"THIS STRANGE ENTERPRISE": GENEVA STEEL AND THE AMERICAN WEST

by

Craig Loal Whetten

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STATEMENT OF THESIS APPROVAL

The thesis of **CRAIG LOAL WHETTEN**

has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

GREGORY SMOAK	, Chair	**08/02/2011** Date Approved
MATTHEW BASSO	, Member	**08/02/2011** Date Approved
W. PAUL REEVE	, Member	**08/02/2011** Date Approved

and by **ISABEL MOREIRA** , Chair of

the Department of **HISTORY**

and by Charles A. Wight, Dean of The Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

Historians of the American West have often used the dichotomy of federal involvement and local exceptionalism to frame the patterns of Western history as well as the direction of Western historiography. To the most famous of early Western historians, the West offered the truest version of what it meant to be American and resulted from individual efforts that yielded positive national results. Yet, some more recent New Western historians suggest that the conquest of the West evidences the worst of what it means to be American and that federal efforts yielded negative local results.

This thesis argues that the history of the Geneva plant in Orem, Utah illustrates a comprehensive view of the West as a confluence of federal, regional, and local involvement that produced dynamic situations only understood when considering these three powers. The history of the Geneva plant began as a response to federal initiatives, foundations placed by regional powers, and adaptations or rejections by local powers. It continued as locals refined their views of the plant and their relationship to larger national corporations while attempting to assimilate the plant and its Eastern owners. The Geneva plant ended as the local economy surpassed its influence, locals grated under the polluted skies it produced, and its Eastern owner relinquished control to local interests that could not afford to continue operations much beyond the new millennia.

To my wife, Jenette.

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INTRODUCTION AND THESIS

On the shores of the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi, there once sat a series of disjointed metal structures that for nearly six decades defined a valley, an economy, and helped create a perception of the American West (Figure 1). Named at various times Geneva, the Geneva works, the Geneva plant, and Geneva Steel, these structures formed the largest integrated steel mill west of the Mississippi River. First built as a means to help win the Second World War, the Geneva steel mill helped spur the growth of the surrounding communities of Provo and Orem and served as a stable force in the Utah Valley economy for nearly five decades. Only later, during the 1970s and 1980s, did the Geneva plant lose some of its luster. No longer contributing to the economic viability of the cities it helped grow and making their air unusually thick during winter inversions, the Geneva steel mill fell silent for the last time in 2002 and disappeared from the skyline in 2004. While the physical form of the Geneva plant no longer exists, historians can benefit from the study of its origins, operation, and demise because of the unique mix of powers and entities that directed the path of Geneva. The people that envisioned the plant and organized its construction and operation came from places as diverse as Washington D.C., San Francisco, and Provo. Accordingly, their visions

Figure 1: Geneva Plant and Mount Timpanogos, circa 1950.

for Geneva reflected their regional, economic, and political backgrounds. The story of Geneva helps historians understand the importance of understanding that federal, regional, and local power in the American West interact to form a unique human landscape that mirrors both private and state sponsored capitalism.

The history of the Geneva plant illustrates that the complex interaction between federal, local, and private power defines the American West as something more complicated than just a 'plundered province' or a capitalist utopia.[1] Geneva helps historians recognize that federal power interacted with regional power in the American West in a way that local entities interpreted, shaped, or sometimes ignored exactly because of the prevalent local conditions and attitudes. Geneva also reminds historians that they cannot ignore these forces and successfully address the nature of the American West. The West never functioned in a vacuum and the best way for historians to interpret federal involvement and local reaction is to gauge both sides of the story and analyze how each node of power interacted to create a uniquely Western result.

This thesis argues that that the Geneva plant, from construction to destruction, illustrates the particularly Western mixture of federal, regional, and local influence, including economic and cultural processes, that defines the American West as a place where historical actors made choices in context of their place of power: local, regional, or federal. The results of these choices, construction

[1] See Bernard Devoto, "The West: A Plundered Province," *Harper's Magazine* CLXIX (Aug. 1934): 355-364. Cited in William G. Robbins, "The 'Plundered Province' Thesis and the Recent Historiography of the American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 55, no. 4 (1986): 577-597.

and operation of a large, federal industrial steel-making plant, significantly altered life in the agriculture-centric economy and insular society. Utah Valley residents learned to accommodate the industry into their local economy and came to believe in the plant's economic power far beyond the actual economic facts. They also overcame their fears of outside influence and eventually claimed the plant as a local cultural icon.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The historiographical context for the Geneva plant sits at the confluence of several historical discussions of the American West. These include discussions of the nature and role of the frontier, Eastern dominance, federal involvement, and local dynamism.

Frederick Jackson Turner began a lasting historical argument about the nature of the West when he presented "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" at the American Historical Association conference of 1893. In this pivotal presentation, Turner argued that the American experience on the frontier defined America by not only changing the very nature of the people living on the frontier, but by shifting ever westward until 1893. Turner eschewed the prevalent "germ" theory of history to present a history of America that followed the expansion of the nation and promoted a nationalistic self-defining process by which Europeans became American through their life on the frontier. The opening of the New World, according to Turner, allowed European colonists to interact with "savages" and nature to shed their Old World baggage and traditions. In this way, American history did not spring from European ancestry, but nearly came *ex nihilo* from the processes on the frontier. Turner argued that the most emblematic frontier experience in American history happened in the West. Not only did Americans then lose their European identity in the West, this western frontier unified Americans

and taught them the values of material success, unity, and democracy. Turner moved the definition of America from the cities along the Atlantic Coast to the Western frontier – from Cumberland Gap to the South Pass. This is one of the most important reasons why Western historiography begins with Turner – he was the first to make the West essential to how historians define America.

Historians have debated Turner's "Frontier Thesis" from its introduction through the present. Immediate contemporaries such as Charles Beard argued that it did not fully address the growth of cities and the influence of large immigrant populations.[2] More modern historians have disagreed with the fundamental lack of diversity, its Euro-centric focus, the reliance on mythological qualities of "the West," and its weakness in understanding economic factors.[3] What later historians would call the "New Western History" either argued against Turner directly, or a few ignore Turner altogether. For many decades, historiography of the West relied on the frontier as the defining element of the West.

The historiographical discussion turned from frontier to Eastern dominance when historians began to argue that the frontier did not create America, but that powerful Eastern individuals and institutions used the West and its appertaining frontier to advance their own interests. This new conceptualization of United States history not only moved the sources of change in the West to the economic and political centers of Eastern America, but also removed the West as the creator of American identity. No longer did historians need to address the West as the best of

[2] Wilbur R. Jacobs, *On Turner's Trail: 100 Years of Writing Western History* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas, 1994), 11.
[3] Terry Bouton, "The New and (Somewhat) Improved Frontier Thesis," *Reviews in American History*, 35, no. 4 (2007): 490.

America, but could describe it as a backwater, full of the misfits and outcasts of American society; as something less than the center of American identity: the East. The best example of this change, who argued the opposite of Turner, Bernard DeVoto pointed out that Eastern dominance of the West defined the American West.

In his seminal article "The West: A Plundered Province," DeVoto made some of the earliest and certainly the most captivating of the arguments about the West and its dependency on the East.[4] A native of Utah addressing a national audience, DeVoto argued that "the west was born of industrialism," and that Eastern businesses used that industry to dominate both Western economics and politics.[5] In the 1934 *Harper's* magazine article, DeVoto further argued that Eastern economic entities had changed the West's resources into commodities and taken the profits for themselves.[6] Beginning with the California Gold Rush, DeVoto suggested that Western growth sprang from industrial promoters, a "stupid" federal government, and the rapacious behavior of Eastern industry.[7] He considered that the West would never achieve economic or political parity with the East because it would never leave its colonial status.[8] Even some thirteen years later, after some of the largest federal expenditures in the West in history, DeVoto continued to argue that the West "has always been a province of the East and it has always been plundered."[9]

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[4] Bernard DeVoto, "The West: A Plundered Province," *DeVoto's West: History, Conservation, and the Public Good* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), 34.
[5] Ibid., 38.
[6] Ibid., 34.
[7] Ibid., 41.
[8] Ibid., 41.
[9] Bernard DeVoto, "The West Against Itself," *DeVoto's West: History, Conservation, and the Public Good* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2005), 75.

Some contemporaries saw DeVoto's argument as a sympathetic and popular consideration of how Western radicalism was rooted in economic issues.[10] Others believed that he enjoyed controversy and found a familiar topic with which he could attract attention.[11] Historians who subscribe to his 'plundered province' thesis might describe the Geneva plant as a tool of Eastern exploitation. U.S. Steel Corporation, based in Pennsylvania, built the Geneva plant, operated the plant, and then purchased the plant from the federal government. When the corporation threatened to close the Geneva plant in the early 1980s, employees and locals believed that the eastern corporation had no sympathy or connection to Western issues and took a profit in the short-term rather than invest in the long-term. These groups argued for both greater Eastern investment and Federal involvement in steel trade issues, while ironically seeking to identify with a self-reliant Western ethic. DeVoto may have been one of the first to identify this dilemma of Western thought encapsulated by the effort to seek one's own identity in the West while using Eastern funds to do so. He considered this dilemma the inherent schizophrenia in Western thought.[12] His earlier despair about the West never achieving parity with the East was somewhat alleviated by the amount of federal dollars invested in the West, but he maintained that failure was "inherent in [the West's] psychology."[13]

While DeVoto identified a broader Eastern influence, later historians specifically labeled the federal government as the preeminent influence in Western

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[10] Garrett Mattingly, *Bernard DeVoto: A Preliminary Appraisal* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1938), 51.
[11] Orlan Sawey, *Bernard DeVoto* (New York: Twaney Publishers, Inc., 1969), 112.
[12] Ibid., 118.
[13] DeVoto, "The West against Itself," 88.

history. These historians described the West as a place defined by federal government intervention. Gerald D. Nash and Richard White, the foremost of these historians, have argued that federal involvement defined the West as well as introduced a new role for the West in American economics and society.[14] Nash described how the Second World War changed America's "Third World," the West, from an economy of resource exploitation to a more diverse economy of industry and technology.[15] He also asserted that changes during the Second World War resulted in a colony being transitioned to a region of self-sufficiency and innovation.[16] Nash and other historians argue that although the federal government acted as the primary agent helping the west to 'catch up', private enterprise also played a role.[17] This is another example of how historians, including Nash, have tried to seek the correct balance between the federal and local power when describing the West. Richard White similarly argues that individuals and local efforts did not create the American West, but that the efforts of the federal government made the West a "dependency of the Federal government."[18]

Nash updates DeVoto's 'plundered province' thesis to account for the federally induced changes in the West during the Second World War. Nash argues

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[14] See Gerald D. Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1990); *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1985); and *American West in the Twentieth Century: A Short History of an Urban Oasis* (Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1973). Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West (*Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1991).

[15] Gerald D. Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 1990), xii.

[16] Gerald D. Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, 1985), vii.

[17] Nash, *World War II and the West, 2.*

[18] Richard White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1991), 57.

that Eastern establishments used the West in a way that DeVoto calls 'plundering', but that the exigencies of national defense during the Second World War forced the federal government to intervene in the West on a scale that few private enterprises could achieve.[19] White, on the other hand, does not argue against a foreign power dominating the West, he simply recognizes it as the federal government rather than Eastern corporations. White acknowledges Eastern commercial interests, but points out that the federal government made their exploitation of the West a possibility.

Some historians have argued that Nash's thesis explains certain phenomena in Utah. John Caughey argues that the federal government supplied most of the West's industry and high technology enterprises during the Second World War.[20] According to Leonard Arrington and Thomas Alexander, the war economy changed Utah in a way that went far beyond the national average or what one could call a basic federal investment.[21] These historians argue that the federal government prepared the infrastructure in Utah for expansion during the Second World War because Utah functioned as an extractive resource colony that provided raw materials for eastern industry.[22] This thesis, however, argues that local and regional enterprises responded to not only religious forces (the early Mormon efforts to

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[19] Gerald D. Nash, *The Federal Landscape: An Economic History of the Twentieth-Century West* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona, 1999), 42.

[20] John Caughey, *The American West: Frontier and Region* (Los Angeles, 1969), 21 Cited in William G. Robbins, "The 'Plundered Province' Thesis and the Recent Historiography of the American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 55, no. 4 (1986): 577-597.

[21] Leonard J. Arrington and Thomas G. Alexander, "Supply Hub of the West: Defense Depot Ogden, 1941-1964," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 32 (1964): 99 – 121. Cited in William G. Robbins, "The 'Plundered Province' Thesis and the Recent Historiography of the American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 55, no. 4 (1986): 581.

[22] William G. Robbins, "The 'Plundered Province' Thesis and the Recent Historiography of the American West," *Pacific Historical Review* 55, no. 4 (1986): 577-578.

produce pig-iron in present-day Iron County, Utah as directed by Brigham Young) but market forces as well (Columbia Steel's efforts to use coal and iron ore from Utah mines at the Ironton plant in Provo, Utah) in order to build self-sufficiency from federal and Eastern industrial control.

Other historians have rejected Nash's arguments by suggesting that while historians can recognize federal government influence, they must also more fully study how local forces actively directed the West's growth, development, and current status. Paul Rhode, for example, objects to Nash's thesis because it does not do enough to account for local economic development. Rhode argues that internal dynamics dictated the results of Western development from 1900 to 1940 rather than federal dollars during the Second World War.[23] Rhode also does not consider prewar California a "backward" region, as Nash described it, but a dynamic and progressive state that benefitted from federal dollars.[24] He also argues that that the federal investment caused a boom period that proved unbalanced and uneven in application after the Second World War, suggesting that federal dollars did not change the entire state, but only limited parts.[25]

Some scholars argue that historians have focused too much on federal and Eastern businesses and ignored historically significant industrial development in the West. David Igler suggests that business interests in the American West

[23] Paul Rhode, "The Nash Thesis Revisited: An Economic Historian's View," *Pacific Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (1993): 363-364.
[24] Ibid., 364.
[25] Ibid., 364.

fostered industry for many decades before the Second World War.[26] Historians, specifically Nash, have ignored these decades of development, according to Igler, because they did not recognize the uniquely Western traits of industry. Igler suggests four representative traits of industry in the West. First, industrialists used private capital to start their industry. Second, industrialists used significant industrial entrepreneurship strategies that included vertical mergers, production chains, and subsidiaries. Third, industrialists operated their businesses in urban contexts with urban business networks. Fourth, industrialists engineered the natural landscape and labor forces to reinforce one another for greater profit.[27] While Igler's traits specifically address industry of the 19th century, it is useful for historians of Western industry in the 20th century as well.

Utah historian Thomas G. Alexander has synthesized both DeVoto and Nash to argue that Utah economics suffered from both an 'old colonial empire' and a 'new colonial empire' that essentially forced Utah's residents to trade one colonial master, Wall Street, for another, Washington D.C.[28] While Alexander agrees with Nash's view of the transformation of economics in the Intermountain West, he disagrees with both Nash and Rhode to argue that transformation in Utah began in 1933.[29] Alexander argues this earlier date because it is the transition point between two economic systems in Utah. The first lasted from the late 19th century to the

[26] David Igler, "The Industrial Far West: Region and Nation in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Pacific Historical Review* 69, no. 2 (May, 2000): 159.
[27] Ibid., 166-167.
[28] Thomas G. Alexander, "Transformation of Utah: From a Colony of Wall Street to a Colony of Washington," *The Thetean* 25 (1996): 1.
[29] Ibid., 2.

Great Depression that, though dominated by Wall Street and inconsistent in success, worked relatively well for nearly fifty years.[30]

DeVoto and Webb blamed plundering of eastern colonialists and the demise of the western frontier for the West's distress, but Alexander places the blame firmly on the collapse of the 'old colonial empire'. The 'new colonial empire', according to Alexander, came from investments and interventions brought by federal agencies at the direction of people in Washington D.C starting in 1933. Alexander argues that these federal construction projects, loans, and direct interventions forever changed Utah. Unlike Nash who argues World War II as the overthrow of colonialism, Alexander perceives it as the second step, and crucial linchpin, of the 'new colonial empire.' For the purposes of this thesis, Alexander's arguments hold mostly true. While the DPC did not start Geneva until nine years after his 1933 transition point, Geneva most definitely came from federal intervention. The problem, however, lies in the fact that the Federal government sold the property to a private corporation – one that clearly fits Alexander's description of the 'old colonial empire' of Wall Street. Other federal facilities in Utah, particularly Hill Air Force Base, remain in federal hands, but the Geneva plant moved back to Wall Street. While the fortunes of most of Utah "rose and fell with Washington and the military," employees of Geneva were bound to an Eastern Corporation that they felt, in the end, betrayed them.[31] Though this thesis does not argue that Utah was a colony, it is important to analyze and trace the lines of power from the Geneva plant in Orem to Washington D.C., Pittsburgh, and Salt Lake City.

[30] Ibid., 6.
[31] Ibid., 20.

"New" Western historians argue that federal projects, such as the construction of the Geneva plant, represent a continuation of the conquest or domination of the West, either by federal forces or by regional/national business interests.[32] "New" Western historians, wanted to move the discussion of Western history away from the mythological place and frontier *process* theses to a more grounded *place* thesis that did not ignore under-represented groups or the federal influence on the West. Where Turner and DeVoto may have primarily addressed Anglo-American settlement, expansion, and economics, "New" Western historians explained the West of Native Americans, other minority groups, and women. The fundamental terms of discussion in "New" Western historiography reflect these changes: Patricia Limerick describes the "conquest" of the West in terms of violence, control, and domination. Contemporaries of Turner might have advocated Turner's frontier thesis using the term conquest, but not in the sense that Limerick uses it. Turner's frontier thesis argues for the conquest of savages by the Europeans who in turn, through this conquest, become American.

While this thesis does argue that federal officials needed to collaborate with executives from a national corporation to succeed in building and operating the Geneva plant, it strongly suggests that regional and local dynamics are a third factor crucial to our understanding of the Geneva plant and the West. Previous efforts by local and regional enterprise deserve more credit for the opportunity and impetus for the construction of the Geneva plant. Nash argued implicitly and explicitly that

[32] See Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York, 1987) and Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York, 1985). Cited in Igler, "The Industrial Far West," 161.

the West had to catch up with the rest of the nation during the Second World War and that it was nearly a *tabula rasa*, with no significant industry and little economic development.[33] As this thesis shows, however, federal officials could not have made their choice to build in Utah if previous local and regional private entities had not made significant progress in steel making using Utah resources. Mormon pioneers first explored the iron-ore and coal in Utah for economic purposes and attempted to use them to achieve industrial independence from the East. In 1917, the Utah Steel Company built a steel plant near Midvale, Utah that failed just four years later in 1921.[34] A regional company, Columbia Steel Company based in California (purchased by the national U.S. Steel Corporation in 1930), built an iron plant at Ironton, Utah in 1920. This plant developed essential techniques for using Utah coal in the iron making process. Without this foundational work, federal employees may have looked elsewhere in the West.

The human and environmental contexts of the Geneva plant help historians frame the connection between federal, regional, and local. The resources developed by regional industry, including the coal reserves near Price, the iron reserves near Cedar City, and the water in Provo River and Utah Lake, influenced the federal decision to build in Utah. In addition, the human environmental landscape of railroads, dams, mines, and cities help us understand that the federal government and local powers considered the local infrastructure sufficient to warrant significant investment. Studying the historical context helps historians ascribe the existence of the Geneva plant to more than federal involvement or a traditional capitalist

[33] Nash, *The American West Transformed,* v.
[34] Douglas Poll et al., *Utah's History* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1978), 467.

venture. Local industrialists did not operate the Geneva plant as a free standing commercial enterprise for the purposes of profit. Rather, locals and private entities adapted to a federal project that federal employees researched and federal dollars funded. The federal efforts also had to adapt to a project that employed local labor, used local resources, and hired an employee of an Eastern company, Walter Mathesius, to operate the plant and find a way to satisfy the local powers.[35]

[35] "Dr. Walther Mathesius – Father of Geneva Steel," Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122, Box 1, Folder 2. J. Reuben Clark, a member of the First Presidency, a governing body of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, described Mathesius: "You have a very remarkable man in charge of operations at Geneva. It is hard for a man to come among us and understand. He is one of the few that has come among us that has tried to learn and did. We are most delighted to know that he is to remain. We could not have a finer man."

THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND AMERICAN STEEL

The Geneva plant resulted from both local and federal deliberations on steel production in the West during the buildup to the Second World War. The first proposals for an integrated steel plant west of the Mississippi River began with a private citizen rather than a federal directive when early in 1941, Henry J. Kaiser, an industrialist based in California, proposed an integrated steel company on the Pacific Coast. He suggested that the steel company would address the shortage of steel in the region.[36] Kaiser had already received a $9.25 million government loan to build a magnesium reduction plant worth nearly $12 million, near San Francisco.[37] His integrated steel mill plan had three parts: a pig iron plant at Mount Pleasant, Utah, a steel mill near Bonneville Dam using hydroelectric power to mill scrap steel, and a steel mill in southern California that would use the pig iron produced in Mount Pleasant.[38] Kaiser wanted to build the steel production facilities using federal government loans rather than private capital and operate the plant using his own corporation. His choice to use a loan for his already operating magnesium plant and a new steel company reinforces the concept of interaction between private and federal power in the West. Kaiser may have had the money to

[36] "Proposes Building Coast Steel Plant," *New York Times*, 23 Apr 1941, 16.
[37] Ibid., 16.
[38] "Steel Mill Proposed at Mt. Pleasant," *Deseret News*, 22 Apr 1941, 3.

build a steel company, but may have sought federal aid as a way to make his efforts more secure and more profitable.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt exerted the first direct federal powers to build the Geneva plant by tasking the OPM with a study of Kaiser's proposal and steel production issues in the West.[39] The OPM's charter goals were to manage the production of materials and plant facilities in order to maximize their contribution to national defense production.[40] The investigation, planning, and construction of new steel plants were within the scope of this executive order. Soon after the press conference, the OPM sent one of its steel capacity consultants, W. A. Hauck, to the west coast to investigate and develop plans to increase steel deliveries to the West.[41] Staff at the OPM worried that that defense program on the Pacific coast, especially in shipbuilding, would use more steel than Eastern plants could produce or, more importantly, deliver. Gano Dunn, a senior production consultant for the OPM, had previously reported to President Roosevelt that American industry produced sufficient steel for the near future. After learning of Hauck's report, Dunn revised his report and recommended increased steel production and output.[42]

Federal demands and federal dollars mixed with regional business to change the industrial landscape of the West when steel demand increased dramatically due to a substantial federal steel production program. Private enterprises across the country had increased their steel production during the years prior to the Second

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[39] Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Executive Order 8629 on the Office of Production Management and the Office for Emergency Management*, Jan 7, 1941. And *New York Times* "Proposes Building," 16.
[40] Roosevelt, Executive Order 8629.
[41] *Deseret News,* "Steel Mill Proposed," 3.
[42] *New York Times,* "Proposes Building," 16.

World War. Early in 1941 the officials at Columbia Steel Company, a San Francisco based subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation, explained that they planned on expanding their steel production facilities by $5 million.[43] This included Columbia Steel Company's facilities in Utah consisting of iron ore mines, coal mines, and blast furnaces at Ironton that produced pig iron.[44] Columbia Steel's decision came in response to their recognition of increased steel demand due to the national defense program and other steel users.[45] That impetus changed as the year progressed and as the Second World War began because federal demand for steel would skyrocket and become the essential cause for expansion.

In the summer of 1941, Hauck and Dunn returned to Washington, D.C. and submitted their report to the OPM suggesting that the steel industry would need to expand production capacity by nearly one and a half million tons.[46] Hauck and Dunn considered the increase necessary due to the strategic value of steel and the lack of production capability in the West.[47] By June, seven private companies had responded to the federal invitation with plans, all of which asked for the government to provide nearly all the funds for expansion. These companies included Columbia Steel Company, which submitted the largest bid, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation, and the Bethlehem Steel Company. The OPM continued to consider Henry J. Kaiser's suggestion of a new integrated steel mill but none of the other projects included new facilities. Columbia Steel's proposal included an

[43] "Columbia Steel Plans Expansion," *New York Times*, 8 Feb 1941, 21.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] "Coast Steel Plants Offer to Expand," *New York Times*, 20 Jun 1941, 11.
[47] Ibid.

expansion of their Ironton facilities at a cost of over fifty-seven million dollars.[48] This proposal, a response of a private regional Western company to a federal request to increase steel production, eventually became the Geneva plant.

Officials at the OPM chose to expand steel production in the West because of national security issues related to the delivery and use of steel on the Pacific Coast. The officials at the OPM, however, did not prioritize the improvement of Western private enterprise or regional development of Western industry. Some contemporary papers characterized the federal expansion of steel production as a planned effort to put the West on equal terms with the East and make Western industry independent of Eastern steel mills.[49] Federal officials like Hauck, however, viewed the closure of maritime shipping lanes and the Panama Canal as the primary strategic reasons for Western steel production. Other papers realized that if the U.S. government ever closed the Panama Canal, either for safety or due to attack, demand for steel in Western defense programs and in railroad use would overwhelm ground transportation and create a steel transportation bottleneck that would significantly hamper defense operations on the west coast.[50] Walther Mathesius, president of the Columbia-Geneva Steel Company from 1943 to 1946 and the Geneva Steel Company from 1946 to 1951, agreed with Hauck's assessment relating in 1951 that the iron and steel industry in Utah developed further because of the federal concerns of a possible closure of the Panama Canal.[51] This argument

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[48] "Columbia Steel Plans…," *New York Times*, 21.
[49] W.H. Lawrence, "West Coast Gets Steel Expansion," *New York Times*, 2 Oct 1941, 16.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Walther Mathesius, "Mineral Resources for the Iron and Steel Industries of the Intermountain West," presented before the 2nd Annual Community-Industry Conference sponsored by the Cedar City Chamber

strongly suggests that the federal government would have never invested in Western steel production had it not been for the strategic implications of the Panama Canal during the Second World War. The officials at the OPM did not aim to foster regional industry or to bring the American West out of the third world and into the first; they simply wanted to address national defense contingencies and the supply and demand issues that loomed ahead of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Even with the focus on developing Western steel capacity, federal expansion fell unevenly on the country. As 1941 progressed, OPM officials again found expectations of expansion too small and increased the target amount for steel production. The staff at the OPM rushed the existing projects to Federal financing agencies. Hauck estimated the cost of expanding production to ten million tons of steel at one and a quarter billion dollars and that a fifteen million ton program would cost at least two billion dollars.[52] Hauck also estimated that nearly fifty thousand men would be required to build the mills needed for expansion.[53] The plan called for new plants in Los Angeles and Pittsburgh, California and Provo, Utah. Tellingly, of the over thirteen million expansion tonnage planned, Pennsylvania would receive over five million tons, Ohio nearly two million tons, Indiana just more than one million, and New York would receive over half a million tons of production. Thus, the vast majority of steel production expansion would still remain in the East and just over one-third would expand to the West.

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of Commerce and the Branch Agricultural College, Oct 3, 1951.," Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122 Geneva Steel Records, Box 1, Folder 3, 2-3.

[52] "West Coast Gets Steel," *New York Times*, 16.

[53] Ibid.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL FACTORS

When the OPM officials recommended a further expansion of Western steel production in 1941, they relied on infrastructure and development already in place due to efforts of regional Western industries. The federal government chose Utah for a steel plant because local factors made it possible, effective, and beneficial to the national war effort. The region had easy access to the necessary raw materials, a proven record of using those materials for pig iron production, and the railroad lines necessary for reliable and expeditious export of the finished materials to the pacific coast shipyards. Mathesius considered Columbia Steel's development of pig iron from the coal and iron ores of Utah essential to the federal choice of Utah for a steel mill. The efforts of the privately owned, independently operated, and Western-based Columbia Steel Company in 1922 allowed employees at Columbia Steel Company to used Western resources to produce Western products. They were successful, but not without some serious effort and innovation. According to Mathesius, processed Utah coal yielded coke below the standards of Eastern industry.[54] Experimental work done by Columbia Steel staff created an improvement in quality that allowed pig iron production to succeed in Utah.

Mathesius credited the Ironton plant for paving the way for the Geneva plant to use Utah coal and iron ore, but he also considered several other materials used in

[54] Mathesius, **"**Mineral Resources for the Iron and Steel Industries," 6.

steel production essential to the federal choice.[55] These include coal from deposits west of Price, iron ore deposits near Cedar City, limestone and dolomite from quarries in Payson, Utah, foundry sand from southern Utah, fluorspar from a location some forty-five miles northwest of Delta, Utah, and blast furnace runners from vestigial Lake Bonneville sand just a few miles from Geneva. The Geneva plant used clay that did not originate in Utah. According to Mathesius, Utah clays were either too full of impurities or had too much alkaline in them for effective steel production use.[56] Easy access to water also brought a steel plant to Utah and Geneva. Mathesius noted that the public may have overlooked water use in industry, but the operation of a steel plant in Utah made water essential. He believed modern steel plants needed to use water efficiently and in long-term partnerships with private, municipality, state, and federal water entities.[57]

Part of the expansion in the earlier Columbia Steel proposal for fifty-seven million dollars included a thirty-five million dollar plant in Provo, Utah. Columbia Steel originally considered this project an expansion of the Ironton facilities.[58] Utah County representatives gathered in the City and County Building in Provo to make a unified front to put the proposed Columbia Steel Company pig iron plant in Utah County.[59] The representatives at the meeting noted that because Utah County already had a blast furnace in operation at Ironton, increasing pig iron production

[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 8.
[57] Ibid.
[58] "Utah County Launches Drive for Defense Plant," *Deseret News*, 16 May 1941, 12.
[59] Ibid.

would be more effective and cost efficient in Utah Valley.[60] While the committee favored expansion of the Ironton facilities, they did allow that three other locations could be acceptable: an abandoned sugar factory in Lehi, an unspecified location between Springville and Spanish Fork, and Geneva on Utah Lake.[61] John E. booth, mayor of Spanish Fork and chairman of the site committee later detailed the specifics benefits of each location: the Lehi plant had an abundance of water and two main railroad lines; the Geneva resort had lake water, a spring with production of from ten to fifteen cubic feet of water per second, and two railroad lines nearby; the Ironton plant which had more than 600 acres available for development including four railroad lines; and finally the Springville-Mapleton Sugar Company's abandoned factory which had plenty of land, water, and three railroads.[62] The local infrastructure empowered the federal government to make a successful choice because of the location of water, rails, and land.

Local powers in Utah County attempted to both facilitate and benefit from federal use of power. They were not a colony that accepted federal choice and watched powerlessly and they were not capitalists who spent their own capital to build the plant. Various elements of Utah County's communities tried to renovate and prepare the manmade environment for the arrival of a large iron and steel plant. A.V. Watkins, the general counsel for the Provo River Water-Users Association, attempted to secure a priority rating for the Deer Creek Project because additional water and power would be necessary once the project for the Geneva

[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] "Utah County Lists Iron Plant Sites," *Deseret News*, 22 May 1941, 17.

plant began.[63] Others were working to plan the expansion of infrastructure, including streets, sidewalks, buildings, and other improvements, to address the expected growth of construction workers and employees.[64] Business leaders were very excited about the news because they expected the plant to produce an economic and population boom in the valley.[65] Dick Anderson, president of the local Labor Union of North America, noted that his chapter, formed in 1938, went from a few members to nearly 2,000 when newspapers announced Geneva and construction crews broke ground on the plant.[66]

Choices made by federal, regional, and local powers created the vision, design, and construction of an integrated steel plant in Utah Valley. Officials at federal agencies worried that steel production in the West could not satisfy national defense needs, especially if authorities closed the Panama Canal. Management at regional industries used earlier investments in technology and manpower to suggest that an integrated steel mill could succeed while using resources found in Utah. Local businessmen and politicians tried to both support and steer federal decisions by suggesting locations, adapting local infrastructure, and attempting to sway public opinion. The decision to build an integrated steel mill in Utah forced federal, regional, and local entities to engage each other and achieve a unique balance of state directed economy and private innovation that typifies the American West. Private industry had discovered a better way to work with the natural

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[63] "Provo Girds for Giant Iron Plant," *Deseret News*, 18 Oct 1941, 8.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Dave Robinson, "OPM Studies $57,200,00 Utah Steel Plant at Provo," *Deseret News*, 20 Jun 1941.
[66] "Dick Anderson, Oral History Transcript, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies," 10 May 1974, Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS OH 294, 18.

resources of Utah in order to make a profit from Western resources. This allowed the federal government to use Utah as a staging ground for increased steel production to support national defense efforts and later a national war effort. Local citizens groups both accepted and used the federal choice of Utah to further the government's agenda and make a profit of their own. Neither the federal government nor the regional and local powers could have succeeded without the other.

CONSTRUCTION AND WARTIME OPERATION

OF THE GENEVA PLANT

The construction and operation of the Geneva plant continues the example of the balance between federal and private that allowed the West to function and develop as a vital blend between national, regional, and local, federal and private, Western and Eastern. The federal government funded construction and operation of the Geneva plant while a private entity, U.S. Steel, operated the plant. During construction and wartime operation, both the federal government and U.S. Steel could not have succeeded without each other or without prior efforts by local entities.

The OPM staff announced the contract to build the Geneva plant on Nov 26, 1941, less than two weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Jesse Jones explained that the DPC had authorized a ninety million dollar contract with Columbia Steel Company to build the integrated steel mill facilities at Geneva, Utah and that it would produce pig iron, steel ingots, and structural steel.[67] A 1945 report by the Arthur G. McKee & Company engineering firm placed the total cost at 134 million

[67] "Award for Steel Plant," *New York Times*, 26 Nov 1941, 5.

dollars.[68] Mathesius recorded that the production ratings came to 1,150,00 net tons of pig iron, and 1,283,400 net tons of steel ingots – a significant increase for Western steel production and larger than the total steel plant production at Kaiser's Fontana steel plant in California.[69]

Construction of the Geneva plant lasted from November, 1941 to December, 1944 (Figure 2).[70] Columbia Steel, a subsidiary of U.S. Steel since 1930, built the plant for the DPC and operated it without fee or profit.[71] Arthur McKee & Company noted that Geneva became the largest integrated steel plant built in the United States during the war and one of the nation's largest steel plants.[72] At the peak of construction more than 7,000 men worked on the project.[73] Nearly an eighth of what Hauck estimated for all American steel industry construction jobs worked at the Geneva plant.[74] In 1941 and 1942, Columbia Steel built thirty barracks housing one hundred men each.

Columbia Steel employees continued construction on infrastructure needs and accessory plants. Columbia Steel employees started the Geneva Coal Mine, located in Emery County, Utah and production began in October of 1942. They also completed the six and half mile railroad spur to the coal mine in sixty days and used

[68] Arthur G. McKee & Company, "Report on the Iron and Steel Properties of Defense Plant Corporation at Geneva, Utah known as Plancor 301 for Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Volume I," Cleveland, Ohio, October 24, 1945. University of Utah Special Collections, 8.
[69] Mathesius, "Mineral Resources for the Iron and Steel Industries," 2-3.
[70] Arthur McKee & Company, "Report on the Iron and Steel Properties," 3.
[71] Walther Mathesius, "Remarks by Dr. Walther Mathesius, President, Geneva Steel Company before the Payson Chamber of Commerce and other service clubs at Payson, Utah Jan 25, 1951." Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122 Geneva Steel Records, Box 1, Folder 1, 1.
[72] Arthur McKee & Company, "Report on the Iron and Steel Properties," 3.
[73] Arthur McKee & Company, "Report on the Iron and Steel Properties," 4.
[74] *New York Times,* "West Coast Gets Steel," 16.

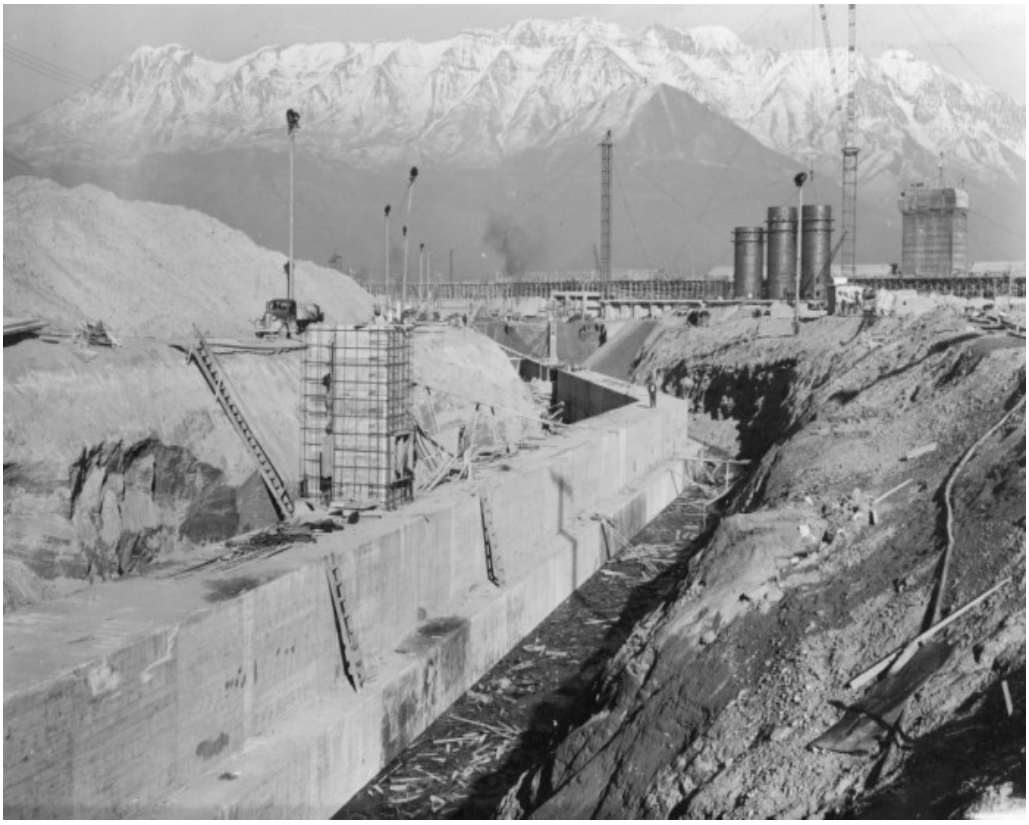

Figure 2: Water Tunnel Under Construction at the Geneva plant, November 1942

movable camps like those used in construction of the Alaska Highway.[75] At the Geneva plant, Columbia Steel officials tried to avoid drawing on agricultural water by using local artesian wells and Deer Creek reservoir water carried by pipeline to the plant property. The water system also included a reservoir covering 310 acres for collection and storage purposes that benefited local agricultural production through greater water access.[76] The Geneva plant required approximately seventy miles of spur track on its grounds.[77] The order of construction and operation in the actual steel mill began with the power plant, coke plant, the first of three blast furnaces, and then the open hearth furnace. Some of the earliest products were pig iron and coke by-products which include gas, tar, benzene, naphthalene, and other products.[78]

Steel shortages in early 1942 validated the DPC and Kaiser's efforts to boost steel production at integrated steel mills like Geneva. Shortages of steel ingots shipped to nonintegrated steel mills slowed work and hindered production of vital war products.[79] In February, 1942 some of the media wondered whether there would be enough raw materials to supply all the steel production expansion.[80] Henry Kaiser recognized the problem and called steel the bottleneck of American war production and essential to the war effort.[81] His plant at Fontana, California, however, would use Western resources to create steel products, just like the Geneva plant, and would not increase the demand on existing steel ingot production. He

[75] "Geneva Works Steel Plant Construction…."
[76] "Geneva Works Steel Plant Construction…."
[77] Arthur G. McKee & Company, "Report on the Iron and Steel," 13.
[78] Mathesius, "Mineral Resources for the Iron and Steel Industries," 4.
[79] "Steel Sheet Mills Turn to War Work," *New York Times*, 1 Feb 1942, 21.
[80] Arthur Krock, "Acute Problem for Steel," *New York Times,* 25 Feb 1942, 16.
[81] "Kaiser to Combat Steel Bottleneck," *New York Times*, 26 Sep 1942, 32.

argued that there were millions of tons of ore in the West and that his mills in the West were going to use it.[82] Kaiser did not have to wait long as the Fontana plant began operations on December 30th, 1942. The first integrated steel mill west of the Rockies, Fontana produced 675,000 tons of steel ingots in its open hearth furnaces while its rolling mill could produce 300,000 tons of ship plate annually.[83]

While Kaiser was able to use federal loans to build his mill, federal efforts to build and operate the Geneva plant relied on a national corporation and the president of its subsidiary who had to work with local powers to secure community good will and success. U.S. Steel executives formed a new subsidiary called Geneva Steel Company on August 20, 1943 and signed a contract to manage and operate the Geneva plant for the federal government without profit. The first president of the Geneva Steel Company, Walther Mathesius, arrived in Salt Lake City on October 4, 1943 to begin his duties.[84] Prior to his appointment as President and a director of Geneva Steel Company, Mathesius had taken an active part in planning and building the plant.[85]

Mathesius wanted to make the plant fully operational, and to do that he needed two things: the proper facilities and the proper relationship with the local people.[86] While construction workers were making excellent progress on the facilities, Mathesius accepted the responsibility to influence the local population as

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[82] Ibid.
[83] Lawrence E. Davies, "New Steel Plant Opened by Kaiser," *New York Times*, 31 Dec 1942, 8.
[84] "Geneva Nears Steel Production," *Deseret News*, 4 Oct 1943, 6.
[85] "Biography Brief: Biography of Walther Mathesius, President Geneva Steel Company, U.S. Steel Subsidiary," ca. Nov 11, 1951, Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122, Box 1, Folder 1, 2. And Walther Mathesius letter to Oscar Sillen, January 24, 1946, Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122, Box 1, Folder 3, 1.
[86] *Deseret News*, "Geneva Nears Steel Production," 6.

best he could. Mathesius reflected that Salt Lake City and Utah still had a 'frontier atmosphere' that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints dominated in religious, economic, and business matters.[87] Mathesius described his job of working to secure local favor as a delicate task to convince LDS leadership that industrial development would add to the state's economic prosperity and would be achievable "without threatening their agricultural pursuits or their organization's control over their people."[88] Even Jesse Jones lauded Mathesius and the community for cooperating in a venture that changed the state's entire economy.[89] Local entrepreneur and industrialist, Joseph Rosenblatt, regarded Mathesius, with whom he dined often, a capable steel man who knew his business well, knew the needs of an efficient plant, knew how to work with people, and knew how to be a disciplinarian.[90] Rosenblatt said that Mathesius expected respect and got it and by reason of his character he became a leader in the community.[91]

Initially, the local population experienced "widespread apprehension" based on the fear that the introduction of a large industrial enterprise might result in the influx of many workers from outside the state.[92] People feared that these new employees might live at variance with the established way of life described as "peaceful" and as an "honored social and cultural ethic inherited from Utah's

[87] Mathesius to Sillen, 1.
[88] Ibid.
[89] "Steel Plant Contract," 20.
[90] "Joseph Rosenblatt, Oral History Transcripts," 1990. Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS OH 1205, 23.
[91] Ibid.
[92] "Establishment of the Mathesius Music Foundation," *BYU Speeches of the Year*, Nov 8, 1956. Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, J. Reuben Clark Papers, Box 400, Folder 2, 2.

pioneers and cherished by each succeeding generation of Utahns."[93] In addition, some questioned whether Brigham Young University could co-exist with such a large industrial enterprise that might interrupt the "serene culture of a church-endowed institute of higher learning."[94] Mathesius held public relations meetings and speeches to reassure locals that agricultural and industrial interests could mingle successfully and that the Geneva plant need not be feared.

The mix of local and out-of-state workers raised some issues about the inclusiveness of Utah County residents and local attitudes. Most of the local construction workers were men of primarily European heritage, but other out-of-state workers included African American men brought to Utah County specifically to work on Geneva. Some of the men encountered racist attitudes. This included an incident recounted by Dick Anderson where an African American construction worker decried the racist treatment he received even though he was veteran. He showed Anderson a wound received during service in World War II. The man then said to Anderson that "I can cut off my finger and my blood would run down that table just the same as yours. But yet, I can't spend a U.S. dollar in your store up here. Two clerks walked away and left me standing there. Tell me why?"[95] While Anderson suggested that the Union he presided over showed no discrimination to African Americans, he admitted that "it was a little rough for the colored people here, but they came here and they were needed here."[96] Anderson recalled how some Colombia Steel construction managers suggested finding workers among the

[93] Ibid., 2-3.
[94] Ibid., 3.
[95] "Dick Anderson, Oral History Transcript," 18.
[96] Ibid.

Japanese-Americans held at the internment camp near Topaz. Anderson feared that such workers would face retaliatory violence and his union voted unanimously against the idea.[97] These narratives reveal that racial attitudes in 1940s Utah were not much different from those prevalent throughout America. Although the local residents would come to accept most employees of the Geneva plant as integral parts of the cultural fabric and economy of the area, minority employees would struggle with acceptance until and even beyond the time the effects of the Civil Rights movement made their way to Utah.

Unlike many local residents, many business leaders and state politicians feared that operations at the Geneva plant would end after the war and that the local economic boom would go bust. Some of the local powers tried to sway business and public opinion to view the existence of the Geneva plant as a positive thing and rally them to envision a future with an operational postwar Geneva plant. Clayton Jenkins, the secretary of the Provo Chamber of Commerce, wrote in the *Deseret News* that the Geneva plant would drastically alter the nature of Provo after the war.[98] In an exuberant turn, Jenkins wrote that the Geneva plant, even if operated at sixty or eighty percent capacity would solve all the job problems in the county and the entire state.[99] Jenkins efforts to minimize fear focused on the postwar operations of the plant. In comparison, Mathesius began operations at the plant on the strict guidelines that the federal government made the plant for the war effort and that postwar speculation was immaterial to war time operations. Jenkins

[97] Ibid.
[98] Clayton Jenkins, "Steel Plant Determines the Future of Provo," *Deseret News*, 16 Dec 1944, 14.
[99] Ibid.

drummed up support by arguing that the citizens of Utah County had confidence that after the war, Geneva Steel would continue to operate and provide jobs "for all our soldier boys and for others who need them."[100]

Regional business and political interests also feared the closure of the Geneva plant and campaigned for it to remain in operation after the war so that the West could have a larger share of economic independence. According to the *Deseret News*, Utah representatives to a Western regional conference in Los Angeles argued that the Geneva plant had to stay in operation to expand an industry already using Western resources to serve the economic needs of the people in the West.[101] The conference found that the Geneva and Fontana plants could both operate if rail operators based the cost of steel shipments in the West on the production cost at Geneva and Fontana. Kenneth Norris, chairman of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce steel committee, demanded federal government action that would insure postwar operation of both plants.[102] The committee adopted recommendations that encouraged lower priced steel, transfer of the mills to private operation with statements of price policies, that fair value determination of the Geneva plant should also determine the debt burden of the Fontana plant (something championed by Henry Kaiser), and that prices on freight must be matched to Western production costs rather than Eastern production and freight (phantom or real, according to the committee). [103] The Arthur G. McKee & Company report suggested that the general

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[100] Ibid.
[101] "Steel Plant Must Remain," *Deseret News*, 12 May 1945, 12.
[102] "Protest is Filed in Kaiser Rise in Steel Price," *Modesto Bee*, 12 Aug 1948, 4; "Steel Plant Must Remain," *Deseret News*, 12.
[103] "Steel Plant Must Remain," *Deseret News*, 12.

location of Geneva Steel would be excellent for postwar commercial use of Utah's raw materials and that geography protected Utah exceptionally well from military actions.[104] Writers at local papers worried that the perceived Western inferiority to Eastern industrial power would force the West to again "take what manufactured goods the East offered – at prices set by the East."[105] The two best results of the effort, according to Western industry proponents, were the Fontana and Geneva plants."[106] Echoing ideas similar to Mathesius' comments to the Payson Chamber of Commerce, these writers argued that since the eleven western states had half of the nation's coal reserves and tremendous iron-ore reserves, the West also ought to have a large proportion of the nation's steel production.[107]

Fears of postwar closure increased in local business leader's and politician's minds when the War Production Board discontinued the Geneva structural steel unit in early 1944. The War Production Board ordered work on the structural steel unit stopped because of oversupply in structural steel parts.[108] This action encouraged the *Deseret News* to report that the plant threatened to become a national problem.[109] Governor Herbert Maw and the Utah Senators appealed to the WPB, but failed to convince them to restart construction – neither the RFC nor the Defense Plant Board had the power to circumvent the WPB order, only President Roosevelt could rescind such an order.[110] The *Deseret News* reported that the Governor and Senators expressed concern about the survival of Geneva Steel and

[104] Arthur G. McKee & Company, "Report on the Iron and Steel," 9.
[105] Sigrid Arne, "West Industry Hinges on Two Steel Plants," Deseret News, 21 Nov 1945, 2.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] "Geneva President Takes Us to Task," *Deseret News*, 15 March 1944, 4.
[109] "Plant Begins Making Steel," *Deseret News*, 4 Feb 1944, 16.
[110] Ibid.

the steel industry in Utah after the war. Others concerned about the postwar status of Geneva Steel included the Chamber of Commerce in Utah County and other civic leaders. The *Deseret News* reported that city and county officials and leaders of business and the Chamber of Commerce in the Utah County area held a meeting (the *Deseret News* assumed that Geneva representatives were in attendance), "and that at this meeting the committee passed a resolution asking the Deseret News to 'refrain from printing rumor and propaganda adverse to the steel plant.'"[111] The Chamber of Commerce committee argued that the *Deseret News* had tried to put obstacles in the way of the plant that might threaten postwar operations. According to the *Deseret News*, the WPB's order was secret, and that by printing the order, the public reaction and concern might help the WPB to change its mind and renew the work, rather than having the mill "dismantled and shipped away to Russia or someplace else."[112]

Mathesius tried to reassure business and political leaders while defending the wartime role of the plant. Mathesius wrote that Geneva Steel always appreciated cooperation of the public including discussions, publications, and other conversation about the plant and that Geneva Steel insisted on news and facts that "represent the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."[113] Mathesius regretted that publication of the stop order on the structural mill had resulted in decreased employment applications. He also argued that the people of Utah and the West would have to cooperate if they wanted to see Geneva Steel continue to operate after the war. The postwar status of the Geneva facilities caused a stir in

[111] "Geneva President Takes Us to Task," *Deseret News*, 4.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.

politics, economics, and cultural life, and it had not even begun producing steel for more than a few months. While Mathesius refused to speculate officially about the postwar outlook for the Geneva plant, he did suggest that there should be some opportunity for postwar operations.[114] He also pointed out that the full-scale operations would depend on the shifting needs of the war program and the time when essential materials would be furnished. He noted that DPC policies disallowed it from competing in the private market. For war time operations, Mathesius said, U.S. Steel did not design Geneva Steel Corporation to address any economic, employment, social, or political needs of Utah County or even Utah, but solely for the ongoing war effort and national steel production issues.[115]

The possibility of keeping the Geneva plant in operation postwar and the nature of the operations and ownership inspired questions about the fate of the plant and its excess steel capacity after the war ended. Some wondered whether the plant would continue as a federal entity or whether the federal government would sell it to private industry. Jesse Jones confirmed that the RFC would convert all of the federal facilities to civilian production because he considered that the less often the government built plants, the better it would be for the industry when the war ended.[116] Jones also said that he would have preferred to have private industry build the plants, but that they were reluctant to do so. [117] The New York Times estimated that war time production of steel would reach its capacity in late 1944 for a total of approximately one hundred million tons, or twice that of the rest of the

[114] "Geneva Nears Steel Production," *Deseret News*, 6.
[115] Ibid.
[116] John MacCormac, "Fling Away Clocks is Jones's Advice," *New York Times*, 1 Jan 1942, 38.
[117] Ibid.

world combined.[118] Jones did not consider excess steel production a problem for the U.S. economy but he did express concern that demand for steel would not keep up with production and that some cannibalism of steel mills in the United States would be inevitable. [119]

Local discussion of privatization at the Geneva plant took on more urgency as wartime orders began to slow and production stopped. Predictions by some that the Geneva Steel Plant would run out of government orders by the fall of 1945 were given more credence when Walther Mathesius announced a partial shutdown as ordered by the DPC and the WPB. [120] Mathesius explained that victory in Europe had greatly diminished the government's needs for structural shapes.[121] Utah Senator Abe Murdock reacted to the news of the partial closure by arguing that there could be no question but that Geneva Steel would survive as a peacetime industry. "The only question is who will operate it," he said.[122] Murdock put a positive spin on the closures by saying that "No one wants to continue a world war to make it possible to operate Geneva. We want the plant to bring steel to the west to unite with our other raw materials in building peacetime industry and wealth."[123] He continued to suggest that Utah representatives, in cooperation with other states, were working to secure a specific plan with which the Geneva plant would be offered for sale to a private enterprise.[124]

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[118] "Mineral Output Speeded for War," *New York Times*, 10 Feb 1942, 12.
[119] MacCormac, "Fling Away Clocks," 38.
[120] James O. McKinney, "First Mill at Geneva Shuts Down," *Deseret News*, 31 May 1945, 1.
[121] Ibid.
[122] "Plant Future Safe, Says Abe Murdock," *Deseret News,* 31 May 1945, 1.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.

When the federal government closed the Geneva plant in 1946, it officially produced its last wartime steel on Oct. 12, 1945, conversion to civilian production became a substantial question.[125] As a result of reduction in government orders, employment at the Geneva plant dropped significantly from November 1944 to a new low in March of 1946.[126] Only one coke oven and one blast furnace were in stand-by operation in January 1946.[127] Although most employees were dismissed, some maintenance crews remained and a few engineers stayed on.[128] Mathesius estimated that conversion of the structural mill to peacetime operations would take six to eight weeks, if all the materials and equipment were available. He also said that the plate mill conversion would take approximately one year. Mathesius believed that it would take three months to resume full operation although a complete changeover to civilian production (including changes to hot rolled strip and coils) would take approximately a year.[129] The *Deseret News* estimated that changing to peacetime operations would cost $40,000,000.[130] Mathesius expressed concern that the plant would close permanently; he wanted it to continue operations. He did not, however, expect to continue as president.[131] He wrote that he had been grateful to make a sizeable contribution to the war production effort

[125] Mathesius to Sillen, p 2.
[126] "Two Unions Win Right to Intervene," *Deseret News*, 13 March 1946.
[127] Mathesius to Sillen, 2.
[128] "Louis Ringger, Oral History Transcript, Geneva Steel Historical Archives," Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS OH 1208, 26 July 1990, 13.
[129] "Two Unions Win," *Deseret News*.
[130] McKinney, "First Mill at Geneva," 1.
[131] Mathesius to Sillen, 2.

and that the company did not regret that "the earlier than anticipated collapse of Japan shortened the steel production program at Geneva."[132]

[132] Ibid.

PRIVATIZATION OF THE GENEVA PLANT

A strict interpretation of historical arguments about federal involvement might suggest that the federal government would have continued to operate the Geneva plant after World War II for national projects, national profit, and national pride. It also would suggest that rather than retreat from influence, the federal government would have seized the opportunity to control more of the economic destiny of Utah. The actual result, however, suggests that the federal government did not want to dominate the West, but simply wanted to address national defense needs of steel supply in the West and then take the opportunity to divest itself of no longer needed facilities. This change to private hands, especially since the plant ended up in an Eastern corporation, more closely aligns with DeVoto's thoughts about Eastern influence than federal theories. To complicate matters, however, when officials at the OPM chose Utah Valley for a steel plant, they depended on regional and local resources to make the realization of the plant possible. That the federal government involved itself in the American West is without question. Nash, White, and other authors do not argue that regional and local powers were non-existent; however, they spend too little time recognizing what development already existed in the West and how vital it was to any Federal involvement. For the plant at Geneva, direct federal involvement ended in 1946 even though in later decades executives would seek federal involvement to protect the plant from foreign

competition. Regional and local powers modified the indelible imprint of federal action in the American West through efforts that, even after federal involvement ended, continued to shape the West according to pre-existing regional and local values.

The DPC offered the Geneva plant for auction and expected bids by April 1, 1946.[133] If the plant had not sold at that time, the responsibilities of U.S. Steel would have ended July 12, 1946.[134] The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* described the Geneva steel mill "the No. 1 problem child of surplus property disposal."[135] Three companies, Kaiser Steel, U.S. Steel, and Colorado Fuel and Iron, were the first to express legitimate interest in purchasing the plant from the DPC.[136] Henry Kaiser announced a bid on the Geneva steel plant and his idea to use it as a cornerstone for a "vast western steel empire."[137] According to the *Deseret News*, Kaiser pictured the Geneva plant as part of a larger steel empire in the American West.[138] He also proposed spending seven million dollars to modify the existing plant so that it could roll hot strip – a semifinished steel product.[139] U.S. Steel Corporation and Colorado Fuel and Iron had informed the DPC of their interest and plan to submit proposals for sale or lease terms. Although U.S. Steel had offered to purchase the plant in the summer of 1945 and had bowed out due to political attacks, Mathesius reported that those who had opposed the purchase had either been "removed from their positions or

[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] George Zielke "U.S. Steel Seeks Utah War Plant," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 1 May 1946.
[136] "Plant Future Safe," *Deseret News*, 1.
[137] "Kaiser Bids for Geneva Steel Plant," *Deseret News*, 16 Jul 1945, 1.
[138] Ibid.
[139] "Kaiser Bids for Geneva," *Deseret News*, 1.

withdrawn their statements."[140] The memorandum offering the plant for sale was distributed as widely as possible so that, as John O'Brien, Brigadier General of the U.S. Army and Director of the Office of Real Property Disposal explained, such an important plant, with effects on the economy of the nation and the West, would be adequately handled.[141]

On May 1, 1946, one month after the April deadline, the War Assets Corporation opened the sealed bids for the Geneva steel plant.[142] The bid prices ranged from $38.75 million to over $222 million and included bids from seven entities including Riley Steel Company of Los Angeles, United States Steel Corporation in behalf of the Geneva Steel Company, and some other apparently fictitious companies.[143] U.S. Steel offered to pay $40 million for the plant and $7.5 million for the inventory in addition to promising at least $42 million in upgrades to production facilities.[144] U.S. Steel's offer came in significantly under the original plant value of around $191 million.[145] The Kaiser Company, Inc., of Oakland, California, who had expressed interest in the Geneva facilities, did not participate in the bidding process. The *New York Times* reported that instead of making an offer, Kaiser demanded that the debt on the Fontana plant, built with federal loan money, be adjusted to the price arranged for the Geneva plant.[146] Arthur G. McKee &

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[140] Mathesius to Sillen, 3.
[141] "War-Plants Disposal: Acceptance of Bid of United States Steel Corp. for Geneva Steel Plant," Surplus Property Committee of the Committee of Military Affairs, May 24, 1946. Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections. 1
[142] "War-Plants Disposal," 1. and "Bids Vary Widely for Geneva Steel," *New York Times*, 2 May 1946, 44.
[143] "War-Plants Disposal", 3. and "Bids Vary Widely," *New York Times*, 44.
[144] Zielke, "U.S. Steel Seeks" and "War-Plants Disposal," 5.
[145] "War-Plants Disposal", 1. and "War Assets Body Approves Sale of Geneva, Utah, Plant to U.S. Steel," *New York Times*, 24 May 1946, 26.
[146] "Bids Vary Widely," *New York Times*, 44.

Company reported nearly identical information on the Geneva plant and the Fontana plant, and this lends some credence to Kaiser's argument.[147] In this case, a private enterprise tried to argue with the federal government to secure similar benefits as another private enterprise and the federal government denied the request.

The War Assets Body approved the sale of the Geneva steel mill to the United States Steel Corporation later on May 23, 1946. The War Assets Body chose U.S. Steel over the other bidders because it reduced government liability for operations and financing, allowed for the greatest potential of continuing use, and removed the government from competing with private industry.[148] In fact, WAB officials thought the U.S. Steel bid would encourage postwar employment opportunities, foster private investment in the West, and assure a secure supply of steel for consumers.[149] They rejected the other bids because they specifically asked for further federal supervision, dollars, or involvement. In the case of the Geneva steel plant, the federal intervention in the West lasted only as long the war. Utah public opinion supported the sale greatly.[150] Mathesius recorded that

> Thus, the Utah people, originally skeptical toward this strange enterprise which the war had planted in their peaceful countryside, are interested today in the future of steel production at Geneva and they are anxiously awaiting the April 1st date in the hope that a sale or lease of these facilities will be consummated by the government and that a private concern will take over, capable of doing a good job here.[151]

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[147] Arthur G. McKee & Company, "Report on the Iron and Steel," 1.
[148] "War-Plants Disposal," 8.
[149] Ibid., 3.
[150] "Utah Opinion Favors WAA," *New York Times*, 25 May 1946.
[151] Mathesius to Sillen, 3.

Ironically, the sale so lauded by local businesses and politicians kept the plant out of local control and placed it into the hands of a national corporation based in the East. Mathesius had built a relationship with the people of Utah and helped them to invest emotionally, culturally, and economically in the plant, but he could not deliver a truly local product. Even management of the plant reflected the movement away from local control. While under the direction of Mathesius, who remained Geneva Steel President until 1951, Geneva Steel Company had its headquarters in the Continental Building in Salt Lake City, Utah (Figure 3). When U.S. Steel merged Columbia Steel and Geneva Steel into Columbia-Geneva Steel on January 1, 1951, the company moved its headquarters to San Francisco, California. Thus, the highest authority at the Geneva plant reverted to a General Superintendent rather than a Company President. Though local and regional interests celebrated the privatization of the Geneva plant, the consequences of having a national and Eastern owner would be felt during wildcat strikes of the 1950s that necessitated a companywide acculturation program in the 1960s, when U.S. Steel forced the plant to compete with other plants in the larger company structure and international competition, and finally ending with the closure of the Geneva plant against the wishes of the vast majority of local interests.

Figure 3: Continental Bank Building, 1951.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Geneva Steel became a tremendous influence on the Utah economy soon after its postwar sale to United States Steel Corporation. Geneva Steel Company and Columbia Iron Mining Company became the largest single employer in Utah during 1951.[152] Five thousand employees lived in Utah County alone.[153] Local authorities and state powers considered Geneva a central icon of Utah County and the state of Utah. Because of the smaller size and, some would argue, more insulated nature of Utah's population, Geneva Steel became an icon for the cities of Orem and Provo and Utah Valley.

While a symbol of the state and valley, Geneva added much needed diversity to the economy of Utah. Mathesius argued that the entire state benefited when he suggested that Geneva Steel's use of Utah's iron ore, coal, and limestone brought the state much closer to a balanced economy.[154] Some fifteen years later, a future general superintendent of Geneva, George A Jedenoff, expressed concern that Geneva shouldered too much of the economic burden in Utah County and that the

[152] Mathesius, "Remarks by Dr. Walther Mathesius," 5.
[153] Larry R. King, "The Economic Impact and Influence of Geneva Steel on Utah County," First Security Bank of Utah, N.A. Orem, UT, April 1972. Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, ii.
[154] Mathesius, "Remarks by Dr. Walther Mathesius," 5.

valley and state needed more diversification.[155] In 1950 Geneva employed 19.3 percent of the valley's labor force, but by 1971 that percentage had decreased to just under eleven percent.[156] This was not due to a decrease in employment at Geneva, rather, the population and labor force of the valley grew in size compared to Geneva.

Beginning with construction of the Geneva plant by U.S. Steel, the populations of surrounding communities increased dramatically. Orem, home of the Geneva plant, saw its population rise 186.5 percent from 2,914 to 8,351 during the 1940s. Orem also grew by over ten thousand people in the 1950s as the growth from Geneva continued to influence the city. Pleasant Grove, also very close to Geneva, saw its population increase by nearly sixty-five percent in the 1940s and nearly fifty percent in the 1950s.[157] These figures can be closely attached to the introduction of the Geneva plant because the state as a whole grew by 9.7 percent in 1943 while Utah County grew by 15.7 percent. The years of 1944 – 1946 saw the state lose 6.7 percent of its population while Utah County experienced a net growth of 10.6 percent over the same years.[158]

Operations at the Geneva plant created wages, salaries, and expenditures that radiated into the communities of Utah County. In addition, federal dollars spent by U.S. Steel made an immediate impact in Utah County. A Utah County property value assessment in 1942 shows a value of $43,794,215 while the 1944 valuation is

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[155] "David Bigler, Oral History Transcript, Geneva Steel Historical Archives," Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS OH 1217, Oct 31, 1990, 9.
[156] Glen T. Nelson, *Economic Base Study of Utah County* (BYU Center for Economic Education, August 1971), 42, cited in King, "The Economic Impact and Influence," 34.
[157] "Utah Economic and Business Review," Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Utah 32, no 1 (1972) Cited in King, "The Economic Impact and Influence," 27.
[158] "Statistical Abstract of Utah, 1969," Bureau of Economic and Business Review, University of Utah, Revised Edition, June 1969, 6. Cited by King, "The Economic Impact and Influence," 21.

at $72,113,062.[159] This tremendous rise in property value can only be ascribed to the new Geneva plant. When the plant became private, Mathesius continued to increase the value of Geneva as he led the company to spend $200 million in upgrades.[160] These upgrades ranged from a first-of-its-kind nitrogen plant to improved production facilities.[161] Later during the early 1970s, Geneva wages and salaries directly influenced forty percent of all income, thirty percent of all nonagricultural jobs, and contributed twelve percent of all property taxes within Utah County.[162] Even members of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints expressed that the church had a stake in the success of Geneva as there were tithing donations and missionary funds that relied on the wages and salaries of Geneva employees.[163] These economic data clearly show that the Geneva plant fundamentally altered the economics of Utah Valley and that its influence only dimmed during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These economic changes, however, have been carefully addressed by other historians. [164] The lingering cultural changes created by the processes involving the Geneva plant may be less readily apparent and deserve greater attention.

[159] King, "The Economic Impact and Influence," 47.
[160] "Dr. Walther Mathesius," 1.
[161] George A Jedenoff, "Operation Bootstraps – Geneva: A Case Study in Communication," United States Steel Corp, Oct. 3, 1966, , Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122, Box 2, Folder 3, 2.
[162] King, "The Economic Impact and Influence," i.
[163] "David Bigler, Oral History Transcript," 34.
[164] Thomas G. Alexander, "Utah War Industry during World War II: A Human Impact Analysis," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 51 (1983): 73.

CULTURAL CHANGES

The Geneva plant created change in the cultural attitudes of Utah Valley residents because of its unique setting in which local attitudes about the plant, their labor, and its place in Utah Valley adjusted to federal, Eastern, and local influences. Even though ownership of the plant changed only twice, from federal to private and later to another private company, locals perceived that the plant and their economic livers were controlled by federal, Eastern, and local forces in at least five separate iterations: first as a federal project (1941-1945), second as an Eastern corporation project (1945-1963), thirdly as a local plant that happened to be part of an Eastern corporation (1963-1979), fourthly as an ignored part of an Eastern corporation (1979-1986), and fifthly as a local business (1986-2002). Locals also responded to efforts by Geneva plant management and local authorities by changing their relationship to the plant from skeptics to supporters, scorned owners, and finally to a cultural identification with an iconic plant that marred the local landscape and air. Throughout all the cultural adjustments, the leadership of the LDS church consistently expressed interest and support for the plant, its operations, and at various points took significant actions to influence local perception of the plant.[165]

[165] The influence of the LDS Church sets the study of the Geneva plant from other federal projects outside of Utah because there were no other institutions like the LDS Church which operated in its own category (a religious organization – not private, public, or local government) or could compare to its fundamental power, organization, and lasting connection to locals.

Members of the LDS faith initially feared the cultural impact of out-of-state employees and a federal operation and how it might change the moral standards of the valley. Mormons in Utah County and across the state also strongly identified with agriculture and worried about the influence of industry on their identity and economic status. As the first decades of Geneva progressed, they recognized the economic benefits and experienced responsive and outgoing corporate policies; Utah County citizens warmed up to Geneva. In the mid-1960s, through a program built to increase efficiency, Errors Zero, local employees and other neighbors to Geneva more thoroughly integrated the Geneva plant into their community and began to recognize the plant as 'theirs' (almost synonymous with BYU) rather than part of an Eastern corporation.[166] Eventually, locals would come to see Geneva as a primary symbol of Utah County and recognize it as a prominent part of the character and culture. Locals grew and expressed an attachment to the plant beyond the economic facts of the 1970s and 1980s. Even though its economic impact lessened as the county grew in size and economic diversity, locals feared losing Geneva while they complained about the pollution, smell, and appearance of 'their' plant.

Mathesius' change from a skeptical outsider to a welcome insider mirrors the changes to perceptions of the Geneva steel mill over the course of its first decade in Utah. Early in the process of building Geneva, the plant may have seemed foreign and frightening to some local powers. They were concerned with the economic impact and social changes brought by the federally directed plant. As Alexander points out, Utah culture changed during the war years as federal projects increased

[166] "Lt. Governor W. Val Oveson, Oral History Transcript, Geneva Steel Historical Archives," Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS OH 1215, Aug 22, 1990, 17.

social dislocation and Utahn's experienced increased divorce rates and crime rates.[167] Later, however, many of these fears abated due to the influence of jobs, money, and the beneficial economic impact on the valley.

Walther Mathesius thought that although he needed the community's cooperation to succeed at Geneva, the federal government did not design the Geneva plant to address any economic, employment, social, or political needs of Utah County or the state of Utah, but solely to address the ongoing war effort and national steel production issues.[168] While initially ignoring local concerns about agriculture vs. industrial, in his postwar years as Geneva president, Mathesius took every opportunity he could to speak to local communities about his vision for the relationship between Geneva Steel and the local and state economics. Mathesius tried to convince locals that Geneva had created the foundation for a new development in Utah that would keep younger people from leaving the state to seek higher wages and stable employment.[169] He argued that industrial development that supported the local social and cultural standards created jobs, injected payroll money into the community, and paid taxes; it also stimulated agricultural endeavors.[170] The dramatic increase in employment after the war served Mathesius' purposes as he often pointed out that in 1950, there were 5,000 more industrial jobs and 2,000 more agricultural jobs in Utah County than in 1940.[171] According to a later superintendent, nearly 100,000 Utahns came to depend on

[167] Alexander, "Transformation of Utah," 22.
[168] "Geneva Nears Steel Production," 6.
[169] "Factory Site Pledged," *Deseret News*, 17 Jul 1940, and Mathesius, "Remarks by Dr. Walther Mathesius," 5.
[170] Mathesius, "Remarks by Dr. Walther Mathesius," 6.
[171] Ibid.

Geneva Steel for their economic welfare.[172] Mathesius is this thesis' primary source for information about the early connections between the plant and the local population, which may be a weakness, but the argument that Geneva changed Utah valley culture and economics hinges on scale rather than reality. In scale, the author considers Mathesius very accurate due to newspaper and census records that support his arguments.

Beyond Utah Valley culture and economics, Mathesius and Geneva made an impact in personal terms with LDS leadership and state political powers. Mathesius retired from Geneva Steel Company in 1951 and some of the brightest luminaries in Utah political, economic, and religious life attended his farewell banquet at the Alta Club in Salt Lake City.[173] Over a dinner of broiled New York Cut Steak aux champignon and frozen peppermint cake, among other things, people such as David O. Mckay, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, five other LDS apostles, and other leaders such as Ray Olpin and Ernest L Wilkinson mixed and mingled to honor Geneva Steel Company's outgoing president.[174] J. Reuben Clark, a senior apostle of the LDS church, continued his connection with the Mathesius' by maintaining correspondence for many years and benefitting from birthday letters and gifts of musical recordings from the Mathesius'.[175] Even in1958, seven years

[172] George A Jedenoff, "The Blessing of Uncertainty," Commencement Convocation Address, College of Physical and Engineering Sciences, Brigham Young University, 26 May 1967, 7.
[173] "Program Honoring Dr. Walther Mathesius on His Retirement," Alta Club, Salt Lake City, Utah, 27 Nov 1951.
[174] "Program Honoring Dr. Walther Mathesius."
[175] J. Reuben Clark to Dr. and Mrs. Mathesius, Sep 2, 1957, Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122, Box 1, Folder 3.

after they moved back to Geneva, Illinois, the Mathesius' managed to attend Clark's 80th birthday in Grantsville, Utah.[176]

Mathesius' legacy of involvement with the LDS church lasted the entire life of the Geneva plant. Officials with U.S. Steel in Utah considered the involvement of the LDS Church and First Presidency, specifically, essential to the success of Geneva, and recognized that they gave the plant unqualified support.[177] N. Eldon Tanner, member of the First Presidency, spoke at the kickoff of the "Errors Zero" program in 1965 and was "absolutely vital" to the program.[178] In 1985, when U.S. Steel announced their intention to close the plant, public relations officers of U.S. Steel met with the First Presidency immediately after meeting with Governor Norm Bangerter and before meeting with the press, saying that "anything they wanted to know about Geneva, they were told."[179] In 1988, when LDS authorities called Louis Ringger, Assistant to the General Superintendent at the Geneva plant, to serve as a temple worker in the Provo Temple, he recalled Elder Gordon B. Hinckley asking him whether he could leave Geneva "without hurting the plant."[180]

David Bigler's thirty-five year employment at Geneva illustrates an example of Mathesius' suggestion that locals would remain in-state to secure employment, a substantial change to the economics and culture of Utah. Bigler graduated from the University of Utah in 1950 with a degree in Journalism and decided to seek employment in-state because of the opportunities at Geneva Steel. He began with

[176] J. Reuben Clark to Dr. and Mrs. Mathesius, Sep 10, 1958, Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122, Box 1, Folder 3.
[177] "David Bigler, Oral History Transcript," 21.
[178] "U.S. Steel Calls Employees Meet," *Deseret News*, 21 Feb 1966, and "David Bigler, Oral History Transcript," 21.
[179] "David Bigler, Oral History Transcript," 21.
[180] "Louis Ringger, Oral History Transcript," 46.

Geneva Steel Company and wrote to Loren Westhaver, then an executive Vice President. Westhaver offered him a position in marketing with U.S. Steel. At the same time, however, Bigler's father, a dairyman in West Jordan, was pursuing a case against Geneva because the fluoride emissions from the plant had ruined the teeth of his dairy cattle.[181] Bigler recalled meetings where executives described the farmers pursuing legal cases as greedy, but upon recognizing him in the room they mentioned that some probably had honest cases. Bigler's father won his case and received compensation for his losses, but this did not keep his son from eventually achieving the top Public Relations position for U.S. Steel in Salt Lake City.[182] Without the opportunity to work for Geneva, David Bigler may have sought employment out of state, something Mathesius recognized early on during his time in Utah. Bigler argued that Geneva brought a higher standard of living to Utah County and the state of Utah as a whole – putting food on the table and providing education for young people.[183] His family experienced some of the negative effects of Geneva – the fluoride emissions that injured cattle – but seemed to be proud that their son worked for Geneva.[184]

Val Oveson, Lieutenant Governor of Utah, grew up in the shadows of the Geneva plant where his father worked as a rolling mill foreman, and exemplifies the experience of the second generation of Utahns connected to Geneva. Oveson's father, Wilford, originally came to Utah Valley in the 1920s to pursue a bachelor's

[181] "Geneva's 'Operation Good Neighbor': The Farm that Works for You," advertisement, *Deseret News*, 16 Dec 1957.
[182] "David Bigler, Oral History Transcript," 1.
[183] Ibid., 34.
[184] Ibid., 2.

degree from Brigham Young University. After dropping out of BYU and working at the Ironton plant, he began work on Geneva as a swing-shift batch-plant foreman making cement for the construction of the Geneva plant.[185] He later changed his position to begin work at the rolling mill in 1944 when construction finished. Wilford Oveson retired in January 1973 and ended up one of the most senior employees in the Rolling Mill. The thirty years of work allowed his family the security and income to live a good life, according to Val Oveson. He argued that many of the employees at Geneva had small farms or a few acres that they tended while not at Geneva. Oveson thought that these employees, including his father, may have intended Geneva to supplement their income from the farms, but then Geneva became the primary source of income.[186] While Oveson recalled the steady income as valuable, he also remembered being embarrassed that his father worked at the mill rather than in a profession such as Doctor, Lawyer, or Professor at BYU. Val Oveson recalled asking his mother "Where is Dad today?" and finding out that "He is working Saturday to change knives."[187] Those knives were the tools that cut the steel at the rolling mill and, according to Oveson, it was dirty and greasy work. On those days his father would shower at the plant and come home from work clean; something he noted was highly unusual. The irony, however, was that Oveson's first time through the gates of Geneva Steel, in 1984 while campaigning for Lt. Governor, came nearly one year after his father passed away. He toured the

[185] "Lt. Governor W. Val Oveson," 1.
[186] Ibid., 11.
[187] Ibid., 2.

facilities and saw the place his father worked to supervise the rolling mill and broke down emotionally at seeing where his father had spent so much of his life.[188]

Local perception of the Geneva plant went from federal economic boon to a beloved but outdated environmental hazard in a cultural process that synthesized local attitudes and corporate policies. Geneva experienced the pinnacle of public sentiment during the war years and in the 1950s. But the next five decades saw forces of management, international competition, and environmental awareness erode fiscal and filial loyalty towards the Geneva plant and its eventual demise as a functioning steel mill. The primary cause for the end of operations at the Geneva plant, however, came from the transportation and market issues associated with is placement in Utah.

[188] Ibid., 2.

DECLINE IN SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS

From the beginnings of the Geneva plant, federal employees and others associated with the decision to build in Utah noted that successful operation of the plant depended on competitive transportation costs and increasing market demand. While the raw materials for an integrated steel mill were more centralized than any other integrated steel mill, the distance to decisive markets was greater than any other integrated steel mill. Located nearly a thousand miles or more from either the Pacific or Atlantic coast, Geneva executives understood that their products had to travel on railroad lines that cost more than water transportation near plants on the Great Lakes or Pacific Coast. Without a competitive price on shipping, Geneva products would cost more to consumers than other national or international products.

Operations at the Geneva plant during the Second World War were unaffected by shipping rate issues, but privatization made shipping rates a primary factor in operational success. During the Second World War, WPB officials did not allow shipping costs to limit the operations at the Geneva plant. Rather, they believed demand for steel in shipbuilding and other wartime efforts outweighed the cost of supply via railroad. Federal officials and U.S. Steel executives operated the plant on a wartime footing and as mentioned above, did not consider postwar operations in either construction or wartime operation. Once U.S. Steel purchased

the plant after the war, it became a private institution subject to market forces of supply and demand and consumers that did not react favorably to overpriced commodities. Base railroad shipping rates did not cause the cost of Geneva steel products to rise to uncompetitive prices. Western railroad executives initially provided favorable shipping rates and these prices never became exorbitant in nature.[189] Starting in 1959, however, shipping rates became a serious competitive issue when international imports arrived via the Pacific Ocean at much lower shipping costs.

While WPB officials did not consider shipping rates a decisive factor, federal planners appreciated the relatively equidistant location of the Geneva plant from major shipbuilding centers in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Portland.[190] They rightly considered that they should locate the war plant in the best place to serve war demand, and that was in a central location like Utah. This focus on war demand, however, did not account for peacetime demand nor the fact that future Geneva plant operators would have to access these distant steel markets via railroad rather than less expensive water transportation. Prior to 1933, according to Alexander, industries in Utah performed the primary processing on Utah's coal and iron ore resources only to ship it East for eastern corporations to finish and ship back as batteries, motors, and coins.[191] Because of this outsourcing of product finishing, U.S. Steel executives did not consider Utah a major steel market, although industries later relocated near Geneva as a natural result of having cheap, local access to steel.

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[189] Nash, *World War II and the West*, 130, 136.
[190] Alexander, "Transformation of Utah," 15.
[191] Ibid., 4.

One of these companies, EIMCO, owned and operated by Joseph Rosenblatt, used Geneva as their primary source of steel and would have been less competitive had they not had a local steel producer like Geneva.[192] Regardless of local benefits, U.S. Steel executives did not consider any Geneva products fit for consumption in the Eastern half of the United States. The Geneva plant production belonged to the Western United States almost exclusively, and thus had to compete on the Pacific Coast with domestic and international steel producers who had less expensive and closer access to steel markets.

The first element of erosion in competition and popularity came with Geneva Steel Company's change in focus from more efficient and effective technology to increased corporate control of labor and production standards. While Geneva had some of the best technology and manufacturing processes, including the first strip mill in the world with speed regulators and automatic thickness control (something German steel engineers wanted to emulate in the early 1950s), U.S. Steel executives chose to focus on labor efficiency.[193] The best example of this change of focus occurred during the 1960s and the administration of General Superintendent George A. Jedenoff. Geneva Steel management began a communications campaign in 1966 called "Errors Zero" that built on an idea used at the Defense Department to reduce production errors.[194] Jedenoff designed the plan to increase labor loyalty and operations efficiency by helping workers see the Geneva plant as 'local' plant

[192] "Joseph Rosenblatt, Oral History Transcript," 25.
[193] "Louis Ringger, Oral History Transcript," 13-16. Ringger was responsible for many new industry standards at the Geneva plant during the 1940s and early 1950s, but U.S. Steel was unwilling to invest the capital to continue these innovations.
[194] Don C. Woodward, "Geneva Vows to Win Survival Fight," *Deseret News*, 8 Mar 1966, B1.

rather than an Eastern corporate plant, while at the same time decreasing the number of wildcat strikes and slowdowns while reducing the number of employees.[195] Jedenoff believed that the numbers of wildcat strikes at Geneva were too high at nearly 6.6 per year, a record for any U.S. Steel plant, and that Geneva's reputation for strikes and slowdowns hurt business.[196] Jedenoff also designed the communications plan in response to lower profits caused by increased domestic and international competition, particularly from Japan. According to David Bigler, the lack of leadership during the post-Mathesius era led to aggressive and negative union leadership that was influenced inordinately by national interests.[197] Bigler argued that Jedenoff brought corporate and union interests back together and into greater cooperation.

While other plants responded with modernization efforts, Kaiser invested $119 million in renovations and Bethlehem put new San Francisco finishing facilities on the fast track, Geneva Steel decided to pursue stricter control of production and labor.[198] Jedenoff thought that Errors Zero would increase labor's performance to a superior level which would be able to counter the distance to market advantage held by domestic steel producers and Japanese steel mills.[199] The greater efficiency reached by employees at Geneva may have alleviated some short-term problems, but did not address the basic issues of cost, shipping costs, and

[195] Jedenoff, "Operation Bootstraps," 7.
[196] "David Bigler, Oral History Transcript", 3-4, and Jedenoff, "Operation Bootstraps," 7.
[197] "David Bigler, Oral History Transcript," 4-5.
[198] "Geneva's Big Challenge," *Deseret News,* 8 Mar 1966, and Jedenoff, "Operation Bootstraps," 7.
[199] Don C. Woodward, "Errors Out at Geneva," *Deseret News*, 11 Jul 1966, B1.

access to markets. These issues would continue to plague U.S. Steel's operations at the Geneva plant for two more decades.

The second element causing Geneva to lose primacy in Utah County was the result of international competition in the steel market and the decreased competitiveness of Geneva during the 1970s and 1980s. According to Jedenoff, the U.S. steel industry lost over 70,000 jobs in just one year due to eleven million tons of foreign imported steel.[200] During the 1960s and 1970s much of these imports came from Japanese and later Korean steel mills. Jedenoff argued that the lower employment costs abroad and lower shipping rates due to deep water ports allowed Japanese steel products to cost thirty to thirty-five dollars less per ton than Geneva steel products.[201] Geneva management also cited a lack of governmental support for the steel industry during the 1970s as another issue that compounded foreign competition. Mathesius had noted this process as early as 1951 and described it thus:

> Malcontents, misfits, idealistic dreamers, free-wheeling economic tinkerers, and politicians intent on their purpose with slight regard for the true facts hold the industry up to scorn as a greedy monster, deviously striving to enrich itself at the expense of the country's welfare, the prototype of all that a large section of our uniformed public still believes to be bad in all 'big business', a horrible product of the 'free enterprise' system, which must be chained and restricted and taxed, lest it wreck the country's economy.[202]

Mathesius, of course, wrote from the perspective of a steel industry manager, but his assessments appear prophetic when considering the public's feelings toward the

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[200] Jedenoff, "The Blessing of Uncertainty," 5.
[201] Jedenoff, "The Blessings of Uncertainty," 5.
[202] Walther Mathesius, "Iron and Steel Production, 1851-1951, and the Coke Industry," Engineering and Construction Division, Koppers Co., Inc. reprinted from *Blast Furnace and Steel Plant*, Nov. 1952, Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122, Box 1, Folder 2, 7.

steel industry during the 1970s and 1980s. Ringger believed that the government interfered with steel in three important ways: the first was when President Harry S. Truman "took over the plants" in the 1950s, the second was the inflationary spiral of the 1970s, and finally the federal government introduced cost of living adjustment regulations.[203]

The third major reason for Geneva's decline came from a greater sense of environmental awareness in federal actions and community standards and the inability of Geneva Steel to match those standards in actual fact and especially in the public mind. From the beginning of operations at the Geneva plant, managers attempted to mollify environmental concerns within the community. At first, it was mainly an issue of working with agricultural interests to assure them that the plant would not harm their crops and that the plant was 'clean' in the sense of orderly, neat, and not dirty. Geneva plant managers recognized that they needed to take certain measures to maintain a high quality of life in the surrounding area. This and Mathesius' prior emphasis on good relations with agriculture interests led to the creation of an experimental agricultural farm in 1953. Scientists employed by Geneva Steel researched, among other things, the effects of fluoride on over one hundred-fifty varieties of crops.[204]

Modern environmental concerns, however, came to the fore in Utah Valley during the early 1980s and challenged Geneva Steel management, especially after its reopening in 1987, to match the growing expectation of clean air, clean water, and less inversion. While early speeches and records of Walther Mathesius give little

[203] "Louis Ringger, Oral History Transcript," 24.
[204] "Experimental Farm Produces Sugar Beets Near Steel Mill," *Deseret News*, 11 Dec 1957.

indication of a specific concern for environmental issues in the modern sense, much of the later literature produced by Geneva Steel emphasizes a historical environmental sensitivity. U.S. Steel recognized the growing concern for the environment in a 1978 publication titled "Geneva and our Environment" in which the corporation attempted to allay fears of the plant being an uncontrolled pollution producer.[205] "A Brief History of Geneva Steel," written in 1990 by Geneva Steel public relations, attempts to emphasize that environmental consciousness was a high priority, more so than federal involvement or labor relations. It lists the improvements made for environmental reasons, including gas cleaning facilities, waste oil recovery facilities, and open hearth precipitators.[206] Bigler suggested that Geneva executives were so advanced with their environmental efforts that they had to explain their expenditures to U.S. Steel executives in Pittsburgh by using the "Mormon Mystery" card: they had to do things a little different in 'Mormon Country'.[207] He went on to suggest that Geneva executives "played that theme over and over."[208] The executives at U.S. Steel, according to Bigler, were just too slow to realize that environmental issues would be significant challenges to the company. He argued that the environment "really clobbered" the company and that the company should have upgraded sooner because cleaner facilities meant more efficient facilities which then meant a more competitive product.[209]

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[205] United States Steel Corp., "Geneva and Our Environment," 1978, Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122 Box 1, Folder 3, 1.
[206] Geneva Steel Company, "A Brief History," 3.
[207] "David Bigler, Oral History Transcript," 25.
[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid., 28.

It the early 1990s public angst about Geneva Steel's air pollution and the infamous Utah inversions made headlines nearly every week in both Utah County papers and state-wide papers. The public blamed Geneva Steel for foul smells, the destruction of Utah Lake, winter inversion, and health issues.[210] Geneva Steel executives, however, argued that they were modernizing the plant and that Utah County is a natural basin for inversion during the winter and that automobile traffic was the most to blame.[211] The divide went so far as to argue whether children's pulmonary illnesses resulted from RSV or particulates emanating from Geneva Steel's smokestacks.[212]

Operations at the Geneva plant ended in 2002 after owners experienced a slow decline in profitability and popularity. U.S. Steel integrated two subsidiaries, Columbia Steel and Geneva Steel, during the 1950s and moved the company headquarters to San Francisco. Local operations then became the responsibility of the General Superintendent rather than the President of the company. The combination of poor management choices, international competition, and environmental concerns combined to end operations at the Geneva Steel plant in both 1986 and 2002. In 1986, as a result of a nationwide strike by steel workers, U.S. Steel executives chose to close the Geneva plant. At that time it needed roughly one billion dollars in modernization to successfully compete with foreign steel

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[210] Brett DelPortso, "Residents Would Rather Have Clean Air than Geneva," *Deseret News*, 10 May 1988.
[211] Brooke Adams, "Geneva Recaps Anti-Pollution Plan Modernization Will Reduce PM10 Emissions by 55 Percent, Officials Say," *Deseret News*, 12 Dec 1989. Lt. Governor Val Oveson expressed his opinion that if there had been more analysis and more red tape, Federal Authorities would have built Geneva in a different valley. "Lt. Governor Val Oveson," 18.
[212] Valerie Schulthies, "Y. Researcher Defends Study Linking Pollution, Lung Disease," *Deseret News*, 17 Oct 1989. And Brook Adams, "Children's Ailments Due To Virus, not PM10, Professor Reiterates," *Deseret News*, 22 Feb 1990.

imports.[213] Rather than spend the money to upgrade an aging and uncompetitive steel mill, U.S. Steel executives chose to close the operations in Utah and move steel production to Pittsburg, California using Korean steel.[214] U.S. Steel officials closed the Geneva plant and ended operations on August 31, 1986. Pundits and Politicians feared that closure of the Geneva plant would further collapse the Utah economy. Lt. Governor Oveson noted that the Kennecott mine had already closed, oil prices were abnormally low, and that the Utah economy needed a rescue. Oveson pointed to officials at Basic Manufacturing & Technologies who purchased the plant and reopened it September 1, 1987 as those rescuers. This company, owned by local attorneys Joseph Cannon and Robert Grow, attempted to use the $44 million purchase price and over $354 million in restoration and upgrades to make the plant a local success story.

These 'local heroes', as the company history described them, attempted to make Geneva last into the next millennia, but could not overcome the same pressures of international competition, upgrade costs, and even more intense environmental pressures (Figure 4).[215] In addition, the plant could not compete with international steel and regional 'mini-mills' that could underprice them in markets that cost too much to reach. After undergoing bankruptcy and shutting down in 2002, backhoes and explosives brought the Geneva plant to the ground in 2005. As it turned out, the economic future of Utah did not rest on the Geneva plant as much as Oveson and others imagined. The state unemployment numbers were at

[213] Michael Morris, "U.S. Steel Prefers Imports to Saving Geneva, Official Says," *Deseret News*, 26 Apr 1986.
[214] Geneva Steel Company, "A Brief History…," 5.
[215] Ibid.

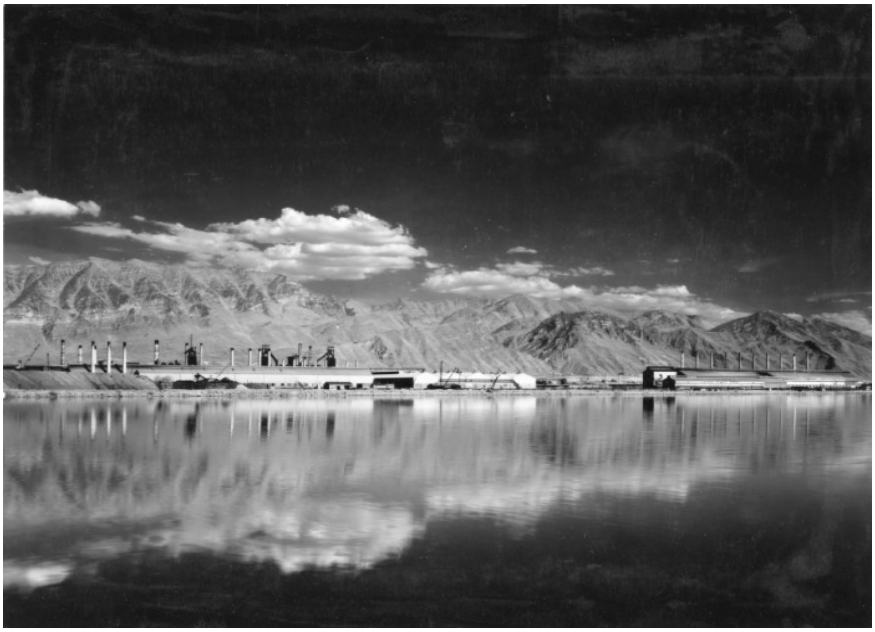

Figure 4: Utah Lake and Geneva plant, circa 1959.

a new decade-low during the year Geneva sat silent.[216] Also, a simple study in 1990 suggested that while neither retail sales nor new construction suffered from the shutdown, the presence of Geneva's air pollution and facilities deterred economic growth in Utah County.[217] It appears that Utah County and Utah simply outgrew the Geneva plant and no longer relied on it as a job creator, job diversifier, and economic weather vane. Orem and Provo, particularly, had become centers for high tech companies (such as Novell, WordPerfect, and Signetics), a diversified service sector, and a population that no longer needed Geneva employment in order to thrive economically.[218] Utah Valley businesses and cities moved away from an economic reliance on Geneva and this suggests that local powers that once had to adapt to the introduction of the federal project now could sustain economic vitality without its continued presence.

[216] Larry Weist, "Unemployment Rate Hits Decade Low, but Pace of Job Creation Also Declines," *Deseret News*, 20 Jan 1987.
[217] Jeffrey R. Bohn, "The Impact of Air Pollution and Geneva Steel on Economic Development in Utah County," Brigham Young University Honors Thesis, 1 Nov 1990.
[218] "High-tech Boom hits Utah County," *Deseret News*, 14 Nov 1985.

CONCLUSION

The construction, operation, and sale of the Geneva steel works constituted a tremendous federal investment in material, manpower, and industry for the county and state of Utah. Of the $60 billion spent by the federal Government in the American West, a significant portion crossed into Utah and changed Utah County from an agricultural appendage of Salt Lake City to a central dynamo of industry along the Wasatch Front.[219] Federal officials at the RFC and DPC recommended expanded steel production in the West in response to national defense requirements and after recognizing that the Panama Canal, a central shipping point for eastern steel, could close during hostilities. They chose Utah as the location for the largest integrated steel mill west of the Mississippi because of its proximity to coal, iron ore, and other raw materials as well as its central location in relation to West Coast ports.

Yet, the effort to construct and operate the Geneva plant forced federal, regional, and local powers to interact in multifaceted ways. Executives at Columbia Steel, a regional company prior to its purchase by U.S. Steel, built on early Mormon efforts to produce pig iron. They used their own funding to discover a more effective technique for using Utah coal the proved significant in suggesting a federally organized integrated steel mill could use local coal. Congressional leaders

[219] Nash, *The Federal Landscape*, 42.

of Utah advocated for the plant and local leaders debated the best locations and how to use the plant to improve economic conditions in Utah County. Construction and operation of the Geneva plant also forced local culture and economics to adapt to a new federal plant and later Eastern corporation plant. The changes in perception followed a trajectory that echoed fears of federal involvement, gratitude for work and economic growth, alienation by an Eastern corporation, and later enthusiasm for 'local heroes' and a local business.

Privatization set the Geneva plant on a course that could not overcome its inherent economic weaknesses. U.S. Steel purchased the plant from the Federal Government and for nearly ten years allowed a local subsidiary to operate the plant. Then in the 1950s, a merger between Geneva Steel and Columbia Steel moved management further away from Utah County. Later efforts to overcome international competition by controlling labor sowed seeds that operators in the 1980s reaped as antiquated and inefficient facilities. Environmental sensitivity also put pressure on management at U.S. Steel and Basic Manufacturing & Technologies and turned the relationship of the Geneva plant and local community inside out – from federal gift to local eyesore.

While the history of the Geneva plant plainly fits into some of our historical categories, the careful analysis in this thesis also gives us new insights into our understanding of the West. The implications for Turner's thesis on the Geneva plant lies with the early history European settlement in Utah. The frontier encompassed Utah at one point and through the processes of the frontier, its citizens overcame its 'savages' and became American. In the West, Turner argued, the frontier created the

ideal American: democratic, self-reliant, and independent. Prior to Geneva, Utah Valley residents primarily relied on agriculture and Turner's ideals of self-reliance and independence.

DeVoto might place this change from agriculture to industry in terms of the Eastern dominance of a colony. The raw resources in Utah would go to the Geneva plant to be changed into commodities that an Eastern company, U.S. Steel, would use for profits without returning investments to the source of profit, Utah. While DeVoto would characterize Utah as a colony, entirely dependent on the East, this thesis points out that local and regional forces had used the resources in Utah for nearly eighty years prior to construction of the Geneva plant. Some of these efforts were more successful than others; Columbia Steel is an example of success. DeVoto, however, would then go on to explain that since Columbia Steel executives accepted a buyout offer from U.S. Steel, they became part of the colonial process. DeVoto would also suggest that the "Errors Zero" program tried to hide the colonial status of Geneva and its employees. He would point out that the program varnished over the fact that the Geneva plant belonged to an Eastern corporation and trying to make employees believe in a Utah Geneva plant that somehow answered to local issues rather than eastern corporate demands was simply delaying the inevitable. The inevitable happened when U.S. Steel closed the plant. Eastern dominance of Utah's steel industry continued until 1986 when Basic Manufacturing & Technology, a local Utah company, purchased the plant.

Nash has had the most to say in this thesis because he argues that federal involvement in the West during the Second World War fundamentally altered the

West's economics, culture, and character. Since the federal government acted as the primary instigator for the Geneva plant, it makes sense to consider Nash's ideas. This thesis agrees that the federal government made significant changes to the West and that this happened in conjunction with private enterprise. Where this thesis disagrees with Nash is on the prewar nature of industry and enterprise. Federal officials would not have chosen Utah for an integrated steel mill if previous industry had not proven that Utah coal could be successfully modified to serve in steel production. While industry in the West did not compare in size or density to Eastern industry, it did make significant progress. Igler argues forcefully that Western industry did not take the same shape as Eastern industry, but proved vital to future industrial growth.

Alexander makes a compelling argument for the transition of Utah from one colonial master to another that synthesizes both Nash and DeVoto. The Geneva plant, however, complicates the issue by changing from federal hands to private hands relatively early in his 'new colonial empire' history. U. S. Steel depended on federal intervention as much as any other large national corporation, but its primacy over the Geneva plant suggests that Geneva was a holdout of the 'old colonial empire' where primary resources were processed, but shipped to other states for refinement. Given that the 'old colonial empire' did not leave Utah with finishing industries or a decisive market for these goods, it makes sense that Geneva sent most of its product to Pittsburg, California for final processing. The possibility that the two empires, Wall Street and Washington, provided a diverse enough economy for Utah to survive the closure of Geneva in the 1980s could suggest an

answer to why Orem did not become a "rust belt" city. Alexander and Nash might agree that when Geneva finally sold to local owners in 1986 that any 'colonization' of Geneva finally came to an end.

New Western historians might consider the story of the Geneva plant as another chapter in the dominance of larger federal projects in the lives of Westerners. At that point in history, there probably would have been little chance for people in Utah County to protest, change, or alter the plans of the federal government. Their best option in response to federal efforts came from adaptation and acceptance rather than resistance. In this way, the Geneva steel plant 'conquered' Utah Valley and changed the direction of the valley for many decades to come.[220] The most heinous consequences came later in the 1980s and 1990s as economic uncertainty and environmental pollution raised the ire of concerned citizens, but in the 1940s the valley probably thought it got quite a catch. Similarly to a hydraulic society, Utah County initially came to depend on the federal project and became subject to the dictates of its management. This lasted until population and economic growth in Utah County and Utah made the Geneva plant employee's wages, salaries, and life style only a small fraction of the sum.

The history of the Geneva plant presents historians with an example of Western history that includes many of the elements argued by prominent historians but suggests that local power is an essential factor in the consideration of the federal and private West. The often contradictory and sometimes complementary

[220] In an interesting turn that might interest Jared Farmer, Herman Mathesius, son of Walter, brought his father's ashes to Mount Timpanogos so that he could spread them in the place his father had had his most happy memories. "David Bigler, Oral History Transcript," 41.

forces of federal involvement and private work forged a unique industrial landscape due to the influence of local powers on the shores of Utah Lake. As Nash argues, neither federal nor private entities would have built the Geneva plant without each other's efforts. Federal dollars of the Defense Plant Corporation, for example, or a private organization to operate it duirng the war, such as the United States Steel Corporation, are examples of such efforts. Igler for example, would note that the employees of the Columbia Steel Company, a private company based in the West, developed the iron ore and coal resources of Utah and the technology to use them properly. But Columbia executives did not have the capital to build an integrated steel mill as large as the Geneva plant. Their efforts, however, made it possible for the federal government to build the Geneva plant in Utah for the federal war program.[221] W.A. Hauck, consultant for the Steel Unit Division of the Office of Production Management, and Jesse Jones, the head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, made essential recommendations and choices that led to the Geneva plant's construction in Utah.[222] The private owners of the Columbia Steel Company and other local industrialists also made recommendations and choices about industry in Utah that enabled the federal investment necessary to use Utah's resources. During the postwar operations, local residents adapted to the Eastern corporation at Geneva presence by first staging wildcat strikes, then by allowing themselves to be co-opted into the "Errors Zero" program. Jedenoff used this

[221] See Walther Mathesius, "Mineral Resources for the Iron and Steel Industries of the Intermountain West, presented before the 2nd Annual Community-Industry Conference sponsored by the Cedar City Chamber of Commerce and the Branch Agricultural College, Oct 3, 1951," Brigham Young University L Tom Perry Special Collections, MSS 3122 Geneva Steel Records, Box 1, Folder 3, 6.
[222] W.H. Lawrence, "West Coast Gets Steel Expansion," *New York Times*, 2 Oct 1941, 16.

program to help employees and locals to see the plant as 'theirs' and adapt an 'us versus the world' mentality that successfully subsumed the Eastern identity of the plant. This identity stuck so well that when U.S. Steel began suggesting that Geneva might close, locals rallied to 'their' plant and strongly disagreed with any closure program. Local residents and businesses enjoyed the change in the colonization or federal presence in Utah when local lawyers bought and operated the Geneva plant in 1987. In reality though, the plant, by then a Utah Valley icon, had more symbolic than economic value and experienced much less agitation when it closed in 2002. The explosive charges and bulldozers that brought down the buildings at Geneva ended a nearly seven-decade long experience of federal intervention, Eastern control, and local adaptation.

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Figure 1: "Geneva Steel Plant P.16," Identifier: 39222001670434.tif, Utah State Historical Society, http://content.lib.utah.edu/u?/USHS_Class,12313.

Figure 2: "Geneva Steel Plant P.13," Identifier: 39222001670400.tif, Utah State Historical Society, http://content.lib.utah.edu/u?/USHS_Class,12310.

Figure 3: "Continental Bank Building P.1," Identifier: 39222001479836, Utah State Historical Society, http://content.lib.utah.edu/u?/USHS_Class,10231.

Figure 4: "Geneva Steel Plant P.15," Identifier: 39222001670426.tif, Utah State Historical Society, http://content.lib.utah.edu/u?/USHS_Class,12312.

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