discussion of relocation, footnotes 158, 159, and 160.

²¹⁴Dale Kruzic, Conroy Chino (Acoma), and Beverly Morris (Aleut), prods., *Looking Towards Home*, Native American Public Telecommunications, 2003, film.

²¹⁵Harkins, et al., 38.

²¹⁶LaGrand, 162-64; and Fixico, *Urban Indian Experience*, 140, 6.

"more as 'Indians' and less as 'tribalists.'"²¹⁷ While probably true for some Omahas, the "conservative tendencies" of a people preserving parts of their heritage for their children pointed to the retention of a very specific Omaha identity.²¹⁸ Issues involving repatriation of Omaha burial remains in the late 1980s were a case in point. During the 1930s, the Works Projects Administration excavated 106 skeletons originally buried between 1780 and 1820 near the Big Village site. Situated north of the modern boundaries of Omaha Nation, the project coordinators ignored ownership issues and sent the bones to Lincoln for preservation and storage in the osteology lab at the University of Nebraska.²¹⁹ The common practices of housing and displaying indigenous remains came to an end in Nebraska in 1989 when the state legislature passed the Unmarked Human Burial Sites and Skeletal Remains Act. Its provisions insisted on the repatriation of existing remains and tribal notification when any indigenous burial sites were unearthed.²²⁰ Using this statute, Pawnees -- with representation from the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) -- aggressively pursued legal actions to regain the possession of their people's remains. Preferring negotiation to confrontation, Omaha Nation ended its Pan-Indian involvement with NARF and the other Nebraska tribes and began their own negotiations with the University.²²¹ Ultimately, they established a repatriation schedule that included scientific analysis of their ancestors' remains. After a University research team presented their report that included a discussion of lead toxicity, the remains were reburied in October 1991.²²²

²¹⁷Ibid., 3.

²¹⁸Liberty, "Population Trends," 225.

²¹⁹Karl J. Reinhard and A. Mohamad Ghazi, "Evaluation of Lead Concentrations in 18th-Century Omaha Indian Skeletons using ICP-MS," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 89 (No. 2, 1992): 183-85.

²²⁰Unmarked Human Burial Sites and Skeletal Remains Act (1989), Ne. Rev. Stat., sections 12-1201 to 12-1212. The federal government passed a less comprehensive repatriation act in the following year. See, Native Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (1990), 25 US Code 3001, et. seq.

²²¹Tina F. Brown, "The Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act: A Necessary but Costly Act," *Nebraska Anthropologist* 12 (No. 1, 1995-1996): 92-94; and Ridington and Hastings, 201, 210-211.

²²²Reinhard and Ghazi, 185.

This tradition of cultural particularism had intense resonance among Lincoln's Omaha urban villagers as transnational connections remained so strong that second generation Indians were rarely cut off from the traditions of the sending culture.²²³ As seen in the Lincoln Indian Club's "traditional Omaha Pow-wow," city enclaves often reinforced "tribal identity and resisted mainstream assimilation."²²⁴ Pan-Indianism by the 1960s and 1970s stressed pride in ethnicity and Indianess and actually augmented a cultural, social, and political revitalization at Omaha Nation.²²⁵ The revitalization of intense nationalism increased resolves among all members of the transnational community to remain Omaha through the tricentennial of the United States and beyond.²²⁶

As Lincoln and national Omaha populations have remained intimately connected, influences necessarily ran both directions. Rifts between the populations were sometimes quite serious, but rarely led to true disfranchisement. While Omaha Nation remained the ultimate keeper of the Omaha Way, Lincoln's urban village has become a worthy satellite of cultural maintenance. In many respects, those who stayed in Omaha Nation were "integrated" into mainstream life through the influences of their urban relatives.²²⁷ The characteristic Omaha search for balance in the homeland included rising educational and economic aspirations for all children of the nation. The hope of

²²³Experiences in Lincoln were much different from Los Angeles and perhaps other Relocation Centers. See, Rolo for a discussion on long distance contacts with sending cultures.

²²⁴Gordon V. Krutz, "Transplanting and Revitalizing Indian Cultures in the City," in Jack O. Waddell and O. Michael Watson, eds., *American Indian Urbanization* (Purdue University: Purdue Research Foundation, 1973), 130.

²²⁵In addition to ICC awards, avoiding termination, increased national sovereignty after retrocession, and land reclamation, Omahas negotiated the return of the Sacred Pole to Nebraska in 1989. Although this success required twenty years of work, many that he has brought improved fortunes to the people -- urban and national alike. Despite tribal division, many hope the Sacred Pole can reunite the Omahas and "take them back to the tribe's essential philosophical principles" See, Ridington and Hastings, 69, 151, 169.

²²⁶Hollis Davies Stabler, 97. See also Patti Jo King, "Urbanization's Effects on Tribalism," *Indian Country Today*, 20 July 2005, 1B.

While Omahas were consistently the majority among Lincoln's Indians, local Poncas, Santees, Hochunks, and Lakotas -- all Nebraska based nations -- maintained similar attachments to tribal identities, again largely due to transnationalism.

many nationals was that the skills that their relatives gathered in the mainstream could be employed in and around Macy for all Omahas to enjoy.

CONCLUSIONS

The Omaha Way at the dawn of the twenty-first century still sought to "maintain a balance between tribal custom and society in general."²²⁸ Consequently, interactions among particular forces and cosmopolitan influences allowed urban Omahas to continuously redefine cultural identity. Although never static, the modern cultural ideal retained basic traditional concepts.²²⁹ A strong connection to the land, distinct religious preferences, intricate kinship networks, and an abiding love for Omaha music and dance have all survived in Lincoln's urban village. All things remained gifts, whether given by *Wakóⁿda*, Kiowas, or relatives at a feast. Mainstream values were used primarily to strengthen the Omaha Way. For instance, urban villagers and Omaha nationals alike acknowledged the need for mainstream educations and the acquisition of job skills applicable to a modern economy.

Transnationalism allowed cultural preservation to occur in multiple population centers. The consistent movement between Lincoln's urban village, Macy, and ethnic enclaves in other nearby cities kept cultural content in all places relatively uniform. Still, claiming the greatest connection to place, Omaha nationals continued to argue that their identities were more salient than their urban relatives. Behaviors in Lincoln, however, indicated an unwavering commitment to the conservatism inherent in the Omaha Way. Remembered traditions in some instances -- especially the "traditional" pow-wow -- may best be preserved outside of the sending culture.

²²⁷Raymond Breton and Gail Grant, *The Dynamics of Government Programs for Urban Indians in the Prairie Provinces* (Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1984), 557.

²²⁸Dennis Hastings (Omaha), in "Commemorating the Omahas," *Lincoln Journal*, 21 February 1992, archives file.

Lincoln's urban villagers understood that tribalism was not only necessary, but it was "alive and well" throughout the era of urban migration. Indeed, "strong" connections to the sending culture and a shared sense of tradition remained unbroken.²³⁰ The survival of tribalism was a story of almost epic proportions. The Omaha Way was consistently assailed in the State of Nebraska since 1854. Encouraged to break communal ranks and farm owner operated plots, cheated out of their allotments, threatened with termination, relocated to cities as a matter of policy, Omahas and their culture have adapted in each case, and they "regularly stymied federal attempts at cultural re-engineering by staunchly defending tribalism"²³¹ Contact with international forces, such as Pan-Indianism, only served to strengthen this concept.²³²

Wielding cultural flexibility as a strength, Lincoln's urban villagers arrived with a knowledge of how not to "assimilate." Instead, they continually adapted and redefined the Omaha Way. These efforts were aided by developments within the sending culture. In the post-war era, Omaha Nation experienced dramatic legal and political, economic, and social revitalization movements. As awareness of problems and possible solutions increased, dire conditions at Omaha Nation improved, but still lagged far behind expectations. Their "diminishing viable land base" combined with "insufficient housing" and "insecure revenues" required either mobility or drastic actions.²³³ Not surprisingly, the resourceful Omahas employed both strategies.

The founding generation of urban villagers often faced "a choice between clinging to what remained of the homeland, or pursuing economic opportunity."²³⁴

²²⁹Fixico, *Urban Indian Experience*, 59.

²³⁰gaiashkibos, interview.

²³¹Lisa E. Emmerich, "Marguritte LaFlesche Diddock: Office of Indian Affairs Matron *Great Plains Quarterly* 13 (Summer, 1993): 163.

²³²King, 1B.

²³³Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n)," 36.

²³⁴Victoria Smith, in Hollis D. Stabler, 143.

Pushed and pulled into a new milieu, they had no intention of changing social or cultural behaviors. Instead they worked to assure that relatives faced with the same options could come to a comfortable social climate. Omaha communities were built around families and community centers in age-old philosophical patterns. Spiritually, the circle remained unbroken in the minds of Lincoln's Omaha urban villagers.

CHAPTER 6

VIETNAMESE URBAN VILLAGERS IN LINCOLN: CLUSTERED COMMUNITIES AND FLEXIBLE IDENTITIES

Maria Dan Vu fled Vung-Tau, Vietnam, as a "boat person" in 1979. Already married with two daughters, she took refuge in Malaysia and then in Indonesia before her harrowing journey ended in Boston in 1983 when she was reunited with her husband Anton, a former South Vietnamese army officer. Six years later, the Vus moved to Crete, Nebraska, to live among Anton's relatives. Educational endeavors eventually brought them to Lincoln where they obtained employment commensurate with their training and bought a house in a modest but desirable neighborhood. Maria Vu -- a teacher and an accountant -- served as community liaison with the Lincoln Police Department and as the director of the Asian Community and Cultural Center. In these capacities, she assisted in translating numerous public documents into Vietnamese in order to ease immigrant adaptation into mainstream Lincoln.¹

The Vus' lives in Lincoln were somewhat atypical as they were both bilingual professionals. Nevertheless, their experiences contained elements shared by all Vietnamese that found homes on the eastern cusp of the Great Plains during the diaspora of Southeast Asians in the late-twentieth century. Sent into motion by the inherent disorders of war, the earliest arrivals came directly from the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) -- South Vietnam -- a nation that was founded in 1955 but "fell" to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) -- North Vietnam -- in 1975. The united country was renamed the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV). Geographic, political, and social divisions caused by the long conflict were so intense that people continued to flee the southern half of the new nation state for decades after "reunification."

¹Donna Biddle, "Asian Center Marks Grand Opening With Displays of Food and Performances," *Lincoln Star*, 28 April 1995, archives file [at *Lincoln Journal-Star* offices]; Marc Kransnowsky, "Former Boat People Ease Transition for Vietnamese," *Lincoln Star*, 2 March 1992, archives file; *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 2000).

Because the RVN was closely allied with the United States in a war against communism, America governmental agencies and private humanitarian organizations worked in concert to resettle Vietnamese immigrants in locations throughout all fifty states. Whether they were placed in Lincoln by refugee agencies or opted to come to Capital City on their own, this new group of urban villagers sought physical and communal security and the opportunity to gain or regain middle-class status.² Confronted by a largely white mainstream at the end of an unpopular war, Vietnamese in Lincoln were called "gooks" and regularly told to "go back home." Additionally, there was a marked fear that the newcomers -- especially those arriving in the late-1970s and early 1980s -- would be a burden on an already taxed public relief system.³ Fortunately, these prejudices were tempered by increasingly compassionate attitudes towards immigrants and refugees. Consequently, although Southeast Asia and southeastern Nebraska share few environmental traits, the Capital City generally proved to be "a friendly and safe place" for Vietnamese families.⁴

Community building in Lincoln began soon after the evacuation of Saigon in 1975 and continued unabated over the next three decades. Sharing the "desire to maintain a Vietnamese identity within a viable Vietnamese community," the immigrants formed cohesive neighborhoods first in affordable and centrally located neighborhoods.⁵ They then moved outward to suit particular spatial and cultural needs as finances allowed. As the city was already built and well populated, these urban villages were

²Nazli Kibria, *Family Tighrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 73.

³Mary Pipher, *The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), 332; and "Germans from Russia Mostly Welcome Viets," *Lincoln Journal*, 18 June 1975, 11.

⁴Hung Nguyen, quoted in "An American Success Story," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 2 December 1994, 7. See also Bob Reeves, "Vietnamese Find New Life," *Lincoln Star*, 1 December 1992, 4; and Anh Quang Tran, "The Wichita Vietnamese" (Ph.D. diss., Kansas State University, 2002), 81.

⁵Jesse Williams Nash, "Vietnamese Values: Confucian, Catholic, American" (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1987), 12.

actually "small aggregates of Vietnamese living close to each other."⁶ These polynucleated living areas were connected by the development of an institutionally complete Vietnamese business district and Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant houses of worship.

Within these spaces, these urban villagers experienced "ever changing identity production" as particular, cosmopolitan, and transnational forces combined to produce multiple and overlapping ascriptions.⁷ Intriguingly, Vietnamese throughout home and diaspora communities were described by cultural observers as a "factious, untrusting tribe" that was only unified when "besieged by larger forces."⁸ As such Vietnamese in Lincoln expressed both the imported frictions of a heterogeneous population separated by social class, geographic origin, and religious affiliation and the solidarity of an expatriate national group.⁹

The examination of particular forces -- largely expressions of performed culture and shared beliefs -- yielded a Vietnamese identity constructed from the experiences of several millennia. Within this overarching ascription, Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant religious splits created clear divisions among urban villagers, but a distinct loyalty to the RVN helped ease such divides, at least among older residents. The urban villagers' interaction with cosmopolitan forces -- forces dictated by the mainstream -- again reinforced Vietnamese solidarity, but at the same time created generational friction. Uniquely, many young urban villagers developed the ability to identify alternately with Vietnamese and American cultures. Finally, transnational forces -- contact with the

⁶Richard C. Owens, "Vietnamese Homegardens in Lincoln, Nebraska: A Measure of Cultural Continuity" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2003), 66.

⁷Caroline Kieu Linh Valverde, "Making Transnational Viet Nam: Vietnamese American Community - Viet Nam Through Money, Music and Modems" (Ph.D diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2002), 2.

⁸Andrew X. Pham, *Catfish and Mandala: A Two-Wheeled Voyage through the Land Scape and Memory of Vietnam* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999), 208.

⁹Ngoc H. Bui and Joseph Stimpfl, "'Who Are These People Anyway?' Variations of Ethnic Identity Within an Immigrant Population," in Esther Mikyung Ghymn, ed., *Asian American Studies:*

sending culture -- produced a *Việt Kiều* identity in Vietnam and true "transnationalists" in the United States.¹⁰ Once again, the older generation's predilection to preserve a worldview steeped in Cold War anti-communism tempered the unity of international identities.

IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Housing all these identities, Lincoln at the turn of the twenty-first century hosted a vibrant Vietnamese community of about 5,000 individuals -- 3,700 foreign born and another 1,300 born in the United States.¹¹ (See Figure 6-1.)

Figure 6-1

FOREIGN-BORN VIETNAMESE IN LINCOLN, NEBRASKA, 1970-2003.¹²

	Lincoln	State
1970	NA	NA
1980	532	1,438
1990	897*	1,806
1995	2,197	NA
2000	3,756	6,364
2003	3,774	6,755

*Lancaster County

SOURCES: US., Bureau of Census; Onyema G. Nkwocha, *Health Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Nebraska* (Lincoln: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, 2003); *Lincoln Journal-Star*, 24 December 1995, 1C.

Identity, Images, Issues Past and Present (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 113-14; and Paul Rutledge, *The Role of Religion in Ethnic Self Identity* (New York: University Press of America, 1985), 53.

¹⁰ *Việt Kiều* means overseas Vietnamese. See Valverde, 2.

¹¹The 2000 US Census listed 3,774 Vietnamese in Lincoln and a total of 6,364 in Nebraska. See, US, Bureau of Census, "Profile of Demographic Characteristics: Nebraska," http://factfinder.census.gov/serlet/OTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=04000US31&q_r_name=DEC_2000_SF1.

In addition to the foreign born, approximately 1,300 Americans of Vietnamese heritage lived in Lincoln. Teresa Trang Nguyen, Asian Community and Cultural Center Community and Youth Coordinator, presentation, 8 November 2005, Asian Community and Cultural Center, Lincoln, Nebraska.

It is quite probable that Vietnamese numbers are underreported.

¹²In total, Vietnamese foreign-born make up about a quarter of all "Asian Americans" in Nebraska. In 1990 there were 12,422 Nebraska Asian Americans and in 2000, 22,767. See, Onyema G. Nkwocha, *Health Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Nebraska* (Lincoln: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, 2003), 22.

Unlike immigrant enclaves in Wichita and Oklahoma City, Vietnamese urban villages in Lincoln were comparatively small during the first years of the diaspora. The initial clustering of 114 families that arrived as part of a humanitarian outreach effort in 1975 did not seem destined to grow into a vibrant Vietnamese regional population center. The founding families were only joined by a modest 60 to 175 Vietnamese immigrants annually for the next decade-and-a-half, but even so judging from census statistics many chose to move elsewhere. In the 1990s, however, numbers spiked as many more individuals were able to leave Vietnam or Asian refugee camps in the last years before the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam normalized relations.¹³

Much like the Omahas' community, the survival of Lincoln's polynucleated Vietnamese urban villages -- actually clusters of families within existing mainstream neighborhoods -- was assured once human capital reached critical mass. Settled for over a decade, the earliest arrivals had already negotiated new lives and identities within the mainstream and willingly helped successive waves of newcomers begin their adaptation. While most were classified as "refugees" by federal officials, a composite immigrant experience connected all the Vietnamese that settled in the vicinity.¹⁴

Waves

The human capital that established Vietnamese urban villages in Lincoln arrived in the United States in three distinct "waves," and their experiences in transit clearly impacted future developments in identity formation. Evacuees -- the first wave -- that

¹³Vietnamese Studies Internet Resource Center, "Top 50 U.S. Metropolitan Areas by Vietnamese Population," <http://vstudies.learnabouthmong.org/top50usmetar.html>; Lloyd Shearer, "Vignettes of Vietnamese Refugees," *Parade Magazine*, 15 June 1975, 12; Nebraska Department of Social Services, quoted in Reeves, "Vietnamese Find New Life," 1; and Bob Reeves, "State Renown for its Refugee Aid," *Sunday Journal and Star*, 24 December 1995, 1C. See also Charles C. Munzy, *The Vietnamese in Oklahoma City: A Study in Ethnic Change* (New York: AMS Press, 1989); and Anh Quang Tran.

Lincoln in 2000 hosted the thirty-sixth largest concentration of Vietnamese in the nation. On the Great Plains, only the larger communities of Dallas-Ft. Worth, Denver-Boulder-Greeley, Oklahoma City, and Wichita had larger enclaves.

¹⁴Valverde, 2.

arrived in Lincoln were a small subset of the 150,000 Vietnamese soldiers and officials that were airlifted out of the RVN in 1975.¹⁵ The second wave was comprised of "boat people" -- often the families evacuees left behind -- who between 1978 and 1982 risked life and limb to get out of Vietnam by any means possible. The third wave arrived beginning in 1979 as the result of Orderly Departure Programs (ODP) designed to prevent Vietnamese from becoming boat people. This wave continued arriving for two decades.¹⁶ (See Figure 6-2.) In addition to welcoming the peoples of the "three waves," the Capital City gradually became a point of secondary migration for individuals who were initially resettled elsewhere. In concert, these immigrants sired the second generation, sometimes described as the "fourth wave."¹⁷

The arrival of evacuees in the Capital City was orchestrated, in part, by the federal government who dispersed resettlement across all fifty states to avoid straining an ailing national economy.¹⁸ At first blush, moving people from tropical Southeast Asia onto the temperate grasslands of the Great Plains seemed unlikely, and Nebraska Governor James J. Exon even bristled at proposed federal quotas that allotted 1,000 refugees to his state.¹⁹ While not challenging Exon's suggestion that local placements be voluntary, U.S. Senator Roman Hruska urged his fellow citizens to welcome the Vietnamese, who, he argued, only "sought America's opportunity" and, like Cubans and Hungarians, a refuge from communism.²⁰ Accepting this humanitarian mission and setting a precedent for subsequent immigration, local chapters of Catholic Social

¹⁵More RVN employees were paroled into the US by the Attorney-General in 1978. See Munzy, 5.

¹⁶U.S., Department of State, "Refugee Admissions Program for East Asia," <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/fs/2004/28212.htm>; Paul James Rutledge, *The Vietnamese Experience in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 65; and Astri Suhrke, "Indochinese Refugees: The Law and Politics of First Asylum," in Franklin Ng, ed., *Asians in America: The Peoples of East, Southeast and South Asia in American Life and Culture* (New York: Garland, 1998), 173.

¹⁷Teresa Trang Nguyen.

¹⁸Darrell Montero, "Vietnamese Refugees in America: Toward a Theory of Spontaneous International Migration," *International Migration Review* 13 (Winter 1979): 625, 641, 644.

¹⁹Bob Guenther, "Exon Prefers Voluntary Basis for Dealing with Refugees," *Lincoln Star*, 29 August 1975, 1.

Services, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services agreed to sponsor 450 largely Christian Vietnamese -- 60 percent of whom were children -- out of a resettlement center in Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas. The federal government provided the agencies \$300 per person to ease the transition into life in Lincoln.²¹

Figure 6-2

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANT ARRIVALS
INTO THE UNITED STATES, 1952-2000

	Immigrant Arrivals	Refugee Arrivals	Sub-Total Periodic Arrivals
1952-1974	17,886	NA	17,886
1975	3,039	125,000	128,039
1976-1980	18,326	155,900	174,226
1981-1985	18,886	165,572	184,458
1986-1990	104,706	108,648	213,354
1991-1995	146,068	152,952	299,020
1996-2000	78,378	45,446	123,824
TOTAL	387,289	753,518	1,140,807

Source: Max Niedzwiecki and T.C. Duong, *Southeast Asian American Statistical Profile* (Washington, D.C.: Southeast Asian Resource Action Center, 2004), 9-10.

²⁰Hruska Asks Open Arms for Refugees," *Lincoln Star*, 10 May 1975, 9.

²¹Shearer, 12; "Nebraskans Plan for Viet Refugees," *Sunday Journal and Star*, 29 May 1975, 11C. See also, Darrell Montero, *Vietnamese Americans: Patterns and Socioeconomic Adaptation in the United States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), 26. Resettlement throughout the United States was arranged by nine civilian organizations: U.S. Catholic Conference, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, International Rescue Committee, United HIAS, Church World Service, Tolstoy Foundation, American Fund for Czechoslovakian Refugees, American Council for Nationalities Services, and Travelers Aid International Services.

In addition to Ft. Chaffee, resettlement centers were operating at Indian Gap, Pennsylvania, Eglin Air Base, Florida, and Camp Pendleton, California.

Interestingly, rural Nebraska recruited dozens physicians from the first wave and the state financed retraining in American medical methods at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and at Creighton University. As Lincoln did not have a shortage of doctors, the city was not included in these initiatives. See, for example, *Lincoln Star*, 13 May 1975, 1; 14 May 1975, 17; 22 May 1975, 7; *Lincoln Journal*, 25 June 1975, 27; 4 June 1975, 14; 3 June 1975, 15.

The influx of "boat people" had only modest effects on the overall population of Lincoln's newest urban villages. Their plight, however, increased local resolves to continue immigrant aid. The unbridled flights of most boat people were made by any available conveyance as they risked their lives to escape repressive SRV policies.²² Many government officials collected \$5,000 per emigrant to guarantee them a safe departure from Vietnam. This scheme contributed \$4 billion to a stagnant economy but left the émigrés penniless. Multiple attempts to exit the graft-filled nation state were often necessary, and success was never assured as an estimated 50 percent of boat people perished at sea, the victims of weather, unseaworthy vessels, or piracy. Survivors often spent years in refugee camps in Thailand, Malaysia, or Hong Kong before being admitted to a safe haven in Australia, Canada, or the United States. Unlike the initial evacuees, this second wave tended to be from outside Saigon and their economic and social standing varied greatly.²³

Under international humanitarian pressure to curtail the unregulated and perilous journeys of boat people, the SRV and twenty-six nations (including the United States) implemented the Orderly Departure Program (ODP) in 1979. Over the next 20 years, 523,000 Vietnamese were admitted to the United States through various federal ODP policies. Initially, individuals seeking family reunification and former US or RVN employees were favored for admittance.²⁴ While not precluded before, the Homecoming Act of 1988 specifically mandated that Amerasians -- "people of mixed

²²See, for example, Marc Krasnowsky, "Former Boat People Ease Transition for Vietnamese," *Lincoln Star*, 2 March 1992, archives file; and Bob Reeves, "Family Who Overcame Bullets, Death at Sea to be Honored," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 17 February 1996, archives file.

²³D.R. SarDesai, *Vietnam: Trials and Tribulations of a Nation* (Long Beach, CA: Long Beach Publications, 1988), 189; Hien Duc Do, *The Vietnamese Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 28; Valverde, 101; and William J. Druiker, *Vietnam Since the Fall of Saigon* (Athens Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Study, 1989), 67. The movement of boat people peaked in 1979.

²⁴U.S., Department of State, "Refugee Admissions Program for East Asia," online; Rutledge, 65; and Suhrke, 173.

Vietnamese and American parentage" -- and their families be allowed to immigrate.²⁵ Concurrently, the Humanitarian Homecoming Act was passed in order to offer havens to internees of various "reeducation" projects. Individuals from this wave would eventually impact Lincoln's population, especially after the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement -- citing low unemployment rates, job availability in many segments of the economy, and affordable housing -- named it a preferred community for new arrivals in the early 1990s.²⁶

Significantly, the population of foreign-born Vietnamese in Nebraska increased 494 percent between 1990 and 2000 -- the second highest growth rate in the nation. While many arrived directly from Vietnam, others were part of an internally directed regrouping designed to reunite friends and families.²⁷ This process was necessary because federal policies disrupted Vietnamese kinship systems. Recognizing only nuclear families, initial placements often deprived urban villagers of "the emotional, social, and psychological support" customarily generated by extended families.²⁸ When immigrants were financially able, they moved around the country in order to reestablish comfortable and familiar social arrangements.

Orange County, California; New Orleans, Houston and Dallas; New York and Los Angeles were the largest centers of internal relocation. On the Great Plains, only the Denver-Boulder-Greeley metroplex, Oklahoma City, Austin-San Marcos, Wichita, and

²⁵Reeves, "Vietnamese Find New Life," 1. See, *Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989, Statutes at Large* 101, sec. 904, 1402 (1987).

By 1993, 88,000 Amerasians -- largely considered "half breeds" in Vietnam -- were admitted. See Valverde, 103; and generally, Kiem Nguyen, *The Unwanted: A Memoir* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 2001).

²⁶Valverde, 104; Reeves, "State Renown for its Refugee Aid," 2C; Helen Mitrofanova, "Lincoln is Gathering Place for Refugees from Around the World," *Nebline*, October 2004, 10; and Pipher, 6. See also *Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989 Act, Statutes at Large* 101, sec. 905, 1404 (1987).

Resettlement was not unique to Southeast Asian populations. In the early twenty-first century, Lincoln ranked fifth in refugee settlement per capita nationally.

²⁷Elizabeth Grieco, "The Foreign Born from Vietnam in the United States," *mpi: Migration Immigration Source*, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?id=197>; and Montero, "Vietnamese Refugees," 625, 641, 644.

Kansas City -- all with much greater total populations than the Lincoln -- hosted larger Vietnamese urban villages.²⁹ Lincoln, however, was one of several communities on the region that experienced continued internal and external immigration even after the last vestiges of the refugee program were dismantled in 1999. Entrepreneur Tim Nguyen, for instance, moved from Houston, Texas, to Lincoln because the Star City offered a sense of community absent in the sprawl of East Texas.³⁰ Nguyen was especially attracted to Lincoln because it served as a "hub of refugee immigration" and had a reputation for encouraging immigrant businesses and neighborhoods as tools for "breathing new life" into older inner-city areas.³¹

Part of this new life was a natural increase as immigrant parents produced 332,361 American-born children between 1975 and 2000, about 25 percent of the total "Vietnamese" population. Lincoln's 1,300 individuals in the second generation were typical of national developments.³² Collectively a young population, this number is expected to swell rapidly in the twenty-first century. State agencies estimate that the Asian population in Nebraska will increase by 20 percent a year for the next several decades largely due to growing Vietnamese populations.³³

Polynucleated Urban Villages

Not surprisingly, Vietnamese residents of all ages intentionally settled in ethnic enclaves as "clustering" facilitated their "psychological adjustment" and eased their

²⁸Hien Duc Do, 38, 41.

²⁹Vietnamese Internet Resource Center.

³⁰Aaron Sanderford, "O Asian Garden Unites Cultures," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 17 October 2004, online archives.

³¹*Ibid.*; and Mitrofanove, 10.

³²Max Niedzwiecki and T.C. Duong, *Southeast Asian American Statistical Profile* (Washington, D.C.: Southeast Asian Resource Action Center, 2004), 13.

³³K. Aguilar-San Juan, "Creating Ethnic Places: Vietnamese American Community Building in Orange County and Boston" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University 2000), 60; and "Health Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Nebraska," 22.

"economic adaptation."³⁴ The constantly expanding urban villages were necessarily "fluid and shifting in their organizations and dynamics."³⁵ As populations across the Great Plains were increasingly centered in suburbanized cities, initial Vietnamese clusters were established in core neighborhoods.³⁶ Favoring home ownership and extended family unity, new arrivals moved into adjacent neighborhoods, and entire clusters regrouped in developing sections of the city. Rarely the majority population of any particular neighborhood, their "community" was in fact a series of urban villages that were connected by a business district on North 27th Street. (See Figure 6-3.)

Vietnamese urban villages emerged and expanded between 1978 and 1990 as immigrants concentrated in the Hartley neighborhood -- home of Sacred Heart Catholic Church and School -- and in the Near South neighborhood. Hartley's housing stock was characterized by affordable, single family homes constructed in the 1920s, many of which were available for rental. Barely a mile away -- the Near South neighborhood was formerly affluent, but distinguished in the 1960s and 1970s by multi-unit apartment complexes and increasing population densities. Additionally, smaller concentrations of Vietnamese settled in Northeast Lincoln, the Belmont neighborhood, greater Northwest Lincoln, and in the affluent area south of Highway 2 and west of 27th Street.³⁷

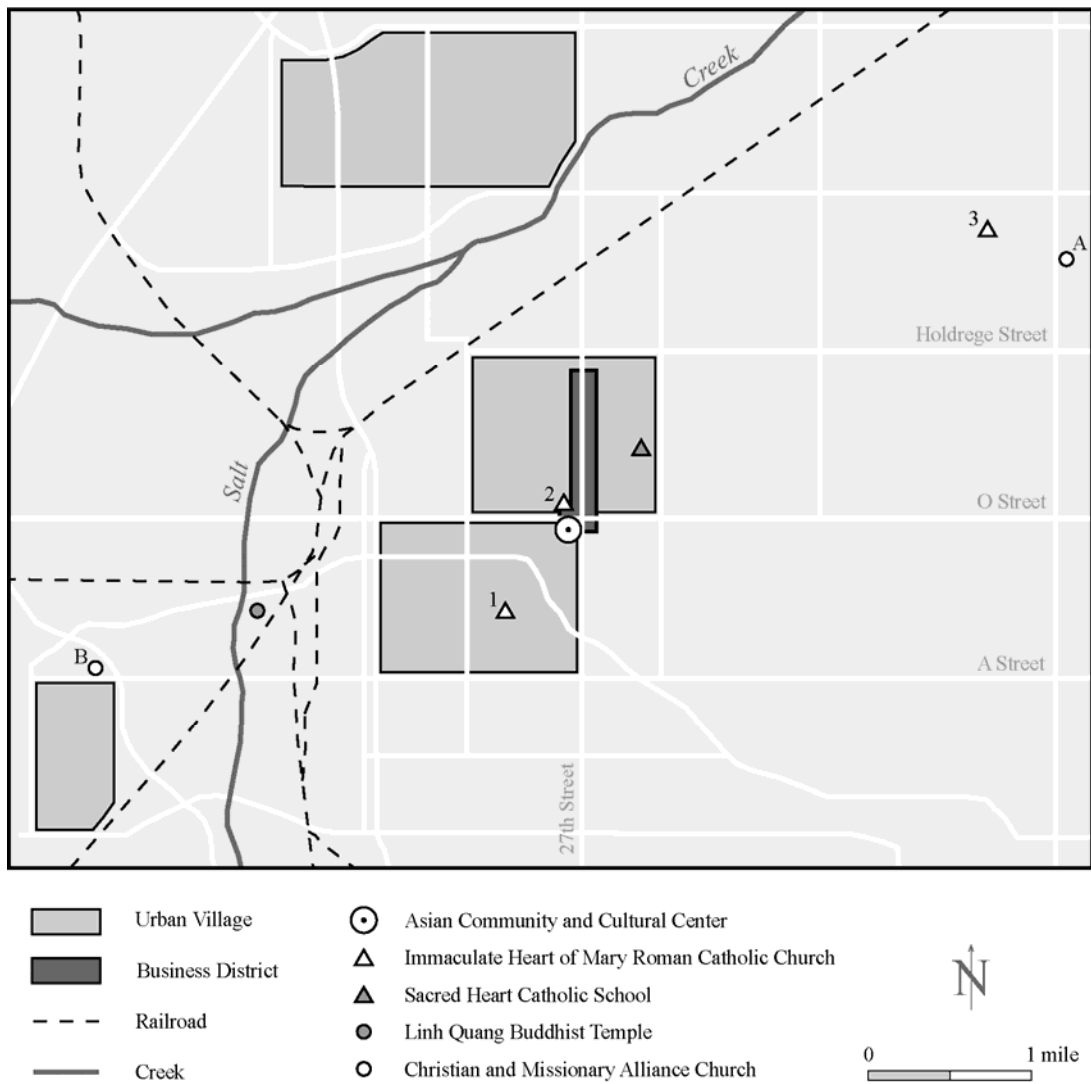
³⁴Jacqueline Desbarats, "Indochinese Resettlement in the United States," in Franklin Ng, ed., *Asians in America: The Peoples of East, Southeast and South Asia in American Life and Culture* (New York: Garland, 1998), 187; and Aguilar-San Juan, 52.

³⁵Kibria, 21; Nash, 138-39.

³⁶For theoretical considerations, see Ric Dias, "The Great Cantonment: Cold War Cities in the American West," in Kevin J. Fernlund, ed., *The Cold War American West, 1945-1989* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 71-72; Carl Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 155; and Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 188.

³⁷*Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1978); *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1980); and *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1985).

Figure 6-3. Map of Vietnamese Urban Villages and Institutions.



Large-scale expansion was necessary to accommodate the growing Vietnamese population in the 1990s. The Near South population increased slightly, but remained contained in the rental district between L and A Streets and between 9th and 27th. The greatest activity among urban villagers focused on neighborhoods targeted by the city for residential redevelopment.³⁸ The numbers in the Hartley area were augmented by new arrivals in adjacent neighborhoods, and by 2000 the Hartley-Malone-Clinton urban village had the largest and densest population of Vietnamese in the greater community. Homeowners also moved into newer housing in Northwest Lincoln and to developments adjacent to West A Street. Additionally, an increasingly affluent subset of the population -- including Maria and Anton Vu -- spread out across South Lincoln.³⁹

Urban village formation and rearrangement was fueled, in part, by a cultural preference for property ownership. Impressively, 67.6 percent of Vietnamese in Nebraska owned their own homes by 2000.⁴⁰ The ratio of homeowners to renters appears somewhat lower in Lincoln's older, core urban villages. In the Hartley neighborhood, for instance, thirty-seven units were owner occupied by "Asians" in 2000 compared to fifty-four rentals, a homeownership rate of around 40 percent. Clinton and Malone -- which have many rental units and high concentrations of students -- had 30 percent and 13 percent owner occupancy rates among "Asians" respectively.⁴¹

³⁸The Near South and South Salt Creek Neighborhoods (South Russian Bottoms) were also targeted for residential redevelopment but have not attracted Vietnamese communities. Presumably, the housing stock does not suit their needs. See, City of Lincoln, "Low-Moderate Income Area (LMI), Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA), Lincoln, NE 2004" (Lincoln: Development Department, 2004, map).

³⁹US, Census Bureau, "TM-P004D, Percent of Persons Who Are Asian Alone: 2000, Lancaster County by Block Groups," <http://fastfacts.census.gov/servlet/CWSThematicMapFramsetServlet>; *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1990); *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1995); *Polk's City Lincoln Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 2003).

East Lincoln and Southeast Lincoln housed few immigrants whether Vietnamese or of other origin

⁴⁰Nebraska boasted a 71.2 percent home ownership rate for the general population in 2000. Vietnamese Studies Internet Resource Center, "Vietnamese Household Tenure Data, Nebraska," <http://site.yahoo.com/vstudies/viethoustend5.html>. The main organizational site as of December 2005 moved to <http://www.vstudies.org>.

⁴¹City of Lincoln, Urban Development Department "Statistics from 2000 U.S. Census," <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/urban/comdev/neighbor/maps&stats.htm>.

The Hartley-Clinton-Malone complex was likely home to new arrivals from Southeast Asia who were working hard to establish themselves. Consequently, poverty - as defined by the mainstream -- was fairly common. In 1990, just over 30 percent of Asians in Lincoln were living below official poverty levels; presumably many of these individuals were among the 70 percent who were foreign born. These rates compared with 10 percent of the general population and 20 percent of the Asian population living in poverty statewide.⁴² Despite a continued influx of immigrants in the 1990s, poverty levels dropped during the decade, and by 1999 only 13 percent of Asians in Nebraska were living in poverty. Although Vietnamese in general made less than other Asians, as a group they earned more than Hispanics, Native Americans, or African Americans.⁴³

As a result of their modest affluence, Vietnamese urban villagers helped to redefine Lincoln's housing market. Generally wishing to accommodate larger, multi-generational families, modest spaces tended to be between 1,400 and 1,700 square feet, and newer housing was often somewhat larger.⁴⁴ Attention to family hierarchy created special needs that often caused Vietnamese homeowners to retrofit standing structures at an average cost of \$3,500. Master suites and master bathrooms, for instance, were eliminated because facilities for family elders could not be less than those of their grown children. These "tastes" and "requirements" encouraged urban villagers to recluster in newer neighborhoods where builders and realtors -- recognizing that 40 percent of housing growth in the twenty-first century would probably come from immigrants

Statistics for more affluent neighborhoods were not readily available, but presumably were much higher. The city's statistics are not exclusive to Vietnamese and student housing accounted for the especially low rates in the Malone neighborhood.

⁴²US, Bureau of Census, "Table 11 Summary of Social and Economic Characteristics for Asian or Pacific Islander Persons and for Households and Families with an Asian or Pacific Islander Householder: 1990," *1990 Census of Population: Social and Economic Characteristics, Nebraska. 1990 CP-2-29* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1993). 34.

⁴³Nkwocha, 31; and Niedzwiecki and Duong, 21.

⁴⁴See, Lancaster County Assessor/Register of Deeds, <http://www.lincoln.ne/cnty/assess/property.htm>.

willingly promoted and constructed residences with the front doors facing east and backdoors out of line with the entrances.⁴⁵

While structural requirements and population pressures led to residential reclustering, the Vietnamese business district remained in the heart of the Hartley-Clinton-Malone urban village. The North 27th Street strip by 2005 was host to many Vietnamese owned restaurants, markets, auto repair centers, nail salons, fashion boutiques, coffee houses, electronic supply stores, and insurance agencies. These cultural "focal points" are intimately connected to real estate, banking, and health care services in other parts of town. Ultimately, although all walks of customers were welcome in most of these businesses, they created zones of refuge for members of a community whose accommodation to mainstream patterns was ongoing.⁴⁶

Immigrants and Refugees

Like all new arrivals, the urban villagers' adaptation to life in Lincoln required large-scale identity transformation. For Vietnamese, this required coming to terms with refugee experiences. Uniquely, until relations with SRV were normalized in 1996, over two-thirds of foreign-born Vietnamese in the US were classified as "refugees" and, in many instances, self-identified with that status.⁴⁷ Refugees are defined as individuals who "*are forced to flee*" their home nations and are subsequently "unable or unwilling to return" because of "persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution" for reasons of

⁴⁵Chien Cao, "*Chào Quí và Các Bạn*" (Greetings to Guests and Friends), <http://chiencao.woodspros.com/AgentHome/Homepage.aspx>; and Bob Reeves, "Builder Customizes Homes to Fit All Cultures," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 2 October 2004, online archives.

⁴⁶Owens, 62-63; Reeves, "Vietnamese Find New Life," 6; Aguilar-San Juan, 181, 157; and Kibria, 19.

⁴⁷Craig Centrie, "Free Spaces Unbound: Families, Community, and Vietnamese High School Students' Identities," in Lois Weis and Michelle Fine, eds., *Construction Sites: Excavating Race, Class, and Gender Among Urban Youth* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000), 67; and Todd B. Schneeberger, "Vietnamese Refugees: An Assessment of Their Loss of Identity and Trust" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska--Lincoln, 2000), x. See Figure 6-2.

religious, social, or political affiliation.⁴⁸ In Lincoln, refugees continued arriving at least through 1994, the year Xuan-Trang Ho and her family arrived seeking political sanctuary.⁴⁹ Because many departed with little or no advanced planning, they were troubled they "did not have the protection of their dead ancestors."⁵⁰ Culturally fragile, they still faced the demands of adjusting to a new and foreign place. Empirical evidence suggests refugees were less likely to adapt American behaviors than immigrants -- those who "*choose to come* to a new life."⁵¹

The refugee concept, however, was a modern invention that evolved as a result of wide-scale displacements in the post-World War II era. To understand the "full richness, complexity, and diversity" of the experiences of Vietnamese urban villagers, and to better contrast them with Volga Germans and Omaha Indians, "immigrants" would appear a more useful term.⁵² By broadest definition, immigrants are "persons lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States."⁵³ As such, the concept encompasses all of Lincoln's urban villagers. Refugees were instead people accepted above and beyond the liberalized quotas of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 as the result of American Cold-War policy. Most were paroled into the country as a reward for resisting international communism.⁵⁴

Politics aside, the experiences of Vietnamese émigrés were so diverse that labeling them as "refugees" largely fails to elucidate any unifying connections. Early

⁴⁸James M. Freeman, *Hearts of Sorrow: Vietnamese American Lives* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 11; U.S., Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *2000 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2002), 80. See also, Rutledge, *Vietnamese Experience*, 6.

⁴⁹JoAnne Young, "Driven by Her Past: Wesleyan Student Earns Truman Scholarship," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 19 September 2005, 1C.

⁵⁰Andrew Pham, 21.

⁵¹Melinda H. Le, "Behavioral Acculturation, Psychological Acculturation, and Psychological Well-Being Across Generations of Vietnamese Immigrants and Refugees" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2004), 44; Freeman, 11.

⁵²Steven J. Gold, *Refugee Communities: A Comparative Field Study* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992), x-xi.

⁵³*2000 Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, 13.

arrivals, for instance, were given preferential treatment and support by governmental agencies and social service organizations. Late comers experienced more neutral treatment and relied on ethnic communities already in place.⁵⁵ All Vietnamese immigrants, however, were "born again" in new milieus.⁵⁶ As such, their "old loyalties" and beliefs were "simultaneously strengthened and challenged" by life in the United States.⁵⁷

Whether Vietnamese in Lincoln started as refugees or not, they became immigrants when they determined to build new lives in the United States.⁵⁸ The focuses of these lives were the decentralized urban villages that they organized and rearranged over the course of thirty years. Largely collections of neighbors who sought affordable spaces in reasonable vicinity to other Vietnamese, a distinct set of ethnic institutions cemented bonds that were weakened by proximity issues. Despite the great physical and cultural dissimilarities of host and sending cultures, lasting communities of Vietnamese found ample room in Lincoln to lead the comfortable lives that eluded them in Southeast Asia.

PARTICULARISM

These relatively stable ethnic enclaves allowed "immigrants to turn inward" and reestablish cherished behavioral patterns.⁵⁹ Steeped in particularism, most Vietnamese urban villagers maintained aspects of performed culture imported from Southeast Asia, especially language, family customs, religion, and traditional celebration practices. Additionally, while the ethnic community in general was "marked by diversity in terms

⁵⁴Jae-Hyup Lee, *Dynamics of Ethnic Identity: Three Asian American Communities in Philadelphia* (New York: Garland, 1998), 90.

⁵⁵Owens, 31.

⁵⁶Rocky Pham, quoted in Ahrin Mishan, and Mick Rothenberg, *Bui Doi: Life Like Dust* (San Francisco: National Asian American Telecommunications Association, 1994), videocassette.

⁵⁷Kibria, 12 and 14.

⁵⁸Montero, *Vietnamese Americans*, 7.

of region, immigration experience, religious outlook, ideology, and background," a shared sense of history served as a unifying agent.⁶⁰ Consequently, a "Vietnamese" identity was nurtured in Lincoln, but this overarching ascription was fragmented by Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant loyalties. An intense attachment to the Republic of Vietnam, however, helped mitigate some of the strains of division.

Place

A large and diverse nation of jungles and mountains, Vietnam is often compared to "a pole carrying two baskets of rice on its ends."⁶¹ The country's narrow, mountainous hinterland -- only thirty-five miles wide in places -- connects the 1,000 mile distance between the tropical Mekong River Delta in the south to the monsoonal Red River Delta in the north. (See Figure 6-4.) Dominated by the dialects and worldviews of Saigon and Hanoi, respectively, these lowland regions comprise a mere 10 percent of the nation's 200,000 square mile area but host nearly 90 percent of its population.⁶² South and North regional cultures are joined by a distinct Central identity which is epitomized by developments in and around the city of Hue.

Vietnamese urban villagers in Lincoln clearly recognized regional differences among themselves. The Vietnamese Student Association at the University of Nebraska, for instance, sponsored an evening celebrating "*Việt Nam Ba Miền*," or the three regions

⁵⁹Ibid., 61.

⁶⁰Gold, 24.

⁶¹Anh Quang Trang, 21.

⁶²Joseph Buttinger, *A Dragon Defiant: A Short History of Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1972), 8; SarDesai, 1; Central Intelligence Agency, "Vietnam," *World Factbook*, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/vm.html>; and *National Geographic Atlas of the World*, fifth ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1981), 186-89.

Vietnam is about equal in area to New Mexico. Longitudinally, it lies between 109 and 102 degrees East. Located entirely Within the Tropic of Cancer, it sits between 7 to 22 degrees North latitude. The northern climate has distinct wet and dry seasons and the southern climate is generally wet year round.

in Vietnam, in 1998.⁶³ They also acknowledged an ancient urban/rural split that further separated Vietnamese according to customs, dress, and marriage patterns.⁶⁴ These differences, however, were already largely obscured prior to immigration onto the Great Plains, and they have become arcane cultural artifacts within Lincoln's ethnic enclaves.

The rural distinctions were weakened by decades of French colonization which caused the "gradual disintegration of the traditional political and legal organization of village life."⁶⁵ The former Republic of Vietnam -- the point of departure for most Vietnamese in Lincoln -- experienced massive population movements from the war-torn countryside to the relative safety of cities in the 1960s and 1970s. Saigon alone grew from 2 million residents in 1955 to 7 million twenty years later. After a generation of such movements, few youth who fled Vietnam had any knowledge of village life. Similarly, thirty years of wars involving Vietnamese, Japanese, French, and American forces caused one of the biggest internal regional exoduses in the twentieth century. In 1954, approximately 800,000 northerners -- mostly Catholics -- fled to the South largely because of issues surrounding religious freedom.⁶⁶ Although families that fled from Hanoi to Saigon in 1954 and from Saigon to Lincoln in 1975 retained a knowledge of their place of origin, most identify themselves as "Vietnamese."⁶⁷ Indeed, in the Capital City this was the case as few other Southeast Asian ethnics have relocated to the community.⁶⁸ In the newly formed Lincoln urban villages, as in Vietnam, 90 percent

⁶³"The Vietnamese Student Association Presents its Sixth Annual Saigon Enchantment," *Scarlet*, 18 September 1998, online archives.

⁶⁴Freeman, 60.

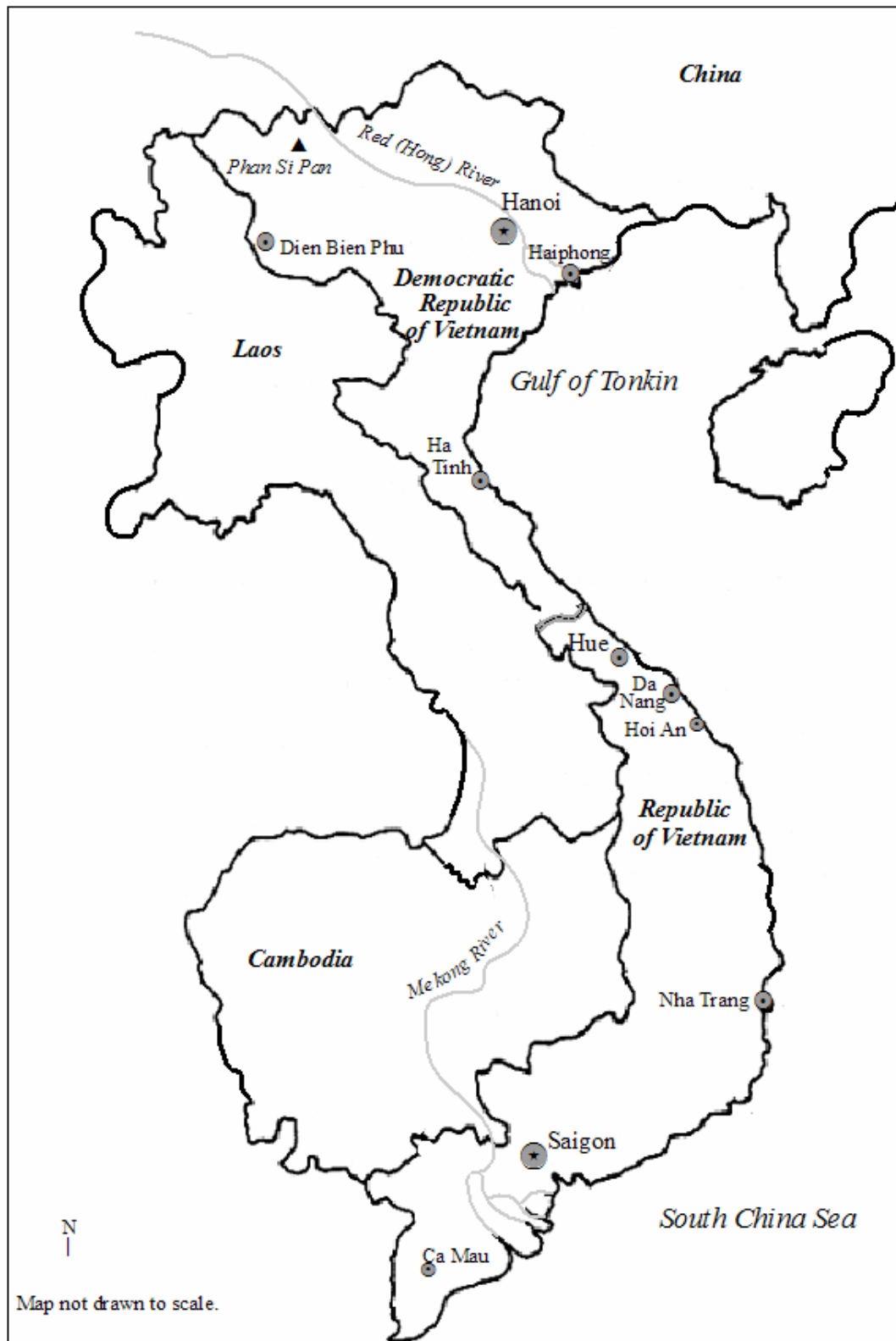
⁶⁵Kibria, 41-42.

⁶⁶Ibid., 49, 62, 52; SarDesai, 111; Nghia M. Vo, *The Bamboo Gulag: Political Imprisonment in Communist Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004), 11, 14; and Thuy Tien, "Tet 1968," in Lesleyanne Hawthorne, ed., *Refugee: The Vietnamese Experience* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982), 36.

⁶⁷Author, Field Notes, ACCC, 23 December 2005.

⁶⁸Pipher, 19.

Figure 6-4. Map of Vietnam, 1975.



of the population was ethnically Vietnamese, and despite some differences, they were "both racially and culturally a remarkably unified people."⁶⁹

History

History, which commonly begins with a creation story, is central to Vietnamese identity. Tradition dictates that the Dragon Lord, *Lac Long Quan*, emerged from the sea to rid the Red River delta -- the cradle of Vietnamese civilization -- of evil demons. Before returning to the ocean's depths, he taught the people how to cultivate rice and how to wear clothing. A benevolent culture hero, Dragon later came back to expel an alien ruler who invaded from the north. In the process, *Lac Long Quan* kidnapped *Au Co* -- the foreign king's wife -- and hid with her in the mountains until the invaders' final retreat. The new princess of the mountains wed the old prince of the sea, and their progeny were the first Vietnamese.⁷⁰

Told and retold, the creation story and other traditions were introduced to the mainstream in the Capital City by a recent display at the Lincoln Children's Museum. "Dragons and Fairies: Exploring Vietnam Through Folk Tales" recounted the adventures of *Lac Long Quan* and *Au Co* and entertained a new generation of young people half a world away from the Gulf of Tonkin and Phan Si Pang -- the highest mountain in Vietnam. The exhibit also made an ancient history accessible to people of Vietnamese heritage in a new milieu.⁷¹

The creation story remains plausible and central to modern identity because it helps explain how multiple cultural influences combined to create Vietnamese culture and civilization. Indeed, the Red River heartland of Vietnam connected the mountainous

⁶⁹Buttinger, 12. Fourteen per cent of Vietnam's population is comprised of indigenous peoples -- most notably Hmongs, ethnic Chinese, Khmers, and Thais. See, Pipher, 19; CIA, "Vietnam."

⁷⁰Keith Weller Taylor, *The Birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 1; and Buttinger, 12.

Tibetan Plateau to the Gulf of Tonkin and the sea- going world for millennia. A result of these connections, a cogent Vietnamese identity emerged during the Van Lang feudal era in the seventh century BCE. Vietnamese people have jealously guarded their culture ever since, even during successive waves of foreign encroachment and invasion.⁷² Between outsider occupations, Vietnamese managed to spread their civilization from Hanoi to Hue to Saigon and beyond.

Long before the nation began its expansion, the "three teachings" of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism -- never mutually exclusive practices -- coalesced to form a "unique Vietnamese philosophical and religious perspective" that permeated all other political and cultural institutions.⁷³ Symbolized by the Yin (the feminine earth) and Yang (the masculine heaven), Taoism was a religious philosophy conceived by Lao Zu of China that sought to maintain balance within the universe. Practitioners used meditation and observation in their quest for "compassion, moderation, and humility."⁷⁴ While philosophically important in the nation's development, only a minority of Vietnamese concentrated on Taoism. Buddhism, on the otherhand, was the preferred religion of the agrarian masses, at least after the third century CE. Its most sacred temples corresponded with natural forces that connected the Buddha to the monsoon season -- the time of flooding fields. Additionally, Vietnamese Buddhists stressed "self-mastery and self-discipline" as tools to build good karma as they sought enlightenment and the opportunity to be reincarnated in a better position in future lives.⁷⁵ Finally, Confucianism -- which emerged in China around the fifth century BCE -- taught all Vietnamese to "maintain a peaceful and stable society" by obeying their "obligation,

⁷¹Erin Andersen, "Fairies Explores Vietnam," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 22 October 2004, online archives.

⁷²Anh Quang Tran, 116; Taylor, 9.

⁷³Rutledge, *Role of Religion*, 7 and 23.

⁷⁴Ibid., 30; "Taoism," <http://www.religious tolerance.org/taoism.htm>.

duties, and responsibilities to family, society, and hierarchy."⁷⁶ The local ruling class preferred Confucianism.

Vietnamese identity was solidified by these three teachings and strengthened by 1,000 years of Chinese aggression. Interestingly, *Nam Việt* -- literally "South People" but most probably "people south of China" -- emerged in 207 BCE when a Chinese general replaced the Van Lang rulers. This proto-nation remained an independent entity until 111 BCE when it was incorporated into the Chinese empire. As a province of the Central Kingdom, most Vietnamese -- an ethnic group of about 1 million at this point -- were reluctant to give up their own "barbarism," and rebellion against the Chinese Han lords was commonplace. Consequently, a Chinese elite and a local mandarin class that accessed power through an elaborate civil service system that dominated Vietnam for 1,000 years could never subsume the Vietnamese identity. This identity, already deeply embedded the village structure, favored autonomous units that allowed community council members to intermeditate between village and state.⁷⁷

After years of struggle, Chinese armies were ousted in 939, and a succession of indigenous monarchies ruled over a centralized, independent state. They claimed "absolute power" through a "mandate of heaven" and immediately launched the *nam tien* -- "southern expansion" -- movement.⁷⁸ This new political culture of expansion was enabled by the residue left by Chinese "constitutional, administrative, economic, educational, and military frameworks" that were vitalized by "a strong revival of indigenous values."⁷⁹ Over the course of 800 years, Vietnamese culture expanded from

⁷⁵Taylor, 81-83; Anh Quang Tran, 117-118; Rutledge, *Role of Religion*, 31. The four temples were dedicated to the Buddha of the Clouds (Phap-van), the Buddha of the Rain (Phap-vu), the Buddha of Thunder (Phap-loi), and the Buddha of Lightning (Phap-dien).

⁷⁶Anh Quang Tran, 118.

⁷⁷Taylor, 83, 13-14, 33, 42; R.B. Smith, "The Cycle of Confucianism in Vietnam," in Walter F. Vella, ed., *Aspects of Vietnamese History* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1973), 3; Montero, *Vietnamese Americans*, 12; SarDesai, 2-3; and Kibria, 41-42.

⁷⁸Buttinger, 53; Nghia M. Vo, 5.

⁷⁹SarDesai, 26.

Ha Tinh to Ca Mau. Hue was incorporated by 1100. The Champa Kingdom that stretched from Da Nang to Nha Trang was conquered in 1471 and completely incorporated by 1720, its Indianized population was marginalized or acculturated into the Vietnamese mainstream. After the fall of Champa, the Khmer-dominated Mekong Delta was the next target of colonization, and military veterans were encouraged to forcibly take lands in this fertile area. By 1780, the cultural boundaries of the modern Vietnamese nation were in place, although political hegemony would prove more problematic.⁸⁰

The actual political unification of Vietnam required civil war and conquest. Ultimately, *Dai Nam* -- "the great south" -- emerged after the Nguyen monarchy of central Vietnam defeated the Trinh, who were based in Hanoi. The Nguyen rulers led the final conquest of the Mekong Delta before turning their attention to Hue -- soon to be the capital of a unified nation -- in 1801 and Hanoi in 1802. After the Trinh's final defeat, Nguyen Anh -- the Gai Long emperor -- claimed a "Mandate from Heaven," and assumed moral responsibility for his subjects during a reign that lasted until 1820.⁸¹ Under his direction, the nation was organized into twenty-six provinces which were administered through a "well-regulated mandarin bureaucracy."⁸²

Ironically, Gai Long's unification project opened the door for French encroachment. Initially, the European power was more than willing to provide military aid used in the struggle against the Trinh in exchange for a monopoly on international trade and a tolerance of Catholicism. Between 1787 and 1820 the Nguyen and French

⁸⁰Taylor, 33; SarDesai, 9; and John DeFrancis, *Colonialism and Language Policy in Vietnam* (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1977), 39.

Khmers remain the dominant ethnic group in neighboring Cambodia.

⁸¹Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 143; and Sar Desai, 37.

⁸²SarDesai, 3, 37, 40-42; and Anh Quang Tran, 120.

alliance remained mutually advantageous and both sides respected the terms of their agreement.⁸³

Subsequent emperors -- Minh Mang (1820-1840), Thie Tri (1841-47), and Tu Duc (1848-1883) -- were less tolerant of cultural and economic interference in their nation. Large-scale repression of Christianity became commonplace by the mid-1830s, and a decade later Tu Duc even offered rewards for killing Europeans. From 1840 on, missionaries and converts sought French military intervention to ease their plight, but internal revolution and European-based war made excursions to Asia impossible. By 1858, however, French Emperor Napoleon III was ready to seek foreign empire and used the persecution of Catholics as a means to begin assaults on Vietnamese sovereignty.⁸⁴

Although early French campaigns were often poorly conceived, their superior military technology and fraudulent diplomacy allowed them to make rapid inroads into the nation. The Nguyen lords clearly misunderstood the ultimate French objective, and, once clear on the matter, their mandarins' attempts to block expansion using solutions written in Confucian classics proved futile. French rule was established over three provinces in the Mekong in 1862 -- a territory they called Cochinchina. In 1883, Annam was established in Central Vietnam and Tonkin in the North. French conquest was complete.⁸⁵ Vietnam was no longer independent or united.

The Confucian hierarchy that favored scholars, farmers, workers, merchants, and soldiers, in that order, was replaced by a new colonial system, one that proved to be "politically repressive and economically exploitive."⁸⁶ Mandarins were gradually

⁸³SarDesai, 42, 45; and Chapius, 175

⁸⁴Oscar Chapius, *A History of Vietnam from Hong Bang to Tu Duc* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995) 188-95; Charles Kimball, "French Indochina," <http://www.guidetothailand-history/indochina.htm>; and Buttinger, 56.

⁸⁵SarDesai, 51; Ngo Vinh Lang, "Vietnam," in Douglas Allen and Ngo Vinh Lang, eds., *Coming to Terms: Indochina, the United States and War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 11; Hoang Ngoc Thanh, "Quoc Ngu and the Development of Modern Vietnamese Literature," in Walter F. Vella, ed., *Aspects of Vietnamese History* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1973), 192; and Buttinger, 61.

⁸⁶Hien Duc Do, 19.

superseded by a French-educated elite that was recruited from the merchant class, and the Confucian examination system was ultimately abolished in the 1910s in all three districts.⁸⁷ Changes among the peasants that comprised 90 percent of the nation's population were equally dire. Rice farmers and fishermen were forced to work in the coal mines and rubber plantations for the benefit of the colonizers. Conditions were often draconian in these new industries. Additionally, labor demands ended the autonomous village system that had allowed the masses to live cooperatively in family groups since the Van Lang era. As the forces of capitalism and colonialism coalesced, the peasantry were also subjected to an over-priced salt monopoly and other harsh measures designed to defray the costs of pacification.⁸⁸

Opposition to foreign domination led directly to a modern Vietnamese national identity, an ascription that was predicated on resistance, modernization, and cultural continuity.⁸⁹ Resistance emerged almost immediately and moved rapidly from the traditional peasants' "right to revolt against inadequate or oppressive rule" into the realm of nation building and self-determination.⁹⁰ Modern nationalism found its voice in 1905 when Phan Boi Chau published *History of the Loss of Vietnam*. Phan looked at the careers of China's Sun Yat-Sen and the Meiji reformers in Japan for national salvation rather than traditional texts.⁹¹ Following a similar path to China, reformers split into Nationalist and Communist camps and eventually divided a fledgling nation.

Ultimately, it was Ho Chi Minh -- a pseudo name meaning "he who is enlightened" -- who successfully mobilized "Vietnam's 2,000 year traditional of anti-

⁸⁷Ibid., 11; Anh Quang Tran, 121; Anderson, 117; and Nguyen Ngoc Phach, "Saigon and Cholon During the War," in Lesleyanne Hawthorne, ed., *Refugee: The Vietnamese Experience* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982), 77.

⁸⁸Taylor, 7; Buttinger, 66-69; Ngo Vinh Long, 1; and SarDesai, 61.

⁸⁹Montero, *Vietnamese Americans*, 17.

⁹⁰SarDesai, 37.

⁹¹Ibid., 63-64.

colonialism."⁹² Widely popular because of his spare life-style and willingness to make sacrifices for his people, "*Bác* (Uncle) Ho" abandoned the democratic principles he had learned at French and English universities and turned to communism after it became apparent that self-determination as described in the Treaty of Versailles would not be allowed in Asian colonies. Consequently, Ho became convinced that the efforts of 100,000 Vietnamese soldiers that served France in World War I were in vain. Hoping to rid his movement of racial overtones of the Enlightenment West, he moved on to the Soviet Union and a new field of political opportunity.⁹³

Politics of Separation

While all diaspora and national Vietnamese share an identity constructed on several thousands years of history, urban villagers in Lincoln construct their identities in opposition to the communist regime Ho Chi Minh established in Vietnam. Indeed, most people in the diaspora fled their homeland because of political and religious repression. They believed democracy and tolerance would have been preserved had Vietnam been unified under nationalist rule or had the Republic of Vietnam maintained its independence. Instead, years of war were followed by years of repression. The SRV's record on human rights became so abysmal that not only were former RVN soldiers and officials ruined or imprisoned, their children were routinely denied access to higher education and social advancement through the 1980s.⁹⁴

From the SRV perspective, the enemies of Vietnamese self-determination were first the French, and then the combined forces of the United States, the RVN, and their allies. The liberation of Vietnam began on August 29, 1945, when Ho Chi Minh

⁹²Gold, 50; and SarDesai, 71. Ho was born Nguyen Sinh Cuong, changed his name to Nguyen Aio Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot) while studying in Europe, and finally became Ho Chi Minh after a sojourn in the Soviet Union.

⁹³Andrew Pham, 228-29; SarDesai, 66, 95.

proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam independent from Japanese and Vichy France forces. Against the ethos of twentieth-century world order, France attempted to recolonize Indochina between 1946 and 1954; and fearing Communist expansion in the region, 78 percent of the cost was footed by the United States. Despite superior weaponry and better funding, the French were defeated by DRV forces with finality at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The Geneva agreement, signed shortly after the battle, settled the "First War of Independence." Vietnam was temporarily divided at the 17th Parallel, with the communists in power in the North and a provisional nationalist government appointed by the last Nguyen emperor in the South. Civilians were allowed free movement on either side of the Demilitarized Zone, and free elections that would unify the nation were scheduled for July 1956. The elections were never held, however, as President Ngo Dinh Diem declared the southern government permanent and formed the Republic of Vietnam in 1955. His regime was immediately recognized by the United States, and an additional twenty years of conflict would be necessary to implement reunification.⁹⁵

Nationalists and RVN supporters feared both communism and Ho, who was a ruthless adversary. Although he draped his movement in the garb of self-determination, Ho betrayed his rivals in Viet Nam Quac Dan Dang -- a group of republican nationalists -- by turning them over to French forces during the rebellions of the 1930s. He did so insisting that their era had passed and only a communist revolution could free Vietnam. This reputation against pluralism sent 1 million northern Protestants, Buddhists, south of the 17th Parallel in 1954.⁹⁶ After separation, the sovereign DRV government

⁹⁴Jacqueline Desbarats, "Human Rights: Two Steps Forward One Step Backward?" in Thai Quang Trung, ed., *Vietnam Today: Accessing the New Trends* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), 48.

⁹⁵Montero, *Vietnamese Americans*, 17-19; Buttinger, 93; Ngo Vinh Long, 21-22, 33; and SarDesai, 83, 88.

⁹⁶Anderson, 12; and Kibria, 49.

"denounced Buddhist monks, disrupted religious traditions, and constricted religious and social freedoms" among all denominations.⁹⁷

Ironically, conditions for Buddhists were not much better in the RVN. Intimately connected to the Catholic Church, President Ngo Dinh Diem appointed family members and co-religionists to most posts in the new government and adopted harsh measures to keep the Buddhist majority in check. Consequently, he was never able to build a broad base of support and failed to promote meaningful economic or democratic reforms. Always in power at the pleasure of the United States, he was removed by coup in 1963. Six presidents followed Ngo -- although Nguyen Van Thieu served from 1965 to 1975. All required American military support to remain in power.⁹⁸

Governmental failure in the RVN was augmented by the DRV's efforts to forcibly reunify the country. The National Liberation Front was formed in 1959 and the war of attrition began. For fourteen years, attacks directed by the DRV increased even as American military presence reached unprecedented levels. Facing internal pressures and little chance of final victory, the United States negotiated a peace accord in January 1973 and withdrew leaving the nation divided.⁹⁹ After several years of regrouping, the DRV began its final offensive in March 1975 and ended the war of reunification in April.

Although dedicated to equality, life in the newly formed Socialist Republic of Vietnam proved untenable for millions of Vietnamese. Continued warfare, economic deprivation, political repression, and religious persecution were commonplace. The SRV fought with neighboring Kampuchea (Cambodia) during the dry seasons of 1976, 1977 and 1978. Although glossed officially in ideological terms, unresolved border issues from eighteenth-century expansion and the era of French administration were

⁹⁷Freeman, 271.

⁹⁸SarDesai, 110; and Buttinger, 95.

largely the cause of these hostilities. Remembering ancient insults while protesting treatment of ethnic Chinese citizens -- most in Saigon's Cholon district -- China invaded Vietnam in February 1979. This seventeen-day campaign solved little but smoldering resentments remained well into the next decade¹⁰⁰

SRV attitudes towards its newly incorporated southern citizens proved no more enlightened than its foreign policies. Revenge proved to be a common factor in its actions. After reunification, the SRV eradicated private ownership, confiscated business, and became the central redistribution agent for all products in the South. These policies lasted well into the 1980s and helped create dire trade deficits with the few nations willing to do business with them. Poor central planning and a period of drought only intensified difficulties these difficulties, and by 1980 food production was not even keeping up with the population.¹⁰¹

Responding to these problems and attempting to overcome war-time urbanization, the SRV created "New Economic Zones" (NEZs) in underdeveloped areas in both the North and South and then assigned "volunteers" to new communities in the hinterlands. Such projects were designed to stimulate agricultural production and repopulate the "blank zones" -- often ecologically denigrated by extensive bombing -- created by U.S. pacification policies. Between 1976 and 1980 the government had planned to move 4 million people. The NEZs, however, were "mostly uninhabitable areas" in a devastated countryside that was long abandoned by local peasants. In their places, former ARVN officers and government employees struggled to rebuild the countryside.¹⁰² The government also sent individuals affiliated with the RVN to reeducation camps. Little more than prisons, the camps were places of hard labor --

⁹⁹Ngo Vinh Long, 39, 44.

¹⁰⁰Druiker, 167-68, 185.

¹⁰¹Nghia M. Vo, 37; Druiker, 57, 98, 106; and SarDesai, 141-46.

including clearing land mines -- starvation, and summary execution. Confinements of up to fifteen years were not unusual, and perhaps one-third of all families in the South had at least one family member in prison.¹⁰³

Uninspired and untalented leadership exacerbated the entire situation. After Ho Chi Minh's death in 1969, an aging politburo and tumultuous change in the Soviet world led to relatively inefficient central government through the late 1980s. Generally, reformers who preferred economic liberalization fought conservatives for two decades¹⁰⁴ These same leaders introduced a new ruling class in the South. Largely recruited from the "poor and landless peasantry," they were indoctrinated in party ideology, but they had little experience and often held grudges against those they governed.¹⁰⁵ Power abuses and outright graft were rampant in most sectors of the country and bureaucrats and officials rarely heeded their own laws. Article 68 of the Constitution of 1980, for instance, guaranteed religious freedom. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Unified Buddhist Association, however, were placed under immediate government supervision.¹⁰⁶

Against this backdrop, many Vietnamese in America maintained anti-communist identities and -- citing natural division within Vietnam -- opponents of the SRV. They argued that "Historically, the north and the south have been divided between two states and two states of mind as early as 1600."¹⁰⁷ Indeed the unification of 1802 was fleeting as the French administration in essence created three Vietnams. From the southern

¹⁰²Druiker, 14-15, 29; Ngo Ving Long, 10; Buttinger, 108; and Trin Do, *Saigon to San Diego: Memoir of a Boy Who Escaped from Communist Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004), 139-41. By 1975, 10 million internal refugees crowded into South Vietnam's cities.

¹⁰³Nghia M. Vo, 154; Gold, 57; and Druiker, 47.

¹⁰⁴Thai Quang Trung, "Factions and Power Struggle in Hanoi: Is Nguyen Van Linh in Command?," in Thai Quang Trung, ed., *Vietnam Today: Accessing the New Trends* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), 9-10.

¹⁰⁵Nguyen Van Canh, "A Party in Decay: The New Class and Organized Crime," in Thai Quang Trung, ed., *Vietnam Today: Accessing the New Trends* (New York: Crane Russak, 1990), 24-25.

¹⁰⁶Druiker, 13; and Desbarats, "Human Rights," 49.

¹⁰⁷Nghia M. Vo, 9.

perspective, their Buddhist heritage allowed for the construction of a region and a nation that was "liberal and flexible," and in many ways the land of opportunity. The North, on the otherhand, was overcrowded, steeped in Confucian values, and overly concerned with the maintenance of hierarchy.¹⁰⁸

Locally, this identity was embodied in an organization called the Vietnam Community of Lincoln. Founded in 2003, they maintain the belief that their country (RVN) was lost to an international insurgency. Politically active in their new milieu, they rallied against John Kerry's presidential candidacy in 2004 because of his former stance as a veteran against the Vietnam War. Additionally, they argued his U.S. Senate record failed to link the SRV to human rights violations.¹⁰⁹ Like many other organizations nationwide, the Vietnam Community of Lincoln maintains Cold-War political sensibilities. For them, "Anything short of a complete rejection of communism and leftist thought" was intolerable.¹¹⁰

Language

Interestingly, Communists and Nationalists alike taught their philosophies to the Vietnamese people in an increasingly national language. Comprised of distinct oral and written components, many urban villagers -- along with people throughout the greater diaspora and residents of Vietnam -- believe "that if the Vietnamese language survives, the Vietnamese people will survive."¹¹¹ At the dawn of the twenty-first century survival seemed assured as an estimated 80 million people around the world spoke the language. In the United States, more than 80 percent of ethnic Vietnamese speak their native

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 6-7; and Nguyen Ngoc Phach, 76-77.

¹⁰⁹Margaret Reist, "Local Vietnamese Protest Kerry," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 2 May 2004, online archives.

¹¹⁰Valverde, 109.

¹¹¹Anh Quang Tran, 222.

tongue at home, even when English is a possibility. A small component of this total lived in Nebraska as 1,075 families spoke Vietnamese in regularly in 1990.¹¹²

A truly unique tongue, Vietnamese has served as a unifying factor guiding a shared identity from the Van Lang era through the present.¹¹³ Because ancient Vietnam "was a meeting place of different linguistic cultures," the true origins of the language are sometimes debated. Most linguists, however, classify it as part of the Mon-Khmer division of the Australo-Asiatic Group. Consequently, Vietnamese is closely related to Khmer, Champa, Thai, and Hmong. As the language developed, the land/water split of the Creation story became vital. Originating in the Red River valley, the tongue of the masses was first spoken by seafaring peoples, but its proximity to southern China dictated Cantonese influences.¹¹⁴

Chinese occupation gave rise to a native, bilingual mandarin class who wrote in Chinese. Vietnamese remained an oral language until the tenth century when *nôm* was introduced. This writing system used Chinese characters to express spoken Vietnamese. While a body of poetry and literature developed in this script, only mandarins were able to read it. These two systems existed side-by-side until around 1918 when a literacy movement that was launched in the late nineteenth replaced them.¹¹⁵

¹¹²Jae-Hyup Lee, 114; Anh Quang Tran, 150; US, Census Bureau, "Table 18: Nativity, Citizenship, Year of Entry, Area of Birth, and Language Spoken at Home: 1990," *1990 Census of Housing: Population and Housing Characteristics for Census Tracts and Block Numbering Areas, Lincoln, NE MSA* (Washington DC: GPO, 1993). On the average, there were slightly more than 4 people per household.

¹¹³A complex and beautiful language, Vietnamese contains twenty-seven consonant sounds and thirty-eight vowel sounds. The plethora of vowel options emanates from the tonal nature of Vietnamese. Pronunciation is vital as the difference between *ba* -- "father" -- and *bà* -- "grandmother" or "m'am" is slight, at least to a non-native ear. As Vietnamese is monosyllabic language, the vowel sounds in "Viet," for instance, actually form a diphthong, a vowel combination where sounds bend in the speaker's mouth, rather than forming a two-syllable word. See, *Langenscheidt's Pocket Vietnamese Dictionary: Vietnamese-English, English-Vietnamese* (New York: Langenscheidt, 2002), 13-15.

¹¹⁴Taylor, 8; Smith, 1; and Buttinger, 14.

¹¹⁵"Ch?-Nôm Script," Omniglot: A Guide to Written Language," <http://omniglot.com/writing/chunom.htm>; and Conrad Schirokauer and Donald M. Clark, *Modern East Asia: A Brief History* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2004), 109.

Intriguingly, it was the romanized *quốc ngữ* script -- literally "national language" -- that ascended slowly to become both an identity marker and a potent source of nationalist sentiment. Introduced in the seventeenth century by the Jesuit Alexandre de Rhodes, *quốc ngữ* was a central component of a colonial educational policy called "transitional bilingualism." The French goal was to prepare the Vietnamese colonial elite to learn their masters' language by first familiarizing them with Roman characters. Ten percent of the population was sent to school to participate in this program between 1861 and 1905.¹¹⁶

Instead of accepting permanent colonial rule, the Vietnamese people "were able to survive linguistic and cultural genocide by merging the narrow issue of language and writing with the broader struggle for national sovereignty and social revolution."¹¹⁷ Vietnamese nationalists -- including Ho Chi Minh -- redefined the meaning of *quốc ngữ* and turned the script "into *the* popular medium for the expression of Vietnamese cultural (and national) solidarity."¹¹⁸ Seen as a way of unifying the distinct regional dialects of northern, central, and southern Vietnam into a single mode of written communication, the spread of *quốc ngữ* began in earnest in 1911. Six years later, *Nam Phong* -- a national newspaper -- emerged in the new script and a revolution in modern literature had begun. By 1946, it was the language of instruction throughout Vietnam and remained so even after separation in 1954. By 1968, both the DRV and RVN had achieved near universal literacy.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶DeFrancis, 69, 229; Chapius, 170; and Anh Qunag Tran, 197.

¹¹⁷DeFrancis, 258.

¹¹⁸Anderson, 117.

¹¹⁹Hoang Ngoc Thanh, 192, 214; Hien Duc Do, 3; Anh Quang Tran, 223; and DeFrancis, 237, 240.

Family

Language also acknowledged proper family and social relationships and helped to maintain traditional Vietnamese identities. Even among Lincoln's Vietnamese urban villagers, Confucian norms dictated that individuals fulfill specific behavioral codes. Ultimately, "Honor," "Obligations," and "Respect" were the watchwords of Vietnamese society, and these concepts were constantly reinforced in day-to-day interactions.¹²⁰ Employing few pronouns, the Vietnamese form of address, for instance, not only allowed people to greet each other, it also allowed them to assess each other as salutations necessarily contain a series of words that express social rank, family relationships, and other positions in the Vietnamese hierarchy. Speakers often forgo "I" (*tôi*) in favor of a word choice that articulates an appropriate relationship.¹²¹

The most important relationships involve family, and elders suggest that "Without family you are no one."¹²² Characterized by patrilineal descent and patriarchal authority, the traditional Vietnamese family was "an extremely cohesive unit that promoted the importance of the group before the individual" in economic, social, gender, marital, and religious terms.¹²³ Often the driving factor behind internal Vietnamese migrations, family designations contain both a nuclear unit -- *nhá* -- which was constructed along male lineage, and an extended family unit -- *họ* -- which was generally made up of several nuclear units organized around a shared male ancestor. In combination, *nhá* and *họ* acted as the impetus for people sharing the same surname to live in close proximity. Additionally, they frequently served as an "economic safety net" and a "source of loans and business capital."¹²⁴ Although these forms were necessarily

¹²⁰Andrew Pham, 107.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 129-30; Anh Quang Tran, 223-25, 231; *Langenscheidt's Pocket Dictionary*, 14-15; and Rosetta Stone Language Learning Success, *Vietnamese, Level 1: Tieng Viet* (Harrisonburg, VA: Fairfield Language Technologies, 2002), computer software.

¹²²Unidentified elder, in Bui and Stimpfl, 115.

¹²³Schneeberger, 10.

¹²⁴Rutledge, *Vietnamese Experience*, 116; Kibria, 44, 55.

far less developed in Lincoln, than in Vietnam or Orange County, the ethos of family remained strong among urban villagers. The Tran Hung family of Lincoln, for instance, pooled money for the good of the family. Tran's oldest son and his bride remained in the family home specifically to contribute to its economy. This arrangement was typical as local young men commonly remained in the family home up until age thirty.¹²⁵

This time-worn practice is comfortable in a culture where marriage not only joins a man and a woman, but also joins two families perpetually in "space and time."¹²⁶ Such momentous events, then, required great consideration and planning. Traditionally, marriages were arranged by members of the extended family -- although matchmaking was often a formality as children sought relationships on their own, even in Vietnam. Weddings were elaborate affairs that often required two ceremonies, one for family and close friends which tended to be fairly solemn as the groom's parents ask to bring the bride into the family. This occasion was followed by a more celebratory event usually held at a restaurant or rented hall.¹²⁷

After the celebrations, life settled down into routines were women tended to remain subservient to men. Although Vietnamese society "contains strong countervailing matrilineal" emphases, especially compared to other Confucian cultures, it was a man's world in Vietnam and in Lincoln's ethnic enclaves.¹²⁸ Women necessarily showed respect "in the way you speak and the way you carry yourself." Issues of eye contact and demeanor continued to be extremely important in diaspora communities.¹²⁹ Additionally, women tended to remain in the family home prior to marriage, which generally occurred between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five.

¹²⁵"Vietnam Cultural Values Serve Family Well in Lincoln," *Sunday Journal and Star*, 30 April 1995, 6J; and Owens, 26.

¹²⁶Nash, 281.

¹²⁷Rutledge, *Vietnamese Experience*, 118; Anh Quang Tran, 138.

¹²⁸Schneeberger, 18.

¹²⁹Uyen Eileen Vu, in Gwen Nugent, director, *Between Two Worlds: Vietnamese Identity in America* (Lincoln: NETV/NETCHE, 1998), DVD.

While gender inequalities were prevalent among Lincoln's urban villagers, marriages tended to be stable and family order generally harmonious. Because Confucian norms remained in place, any undesirable behavior reflected "negatively upon the entire household."¹³⁰ Consequently, children were expected to "obey their parents in every way."¹³¹ Still, because children are central to a culture that reveres its ancestors, family size tended to be large. In Vietnam nuclear families often boasted eight to nine children. In Lincoln, however, mean family size is slightly over five people -- which is still large by local standards.¹³²

Religion

The significance of family extended beyond life as Vietnamese traditionally honored their ancestors. Ritual appeals to dead relatives were designed to aid harvests and human fertility. Part of a "grand panalogy of belief systems," even before the advent of the "three teachings," ancestor worship has remained vital into the twenty-first century among many Vietnamese Buddhists and Christians.¹³³ Similarly, altars to the Kitchen God and the God of the Hearth date into antiquity but remain common in Vietnamese psyches. A spiritual people, religious heterogeneity was the norm and exclusivity the exception.¹³⁴

Despite tendencies for inclusion, the Vietnamese Missionary and Alliance Church, Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, and Linh Quang Temple protected unique Protestant, Catholic, and Buddhist identities in Lincoln. Each congregation was

¹³⁰Bui and Stimpfl, 117.

¹³¹Unidentified youth informant, in *ibid.*, 116.

¹³²Nash, 282; Gold, 65; Owens, 26, 81; and Kibria, 44-46.

¹³³Paul Kwan, Arnold Iger, and Paul Lundahl, prods., *Anatomy of a Springroll* (New York: Filmmakers Library, 1992), videocassette; "Animism," <http://mcel.pacific.edu/as/students/vb/animism.htm>; "Vietnam," <http://geographica.com/vietnam/>; and Hien Duc Do, 7.

¹³⁴Michael Barker, "Unintentional Yet Essential Political Ties: The Christian and Missionary Alliance in French Indochina," http://www.bucknell.edu/Beaucarnet/documents/Barker_Paper.pdf, 6; and Andrew Pham, 121.

established by Vietnamese urban villagers to serve important but distinct roles in the "maintenance or revitalization of traditional culture."¹³⁵ Individually, they protected and nurtured culturally specific practices that developed over the course of decades if not centuries.

Religious splits were not confined to diaspora communities. In Vietnam the cohesiveness of the village system was enhanced when all members of a community subscribed to the same doctrines. Consequently, hamlets and villages were generally Buddhist or Christian exclusively by the nineteenth century and many remained that way even in the 1970s. The predilection for coreligionists to socialize among themselves remained common in urban Vietnam, and the practice was exported with emigration -- an experience that favored Christians. While 90 percent of Vietnam was Buddhist, only 27 percent of first wave refugees subscribed to these teachings.¹³⁶ Settlement patterns on the Great Plains also illustrated religious separation. In Lincoln, Christians -- Catholics and Protestant alike -- began arriving in 1975 and consistently outnumbered Buddhists, whose presence was not substantial until the 1990s. Wichita, Kansas, and Oklahoma City, on the otherhand was largely dominated by Buddhists during the same time period.¹³⁷

Interestingly, although they had the fewest practitioners and the shortest history in Southeast Asia, the Vietnamese Christian Missionary and Alliance Church was the first congregation that urban villagers founded in Lincoln. Established in 1975 by fifty members, the church has remained relatively small as adult membership in 2005 was

¹³⁵Rutledge, *Role of Religion*, 56, 65.

¹³⁶Son Ha, "The Village," in Leslyanne Hawthorne, ed., *Refugee: The Vietnamese Experience* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982), 10; Freeman, 88; and Montero, "Vietnamese Refugees," 627. The Republic of Vietnam was largely ruled by its Catholic minority and religious tension detracted from the government's stability.

¹³⁷Rutledge, *Role of Religion*, 7. Oklahoma City boasted a population of 4,000 Vietnamese in 1980, 60 percent of whom were Buddhist. In contrast 30 percent were Roman Catholic.

approximately 125 individuals.¹³⁸ Still, this modest congregation was part of the only sizable Protestant denomination in Vietnam. Its parent organization counted 37,222 adult members in 342 churches in 1964 and reported that proselytizing efforts were yielding 1,000 to 1,500 new baptisms annually. The church's growth, however, was uneven. Mission efforts began in Da Nang in 1911 and expanded into Hoi An, Haiphong, and Hanoi in 1915. Initial conversion successes were short lived as the French banned Protestantism in 1928 because Vietnamese nationalists were using the church to cultivate connections in the United States -- then viewed as a beacon of liberty and self-determination. Silenced, but not eliminated, about two-thirds of North Vietnam's 2,500 Protestants fled south in 1954 to take refuge near the new denominational headquarters in Nha Trang. From this base of operations, the organization was soon administering 100 church-affiliated schools throughout the South as well as an orphanage and other social services.¹³⁹ All furthered a doctrine that averred the Bible was the "inerrant" word of God given to humankind through divine intervention. While judgment was "imminent" and Christian belief exclusive, universal redemption was possible for those individuals who were willing to repent and "receive the gift of eternal life."¹⁴⁰

In comparison, Vietnamese Catholicism, merged universal Roman Catholic doctrine -- which focused on "grace" and stressed community, interdependence, and

¹³⁸Jeff Clinger, "Vietnamese Christian Missionary Alliance," <http://www.nebraskaweslyan.edu/event/harvardel/vietnam/history.htm>; and Lincoln Interfaith Council; "Meet set to Organize Vietnamese Congregation" *Lincoln Journal*, 23 June 1975, 16; "Rosemont Congregation in Midst of Great Refugee Experience," *Sunday Journal and Star*, 8 July 1975, 9C; and Lincoln Interfaith Council (LIC), "Directory of Congregations and Faith Communities of Lincoln and Lancaster County," <http://www.lincolninterfaith.org.fthfrm4ab.htm>.

¹³⁹Christian and Missionary Alliance, *Missionary Atlas: A Manual of the Foreign Work of the Christian and Missionary Alliance* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1964), 61; Barker, 1, 3, 9, 11, and 16; "What About the Church in North Vietnam," *Vietnam Today: News Magazine of the Vietnam Field*, Winter 1971, 2-3; and Dave and Helen Douglas, Bob and Elaine Green, Royce and Betty Rexilius, Spence and Barbara Sutherland, "Nhatrang is Truly a Center for Christian Service," *Vietnam Today: News Magazine of the Vietnam Field*, Fall 1973, 5.

¹⁴⁰Christian and Missionary Alliance, "The Alliance Doctrinal Statement," <http://www.calliance.org>.

responsibility -- and Confucian tradition -- which stressed the individuals place within family and social hierarchies. These two philosophies mixed flawlessly as both demanded individual spiritual and moral growth and the preservation of established social order.¹⁴¹

While thousands and then millions of Vietnamese Catholics lived comfortably in Southeast Asia, the history of the church in Vietnam proved often tumultuous. Initially operating at the pleasure of Vietnamese rulers, French and Portuguese missionaries spread the religion of their states at the behest of European merchants looking for the military and financial backing of their monarchs. The modest operations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were discontinued in the eighteenth century, however, as foreign missionaries were habitually executed or exiled. France's role in displacing the Trinhs was rewarded by the Gia Long emperor's tolerance of Jesuits who converted 800,000 Vietnamese by 1800 and many more over the next twenty years. The remaining Nguyen monarchs returned to an earlier practice of repressing Christianity, but French colonization started a new era for the Catholic Church. Taking advantage of Confucian structures, missionaries concentrated on converting village headmen who held great sway among their relatives. When successful, conversion of entire villages was the norm. Using this practice, 10 percent of the Vietnamese population was Catholic by the twentieth century.¹⁴²

The Catholic minority has always been Lincoln's Vietnamese majority. In fact, most of the 450 arrivals in the 1970s were Roman Catholic. Their numbers allowed them to found Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in 1979 which was the "first canonical

¹⁴¹Nash, 81-85.

¹⁴²Chapius, 170; Monterro, *Vietnamese Americans*, 14; SarDesai, 46; Barker, 6; and Buttinger, 15.

Vietnamese Church in America."¹⁴³ Membership steadily increased to between 1,700 to 2,000 individuals by 2004.¹⁴⁴

In juxtaposition, Vietnam's religious majority arrived late in Lincoln and did not found a congregation until 1992. In just a decade, however, 600 practicing Buddhists were living among Lincoln's Christian Vietnamese urban villagers.¹⁴⁵ In true Vietnamese fashion, Buddhism was practiced "in a context which the family, both living and dead," had great importance -- more so than in other place the religion was prevalent.¹⁴⁶

Vietnam hosts three denominations of Buddhism: the Mahayana school -- the predominant form imported from China, the Theravadin -- a form imported from India and preferred by the Khmer minority, and an indigenous form of Vietnamese Buddhism that is a blend of the two. All three comfortably coexisted for over a millennium, and although Mahayana has the most practitioners, aspects from each tradition appear in the 160 Vietnamese Buddhist Temples and centers in the United States.¹⁴⁷

Traditionally, Vietnamese religious open-mindedness allowed Buddhists, Catholics, and Protestants to intermingle.¹⁴⁸ Fealty to all three religions and divergent historical developments within each often led to divisions among Vietnamese once identity construction became fairly specific. Conversely, a shared history and language created solidarity among Lincoln's urban villagers and adherence to familiar social arrangements helped solidify a Vietnamese identity. This ascription was modified slightly by loyalty to a now-defunct nation state. No longer an actual place, many urban

¹⁴³Sister Loretta Gosen, *History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, 1887-1987* (Lincoln: Catholic Bishop of Lincoln, Inc., 1986), 301-02; and "Vietnamese 'Tet' Happy New Year!: Chuc Mung Nam Moi," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 23 February 1980, 8.

¹⁴⁴LIC, "Directory;" and Church spokesperson Katie Tang, in Bob Reeves, "Vietnamese Church Celebrates 25 Years," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 19 June 2004, online archives.

¹⁴⁵LIC, "Directory."

¹⁴⁶Peter N. Gregory, "Describing the Elephant: Buddhism in America," *Religion in American Culture* 11 (No. 2, 2001): 244.

¹⁴⁷"Vietnamese Buddhism," <http://mcel.pacificu.edu/students/vb/summary.htm>; Buddhist Studies Dharma Education Association and Buddhnet, "Buddhism in Vietnam," <http://buddhanet.net/learning/buddhistworld/vietnam-txt.htm>; and Gregory, 239. Figures were from 2001.

¹⁴⁸Freeman, 117.

villagers were united by their shared distaste for the policies and ideologies of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. As a remembered place, however, the RVN remained a central component of identity among a people disconnected from smaller localities.

COSMOPOLITANISM

Interestingly, the same religious practices that often led to conflict in the SRV also exposed tensions that existed between Vietnamese urban villagers and greater Lincoln. Divisions were especially pronounced among Southeast Asian Christians who were influenced by governing bodies within the mainstream. Consequently, when seen as a cosmopolitan force, Vietnamese religious institutions reinforced a distinct Vietnamese identity. Similarly, secular organizations dominated or frequented by the urban villagers also tended to reinforce Vietnamese identity at the expense of an Asian ascription dictated from outside their community. Contact with mainstream organizations -- especially work and school -- demonstrated the tension between adult immigrants and their offspring. For those acculturated in Vietnam, contact with mainstream structures strengthened Vietnamese identity. For younger individuals, it betrayed the difficulties of wanting to be Vietnamese and American at the same time and demonstrated the human ability to negotiate hybrid identities.

Vietnamese Religious Institutions

While Vietnamese Buddhist, Catholic, and Protestant identities served to divide Lincoln's urban villagers, contact and tension with mainstream co-religionists often served to reinforce a Vietnamese identity. This was especially true among Christians who built their congregations in the shadows of mainstream institutions. Even after they established themselves in separate facilities -- which were not necessarily in the same

neighborhoods their practitioners inhabited -- neither Protestants nor Catholics were completely independent bodies.

Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam or "Society of Sacred Protestants of Vietnam" -- the Vietnamese Christian and Missionary Alliance Church -- appears to be the exception to the rule as its parishioners followed the physical church. Closely connected to the South Vietnamese war effort, many Protestants were among the first wave of immigrants to arrive in Nebraska. Always a small congregation, it shared quarters with the Rosemont Alliance Church in Northeast Lincoln for eighteen years. Initially led by Rev. Nguyen Van Phan, the minister and many congregants apparently lived in the neighborhood. While physically and denominationally connected to the Rosemont Church, Vietnamese parishioners remained separate by culture and preferred their own services and institution. They relocated the church to a house in West Lincoln in 1992 and began the process of growing their physical space. In 1999, construction of the present 5,000 square foot sanctuary at 1440 West A began, and its doors opened in April 2000. Intriguingly, movement of Vietnamese from northeast Lincoln to West A street happened rapidly at this time.¹⁴⁹

Conversely, *Giáo xứ: Khiết-Tâm-Mẹ*-- literally "Disciples of the Pure-Hearted Mother" -- or the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church was located in Vietnamese neighborhoods for years before being relocated to northeast Lincoln -- a neighborhood showing a decrease in Asian residents. Initially located at 2013 "G" Street, the original congregation of thirty families moved into larger quarters at 2601 "P" Street in 1991. The second building that included a chapel, a gymnasium, and several classrooms, featured a sanctuary that held 380. While it remained convenient to parishioners who lived in the Hartley-Clinton-Malone urban village, the physical structure was derelict

¹⁴⁹Clinger, online; LIC, "Directory;" "Meet set to Organize Vietnamese Congregation," 16; and "Rosemont Congregation in Midst of Great Refugee Experience," 9C. See also *Polk's Lincoln City Directory*, 1995 and 2000.

and the Vietnamese Catholic population was expanding rapidly. A larger facility at 6345 Madison Avenue in Northeast Lincoln was obtained to house the parish's now 400 families.¹⁵⁰

Ministered to by the Vietnamese order of the Mother Co-redemptrix, but administered by the conservative Roman Catholic Diocese of Lincoln -- which covers Nebraska south of the Platte River -- developments in the local congregation displayed mounting tension between Vietnamese ways and mainstream desires. On one hand, the Diocese celebrated the Immaculate Heart of Mary as part of a "national church" legacy that was "more than a century" old.¹⁵¹ Indeed, Catholic Social Services was touted for helping Vietnamese to obtain a church "where they can worship in their own language, and preserve their culture and tradition."¹⁵² On the otherhand, this distinctive congregation is slated to vanish just as German and Czech national churches did before them. Already described as the church for "Catholics of Vietnamese descent," the Diocese would welcome the eventual assimilation of the population. Indeed Vietnamese Catholics were frequently encouraged by the Diocese to move closer to the mainstream in terms of language and practice.¹⁵³

Long used to outright persecution and cross-county flight, encouragement to assimilate and movement across town undoubtedly seemed subtle to Lincoln's Vietnamese Catholics who remained intimately connected to their own international order. The Congregation of the Mother Co-redemptrix was established in 1941 in Phat Diem -- a Catholic center just southeast of Hanoi. Many of its priests and brothers were among the 1 million refugees who fled south of the 17th parallel in 1954. Reestablished

¹⁵⁰"Vietnamese Catholics Purchase New Church," *Southeast Nebraska Register*, 14 December 1990, 1; LIC, "Directory;" Membership figures supplied by church spokesperson Katie Tang. See, Reeves, "Vietnamese Church Celebrates 25 Years," online archives.

¹⁵¹"The Diocese of Lincoln Parishes, Institutions Diverse, Unique," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 11 May 1992, 19.

¹⁵²"Vietnamese 'Tet' Happy New Year!," 8

in South Vietnam, 185 members fled Saigon in 1975 and resurfaced in Ft. Chafee, Arkansas. From there they moved on to the southwestern Missouri town of Carthage to rebuild their order and serve as a center to Vietnamese Catholics in the United States.¹⁵⁴

To give thanks for arriving safely in America and to celebrate Vietnamese culture, the congregation launched Marian Days in 1978. Each year in August, they gather in honor of "Mary Mother of God" who "rescued the children who came to this country by boat."¹⁵⁵ The event immediately became a homecoming for Vietnamese parishioners from around the United States, including those in Nebraska, and ties that were stretched by geographic distance were rekindled. By 1981, 6,000 attended, two years later 16,000, by 1987 over 40,000, and by 2004 about 70,000. In this manner, the Vietnamese Catholic church served to reinforce community among its practitioners. On a local level, Immaculate Heart of Mary and Sacred Heart Church served as meeting places and centers of education for many in the community.¹⁵⁶

Despite this particularism, however, the old Vietnamese tradition of inclusion was alive in well in late-twentieth century Lincoln. Marriage among Buddhists and Catholics was part of the culturescape. Yhanh Do and Tam Ngo, for instance, wed at the Immaculate Heart of Mary before reinforcing their vows during a Buddhist service at the bride's home in 1994.¹⁵⁷ The observance of Tet -- the lunar new year -- was an even greater cultural unifier. Tet functions both as the "grand birthday of all" Vietnamese and as a focal point of "self-identity and reverence for the past." Celebrations traditionally last an entire week, although mainstream pressures have pushed the most

¹⁵³*Southern Nebraska Register*, 14 May 1993, 1; "Vietnamese Bishops Ask for Catholic Commitment to Nation," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 20 October 1995, 1.

¹⁵⁴Gosen, 302; "Four Vietnamese Ordained During Marion Days," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 6 June 1981, 1.

¹⁵⁵Sister Maria Nguyen, quoted in Antonia Ryan, "Vietnamese Celebrate Faith and Culture at Marian Days," *National Catholic Reporter*, 24 September 2004, online.

¹⁵⁶"Vietnamese Celebrate," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 26 August 1983, 2; "Marian Day Attracts Thousands to Missouri Town," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 21 August 1987, 1; "Four Vietnamese Ordained During Marion Days," 1; and Nash, 134.

elaborate proceedings onto weekends. Activities range from lighting fireworks to chase away evil spirits and exchanging gifts to attending religious services.¹⁵⁸ While Catholics and Buddhists have separate ceremonies at their respective institutions, community-wide events have occurred at the Indian Center, the Malone Center, and the F Street Recreation Center in recent years.¹⁵⁹

Outside of Tet, however, Buddhist contact with mainstream institutions did not occur regularly in Lincoln. Linh Quang -- "Divine Light" -- temple was founded in an old two-story house at 216 West "F" Street, just two blocks from the First German Congregational Church in the South Russian Bottoms. Making use of indoor and outdoor space, the property was both affordable -- it was purchased for \$36,000 but is under constant improvement -- and almost physically removed from the city.¹⁶⁰ This particular Vietnamese institution has not had to negotiate its legitimacy with an established Buddhist mainstream. In addition to Linh Quang, there are small Nicheren, Tibetan, and Zen Buddhist communities, but these are largely comprised of European American converts who are interested in Vietnamese practices but generally unable to access them due to language barriers.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷Joanne Young, "Best of Both World's: Couple's Union Honors both Eastern, Western Traditions," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 11 June 1994, 9.

¹⁵⁸Anh Quang Tran, 137; Rutledge, *Vietnamese Experience*, 146; Jae-Hyup Lee, 119-20; and Hien Duc Do, 92. Tet falls annually between January 19 and February 20.

¹⁵⁹"Vietnamese Celebrate Tet at Cathedral of Risen Christ," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 31 January 1976, 8; "Tet Celebration Reminds Vietnamese of Culture, Sacrifices," *Southern Nebraska Register* 8 March 1996, 1; "Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 17 February 1996, archives file; Joanne Young, "Public Facilities Mark the Year of the Rat's Start," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 16 February 1996, 1D-2D; and Margaret Reist, "Local Vietnamese get set to Ring in New Year," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 19 January 2004, online archives.

¹⁶⁰LIC, "Directory."

¹⁶¹*Ibid.* While a small Asian population is involved in these three movements, most practitioners are European Americans. Nicheren is an evangelical Japanese form with many adherents nationally, but relatively few locally. Zen is distinctly Japanese as well and is popular for its meditation strategies. Finally, Tibetan Buddhists follow the Dali Llama in a practice culturally specific to inland Asia. All four organizations are nominally in contact but practices and beliefs vary dramatically.

Nationally, there are three to four million Buddhists in the United States -- 25 percent are European Americans -- and adherents are growing rapidly, largely through increased Asian immigration. See Gregory, 236-37.

Operating in a culturally specific manner, Linh Quang demonstrates how "the Vietnamese community uses public functions to bring the community together and to reinforce traditional culture."¹⁶² Their observance of Vu-Lan Day, for example, was a celebration of a moment when "all Buddhists should pray together for their mothers and others, both alive and dead, who need salvation."¹⁶³ This event is now marked annually in Lincoln as in Vietnam on the full moon in the second month following the summer solstice. Responding to influences from the mainstream, Linh Quang also sponsors a Buddhist Youth Group that helps "younger kids, especially those who were born here, to learn about their traditions and customs."¹⁶⁴

Vietnamese Secular Institutions: Performed Culture In Negotiated Spaces

In addition to the long-familiar religious institutions, new organizations -- both in form and function -- were created by urban villagers to help them interact with the host society.¹⁶⁵ The Asian Community and Cultural Center (ACCC) and an institutionally complete business district were prime examples of such establishments. Together they protect several aspects of performed culture, and they foster both Vietnamese and Asian identities.

An independent ACCC moved to its second home at 2615 "O" Street in October 2005, thirteen years after it was proposed by the Lincoln Interfaith Council (LIC) and eleven years after it opened its doors. A mainstream organization that sponsored and supported immigrant communities, LIC coordinated grant moneys from charitable and federal sources to launch the facility that was designed to maintain social services in the community as Church World Services, Catholic Social Services, and governmental

¹⁶²Centrie, 78.

¹⁶³Bob Reeves, "Buddhists Celebrate 'Mother's Day'," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 14 August 1995, archives file.

¹⁶⁴Minh Dao, spokesperson for Linh Quay Buddhist Temple, in Bob Reeves, "Voices of Diversity," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 24 April 2004, online archives.

organizations on all levels began to withdraw resettlement aid in Lincoln in the early 1990s. ACCC shed its mainstream sponsorship in 1998 and emerged as a 501(C) 3 non-profit organization. Located at the south end of the Vietnamese business district, the center immediately became a focal point of local Vietnamese populations.¹⁶⁶

The center's stated mission is "To support and empower Asian people while sharing our cultures through our programs and services."¹⁶⁷ Services include conflict mediation, English lessons, credit counseling, youth leadership training, and citizenship classes. Interestingly, English language classes -- while open to all -- empower largely local Vietnamese. The casual course is open to people of all abilities on a drop-in basis. It is led by a center coordinator -- who is an American citizen of Vietnamese ancestry -- staffed by an Americorps worker, and assisted by volunteers from the mainstream community. Largely a positive and friendly exchange, English conversation was punctuated with Vietnamese explanations that allowed advanced students to assist newcomers. While class size was small, solidarity of a larger Vietnamese community in Lincoln was reinforced as Christians and Buddhists intermingled and people from divergent regions of South Vietnam interacted.¹⁶⁸

Additionally, Asian culture is shared with mainstream Lincoln through the efforts of dance groups who perform the Lion Dance, the Dragon Dance, and the Lotus Dance in Vietnamese and mainstream civic celebrations. Sponsored by the center, all three styles are of Vietnamese origins, but dancers from all backgrounds were welcome to participate. Originally a prayer to the Buddha for peace and prosperity, but popular among Christians as well, the lotus dance -- *Múa Hoa Dang* -- featured vibrant and

¹⁶⁵Munzy, 185.

¹⁶⁶Mary Kay Roth, "New Asian Community Center to Open its Doors Next Month," *Lincoln Star*, 24 October 1994, archives file; Reeves, "State Renown for its Refugee Aid," 1C; Valverde, 102; Teresa Trang Nguyen; and Asian Community and Cultural Center, "Making a Difference in Our Community," pamphlet (Lincoln: Asian Community and Cultural Center, date unknown), 5.

¹⁶⁷"Mission," Bulletin Board, Asian Community and Cultural Center, Lincoln.

¹⁶⁸Author, Field Notes, ACCC, November-December 2005.

colorful choreography and is performed by young women.¹⁶⁹ Its serene movements were contrasted by the spectacular four-footed lion and six-footed dragon costumes whose dances are accompanied by a cacophony of cymbals and playful spectators chasing their tails. These "boisterous arts" were designed to ward off evil spirits during Tet and Tet Trung Thu -- the harvest festival.¹⁷⁰ In Lincoln, both dances share similar stylings and, while movements can be performed by most young people, the best dancers are also martial arts practitioners. Part of flexible traditions, a focus on spectacle has replaced the esoteric aspects of martial arts even in Vietnam.¹⁷¹

By sheer population, Vietnamese often dominated events at ACCC, although no real tension among other ethnicities has been apparent. Vietnamese affiliation with an "Asian" organization raises interesting identity questions, however. As a general rule, Vietnamese was preferred over an Asian identity as few found much meaning in the latter description. Uyen Eileen Vu, for instance, bristled at the mainstream assumption that all Asians were of the same heritage and recalled experiences of explaining she speaks Vietnamese rather than Chinese.¹⁷² Part of this hostility was the rebellion against being seen as a part of an Asian "model minority" by the mainstream instead of being viewed as a discreet cultural group.¹⁷³

Foodways and a distinct Vietnamese business district reinforced the desire to maintain a national identity. Food preparation in the home was vital to Vietnamese identity maintenance.¹⁷⁴ Dietary studies in Oklahoma City noted that a mere 10 percent

¹⁶⁹Teresa Trang Nguyen; Vietnamese Cultural Society: Metropolitan Washington, "A Brief Introduction to Vietnamese Music and Dance," http://www.vcsmw.org/activities/music_art_lit.html.

¹⁷⁰Tet Trung Thu is held on the 15th day of the 8th Lunar month. Folklore dictates "that if the moon appeared yellow that night, that next year's crop would be plentiful and if the moon was bright orange that peace would reign in the country." See Hien Duc Do, 100.

¹⁷¹Michelle Baran, "Celebration of Vietnamese New Year Features Taste of Southeast Asia," *Daily Bruin Online*, 2 February 2001, <http://www.dailybruin.ucla.edu>; "Lion and Dragon Dance," <http://www.acjc.edu.sg/Spectra/VibrantCulture/Vietnam/toppage1.html>; and Hoang Huong, "Mid-Autumn: Dragons to the Streets," *Veitnam.Net*, 9 November 2005, <http://www.vnn.vn>.

¹⁷²See, Nugent, *Between Two Worlds*.

¹⁷³Bui and Stimpfl, 122.

¹⁷⁴Andrew Pham, 123.

of immigrants reported dietary change even after two decades in the United States.¹⁷⁵ The pattern appears to have repeated itself in Lincoln as diets rich in grains -- especially rice -- vegetables, fish, meats, eggs, and herbs are common; in contrast, dairy products are largely absent. Catering to "Southeast Asian" preferences, four large food markets were located in the business district by 2005. Additionally, fresh fish was available at Mai Lea Seafood and at Midwest Seafood beginning in 2002. The latter operation was typical of Vietnamese business ventures connected to a greater diaspora community. Owned by Andrew and Tony Vuong who arrived in America as teenagers in 1990, fresh produce from the Gulf Coast and from California was shipped in daily by relatives in the fish business in both locations.¹⁷⁶

In diaspora culture, Vietnamese food served as a cultural focal point that "provides a cohesive boundary through which continuity is maintained."¹⁷⁷ The spring roll, for instance, even has its own creation story. According to legend, a grave tyrant enslaved a great chef and demanded that he prepare a new dish each new day or offer his life. The chef cooked valiantly for 999 days before coming to his last recipe. The kitchen goddess appeared to the chef and gave him directions for a feast that contained a herb that put the tyrant to sleep. Consequently, the chef escaped with his last recipe -- the one for spring rolls -- intact.¹⁷⁸ Essentially shredded vegetables and meats wrapped in rice paper and fried in oil, spring rolls dipped in fermented fish sauce are ubiquitous delights. They are available at a plethora of Vietnamese restaurants that have become part of the Star City's culturescape.

Because cafe society is an important meeting place for Vietnamese men and boys, four 27th Street restaurants by 2005 maintain a healthy trade serving only

¹⁷⁵Munzy, 112.

¹⁷⁶Jeff Korbek, "Midwest Seafood Keeps the Fresh Catches Coming," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 2 March 2005, online archives. The marquee on Vina market states the market is "*A Dong*," or Southeast Asian, rather than Vietnamese.

¹⁷⁷Owens, 42.

traditional cuisine. Many entrepreneurs keep a Vietnamese clientele, but have expanded their menus to reach a mainstream customer base as well. It appears this portion of the trade often blurs national foods of Asian nations. Indeed, Chinese and Japanese dishes are readily available in many establishments.¹⁷⁹ Still, condiments, such as fish sauce and garlic chili sauce, make Vietnamese restaurants distinct.

Mainstream Institutions

While Lincoln Vietnamese urban villagers were generally able to live, shop, and eat within Vietnamese spaces, they necessarily dealt with city government, work, and school -- three institutions dominated by mainstream sensibilities -- on a regular basis. In many respects, the city facilitated the maintenance of the Vietnamese identity and, work reinforced separation from American society. School, on the otherhand, forced younger individuals to confront language and cultural gaps that divided a Vietnamese identity from a mainstream one. Necessarily straddling two worldviews, a flexible hybrid identity developed that allowed individuals to switch ascriptions.

The older generations, however, were fully acculturated in Vietnam, and recalling great inefficiency and graft, tended not to trust government officials. To its credit, the city of Lincoln took steps to assure a modicum of mutual understanding between the mainstream and the urban villagers. In many cases, the Equal Opportunity section of Lincoln City Charter was thoughtfully implemented, especially after the huge influx of immigrants in the 1990s.¹⁸⁰ To help ease concerns over bribes and fair treatment even during events such as issuing speeding tickets, the Lincoln Police

¹⁷⁸Kwan, et al.

¹⁷⁹Nash, 296-97. See also Jeff Korbek, "Dat's Offers Oriental Fare for Down Town Dining," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 6 May 2005, online archives; and Jeff Korbek, "Wok Express Moves to Bigger more Convenient Location," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 30 September 2004, online.

¹⁸⁰Title 11 of the charter states that "It is the policy of the City of Lincoln to foster equal opportunity" and to "protect, preserve, and perpetuate all constitutional rights." See Lincoln, Nebraska, "Lincoln City Charter, 2005," <http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/attorney/charter.pdf>.

Department hired cultural outreach workers to translate traffic citations and common directions into Vietnamese. Additionally, applications for marriage licenses, safety directions for public buildings, and other important documents were also written in *quốc ngữ*.¹⁸¹ On a statewide level, voter registration and driver license manuals and exams were also available in Vietnamese by the 1990s.

These efforts were clearly reassuring to urban villagers who were sometimes able to negotiate governmental procedures without translators. The need to confer in English in the workplace remained an issue, however. While an educated and bilingual minority commanded professional and entrepreneurial careers, the majority of Vietnamese adults born in Vietnam worked in factory settings that did not require good conversational English. Many have become valued long-term employees as laborers in food processing, electrical manufacturing, and service and hospitality industries. Leading employers included Mapes Industries, Lincoln Plating, Yankee Hill Brick, Square D -- an electrical manufacturer, Russell Stover Candies, Lester's Electric, Land and Sky -- a furniture manufacturer, Farmland Foods, and ConAgra. Additionally, hotels and garment cleaners hired and retained many Vietnamese women.¹⁸² These types of employment were reminiscent of work patterns among other immigrant groups.

Consequently, work often reinforced immigrant status and Vietnamese identity. Their jobs, while not necessarily fulfilling, were generally seen as a means to an end for most urban villagers who were primarily attempting to achieve middle-class status

¹⁸¹Krasnowsky, 2; "Marriage Info in Vietnamese," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 18 March 1996, archives file; City of Lincoln, Fire and Rescue Department, "*Tieng Viet*," <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/fire/pdf/translate/viet.htm>.

¹⁸²Teresa Trang Nguyen; Linda Uhlrich, 1B; and Author, Field Notes, ACCC, 11 November 2005. For additional job placement information, see, for example, *Polk's Lincoln City Directory* (Kansas City: Polk, 1995). Also see Owens, 85-86, 105. In a survey of thirty individuals regarding gardening, Owens found that 44 percent of respondents worked in factories. Mean age of his sample was 56 and most had been in America eleven years. In Vietnam, 32 percent farmed, 18 percent were RVN employees, and 18 percent were self-employed. As a conglomerate, their mean income was \$25,000. While a small sample, reported results seem to be supported by more general observations of the community.

"while preserving some of their language and cultural practices."¹⁸³ Consequently, whether they were fishermen, farmers, or teacher in Vietnam, most urban villagers were "eager to work" in meat packing even if it meant a reduction in social status. Most set out to contribute to the family economy in order to advance its communal status.¹⁸⁴

Many first-generation Vietnamese were content with their jobs as their limited English-speaking skills often limited employment possibilities.¹⁸⁵ Their placements, however, were often met with concern and even consternation among observers from mainstream and immigrant communities alike. The jobs urban villagers performed were often described as "difficult and dangerous," certainly the type of work many other Americans no longer wanted. Additionally, younger members of the Vietnamese community often acknowledged the positions their elders held with embarrassment.¹⁸⁶ While compassionate, both these inclinations belie individual goals and deny older notions of the dignity of honest labor. As home ownership statistics indicate, many urban villagers have achieved economic stability in the new milieu by accepting assembly line jobs.

Because most positions do not require verbal communication, local employers welcomed Vietnamese who brought a reputation for industriousness to their workforces. The laborers themselves -- often working along side Mexican, other Asian, and European immigrants -- desired and attempted to learn on-the-job English to help them get along with their work. There was also the perception that learning English would protect them from certain forms of unfair treatment, especially heavy work loads.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³Aguilar-San Juan, 27.

¹⁸⁴Linda Uhlrich, 1B.

¹⁸⁵Owens, 105. Many urban villagers' understandings of written English are well advanced. Generating conversational English, however, is a goal many are still achieving.

¹⁸⁶Pipher, 98; Teresa Trang Nguyen; and Young, 1C.

¹⁸⁷Reeves, "State Earns Renown for its Refugee Aid," 1C-2C; and Author, Field Notes, ACCC, 18 November 2005.

While important to ease on-the-job interactions, English acquisition was imperative for younger immigrants and individuals born in the United States as the school experience was in English only. In addition to language issues, mainstream schools served as "powerful cultural agents" for shaping young urban villagers' attitudes, expectations, and behaviors.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, schools often compelled immigrant children to examine Vietnamese, Asian, and American identities.

Demographically, the urban villagers remained a young population that fed schools near their residences. About 40 percent of the entire population of earliest arrivals attended local schools in 1979 -- 86 were in Lincoln public schools, 75 in parochial schools, and 35 at the University of Nebraska. By the turn of the twenty-first century, the percentage of Vietnamese individuals in the school-aged population was only slightly higher than the mean, but the percentage of young adults in the 25 to 34 year age range was almost twice that of the general population. Consequently, as urban villagers tend to enjoy high birthrates, an increase in school-age population can be predicted in the near future.¹⁸⁹

Barriers manifested themselves as soon as Vietnamese youth entered schools in Lincoln. These included language difficulties, unfamiliarity with American culture, and racial prejudice towards immigrants from a region with a historically negative context. Even within the most ethnically diverse of these institutions, hurtful epithets were aimed

¹⁸⁸Kibria, 146.

¹⁸⁹Ulrich, 1B; See also City of Lincoln, Planning Department, "Table 4: Age and Race Comparison, Lancaster County, Nebraska," in *2000 Census Report: Lancaster County, Nebraska (MSA) Comparison of Demographic Characteristics, 1990, 2000*, 8, 10. This data set was specific to Asians -- Vietnamese represented over 50 percent of all Asians in the county by 2000.

Public schools record "Students of Color" as a single category -- part of a growing Asian-Latin American-African immigration population. Interestingly, Elliot School -- serves the Malone and Near South populations and reported that 62 percent of its student body was in this category. It also remarked that twenty-six languages were spoken among the population. Clinton and Hartley reported about 50 percent "students of color" while Sacred Heart -- the nearby parochial elementary school reported -- 60 percent of its students were Vietnamese. The Schools in the Belmont, Northwest, and West A neighborhoods report 20 to 40 percent "students of color." Middle School and High School populations are necessarily more diffuse, but districting patterns were similar. See, Lincoln, Nebraska, Lincoln Public Schools, "LPS District Map," <http://www.lps.org/about/districtmap/default.html>; and Lincoln, Nebraska,

at individuals laboring to grasp the language of their new home. Facility in English often separated those who adapted readily to the new milieu from those who did not. Fortunately, efforts were made to ease this sort of transition. In the school districts with the largest immigrant populations, English as a second language learning programs were provided, paid for in part by federal aid.¹⁹⁰

Students, however, still struggled with the language itself and the concept of being different than the mainstream. For most individuals, it took "one to three years to learn social English and five to seven years to learn academic English."¹⁹¹ Even after years of study and observation, native Vietnamese speakers often grapple with tenses and plurality as these concepts in their language are contextual and denoted by neither vowel changes nor the use of suffixes. As a general rule, Vietnamese write better English than they speak which makes education possible, but true success often depends on other issues.¹⁹²

Educational achievement among young urban villagers often depended on attitude, and divergent connections to the sending culture alternately helped and hindered students. Vietnamese elders in Lincoln often coached their children to gain an education, become materially successful, and raise the status of the entire family. Thus encouraged, many students excelled in school and went on to succeed at the University of Nebraska and Nebraska Wesleyan University as well.¹⁹³ For others, however, cultural loyalty was constructed to exclude many mainstream characteristics. For these urban villagers -- probably injured by racial prejudice -- success in school was viewed as a

Lincoln Public Schools, "Elliot School: Student Profiles," <http://www.lps.org>; and Erin Andersen, "Students Get Cultural Education" *Lincoln Journal Star*, 14 January 2005, online archives.

¹⁹⁰Bui and Stimpfl, 121, 127; and Reeves, "State Renown for its Refugee Aid," 2C. See also Pipher, 114, 332; and Lincoln Public Schools.

¹⁹¹Pipher, 75.

¹⁹²Pipher, 64; and Author, Field Notes, ACCC, 18 November 2005.

¹⁹³Bui and Stimpfl, 117. A survey of common Vietnamese family names in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus directory yielded over 120 registered students. By 1990, the college graduation

"white" endeavor. These are the individuals most at risk for gang activities.¹⁹⁴ Although such the existence of such organizations creates another stereotype Vietnamese must negotiate, in many cities including Lincoln, gang activity is perpetrated by young men who are generally between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four.¹⁹⁵ The Lincoln Police Department, however, is reluctant to provide information on such activities.

Fortunately, most urban villagers spent their time in school wisely as English competency and education were generally deemed to be vital components of future success. English acquisition and entry into the mainstream economy, however, changed many urban villagers connection with the Vietnamese language. To accommodate American sensibilities, many individuals reworked their names. In the old milieu, family name preceded the familiar -- Tran Phong, for instance, was actually Mr. Tran. In Lincoln, names were often juxtaposed -- Phong Tran, for example -- and many adopted American familiar names, placed them at the beginning of the sequence, and used them even more commonly than their Vietnamese names. Similarly, because schools demanded English, students often lived in two linguistic worlds. Many necessarily spoke Vietnamese at home, and, intriguingly, many used Vietnamese sprinkled with English words when talking to peers.¹⁹⁶ Still other young people in the twenty-first century "speak little if any Vietnamese."¹⁹⁷

In addition to a new language, schools also forced young urban villagers to deal with the concepts of independence and assertiveness. While these traits were valued in mainstream culture, they were often at odds with the traditional Vietnamese family hierarchy which placed the group before the individual. Even University students

rate among "Vietnamese Americans" was already 17 percent, just 4 percent below the national average. See Niedzwiecki and Duong, 16.

¹⁹⁴Pipher, 171.

¹⁹⁵Hien Duc Do, 60.

¹⁹⁶Anh Quang Tran, 238; and Duc Tran, in Nugent. See also Bob Reeves, "Family Who Overcame Bullets," 1D.

struggled with the concept that "Authority [in the U.S] is not based on age," but rather on accomplishment.¹⁹⁸

Generations

Examinations of the worlds of work and school demonstrated that identity formation for many Vietnamese urban villagers was a "complex negotiation of commitments and compromises."¹⁹⁹ Generational divisions further complicated the efforts of these immigrants in adapting to the mainstream culture. Familiarly, the construction of generations among Vietnamese in America includes the first generation - - those born in Vietnam who generally emigrated as teenagers or adults -- and the second generation -- those born in the United States. Uniquely, there is also a "1.5 generation" that consists of individuals born in Vietnam who emigrated before they were eight years old. Consequently, they were acculturated in the United States, but they remained intimately familiar with the old milieu as well. Interestingly, the communities that provided first-generation immigrants with "a safety net of protection and support" often became a "burden to children."²⁰⁰

As a general rule, first generation urban villagers remained deeply connected to the culturescapes of Vietnam. Preferring hierarchical and harmonious extended families, they often constructed support systems solely within the Vietnamese community and felt little pressure to abandon old-world patterns. As parents, they attempted to keep their children involved in affairs within the home and the urban village and dissuaded prolonged contact with new American peers.²⁰¹ Their greatest fear was that their children would become Americanized, and in the process "lose their spiritual

¹⁹⁷"Tet Celebration Reminds Vietnamese of Culture, Sacrifices," *Southern Nebraska Register* 8 March 1996, 1.

¹⁹⁸Duc Tran, in Gwen Nugent. See also Schneeberger, 10.

¹⁹⁹Bui and Stimpfl, 120-21.

²⁰⁰Ibid., 126. See also Jae-Hyup Lee, 96.

nature and become materialistic."²⁰² While the elders remained certain of their Vietnamese identities in the twenty-first century, they often described the next generations as "uncentered" and "uncertain of their identity." They called these individuals "*mat goch* -- lost roots" because they appeared to be growing away from the values of their urban villages.²⁰³

The second generation -- which in 2005 accounted for about a quarter of the population -- was simultaneously scolded for moving away from traditional culture and praised for serving as cultural intermediaries for their older relatives. Many demonstrated great facility moving back and forth between cultures, but the practice threatened the stability of the family hierarchy as youths were necessarily in charge of mainstream interactions. Consequently, they often were "caught between two cultures."²⁰⁴ Some even suggested, "we don't really fit in." Indeed, Vietnamese saw them as Americans, and Americans saw them as Asians.²⁰⁵

Similarly, many in the 1.5 generation have "thrown the established line of household authority into disarray" by accepting mainstream preferences for "greater equality between men and women and between young and old."²⁰⁶ Gender equality was a relative thing, however, and some young women suggested that men "assimilate" easier into the mainstream as their socialization patterns were less limited.²⁰⁷ Conversely, women were still charged with taking care of younger siblings and expected to be mindful of family status. Still, the desire to be part of the new milieu was intense, and

²⁰¹Melinda Le, 1, 44, 117; and Pipher, 225, 228.

²⁰²Pipher, 221.

²⁰³Andrew Pham, 63.

²⁰⁴Bui and Stimpfl, 12. See also Melinda Le, 12.

²⁰⁵Teresa Trang Nguyen, presentation.

²⁰⁶Kibria, 107.

²⁰⁷Son Tran, in Nugent.

once again, younger urban villagers lived in "two different worlds." At home they had "to be Vietnamese" but outside of the house, they could "be American."²⁰⁸

As a result of such dichotomies, individuals in the 1.5 and second generations developed a hybrid identity that allowed them to move comfortably back and forth between the two cultures. Perhaps best described as "cultural switching," the new identity was more a dual entity than a synthesis. It encouraged young urban villagers to proudly proclaim, "I'm Vietnamese, but yet I also live in America."²⁰⁹ Among community elders they *were* Vietnamese; in the mainstream public they *were* American.²¹⁰ Interestingly, as youths explored and incorporated the norms and values of the host culture, they frequently celebrated the religions, family structure, and language of the sending culture with renewed vigor.²¹¹ While few urban villagers were truly bilingual, it appears many were bicultural.

Older and recently arrived urban villagers on the otherhand, especially those with limited English language skills, remained distinctly Vietnamese. Their responses to cosmopolitan forces were generally utilitarian. They took what they needed in order to live comfortably, but socially they remained in the familiarly of spaces they constructed. Many jealously guarded being Vietnamese, because as Son Tran -- who arrived in 1991 as an eighteen year old -- avers, "You don't know what your identity is until you are at risk of losing it."²¹²

²⁰⁸Ngoc Dung Le, quoted in "Youths Occupy Different Worlds," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 30 July 1994, 1. Le was born in Vietnam, but moved to the United States prior to age 10.

²⁰⁹Bui and Stimpfl, 123-24. See also Son Tran, in Nugent.

²¹⁰Pipher, 162.

²¹¹Melinda Le, 42, 17, 108-09.

²¹²Nugent, *Between Two Worlds*. See also Bui and Stimpfl, 124.

TRANSNATIONALISM

While urban villagers in Lincoln -- even those who arrived in 1975 -- remained fundamentally Vietnamese, they were already distinct from populations in Vietnam. Called *Việt Kiều* -- overseas Vietnamese -- in the sending culture, by 2000 they were part of a 2.7 million person diaspora that was spread over 100 nations. Not a self-imposed ascription, the term *Việt Kiều* was "at once condescending and associated with wealth and prestige."²¹³ Urban villagers who returned as tourists recognized these distinctions, but they also realized they had become part of a transnational "community." More a "social network" rather than a "place," this community fostered a new identity that allowed them to maintain social and economic ties to a symbolic homeland.²¹⁴ These ties were reinforced through popular culture and instantaneous technological contact.

Politics of Separation

Not all of Lincoln's Vietnamese urban villagers took part in their new transnational community. For immigrants who constructed their identities around the RVN and the Catholic Church in particular, interaction with the SRV seemed antithetical to their values.²¹⁵ Politically, fervent anti-communism remained a vital motivator well into the twenty-first century. For urban villagers in this camp, the 1975 decision to withdraw \$3.25 billion in American aid promised to the Hanoi government after the Paris Accords was justified by continued DRV aggression. As they gained citizenship in their new home they often use foreign policy as a reference point for democratic participation. In 1992 presidential election, for instance, many voted for Bill Clinton because they were concerned about President George H.W. Bush's attempts to normalize economic relations with the SRV. Conversely, in 2004 many opted for George W. Bush

²¹³Young, 5C. See also Valverde, 82.

²¹⁴Valverde, 15. See also Andrew Pham, 7.

because of John Kerry's senatorial stance favoring normalization. Believing that living in Vietnam under communist rule was untenable, many lobbied for maintaining Vietnamese refugee status -- even if classified as "economic refugees" -- and continuing the practice of accepting high levels of immigration from Southeast Asia.²¹⁶

Vietnamese Catholics in Lincoln were keenly aware of the repression of their coreligionists in the SRV and argued for continued separation. Indeed, many congregants of Immaculate Heart of Mary were descendants of refugees who fled south of the 17th Parallel in 1954. Distrust of the Hanoi government was confirmed by reports from the 800,000 Catholic who remained in their northern homes.²¹⁷ Saddening news continued to reach the urban villagers after their arrival in Lincoln. The organ of the Lincoln Diocese reported the dire situation for decades with stories that included, "Church in Chains in Vietnam," "Hanoi Churches Now Historical Monuments," "Vietnamese Bishops Harassed, Interrogated," and "Vietnamese Bishops Remain at Odds With Government."²¹⁸ While an estimated 1.5 million to 3 million individuals practiced Catholicism in twenty-five Vietnamese dioceses in the 1990s, conflict between the international church and the SRV government was common. SRV officials recently denounced the Vatican for granting sainthood to 117 Vietnamese martyrs who preserved their faith during purges in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Lincoln's urban villagers undoubtedly joined the Bishop of Hanoi in rejoicing over their canonization.²¹⁹

²¹⁵Aguilar-San Juan, 154

²¹⁶Druiker, 35; Aguilar-San Juan, 67; Reist, "Local Vietnamese Protest Kerry," online; and Don Watson, "Vietnamese to Bereuter: Let More In," *Lincoln Star*, 26 May 1995, archives file.

²¹⁷SarDesai, 109.

²¹⁸"Church in Chains in Vietnam," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 27 February 1976, 3; "Hanoi Churches Now Historical Monuments," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 22 August 1980, 8; "Vietnamese Bishops Harassed, Interrogated," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 11 December 1984, 3; and "Vietnamese Bishops Remain at Odds With Government," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 28 January 1990, 1.

²¹⁹"Vatican-Vietnam Consensus Reported," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 13 March 1998, 9; "Vietnam Should Lift Restrictions on Religion," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 4 January 1991, 7; and John Travis, "Vietnam Protests Sainthood Plans for Martyrs," *Southern Nebraska Register*, 18 March 1983, 2.

Political, Social, and Economic Ties

Issues of political separation remained entrenched in older populations, but began to dissipate among the 1.5 and second generation urban villagers in the 1990s even as the United States and the SRV were restoring political and economic relations. Although Vietnamese in Lincoln had great difficulty maintaining connections to home and family in the 1970s, travel to Vietnam was not considered an option., SRV policies towards expatriates gradually softened beginning in the 1980s. Free market reforms -- *doi moi* -- were implemented in 1986 and overseas entrepreneurs were encouraged and increasingly likely to reconnect with their homeland. In addition to business involvement, elderly *Việt Kiều* were allowed to visit Vietnam by 1992. United States policies also eased the separation. In 1994 the economic embargo that was implemented in 1975 was finally lifted. Normalization followed in 1995 as political diplomacy was formerly reestablished. In 2001, U.S.-Vietnam economic relations were normalized as well.²²⁰

The end result was Lincoln's urban villagers and *Việt Kiều* across the United States were able to travel to Vietnam as tourists on a regular basis. Eight thousand American *Việt Kiều* made the journey in 1988, and the number of visitors increased each subsequent year. In 2000, 280,000 made the trip.²²¹ Lincoln's urban villagers were part of this new tourist industry. Xuan-Trang Ho, for example, has returned to Vietnam twice since her arrival in the United States in 1994, once with her family and once with a group from Nebraska Wesleyan University.²²² Similarly, Loi Vo, a former ARVN pilot, has visited Vietnam six times since he flew out of Saigon and into exile in 1975.²²³ A small travel industry has even developed in Lincoln. Kim Son Video and Gifts, for instance,

²²⁰Aguilar-San Juan, 154; Valverde, 8, 108.

²²¹Valverde, 128.

²²²Young, 5C.

²²³Cindy Lange Kubik, "A Bumper Crop of Bumpers," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 14 July 2005, online archives.

advertises "*Bán Vé Máy Bay Chuyên Tiên Vé VN*" -- which means they sell airline tickets to locals and remit them to people in Vietnam as well.

Even before visiting became common place, many overseas Vietnamese sent remittances home to aid their relatives. In the late 1970s, they were largely in the form of food and durable goods. By the mid-1980s, they were almost universally monetary gifts sent through American merchants. By 1995, the money went through banks. In addition to aiding families, these gifts brought needed currency into the SRV and helped stabilize its economy. In all, over \$2 billion has entered Vietnam over the last quarter century.²²⁴ Tourism, hard currency, and human capital have all influenced the nation, especially the southern half. Originally from Phu Hoa Dong, Lincolnite Loi Vo noted that a vibrant tourism industry that catered largely to *Việt Kiều* grew up in his old home town that was formerly rice fields. Small investments by transnational entrepreneurs were increasingly common. In 2000, they committed 385 billion dong -- slightly over \$27 million -- to various projects. Even many self-described anti-communists embraced the goal of bringing American companies into Vietnam to benefit the country of their birth.²²⁵

Transnational contact reinforced cultural ties as well as brought aid to an ailing economy. Many Lincoln Vietnamese urban villagers -- especially members of the 1.5 and second generations -- looked "to Vietnam as a source of identity validation."²²⁶ Time was an important factor throughout the transnational community. Two-thirds of Vietnam's population was born after the "American War" concluded. (See Figure 6-5.) To this generation, the conflict was not a living memory; rather it was just one chapter in

²²⁴Valverde, 122-130.

²²⁵Kubik, "A Bumper Crop of Bumpers," online; Valverde, 138; CIA, "Vietnam," 11; and Trin Do, 225.

²²⁶Valverde, 7-8. See also Aguilar-San Juan, 154.

Figure 6-5: Estimated Population of Vietnam,
1890-2005.

1890	10 million
1940	21 million
1980	53 million
1990	65 million
2005	83 million

Source: Ngo Vinh Long, "Vietnam," 9; and Central Intelligence Agency: World Factbook, "Vietnam," <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/vm.html>.

a prolonged struggle for nationhood.²²⁷ Similarly, many young Vietnamese born in America were entrenched in the idea that RVN "fell to communism," but they were "shielded from the actual experience of war." Harboring few horrible memories, many urban villagers in the twenty-first century viewed Vietnam as a cultural cradle rather than a lost homeland.²²⁸

Popular Culture

For many Vietnamese in America, "having fluid connections with things coming from Vietnam" was an essential part of transnational identity formation. These connections have developed only gradually as trends in the SRV had little influence in the United States between 1975 and 1995. Still, as Vietnam emerged as the imagined center of a familiar and desirable culture, transnational communities were increasingly connected through cyber space and a burgeoning music industry.²²⁹ As a general rule, these developments were welcomed by younger urban villagers, but questioned by their elders.

Before relations between America and the SRV were normalized, the *Việt Kiều* entertainment industry was centered in Orange County, California. One of perhaps thirty companies, Thuy Nga Productions was founded in 1989 and emerged as an industry leader by marketing a wide array of music, movie DVD, and karaoke items. Packaged as part MTV and part Broadway musical, this truly American-based operation largely advertised in Vietnamese, but its copy was punctuated by English words and short English narratives.²³⁰

²²⁷Khuyen Vu Nguyen, "Memorializing Vietnam: Transfiguring the Living Pasts," in Marcia A. Eymann and Charles Wellenberg, eds., *What's Going On?: California in the Vietnam Era* (Oakland: Oakland Museum of California, 2004), 154.

²²⁸Valverde, 131; Khuyen Vu Nguyen, 155.

²²⁹Valverde, 207, 4-5.

²³⁰Thuy Nha Production, <http://www.truyngaonline.com>.

Typical of the entire "Little Saigon" industry, they produced and sold "a nostalgic blend of love tunes" sung by male or female soloists in Vietnamese. Enjoyed across the diaspora, the most popular works were sugary ballads that synthesized traditional elements with influences from global popular music. Musical accompaniment included modern instruments, such as keyboards, electric bass, and guitars, as well as distinctly Asian devices such as *Đàn Nhi* -- a bowed Vietnamese stringed instrument renowned for its haunting melody lines. The desired effect was the creation of a "longing for the old pre-communist Vietnam." Because recordings were aimed at a finite population, sales numbers were comparatively modest with movement of 15,000 copies considered a hit.²³¹

Popularity of the California-based industry reached its zenith in 1995, and while interest in music remained, a drastic switch occurred. Business in Little Saigon experienced a 70 percent drop over the next five years as a "musical invasion" from Vietnam was launched out of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) and Hanoi.²³² Made possible by trade policy shifts and plausible by young American transnationalists that wanted to "move on and open up and show these people what freedom is all about," a vibrant new source of music emerged in 1997.²³³ Although not as smoothly presented and professionally staged as the "Little Saigon" product, the imported style focused on emotion and musical innovation. Paying homage to mainstream American popular culture, hip-hop and rock 'n roll elements were employed by many of the Vietnamese

²³¹Richard Marosi, "Vietnam's Musical Invasion," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 August 2000, 1A. See also Valverde, 146-47; and Vietnamese Cultural Society: Metropolitan Washington, "A Brief Introduction to Vietnamese Music and Dance," http://www.vcsmw.org/activities/music_art_lit.html.

For examples of American Vietnamese popular music listen to "South East Asian Youth Club," KZUM Radio, Lincoln, Nebraska, FM 89.3. The show, hosted by Bich "Katie" Tang airs Saturdays from 2:30 to 4:00 pm.

²³²Valverde, 155-56; Marosi 1A nad 5A.

²³³John To, concert organizer, in Evan Harper, "Vietnamese Pop Concert in Anaheim is Target of Protest," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 August 2001, 5B.

bands. These influences were largely absent in the domestic products, but they were welcomed by younger consumers who were tired of static nostalgia.²³⁴

While the Vietnamese products were available in record stores in Orange County and in Lincoln, Nebraska, they failed to get air play on American radio stations. In fact, the music has become part of "a widening cultural divide" between the generations. In California, one concert by Vietnamese nationals was picketed by more protesters than the concert hall could seat. Most came waving RVN and U.S. flags and, despite promoter's suggestion that lyrical content had changed less than musical style, they expressed concerns about the spread of "communist propaganda" within their communities.²³⁵ Siding with the old guard, the only local radio station in Lincoln that carries Vietnamese language programming preferred the established nostalgia of American artists.

Even those individuals most opposed to SRV popular culture have kept contact with relatives in the sending culture, and in the years since normalization they have enjoyed eased communications. Contact was initially slow and uncertain as urban villagers used letters, the telegraph, and the telephone to continue intercourse. Since the mid-1980s, many have gladly accepted the aid of new information technologies. Significantly, the arrival of the Internet "aided transnational connections and community-building activities between Vietnamese Americans and Vietnamese nationals."²³⁶ Additionally, it changed the nature of local and national news as members of the Vietnamese diaspora became increasingly connected.

Interestingly, technology has precluded the development of a Vietnamese language press in Lincoln. Although some local news was broadcast in Vietnamese during the "South East Asian Youth Club" -- a weekly show on community radio --

²³⁴"From House to Hip-Hop, Beatz 3's Got It," *Viet Nam News*, 16 December 2005, <http://www.vietnamnews.vnagency.com>; "Hanoi Fans About to Rock at Festival," *Vietnam News*, 25 November 2005; Marosi, 1A; and Valverde, 169-71.

²³⁵Marosi, 1A; and Harper, 5B.

²³⁶Valverde, 220, 223..

information in print was confined largely to biweekly newspapers published in Southern California or and Canada. Toronto's *Thòi Báo*, for instance, reportedly circulates over 100,000 copies which were commonly found in restaurants around the Capital City. Additionally, there were a plethora of online "newspapers" from Australia, San Jose, California, and Hanoi in both Vietnamese and in English.²³⁷

Personal communication, however, has been facilitated by the Internet. Even in the tightly monitored SRV, "virtual space allows for relative free expression" although many Internet groups employ self-censorship to placate authorities. Communication with the sending culture could not proceed at the pace it did among diaspora Vietnamese as personal computers in Vietnam remained unaffordable. Internet cafes, however, were ubiquitous by 2000, especially in large cities.²³⁸ Consequently, messages were sent back and forth in cyber space, and then passed along by more conventional methods. Ultimately, a sense of shared community was enhanced as *Việt Kiều* reconnected to the sending culture.

By the dawn of the twenty-first century, transnational Vietnamese were linked by technologies that often transcended the boundaries of nation states.²³⁹ In the United States alone, Lincoln was connected to Houston and Orange County by family and business operations decades ago.²⁴⁰ Increasingly, these connections ran back to Vietnam as well. While rejected by many older urban villagers who still fear communism, transnationalism will certainly continue to influence Vietnamese across the diaspora.

²³⁷See, for example, <http://www.thoibao.com>; and <http://vietbao.com>.

²³⁸Valverde, 222, 225, 242, 259.

²³⁹Ibid., 51.

²⁴⁰See "Youths Occupy Different Worlds," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 30 July 1994, 5.

CONCLUSIONS

While Lincoln's urban villagers must be readily identifiable as *Việt Kiều* in the cities and villages of Vietnam, they have become at once foreign and familiar. Their renewed contact -- while questioned by some -- may help maintain a Vietnamese identity in Nebraska as language and social skills have already been altered by overseas travel. Similarly, most particular and cosmopolitan influences support an overarching "Vietnamese." While there were clearly divisions within this identity, few appear to have abandoned it as their primary ascription.

The Vietnamese identity in Lincoln was founded on a shared sense of history that spanned three thousand years. It was maintained through the daily use of performed culture -- especially language, traditional celebrations, and foodways -- within polynucleated settlements. It was strengthened and zealously protected by trying contacts with the mainstream. American Christian religious organizations, for instance, questioned some culturally specific practices that were imported into the new milieu. The foundation of separate congregations diluted criticisms and protected the old practices through insulation. Similarly, while employment played a major role in Vietnamese adaptation to the mainstream, language and cultural barriers in the workplace often allowed retrenchment within the community. More defensively, Vietnamese actively avoided an imposed "Asian" identity, by highlighting the distinctiveness of their own culture.

Formed by imported preferences and sustained to ease transitions into the new milieu, the Vietnamese identity in Lincoln was never absolute. Internally, it was divided by Vietnamese Buddhist, Vietnamese Catholic, and Vietnamese Protestant sensibilities. Traditionally tolerant of each other, interaction in Lincoln was common, but spiritual needs and loyalties among all three religions remained distinct. The greater division was between generations. Immigrant loyalty to the RVN and their protection of Southeast

Asian family hierarchies did not always make sense to 1.5- and second-generation Vietnamese. The younger urban villagers were in near-constant contact with the mainstream through their experiences at school and work and through their duties as cultural intermediaries. Consequently, new expectations were formed, new behaviors accepted, and ancient hierarchies questioned. Intriguingly, instead of moving toward an American identity *en masse*, a hybrid identity developed among younger urban villagers -- an identity that appeared to strengthen the Vietnamese ascription. Still valuing Vietnamese ways, they maintained them along side a new set of "American" behaviors. Resulting in "cultural switching," the practice of alternating Vietnamese and American identities demonstrated that despite great mainstream pressures and disuniting influences, the generations were more alike than they were different.

CHAPTER 7

COMPARISONS: IDENTITIES AND COMMUNITIES DURING THE LONG TWENTIETH CENTURY

If food "is everyone's first language," then Lincoln in the twenty-first century hosts a lively dialogue.¹ By discussing dishes as commonplace as soup, 130 years of long-standing ethnic practices that celebrate divergent identities can be accessed by all residents of the Capital City. In addition to providing nourishment and interesting dining experiences, soups connect "past, present, and future" generations of distinct urban villagers.²

Although not popular restaurant fare, *Knoephla* or noodle soup remains available at American Historical Society of Germans from Russia (AHSGR) functions, and a variety of recipes undoubtedly warm countless local kitchens. There may have been 100 names for *Knoephla* in the North and South Russian Bottoms prior to World War II as the sending culture was actually a conglomeration of agrarian villages. Conversely, *watónzi skítke tani*-- an Omaha corn soup graced with a hearty beef (or bison) broth and savory chunks of meat -- has a single name reflecting the intense nationalism of its sending culture. Served with frybread rather than rye bread, it too is enjoyed primarily at community events and is often provided by the hosts of functions as acts of "sacrifice" for their relatives. Widely available in Vietnamese homes and restaurants, *phở gà* is a traditional yet transnational chicken noodle soup available in Hanoi and Saigon, Sidney, Australia, and Lincoln, Nebraska. Comprised of a slow-cooked stock seasoned with ginger, shallots, and onions, this dish is served with blanched sprouts, basil or cilantro,

¹Paul Kwan, Arnold Iger, and Paul Lundahl, prods., *Anatomy of a Springroll* (New York: Filmmakers Library, 1992), videocassette.

²Richard C. Owens, "Vietnamese Homegardens in Lincoln, Nebraska: A Measure of Cultural Continuity" (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2003), 12, 131.

green chilis, and limes on the side.³ It is a favorite food from "a country of food," a place "of skinny people obsessed with eating."⁴

Soups can be sampled at the Welfare Society Hall in the North Bottoms, the Lincoln Indian Center, and at multiple locations in the Vietnamese business district. All three locations are specific to the enclaves ethnic populations built in Lincoln. These places protected particular pieces of performed culture and housed ever evolving complex cultural identities. Cosmopolitan and transnational forces interacted with imported ideas to modify continually these ascriptions. Never finished products, numerous identities overlapped with each other and still other designations were discarded or vanished over time. Still, German from Russia, Omaha, and Vietnamese identities remained long-term markers of distinction that are vital to living and evolving populations.

Viewed together, discussions about cultural identity among these three unique ethnic groups provide a long-range lens that focuses on a century of pluralism in Lincoln.⁵ Within this emerging picture, the particular identities that matured in their urban villages were often framed by mainstream distrust and disapproval. Consequently, struggles over "ethnic, racial, and national" boundaries were inherent parts of the new arrivals' adaptations to life in the Capital City.⁶ All three groups demonstrated that it was "possible to be behaviorally acculturated to the host country in order to survive in the new culture, while at the same time maintaining one's cultural values and ethnic

³See, Jefferey Alford and Naomi Duguid, "The Soups Always on in Vietnam," *Eating Well: The Magazine of Food & Health*, January/February 1997, 40-41.

⁴Andrew X. Pham, *Catfish and Mandala: A Two-Wheeled Voyage through the Landscape and Memory of Vietnam* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999), 123.

⁵Brian A. Cherwick, "Polkas on the Prairies: Ukrainian Music and the Construction of Identity" (Ph.D. diss., University of Alberta, 1999), 13.

⁶Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 189.

identity."⁷ Naturally, the ways each group accommodated to the mainstream depended on specific cultural interactions at specific points in Lincoln's history.

PLURALISTIC COMMUNITIES

Lincoln's cityscape is necessarily a "historical-social-spatial" construction that included immigrant and migrant populations that were culturally different from the mainstream.⁸ Establishing urban villages in significantly different eras, Volga Germans, Omahas, and Vietnamese were all subject to community discussions about their inclusion or exclusion. Over the course of the long twentieth century, fundamental shifts in the tone of the dialogues softened as mainstream objections to diversity decreased, but acceptance was never guaranteed. Never relinquishing agency, side-channel groups were aware of mainstream debates, but particular group interests were often the chief catalyst urban villagers examined when they set out to build their enclaves. Intriguingly, the oldest urban villages -- now largely defunct -- are officially celebrated in the twenty-first century, while the living enclaves are barely acknowledged.

Despite encountering the full brunt of exclusionist philosophy, it took Volga Germans several generations to abandon most parts of their imported performed cultures. The treatment of Lincoln's "dumb Rooshians" was deeply influenced by the melting-pot myth that dominated mainstream American psyches between World War I and the 1950s -- and beyond.⁹ While not promoted by the individuals who coined the metaphor, most interpretations of the melting pot suggested that ethnic groups must abandon particular identities and be "assimilated" into the prevailing Anglo-American society. Lurking

⁷Melinda H. Le, "Behavioral Acculturation, Psychological Acculturation, and Psychological Well-Being Across Generations of Vietnamese Immigrants and Refugees" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2004), 17, 42, 108-09.

⁸Edward W. Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Malded, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 8.

⁹Charles C. Munzy, *The Vietnamese in Oklahoma City: A Study in Ethnic Change* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 11.

beneath these notions was an amazingly resilient assumption of mainstream superiority.¹⁰

Arriving after World War II, Omahas and Vietnamese formed their communities in an era when "cultural pluralism" -- the idea that there was room for ethnic heterogeneity within the greater body politic -- was emerging.¹¹ Interestingly, the very desirability of pluralism remains a hotly debated topic. The old assimilationist arguments remained, but other scholars averred that mainstream attempts at inclusion hide unexpected agendas. Multiculturalism as a support for shared access to space, for instance, "de-legitimizes" Native American territorial claims.¹² Additionally the creation of "so-called minority" subcultures -- whether glossed as side-channels or not -- was necessarily exclusionary, racist, and rife with historic "inequality."¹³

Ultimately, cultural pluralism was "a fact in American society before it became a theory."¹⁴ Favoring their own agendas, Volga Germans, Omahas, and Vietnamese largely arrived through their own volition, and they built ethnic enclaves more as a matter of choice than out of fear of persecution. Whatever mainstream inclinations prevailed, these particular urban villagers insisted on living among their own kinspeople whenever possible. New arrivals in the enclaves were connected by vertical social networks that linked generations of families and horizontal networks that joined

¹⁰Murray B. Binderman, "The State and Future of a Theory of Ethnicity," in Jack Kinton, ed., *American Ethnic Revival: Group Pluralism Entering America's Third Century* (Aurora, IL: Social Science and Sociological Resources, 1977), 16.

¹¹John J. Bukowczyk, *And My Children Did Not Know Me: A History of the Polish-Americans* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 106.

¹²Diva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, eds., "Introduction: Beyond Dichotomies -- Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class in Settler Societies," in *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Class* (London: Sage Publication, 1995), 27.

¹³Antonia I. Castañeda, "Women of Color and the Rewriting of Western History: The Discourse, Politics, and Decolonization of History," in Sandra K. Schackel, ed., *Western Women's Lives: Continuity and Change in the Twentieth Century* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 47.

¹⁴Milton M Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York Oxford University Press, 1964), 135.

neighbors and coreligionists.¹⁵ Coherence to patterns of "family" and "cultural community" were challenged by the mainstream, but economic and political influences often reinforced separatism.¹⁶

Some middle-class immigrants -- often leaders within their communities -- served as role models of modern economic development in Lincoln.¹⁷ Most urban villagers, however, occupied the lower occupational rungs of an unfamiliar cityscape. Although they were agrarian peoples who often garnered wages from migratory farm labor, most *Volgers* could not afford to own farmland and built distinctly urban lives. Due to their early coming, they constructed their enclaves from the ground up on the outskirts of downtown. Here they had access to the mainstream economy and little need of transportation services. Similarly, Omahas arrived as rural people and probably recognized some of their teutonic neighbors from the beet fields. They came to escape rural poverty during the post-World War II era. From this time on, population and job growth across the Great Plains was concentrated in communities of 60,000 or more.¹⁸ With nowhere left to build, Omahas and Vietnamese -- who were already mostly urbanized -- settled in Lincoln's affordable, core neighborhoods where they duplicated a common pattern of working as laborers and service personnel. All three urban villages hosted relatively fluid populations as affluent families moved into larger accommodations or out of enclaves altogether, usually to be replaced by newcomers.¹⁹

¹⁵Kevin Hannan, "Refashioning Ethnicity in Czech-Moravian Texas," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 25 (Fall 2005): 40.

¹⁶Soja, *Postmetropolis*, 9.

¹⁷John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 143.

¹⁸Ric Dias, "The Great Cantonment: Cold War Cities in the American West," in Kevin J. Fernlund, ed., *The Cold War American West, 1945-1989* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 71-72; and Carl Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American West* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 155.

¹⁹Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 188; and Bodnar, 187.

The physical forms of the various urban villages -- despite these economic similarities -- were variable and reflected distinct demographic and technological developments. Because they arrived into a relatively undeveloped, walking city in large numbers, the North and South Russian Bottoms developed as classic urban villages. They housed homogeneous populations -- at least as viewed from the outside -- and they were institutionally complete as urban villagers did not need to leave their neighborhoods for most of their religious, social, and material needs. Their gradual, but nearly complete adaptation to the mainstream coincided with marked "spatial decentralization" -- often thought of as "one of the hallmarks of assimilation."²⁰ By the 1950s and 1960s Volga Germans were "pretty well spread out all over the city."²¹

Older *Volgers* that remained in the Bottoms recalled the in-migration of American Indian families along the western edges of their enclaves during these decades.²² The larger mainstream may have barely noticed this much smaller urban village until the 1970s when concern about placement of the Indian Center was at its height. While clustering was always apparent, decentralization was mandated by small numbers and by low homeownership levels. "[I]ntegrated pluralism" -- small conglomerates surrounded by mainstream groupings -- may best define Omaha spaces within Lincoln.²³ Advances in transportation, however, made congregating at community focal points relatively easy, and cultural preservation was carried on in ethnically heterogeneous residential environments.

Half-way between the Volga German and Omaha situations, Vietnamese numbers were initially too small to allow neighborhood homogeneity. Additionally they

²⁰Jacqueline Desbarats, "Indochinese Resettlement in the United States," in Franklin Ng, ed., *Asians in America: The Peoples of East, Southeast and South Asia in American Life and Culture* (New York: Garland, 1998), 187.

²¹Jacob Reifschneider, interview by Molly Collins, 2 September 1980, folder AV1.636.22, transcript, Neighborhood Oral History Project, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska, 11.

²²George Kruse, interview by Molly Collins, 1 July 1980, folder AV1.636.18, transcript, Neighborhood Oral History Project, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska, 5-6.

arrived in core districts long after they had matured. Spatially, then, Vietnamese achieved "ethnic dominance" -- they were the plurality rather than the virtual majority -- in certain neighborhoods by the mid-1990s.²⁴ A predilection for homeownership and the presence of a Vietnamese business district cemented settlement patterns. Enjoying the comfort of a relatively tolerant mainstream, all of Lincoln is invited to restaurants and shops on "North 27th Street" to "Try something Vietnamese" -- whether it be *phở gà* or a dish ordered after asking the waiter to "recommend something fresh and different."²⁵

Similarly, in the twenty-first century all Lincolniters were welcome to come into the urban villages to attend Germans from Russia soup suppers and Omaha doings.²⁶ Interestingly, the governmental mainstream acknowledged the historic Volga German neighborhoods while shying away from discussing modern ethnic enclaves.²⁷ There are, for instance, no historical markers celebrating the vitality of Omaha or Vietnamese citizens and their contributions to Lincoln. Likely concerned about racial profiling or other unseemly accusations, interested parties are able to access information about ethnicity primarily through the city planning department's publications compiled from census reports.

Whatever forms urban villages manifested, ethnic communities "maintained a series of insular social networks that reinforced ethnic identity" and preserved cultures.²⁸ These enclaves continued to form even in an era of "growing tolerance" in the

²³Binderman, 17.

²⁴Bodnar, 177.

²⁵Bryan, the Asian Center Guy, "7 Simple Steps You Can Take to Discover Lincoln's Asian Culture," <http://www.LincolnAsianCenter.org>.

²⁶See, for instance, *Lincoln Chapter, The American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Newsletter*, January/February 2006, 6; and Carrie Wolfe (Omaha), President, "Lincoln Indian Club Events Tentatively Scheduled for 2006," flyer. The Lincoln Indian Club schedules multicultural events on St. Patrick's Day and Cinco de Mayo and often invites Irish and Mexican dancers to perform demonstrations.

²⁷See, for example, the home page for Neighborhood Works Lincoln (formerly Neighborhoods, Inc.), <http://www.nwlincoln.org>.

²⁸Hannan, 31.

mainstream.²⁹ Over the years, there were significant differences in the way ethnic residents were treated. Volga Germans, for instance, necessarily provided for themselves and their communities without much sympathy from greater Lincoln. State and city governments as demanded by the Constitution and the city charter now provide interpretive services and other considerations for ethnic citizens.³⁰ The general population, however, may still harbor many age-old suspicions about immigrants and migrants.

ETHNICITY AND RACE

Throughout the twentieth century, some mainstream citizens responded negatively to urban villagers' behavioral differences and their appearances. In any event, issues surrounding ethnicity, race, and racialism -- all social constructions -- highlighted continued tensions between particular and cosmopolitan forces. Culturally and behaviorally specific, "ethnic boundaries" and racial lines were issues the new arrivals contended with in the course of their identity negotiations.³¹

A concept with no "meaningful biological" basis, "race" is more accurately defined as human geography. This modern explanation of physical differences among peoples insists that the global pallet of skin colors exists because pigmentation evolved in response to environmental circumstances.³² Human intermingling, however, led earlier generations of western scholars to produce arbitrary classification systems based on "biological descent."³³ By the late eighteenth century, racial rankings -- ignoring the

²⁹Elliott R. Barkan, "America in the Hand, Homeland in the Heart: Transnational and Translocal Immigrant Experiences in the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 35 (Autumn 2004): 339-40

³⁰Leah Thorson, "Interpreters Fill Courtroom Niche," *Lincoln Journal-Star*, 31 May 2005, online archive.

³¹Hannan, 32.

³²Daniel G Blackburn, "Why Race Is Not a Biological Concept," in Berel Lang, ed., *Race and Racism in Theory and Practice* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 4.

³³Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose, eds., *Constructions of "Race," Place, and Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 4.

great differences that existed among Asians, Caucasians, and Native Americans -- encompassed essentialist ideas about social and intellectual capabilities. A century later, Social Darwinists refined established categories by focusing on technological progress.³⁴ While "racism," in the early twentieth century was a word "that did not then exist," most Americans assumed "white supremacy was good for everyone."³⁵ Racialism -- a concept employed only after rankings fell out of favor -- chronicles the practice of placing "troubling individuals" into caste systems.³⁶ Ethnicity -- whether portrayed as backwards or progressive -- is much more specific than race and depends on the "salience of group consciousness."³⁷ Often a source of pride among side-channel peoples, ethnicity may or may not be constructed by the mainstream in conjunction with race.

While physically indistinguishable from the 40 percent of Nebraska's population that claimed German heritage, *Volgers* were racialized the entire time they remained in their urban villages.³⁸ Culturally and linguistically distinct, their position within complex early-twentieth century hierarchies -- at least in the beet fields -- was one step above Mexicans and Japanese laborers.³⁹ In Lincoln they helped build neighborhoods and infrastructure, but they remained part of the immigrant "problem" until World War II.⁴⁰ In the post-war era, race as a "symbol of cultural status" was extended to formerly excluded groups including Jews and Germans who emigrated from beyond the pale of

³⁴Ibid., 4-5; and Blackburn, 3, 6, 9, 14-16

³⁵Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 198.

³⁶Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 290. See also Walter R. Allen, "The Dilemma Persists: Race, Class, and Inequality in American Life," in Peter Ratcliffe, ed., *"Race", Ethnicity and Nation: International Perspectives on Social Conflict*, (London: University College Press, 1994), 60.

³⁷Peter Ratcliffe, ed. *"Race", Ethnicity and Nation: International Perspectives on Social Conflict* (London: University College London Press, 1994), 6.

³⁸Frederick C. Luebke, "Time, Place, and Culture in Nebraska History," *Nebraska History* 69 (Winter 1988): 162.

³⁹See, Peck, 234.

⁴⁰Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1.

the *Reich*.⁴¹ Intriguingly, Volga Germans became "white" and not ethnic almost simultaneously.

Although they took advantage of their Americanization -- Amens, Giebelhauses, and Schwartzkopfs clearly participated at all levels of Lincoln society -- their heritages were soon challenged as race and ethnicity became virtually interchangeable.⁴² In the post-war world, mainstream Nebraska was increasingly defined as a collection of "immigrants" from the "United States or Europe."⁴³ Even observers who valued cultural diversity have suggested that mainstream "identity the last 150 years has mainly been European," as ethnic separation was legislated out of existence during World War I.⁴⁴ Additionally, the ethnic revival favored southern and eastern European Americans, especially Poles, Italians, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, and Russians. Germans, who were formerly the "most separate and independent of immigrants" were allegedly "speedily absorbed into Anglo-American society."⁴⁵ Such constructions ignored the survival of the German language press and the contributions of German-speakers to litigation protecting diversity. Although Germans from Russia were often placed in a category by themselves, immigration historians aver that Teutons in Nebraska, despite their numbers, have "the weakest sense of peoplehood."⁴⁶

As European ethnic identities became voluntary ascriptions, it appeared that cultural homogeneity had been achieved.⁴⁷ As a result, ethnicity was racialized in post-war Lincoln as citizens were viewed as a collection of whites and a few exotic outsiders.

⁴¹Janet Bauer, "Genealogies of Race and Culture in Anthropology: The Marginalized Ethnographers," in Berel Lang, ed., *Race and Racism in Theory and Practice* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 124.

⁴²Jackson and Penrose, 5. For a discussion of "whiteness," see Peck, 166, 227-28.

⁴³Luebke, 154.

⁴⁴Mary Pipher, *The Middle of Everywhere: The World's Refugees Come to Our Town* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), 5.

⁴⁵Michael Novak, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics and Culture in the Seventies* (New York: McMillan, 1972), 46-47.

⁴⁶Luebke, 162.

⁴⁷Richard D. Alba, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), xiv.

As late as 1980 the non-white population comprised 4 percent of the city's population. The new ethno-racial makeup of the Capital City began to change dramatically thereafter. By 2004, ethnics had increased their presence to 12 percent.⁴⁸

Used to being racialized, Omahas always accounted for less than 1 percent of the city's population but clustering made them obvious in their urban village. Probably less harried in mainstream Lincoln than in the rural areas immediately adjacent to Omaha Nation, they still were forced to confront negative stereotypes that painted them as indolent drunkards. Unfortunately, the levels of Native American substance abuse and related chronic diseases are much higher than any other population in the state.⁴⁹ The mainstream public rarely looks beyond these statistics to familiarize themselves with truly Omaha values.

Similarly, tribal ethnicity is frequently overlooked as "Indian" has become a catchall racial designation. Omaha as an ethnicity exists primarily in an international Indian context. Fortunately, as mainstream tolerance has increased during the era of urban migration, positive aspects of Omaha culture were occasionally revealed in the media. As early as 1962, the *Lincoln Star* ran a week-long series on the Native American Church that highlighted its beliefs, rituals, and their promotion of "sobriety, industry, charity, and right living."⁵⁰ While press coverage about urban villagers was generally sparse, articles about "doings" were generally favorable.⁵¹

Human interest stories also explore Vietnamese cultural traditions in Lincoln. The favorite topic is Tet -- the Vietnamese Lunar New Year -- which is always marked

⁴⁸Bob Reeves, "Voices of Diversity, *Lincoln Journal Star*, 6 May 2005, online archives.

⁴⁹See, Onyema G. Nkwocka, *Health Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Nebraska* (Lincoln: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, 2003), 117-20. While not classified unduly as "heavy drinkers," "binge drinking" is a major issue as are cirrhosis mortality -- ten times more prevalent than in the general population, and diabetes mortality -- six times the rates in the general public.

⁵⁰Earl Dreyer, "They Pray All Night: Indian Church Ideas Christian," *Lincoln Star*, 21 December 1962, 1. The series ran on page one through December 26.

⁵¹See, for example, Jonnie Taté Finn, "Preparing for Powwow, with Eye Toward Sky," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 4 August 2005, B1.

by colorful festivities and feasting.⁵² Despite the favorable press, Vietnamese -- who like Omahas remain both ethnically and racially separate from the mainstream -- face two divergent stereotypes. A "Rambo" image formulated in Hollywood in the post-Vietnam War era continues to define Vietnamese as war-like and ruthless in the popular imagination.⁵³ They also face the onus of being part of a "model minority," a racial designation assigned to all Asians. Especially poignant among men, Asians are supposed to be better educated and make more money than other groups.⁵⁴ Interestingly, Vietnamese in concert were the only Asian group whose income was below the national medium in 1985.⁵⁵ Language and education gaps continue to keep many of the new immigrants in positions at the bottom of the economic ladder. The first generation habitually pools its resources for continued family success while encouraging the next generation to raise family status. Facing pressure to excel in school not only at home, but in public as well, many youth have difficulties adjusting to these great expectations.⁵⁶

For their part, Vietnamese urban villagers face an unfamiliar cultural mix. From an Asian perspective, "America as a cultural identity is a hybrid of European civilizations."⁵⁷ To them, historical experiences of Volga German immigrants seem light years away. While immigrant experiences may not create bonds between people, sometimes they do create empathy. At the 1975 American Historical Society of Germans from Russia convention in Lincoln, Marie Fahrennruch Prichard said of the

⁵²See, for example, Josh Swartzlander, "Asian Community Celebrates New Year," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 21 January 2006, online edition. Multiple articles report on Tet annually.

⁵³Son Tran, in Gwen Nugent, dir., *Between Two Worlds: Vietnamese Identity in America* (Lincoln: NETV/NETECH, 1998), DVD.

⁵⁴Anh Quang Tran, "The Wichita Vietnamese" (Ph.D. diss, Kansas State University, 2002), 175.

⁵⁵William Doerner, "To America with Skills," *Time*, 8 July 1985, 47.

⁵⁶Ngoc H. Bui and Joseph Stimpfl, "'Who Are These People Anyway?' Variations of Ethnic Identity Within an Immigrant Population," in Esther Mikyung Ghymn, ed., *Asian American Studies: Identity, Images, Issues Past and Present* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 122.

⁵⁷Jae-Hyup Lee, *Dynamics of Ethnic Identity: Three Asian American Communities in Philadelphia* (New York: Garland, 1998), 3.

Vietnamese, "I love them, They need a country." In fact most of the 700 polled at the event shared this assessment. Francis Amen went on to encourage the newcomers to preserve their heritage as a mechanism to maintain pride in the face of inevitable discrimination from the mainstream.⁵⁸

In this manner, German from Russia revivalists "helped create a greater sensitivity" to the presence of and needs of more recent arrivals.⁵⁹ While "racial and ethnic discord is not a deep-seated characteristic of Nebraska history," it always lurks just beneath the surface.⁶⁰ Fortunately, discrimination often softens when divergent groups interact. Germans from Russia, Omahas, and Vietnamese all recognize this and frequently invite the mainstream public to events in order to stimulate positive exchange. Still, the latter two peoples remain racialized and negative stereotypes are perpetuated. Continued ethnic pride, however, frequently mitigates these negative developments. Even those who have adapted closely to resemble the mainstream take time to celebrate their distinctness. Consequently, retained and revived cultural identities still play a comforting role in the twenty-first century.

TRANSNATIONALISM, INTERNATIONALISM, AND NATIONALISM

While some argue that "identity is no longer based on territory" as the "world community is small and interconnected," place -- whether remembered or revisited -- also remains vital in the long-term maintenance of ethnicity.⁶¹ Germans from Russia, Omahas, and Vietnamese in Lincoln all build parts of their modern identities on transnational, translocal, or international ties to their sending cultures. Connections

⁵⁸"Germans from Russia Mostly Welcome Viets," *Lincoln Journal*, 18 June 1975, 11.

⁵⁹Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Significance of Immigration in the Formation of an American Identity," *History Teacher* 30 (November 1996): 23.

⁶⁰Luebke, 163.

⁶¹Pipher, xiii.

certainly vary from individual to individual, but considerations of homelands were part of "the struggle to determine how far to go in adapting to the new host society."⁶² Intriguingly, the related cosmopolitan influence of American nationalism also informs identities among all urban villagers.

True transnationalism required "simultaneity, persistence, and intensity" of contact and participation between individuals in host and sending communities. More casual contact is better defined as "translocalism," and internationalism in this context focuses on diaspora populations with mere memories of the sending culture.⁶³ Not surprisingly, access to points of origin became easier over time.

Transnationalism prior to World War II was accomplished only with great difficulty. Many Volga Germans communicated with the colonies in Russia via mail, but international service could take up to six months. Similarly, traveling back to the villages was arduous and expensive and most often occurred during emergencies. Before 1917, most available funds brought new *Volgers* to Lincoln, rather than returning urban villagers to the sending culture. After the Russian Revolution, diplomatic difficulties excluded continued emigration, and most contact was focused on humanitarian relief to relatives suffering from starvation caused by drought and Soviet callousness. By the time Germans from Russia could afford to travel and faster conveyances were in place, their cultural hearths had been displaced and the urban villagers were largely acculturated to the mainstream.

Like *Volgers* of the 1910s and 1920s, Omaha urban villagers were often financially constrained and travel was relatively expensive. Still, proximity to the Omaha Reservation assured near continuous economic and social contact with their kinspeople in the sending culture. Despite the 100-mile separation, "near instant

⁶²Barkan, "America in Hand," 341.

⁶³Ibid., 345.

transmission of information" helped create a "prolonged reluctance" to acculturate. Additionally, because a return to Macy was always possible, a commitment to the receiving culture was never required.⁶⁴ This localized transnationalism often extended to Indian internationalism as numerous indigenous nations in Nebraska remained connected to each other but insulated from the mainstream for decades. Consequently, many Native Americans find comparisons between urban Indian migrants and other immigrants problematic as tribal identities are inherently more "resilient," "spiritual," and connected to place than identities of arrivals from far-flung continents.⁶⁵

Clearly Vietnamese urban villagers in the early years of their diaspora experienced the same difficulties as Volga Germans in maintaining homeland ties. Uniquely, their financial capabilities expanded at precisely the time modern communication technologies matured. This was also an era when the political barriers that separated *Việt Kiều* from relatives in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were relaxed. Consequently, airplane travel to the sending culture became decidedly common by the early twenty-first century. Additionally, the "introduction of the computer had social consequences" as great as transportation advances.⁶⁶ Today, the internet links the 2.7 million *Việt Kiều* living in 100 countries around the globe back to their cultural hearth and to each other.⁶⁷

Although only Vietnamese use their native script in these communications, computer access for all urban villagers currently plays the role the foreign language

⁶⁴Elliott Robert Barkan, "Proximity and Commuting Immigration: An Hypothesis Explored via the Bi-polar Ethnic Communities of French Canadian and Mexican Americans," in Jack Kinton, ed., *American Ethnic Revival: Group Pluralism Entering America's Third Century* (Aurora, IL: Social Science and Sociological Resources, 1977), 165, 170, 178.

⁶⁵Judi M. gaiashkibos (Ponca/Santee), Executive Director Nebraska Commission of Indian Affairs, interview by author, 31 October 2005, Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs Offices, Lincoln, Nebraska.

⁶⁶David E. Nye, *Narratives and Spaces: Technology and the Construction of American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 161.

⁶⁷Caroline Kieu Linh Valverde, "Making Transnational Viet Nam: Vietnamese American Community - Viet Nam Through Money, Music and Modems (Ph.D diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2002), 82.

press did in the 1910s and 1920s. Localism is necessarily obscured by these developments. World and national news can be garnered from the variety of Vietnamese language information sites scattered across the world-wide web, but little of it applies to Lincoln. Local, but not particular, the Asian Community and Cultural Center (ACCC) site is in many respects a pan-Asian cosmopolitan influence. Although Vietnamese are numerically dominant in the Capital City, English is used as the *lingua franca* as people from China, Korea, South Asia, Philippines, and beyond use its resources and services.⁶⁸

Not necessarily adverse to new technologies, neither the Lincoln Indian Center nor the Lincoln Indian Club sponsor websites. Local news travels throughout the urban village and beyond in time-honored oral chains that connect community members. The sending culture, however, has embraced the internet -- a tool that began spreading across Indian Country in 1994. Many Native Americans suggest that the establishment of "[v]irtual communities" aids in the maintenance of "coherent group identities."⁶⁹ Taking advantage of the versatility of electronic platforms, the Omaha Way is now reinforced by *OmahaTribe.com* -- a website administered in Macy. Formatted like a daily newspaper right down to its masthead, the site keeps Omahas apprised of news and weather in and around Omaha Nation. It also contains numerous interactive forums and is designed to serve as the homepage for all residents on the reservation.⁷⁰ Their relatives in Lincoln undoubtedly stay abreast with developments through this site even though no space is reserved for their events and concerns.

Because of electronic capabilities, *Die Welt-Post* (1916-1982) had no counterparts in the communities of later arrivals. The newspaper itself emerged a generation after the North and South Bottoms were erected and stayed a generation after most residents had moved away. The former necessity of the printed word is recalled in

⁶⁸Asian Community and Cultural Center, <http://www.lincolnasiancenter.org>.

the twenty-first century by a quarterly newsletter published at AHSGR headquarters, but the organization's website has a wider reach as it is accessible by the whole world. No longer aimed just at urban villagers, both forums serve the broad revivalist community that studies the history of the Volga colonies and makes genealogical connections among ancestors scattered around the globe.⁷¹

Intriguingly, until they emigrated from Russia, Volga Germans were peoples without a country. The merging of nation state and ethnicity that defined political and social developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries actually happened after the colonists were in place in the eastern reaches of Romanov Europe.⁷² As their cultural hearths were essentially independent, loyalty to the Czars was always minimal. Although they had sentimental connections to the German Empire, the first modern country most *Volgers* affiliated with was the United States. They were anxious to demonstrate their loyalty to their adopted country through military service in both World War I and World War II. Their scions continue this tradition.

Similarly, modern American nationalism helped inform the identities of Omaha and Vietnamese urban villagers. As dual citizens of Omaha Nation and the United States, Omahas' loyalty to flag and country has been unwavering since World War I. Tribal members are universally proud that "virtually all men" among their relatives have served even in the most unpopular wars.⁷³ As a people, they supported the Vietnam War even during the darkest days of mainstream protest, and they continue to serve without community dissent in Iraq.

⁶⁹Ritva Levo-Henriksson, "Force and Possibility: Hopi Views about the Internet," in John R. Wunder and Kurt E. Kinbacher, eds., *Reconfigurations of Native North America* (Forthcoming), 185.

⁷⁰OmahaTribe.com, <http://www.omahatribe.com>.

⁷¹*American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Newsletter* has been issued quarterly for nearly thirty years. The website, <http://www.ahsgr.org>, was first copyrighted in its current form in 2003.

⁷²See, Jackson and Penrose, 7-9.

⁷³Edward Cline (Omaha), in "Omaha Tribal Representatives Hit Moratorium," *Lincoln Journal*, 15 October 1969, archives [*Lincoln Journal Star* offices] file.

Equally anxious to prove their loyalty to their new nation, some Vietnamese urban villagers may not technically be citizens of any country. Most first-generation immigrants in Lincoln were connected to the now-defunct Republic of Vietnam (RVN), and for many citizenship in the sending culture was terminated with the fall of Saigon. Like *Volgers* before them, many Vietnamese may reside in the receiving society as landed aliens their entire lives. Language barriers and the cost of preparing for citizenship examinations are known to be discouraging.

By defining nation as "an imagined political community," many Vietnamese urban villagers maintain loyalty to RVN and the United States.⁷⁴ At the 2006 ACCC Lincoln Tet celebration, for example, several elders were enlisted to explain traditions of giving, family hierarchy, and graceful reception of gifts to a largely mainstream audience. While not the topics of discussion, RVN and US flags flanked these speakers as a matter of community protocol.⁷⁵ This unflinching loyalty to both nations allows older immigrants to construct identities as patriots and as comrades in arms to US servicemen. Honoring this tradition, many younger urban villagers have served in the two gulf wars.⁷⁶

Because of these loyalties, Vietnamese immigrants often remain disconnected to the modern Vietnamese nation state. An increasing number of 1.5 and second generation urban villagers, however, see it as a cultural hearth. While youths have actively sought to rekindle contact to the sending culture, a generation gap has clearly developed over this issue.

Still, nationalism has been remarkably constant among all three groups of urban villagers despite continued discrimination and other issues the ethnic populations

⁷⁴Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 15.

⁷⁵Author, Field Notes, Tet Presentation, ACCC, 27 January 2006.

⁷⁶See, for example, Tim Nguyen, quoted in Aaron Saunderford, "O' Asian Garden Unites Cultures," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 17 October 2004, online edition.

confronted. The maintenance of transnationalism, however, was more variable. Proximity favored Omahas whose connections as a rule have remained remarkably constant. Volga Germans commuted to the Russian colonies with much greater difficulties and may generally have been perceived to be translocal. Since the revival, however, contact with other German Russians is international as the sending places only exist in memory. Vietnamese face an even greater physical distance, but modern technologies have truly made the world a smaller place. Transnationalism for them is a choice made with little inconvenience.

PERFORMED CULTURE

While proximity influenced the continued transmission of behaviors and ideas from the sending cultures, saliency of cultural identity in all of Lincoln's urban villages was intimately related to the maintenance of performed culture. These folk practices preserved alternative "source[s] of knowledge" the new arrivals imported from their sending cultures, and provided them the means for "understanding important considerations in a milieu where conflicting agendas and ideologies proliferated."⁷⁷ Adaptations to mainstream practices and expectations replaced or eliminated the need for some of these behaviors, but Germans from Russia, Omahas, and Vietnamese all continue to celebrate certain aspects of their sending cultures in the twenty-first century.

As referenced in Chapter 1, folkways are maintained in a variety of ways. Most significantly for this study, they exist like soup as "retentions" -- long term survivals that still demonstrate ethnicity, as "revivals" -- cultural forms that have been returned to a community after a period of dormancy, and through "ethnic reintensification" -- a process where residents born in urban villages learn folkways directly from the founding

⁷⁷Bodnar, 185.

generation and continue performance without lapses.⁷⁸ While the lines between retention and reintensification may be thin, revivals are few and stand out clearly.

Lincoln's German from Russia population clearly demonstrates that ethnicity can be revived, but once "cultural artifacts are lost, succeeding generations do not typically revive them."⁷⁹ Their ethnicity exists historically, but -- *Knoephla* and other foodways aside -- few aspects of performed culture remain. Behaviors that formerly had great resonance within the North and South Bottoms slowly lost meaning. Over the course of several decades beginning in the 1950s, urban villagers dispersed from their enclaves, religious structures fizzled, and, by the early 1980s, the last remnants of the Volga village dialects vanished. Ethnicity, however, outlasted performed culture.

Interest in a newly minted Germans from Russia heritage among third and fourth generation *Volgers* was part of a wider ethnic revival. Best seen as a grass-roots cultural movement that connected international communities of Teutons that emigrated from all corners of the Romanov empire, the revival allowed "a selective return to roots." Groups chose "what of their past to accept, what to recover, what to use, and what to discard."⁸⁰ As the reservoir of behaviors that defined Volga Germans in early twentieth-century Lincoln was no longer accessible, geographic and historical information emerged as the revivalists preeminent focus.⁸¹

Place and history were deeply intertwined in this local revival. The AHSGR encouraged its members to research and reconnect with the original colonies of their ancestors. Most of the organization's intellectual energy is spent on examining these vanished cultural hearths or on pursuing family genealogy. While the old Russian Bottoms are not generally the subjects of revivalist efforts, research and socializing are

⁷⁸Stephen Stearn, "Ethnic Folklore and the Folklore of Ethnicity," *Western Folklore* 36 (January 1977): 18. A fourth category, "Ethnic survivals" -- practices retained with little concern for ethnic identity -- may exist in Lincoln, but would be necessarily difficult to observe.

⁷⁹Hannan, 32-33.

⁸⁰Bukowczyk, 118-20.

done within their confines. AHSGR headquarters sits in the heart of the *Franker Boden*. Home to extensive archives and an ever expanding museum, it also serves as a social point for quilters and coffee drinkers. Across town in the *Norkaer Boden* the annual Soup Supper is held in the old Welfare Society Hall. While still the original structure *Volgers* erected in 1927, the venue was purchased in 1994 for \$4,000 -- a testament to its formerly dilapidated condition. Still under renovation, its taxable value increased from \$103,000 to \$174,000 between 2000 and 2005.⁸² Clearly more of a community project than can be supported by the \$6 fee to eat soup each spring, the revitalization of the hall allows the grandchildren of the North Bottom's founders to maintain particularism in a revival movement dominated by the historical district that now encompasses the South Bottoms.

Omaha urban villagers, on the otherhand, are spatially connected to their neighborhoods only because of proximity to relatives. The stability of the Indian Center helps mitigate endless mobility necessitated by low rates of property ownership. Additionally, proximity to Omaha Nation provides a spatial anchor for a people intimately connected to the Nebraska landscape. Intriguingly, the urban migration began precisely in an era when Omaha Nation and the Omaha Way were experiencing revitalization. Although the sending culture was increasingly rich in tradition, its depressed economic state made out-migration a rational choice.

Omaha performed culture has largely been retained in Lincoln and in many cases it has been reintensified. Indeed, "basic values remain strong" among most urban Indians.⁸³ Kinship relations and gift reciprocity, for example, are still central tenets of behavior within the urban village. While some local practices have necessarily been

⁸¹Hannan, 33.

⁸²Lancaster County, Nebraska, Assessor/Register of Deeds, <http://www.lincoln.ne/cnty/ assess/ property.htm>.

⁸³Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 60.

modified by the demands of "white American materialism and competition in the modern world," others remain more "traditional" than those at Omaha Nation.⁸⁴ The Lincoln Indian Club Pow-wow is perhaps the best example. Its emphasis on teaching Omaha children arena protocol and the meaning and method of Indian music recalls the original intent of Omaha fall celebrations far more than the modern contest-style pow-wow at Macy. While both preserve and transmit Omaha culture to future generations, the urban event places cultural tradition under a magnifying glass and attempts to reestablish protocols already vanished in the sending culture.

Omaha language, however, has neither been retained nor reintensified in Lincoln. Only elders among the founding generation had a grasp on their native tongue -- a pattern duplicated on Omaha Nation. Subsequent generations appear not to have learned Omaha from relatives in either location. Sadly, Native Americans are barely a part of the Capital City's celebrated language diversity; at least forty-eight dialects were present in 2005. Fifty people reported speaking Navajo, 115 individuals claimed they spoke Dakota, but Omaha language was not reported on the list.⁸⁵ Still, complete language loss is not a foregone conclusion as tribal and mainstream efforts have been promoted to stem the tide. United States Congress passed Native American Language Acts in 1990 and 1992, although federal efforts to implement programs to date have been half hearted.⁸⁶ In 1999, however, the Nebraska legislature determined that teaching American Indian languages was "essential to the proper education of Indian children." To facilitate this goal the legislature allowed "elders to be certified by their tribe as tribal language specialists" and eliminated the need to have state licensed teachers present for classes to

⁸⁴Ibid., 25.

⁸⁵Jonnie Taté Finn, "Study Lists Lincoln High in Linguistic Diversity," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 27 March 2005, 7B; and Jonnie Taté Finn, "Lincoln is a Land of Many Tongues," *Lincoln Journal-Star*, 27 March 2005, online archives.

⁸⁶James Crawford, *Hold Your Tongue: Bilingualism and the Politics of English Only* (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1992), 60-61.

be accredited.⁸⁷ Even with these significant statutes in place, revitalization will require tribal initiative and control, and it may be another generation before language reintensification occurs.⁸⁸

Conversely, Lincoln's 3,520 Vietnamese speaking residents communicate in the third most common language of the city.⁸⁹ While some argue that continued immigration is the "*paramount reason for linguistic*" survival,⁹⁰ Vietnamese entered a much different mainstream than Volga Germans. Those moving to Lincoln in the late twentieth century had the advantage of greater official facilitation of non-English languages. The Red Cross Language Bank, for instance, maintained a pool of bilingual volunteers working in thirteen different tongues -- including Vietnamese -- to aid residents in medical situations. Additionally, community liaison personal for the Lincoln Police Department -- Maria Vu and Jung Nguyen -- received a \$200,000 federal grant to translate the Nebraska Driver's Manual into Vietnamese. Marriage license applications and a numerous other forms were also translated in 1996.⁹¹ While particular village dialects prevailed in the Russian colonies, Vietnamese -- even considering regional differences -- speak and write a national language shared by 80 million people on all inhabitable continents. Mass communication ensures access to a large pool of colinguists that would remain available even if immigration stopped. Local use of Vietnamese is reinforced by the availability of recorded music and movie rentals at many 27th Street businesses.

⁸⁷LB 475 (2005), in *Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs Newsletter*, Winter 2005, 2; and Mark Joseph Awakuni-Swetland, "Umo(n)ho(n) Ithae t(h)e -- Umo(n)ho(n) Bthi(n): I Speak Omaha -- I am Omaha" (Ph.d. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2003), 187.

⁸⁸Crawford, 60-61.

⁸⁹Finn, "Lincoln is a Land of Many Tongues," online. English was the most common tongue, Spanish the second.

⁹⁰Crawford, 128; see also Hannan, 38.

⁹¹Mary K. Wayman, "Red Cross Language Bank Aids Immigrants," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 26 December 1992, archives [*Journal Star* offices] file; Bob Reeves, "Vietnamese Find New Life," *Lincoln Star*, 1 December 1992, 1 and 4; and "Marriage Info in Vietnamese," *Lincoln Journal and Star*, 18 March 1996, archives file.

Among Vietnamese, "language, ethnicity, culture, and in many respects religion" remain "bound together" in the newly formed urban villages.⁹² These spaces remain dominated by the founding generation that anchors its status and identification "almost exclusively in family."⁹³ Most aspects of performed culture are retained among this portion of the population. The second generation -- which currently comprises only a quarter of all urban villagers -- is already negotiating a cultural identity that is a synthesis between old and new milieus.⁹⁴ It seems likely that while some behaviors will necessarily lapse, other important cultural aspects will be reintensified as Vietnamese and American patterns are frequently practiced in separate spheres.

Omahas and Germans from Russia have also negotiated interactions between imported culture and mainstream expectations. In many respects, they ended up on opposite ends of the behavioral adaptation spectrum. *Volger* particularism largely vanished while Omaha particularism appears to have increased. Although Vietnamese urban villagers are still in their first generation, both mainstream structures and internal predispositions suggest significant aspects of performed culture will be kept for decades to come.

CONCLUSIONS

Foodways -- as evidenced by the retention of *Knoephla*, *watónzi skítthe tani*, and *phở gà* outlast many other markers of ethnic boundaries.⁹⁵ On rare occasions, culinary cultural traditions mix and items such as the frybread runza -- the cabbage, onion, and hamburger filling from the Russian Bottoms wrapped in Omaha deep-fried bread --

⁹²Hannan, 32.

⁹³Bui and Stimpfl, 126.

⁹⁴See, Bukowczyk, 144.

⁹⁵Alan M. Kraut, "Ethnic Foodways: The Significance of Food in the Designation of Cultural Boundaries Between Immigrant Groups in the U.S., 1840-1921," *Journal of American Culture* 2 (Fall 1979): 417.

emerge.⁹⁶ Other combinations of comfort foods are generally absent as most performed cultures remain deeply rooted in particular ethnic ways.

Whether behaviors and beliefs survived within the ethnic enclaves depended largely on how far the urban villagers were willing "to go in adapting to their host culture."⁹⁷ The Volga Germans' metamorphosis to Germans from Russia indicated this ethnic group was willing to acculturate almost completely. Conversely, despite years of pressure to abandon traditional behaviors and beliefs, most Indian peoples remained distinct. While largely due to choice, the mainstream generally refused to accept the total assimilation it formerly demanded. Omahas were always reminded that they were Indians and frequently faced exclusion as a result.⁹⁸ Vietnamese were also racialized, and their ethnicity was blurred with other Asians. Increasing mainstream tolerance -- at least at official levels -- eliminated some of the negative cosmopolitan forces Volga Germans and Omahas necessarily encountered.

Viewing ethnic enclaves in Lincoln as "extensions of homelands" is a valuable method for examining identity construction in immigrant and migrant groups.⁹⁹ Remarkably, Vietnamese transnational connections are nearly as strong as those of the Omahas. Distinct identities in both urban villages were regularly reinforced by contact with sending cultures. Germans from Russia, on the otherhand, lost intimate connections with the Volga colonies generations ago. Their sending cultures survive as historical artifacts that inform a modern identity without reinforcing aspects of performed culture.

Despite significant variances among ethnic groups, Lincoln's urban villages housed and continue to house populations that preferred to remain distinct from the mainstream. Interestingly, their strong family values and cultural conservatism are

⁹⁶*Umóⁿhoⁿ Nikashiⁿga Ukéⁿhiⁿ Uhóⁿ: Common Omaha Cooking* (Lincoln: Native Language Program, University of Nebraska Anthropology Department, 2002), 58-59, 80.

⁹⁷Barkan, "America in Hand," 341.

⁹⁸Fixico, 174; and Author, Field Notes, conversation with Barry Webster, Council Member, Omaha Council Chambers, 6 October, 2005.

largely in step with twenty-first century mainstream values. Because diversity is often undervalued, however, many citizens in the Capital City are unaware of the cultural contributions urban villagers have made in the past and are poised to make in the future. Hopefully, the mainstream on the Great Plains will recall its past significant diversity and grow to embrace pluralism.

⁹⁹Barkan, "Proximity and Commuting Immigration," 163.

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