

Capitalist Utopias: Building Towns in West Texas

One particularly warm early fall afternoon in 1887, Charlie Williams, after a long morning riding range for the Curry Comb, sidled up to a decent-sized mesquite tree looking to grab some shade and take a little break from sun. Wrapping his horse's reins around a branch, he settled back into the tree's gnarled trunk and stretched his legs. Sipping water from his canteen, Charlie gazed over the edge of the caprock at the flatland below and daydreamed. He imagined building a city out there in the scrub. As his eyelids grew heavy, the vision grew clearer: A tidy grid of neat tree-lined streets and perfect little cottages. Anchoring the neighborhoods were stately churches. Children hurried towards modern and important-looking schools and a business folk moved with great purpose along downtown sidewalks. Stretching to the horizon were hundreds of picture-perfect little family farms. Drifting to sleep, Charlie found himself walking the city's streets, pleased by each detail. Striding into the bustling and ornate lobby of the town's grand hotel, he was suddenly surrounded by well-wishers offering hearty huzzahs and handshakes. A chorus of congratulations for the city he had built. Startled awake by his horse, the dream shook loose slowly.¹

Twenty years later, in spring 1906, Charlie Williams bought the Curry Comb (and parts of several other ranches). He paid cash. His total spread of 300,000 acres made him one of the largest landowners in Texas. But Charlie had no interest in ranching. No, his plans were much, much larger, he was not only going to make his dream come true, right

¹ Zach Moore, "Making Dreams Come True," *Pearsons Magazine* October 1909, 522-529.

down to the grand hotel and tree-lined streets, but he was going to turn Garza County, still one of the most isolated places in America, into a modern capitalist utopia. Charlie was going to save America.

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Charlie Williams was never really a cowboy, he only punched cattle for the Curry Comb for a few weeks (and maybe not at all). His name wasn't even Charlie Williams, it was Charles William Post, but everybody called him C.W. Before he was thirty, he had built a successful farm implementation business and owned several patents. But in 1886, he had lost it all (along with his parents' homestead) to a shady banker. Devasted, he had a nervous breakdown and like so many in the Gilded Age, he headed west to start over. He landed in the go-go city of Fort Worth, one of the fastest-growing places in the United States. And from there, he headed to Garza County and began to cowboy (or not).

C.W. Post was born in the frontier town of Springfield, Illinois in October 1854. His father, a serial entrepreneur originally from Vermont, ran a farm implement dealership and was a comfortable member of Springfield's vibrant and active booster class. Abraham Lincoln was his lawyer. The Springfield of the in the mid-19th century, was in the words of historian Richard White, "the Nazareth of the nation"; the epitome of the republican ideal, the model of a Protestant, egalitarian, producerist community.² Populated mostly by

² White, *To the Republic*, 2.

independent businessmen, professionals, and farmers, it was a place where wage labor was still seen a temporary condition as a man worked his way toward independence. It was a place where the home was the most important structure and the best metaphor for the proper organization of society. Springfield was governed by the booster/business class whose aspirations were simple: sustained and constant growth. Places like Springfield were, in the words on historian Daniel Boorstin, the “American businessman’s first natural habitat.”³

By the time Post headed off to college at thirteen, an articulate, brilliant boy with a preternatural penchant for mechanical engineering, he had been thoroughly indoctrinated in the can-do optimism, entrepreneurial spirit and republican values that defined Springfield. It surprised no one when Post dropped out of college at fifteen, anxious to seek his fortune. After a scattering of entrepreneurial adventures, Post found solid success in sales, working for a farm equipment company traveling across the Old Middle West. He was good at it; Post was tireless, smart, good-looking, honest, and an excellent communicator. More importantly, he knew how to pitch his products to the growing class of commercial farmer, pitching his machines as practical solutions to modern agricultural problems. They were an investment in the future, a means to increased production, he told his clients. Mechanically minded and an itinerant tinkerer, Post soon was inventing his own equipment. (He had several patents). He abandoned his career as a traveling salesman to strike out on his own as the producer of Post Capital City cultivators. It was

³ Boorstin, *The Americans*, 116. For more see also Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community*; Wills, *Booster, Hustlers, and Speculators*; Abbott, *How Cities Won the West*; David Hamer, *New Towns in the New World*

such a popular piece of equipment that soon he gathered up several investors, including his parents, and founded the Illinois Agricultural Works, to sell them along with other of his creations including a tongueless cultivator, hay stackers, and plows. The details of how Post lost his company are murky, but suffice to say, by early 1887, he had lost everything.

His health shattered and his business gone, Post, along with a large part of his extended family, moved to Fort Worth, Texas. By summer, Post had established Post and Company, with offices at 610 Main Street, a real estate brokerage house, whose primary investors were members of the Post family along with friends and associates back in Springfield. This was the time in his life that he later claimed to have cowboied for the Curry Comb, if that was the case, Post must have been busier than imaginable; by his own calculations, between July and September 1887, his company had invested \$100,000 in Fort Worth real estate. It planned on spending that much more before the end of the year. Post was excited about Fort Worth, he had chosen the city with great care, in his years on the road selling farm equipment, he could easily recognize the potential of the lands of West Texas. The smart play, he thought, was to invest in the city that would service that expansion and serve as the core to the agricultural periphery of the Texas plains rather than try to set up shop in some frontier town. Fort Worth, in the 1880s, was very much like Springfield thirty years earlier, a former frontier town, expanding at an insane rate, newly tied to national markets, and ready to serve as the logical destination for Texas cattle and agricultural produce. He also had great faith in Fort Worth's potential as a manufacturing center. An investor's best bet "to turn an honest penny in city property." Within months of arrival, Post was boosting Fort Worth with the best of them: "The man

who believes there will be any stop to the western movement until the country is filled up, is too short-sighted to be worthy of comment” he quipped to a local newspaper.⁴

He was an active and important member of Fort Worth’s Chamber of Commerce. The whole family helped out in putting on the first Spring Palace Exhibition, a massive advertisement for West Texas agriculture that drew people by the tens of thousands. They donated hundreds of acres for the site, cousin Willis was the secretary of the group that organized the whole event and C.W. helped organize excursion trains.⁵ Post and Company was the driving force behind establishing the city’s first manufacturing district, anchored by a massive woolen mill that Post had purchased in Missouri and had shipped down brick-by-brick. He also began negotiations to build a paper mill and a new electric plant that would be powered by the Trinity River, which he would divert. He also invested in two different streetcar lines. But his most ambitious project was the development of Sylvania, an upscale and thoroughly modern suburb, serviced by a private streetcar and with its own 22-acre park. (It’s now called Riverside).⁶ In addition to his busy real estate and manufacturing interests, Post juggled several other new companies founded to sell a bunch of his new inventions: stationary made from cotton seed hulls, a “safety” bicycle wheel, sheet music for player pianos, and “scientific” suspenders that could be worn under a shirt. In early 1891, just a few weeks after his streetcar was operational and the first lots in his upscale suburb were going on the market, Post suffered another nervous breakdown that left completely incapacitated. Terrified that C.W. was literally working

⁴ Interview with *Fort Worth Gazette*, 24 September 1887

⁵ *Fort Worth Gazette* 26 February 1889.

⁶ For more on Post’s Fort Worth Years see *Fort Worth Gazette* 15 June, 1888, 26 February, 13 June, 31 December 1889, 8 April, 4, 11 May, 15 September, 8 October, 1890.

himself to death, his wife Ella shipped him off, on a stretcher, to the best health resort in the country, the Battle Creek Sanatorium.⁷

In 1891, Battle Creek was the center of the health fad world, a Babylon of mesmerists, vegetarians, gymnasts, Christian Scientists, water therapists, and any number of half-serious charlatans. At the center of it all was the Kellogg brothers' Battle Creek Sanatorium, world renowned for its miracle cures. Guests at the San followed a strict regimen of physical fitness, quiet reflection, and careful attention to diet. They were forbidden tobacco, meat, alcohol, and caffeine. The only foods available were healthy grains and fresh vegetables. Days were to be spent in mostly in quiet reflection. Both breakfast and bedtime came early. Not surprisingly, most of the San's stressed-out, overworked, and out-of-shape guests felt much better after a few weeks of exercise, quiet, sleep, and a healthy diet.⁸

But not Post. No, the San threatened to killed him. By November, he had lost ninety pounds (from a health 180) and was never hungry. Listless, he spent most days slumped in a wheelchair moping and whining to anyone who would listen about his impending death. He was in such pathetic shape that Kellogg called Ella into his office and recommended that she get her husband's affairs in order and quickly, he was not likely to live through the week.⁹ Desperate, Ella turned to Elizabeth Gregory a local

⁷ Nellie Leitch Major, *C.W. Post: The Hour and the Man* (Washington, D.C.: Press of Judd and Detwiler) 1963, 20-27

⁸ For more on the San see Brian C. Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014); Howard Markel, *The Kelloggs: The Battling Brothers of Battle Creek* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2017. Don't miss T.C. Boyle's hilarious novel, *The Road to Wellville* (New York: Penguin, 1993).

⁹ The San's failure to cure Post is the opening act in the Post-Kellogg feud, one of the greatest in American business history. See Rubin, *American Empress*, 9-11, Major, *C.W. Post*, 28-29.

Christian Scientist “practitioner” and asked her to speak with C.W. about the miraculous power of positive thinking. It was, after all, just the kind of solution that a man like Post would appreciate, using his own mind to cure his broken body. Post took to it instantly. He even moved himself into Gregory’s guest bedroom and was soon tearing through Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health* and other Christian Science tracts. And apparently, everything in Gregory’s fridge. He started eating again and within a few weeks had regained much of his strength and vigor. And immediately got into the health business.¹⁰

He opened a cut-rate San that he called the La Vita. It was cheaper than the Kellogg’s place and guests were allowed to eat meat. (Post loved a good steak.) Dabbling in the guru business, Post soon developed his own theories on health, faith, and spirituality; a mish-mash of Christian Science, neurology, religion, mesmerism, and the supernatural that he subjected upon his guests in daily lectures. After a few months, he had the best of them published in a book he self-published in 1894: *I Am Well!: The Modern Practice of Natural Suggestion as Distinct from Hypnotic or Unnatural Influence*. Interspersed with stories about miraculous cures - a regular occurrence at La Vita apparently – the book was about the Law of Harmony and accessing the Universal Divine Mind.¹¹ It read like this:

It is only when the ignorance of intellect is displaced by the higher intelligence, the psychic sense, Soul, Life, or Divine Mind, whichever term seems best, that the being gains a knowledge of the plane of eternal principles and of man’s connection with his cause. This knowledge unfolds the new man and brings with it, according to law, an endowment of the ponderous power of Life, dismissing the unreal breaking the mesmeric spell,

¹⁰Major, C.W. *Post*, 29-30. See Brian C. Wilson *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living*, 125-128.

¹¹ Major, C.W. *Post*, 28-37; Rubin *American Empress*, 18-19.

and returning man to a natural, normal state, from the world of illusion to the world of eternal realities.¹²

For 150 pages.

La Vita never really caught on. It only managed to keep the doors open thanks to the popularity of Post's "scientific suspenders" which he was making on site. Post spent fewer evenings giving lectures and instead tinkered in the Inn's barn, which he had turned into an R&D lab for recreating the kind of health products available at the San. His first was a coffee alternative that he originally called Postum Food Coffee, made from grains and molasses and was a similar to a drink offered to the guests down the road. Post, who had a tendency to overindulge when drinking coffee, was convinced that the drink lay at the root of his gastrointestinal problems. He was also convinced that he was not alone in that idea.¹³ Thanks largely to a well-conceived marketing campaign: sampling stations (like at Costco), letting grocers sell on consignment, and the most aggressive and largest advertising campaign in the history of the U.S. Postum took off. It was the very first health food, one that would one that would make the blood red, the nerves steady, and cure "coffee neuralgia" (a disease he made up from whole cloth). For three years, Post poured all his profits into advertising, his plan was to create something close to universal demand for Postum; he expected shoppers to enter stores and ask for his product by name. Thirty percent of his advertising budget (easily the largest of any company in the nation) in

¹² Post, *I Am Well!: The Modern Practice of Natural Suggestion as Distinct from Hypnotic or Unnatural Influence*, Battle Creek: La Vita Inn Company, 1894, 4.

¹³ Post always claimed that he got the idea for Postum from his days in West Texas where plains women, far from markets, had created a coffee substitute by grinding up a mixture of baked grains and molasses. His product was also remarkably similar in style and taste to the coffee substitute available at the San. It was the second act in his feud with the Kelloggs.

national magazines, building the Postum brand. The other seventy percent was spent in placing ads in as many of the nation's daily and weekly newspapers as he could. No company to that point had adopted such an aggressive blanketing strategy. It worked. This was a critical time in the food business, as the model for buying groceries was moving away from storekeepers servicing customers from behind a counter to the self-serve, products-on-shelves model of the modern supermarket. The new model demanded new thinking on branding, packaging, and advertising and Post figured it out before anyone else.¹⁴

He also figured out breakfast. Grape Nuts and then Post Toasties followed Postum. Grape Nuts made the blood stronger and the mind clearer, a breakfast cereal that "feeds the nerve cells." "Phosphate of potash," was the key; a magical chemical compound that could cure malaria and appendicitis. (The latter claim led to a particularly nasty false advertising fight with *Colliers*, which Post lost). Post Toasties, more carefully targeted as a breakfast cereal that appealed to children, was a healthy, tasty, and convenient option for busy mothers.¹⁵ The ads for the cereals and Postum were homey, targeted vague fears, and drew upon testimonials (mostly to the health benefits) and featured comfortable and recognizable images of families, mothers, couples, set in the cozy confines of the middle-class kitchen. The campaigns transformed advertising, turning it into a "new form of social power."¹⁶

¹⁴ Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 93-97.

¹⁵The federal government would not begin demanding truth in advertising until the 1930s. Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World*, 91-101; Jordan Weisman, "The Devious Ad Campaign that Convinced America Coffee Was Bad for Kids," *The Atlantic Monthly* 28 December 2013; Post City, 8-10.

¹⁶ Carson, *Cornflake Crusade*, 165.

The manufacturing center Post built was no less a marvel. Like the detail-oriented, obsessive the he was, he was determined to reinvent the factory system. He called it Postumville and it was America's first corporate campus, a clean, modern and technologically-advanced factory. With its manicured grounds and with every building painted the same shade of crisp linen white, it was known as "White City." Covering several acres and with 2500 employees, it was the largest food processing center in the world. Dedicated buildings housed the dozens of specially-designed, massive, and built-to-order ovens, grinders, kneaders, moulders, slicers, carton makers, packer belts, rollers, evaporators, and roasters. Each machine was tended by identically-dressed employees, their uniform, reflecting their position in the company. At the center of campus was a beautiful Elizabethan mansion that stood as the company headquarters (and the in-house advertising unit).¹⁷ The company's delivery trucks were modern and gorgeous with clean advertising on their sides and driven by sharply-dressed and wholesome young men. Considering himself a benevolent employer, Post paid higher than average wages, offered health insurance, and even established a bonus system. A firm believer in the value of home ownership to the workingman, he even made attractive custom homes available at close to cost and even arranged the financing.

Within ten years of selling his first batch of Postum, Post was one of the most famous businessmen in the world. The company cleared \$5.3 million dollars that year, (\$142,000,000 in 2018 dollars). The company (still private) returned 700% dividends. All in two markets – breakfast cereal and coffee substitute - that hadn't existed when Post

¹⁷ *A Trip Through Postumville*, (Battle Creek: Postum Cereal Company, 1920)

arrived in Battle Creek. He enjoyed great status as a marketing genius and one of the most important men in Battle Creek.¹⁸ He spawned several imitators and the town was soon more well-known as the breakfast capital of the world. In 1903, he began a two-year slow withdrawal from the day-to-day operations of his company to devote himself to public life. Although he had an intense interest in reforming the United States Postal Service, rethinking salaries of public officials, and expanding the flexibility and options of smaller currencies, his main interest was America's labor problem.

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The conflict between capital and labor, between owners and workers, was the defining issue of the age. The rise of industrial capitalism had ushered in enormous changes to the political economy, but none larger than the explosion of the wage labor system. Working mostly in the colossal new industrial spaces – the sprawling factories, the mines and timber camps that stretched for miles, the spiderwebs of railroads – wage earners were, if measured by sheer numbers, the dominant class in the United States at the

¹⁸ Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World*, 91-101; Jordan Weisman, "The Devious Ad Campaign that Convinced America Coffee Was Bad for Kids," *The Atlantic Monthly* 28 December 2013; Post City, 8-10. *Nashville Tennessean* 30 June 1901; *A Trip Through Postumville*, (Battle Creek: Postum Cereal Company, 1920); Markel, *The Kelloggs*, 140. When Post died, the company was worth almost twenty million dollars. His daughter Marjorie, a shrewd if not particularly innovative business leader, ran the company and enjoyed sustained and solid growth. She turned the company over to her husband, E.F. Hutton, the Wall Street investment banker. He started a wave of acquisitions – Jell-O, Maxwell House, Birdseye - and changed the name of the company to General Foods. He took the company public in 1922; when *Fortune* magazine began listing its 500 largest companies in 1955, General Foods was number thirty-one. Marjorie was the wealthiest woman in the United States. In the 1980s, General Foods merged with Kraft to become the largest food company in the world.

turn of the century. But, unexpectedly, as wage labor expanded into every aspect of American life, the nation's capital flowed into fewer and fewer hands. Almost every industry arranged itself into some kind of all-powerful collective. There were various names: pools, associations, monopolies, most people just called them "trusts". In one four year period, the great merger wave at the turn of the century, 136 new trusts organized. One of these collectives controlled 70% of the individual market shares in snuff, asphalt, cans, paper, elevators, cigars, film, gypsum, ice, bathroom fixtures, chewing gum, stainless steel, hand tools, plate glass, whiskey, envelopes, novelties, chemicals, leather, paper bags, and many, many others. Independent factories either got swallowed up or went out of business.¹⁹ Trusts colluded to keep profits high and wages low. Labor responded by engaging in its own organizing frenzy. None with more success than the craft-union focused American Federation of Labor. In the first years of the new century, membership increased six-fold from 278,000 to 1.68 million. Labor's great power was in their numbers, the skills of its members, and the willingness to shut down production through strikes or manipulate market demand by calling for nationwide boycotts. These were times when there were 15,000 strikes a year involving a half a million workers.²⁰

One of the first boycott targets of the newly-powerful labor movement was the Postum company. In 1901, a typographical union called for an advertiser boycott of the fiercely anti-labor *Los Angeles Times*. As one of the *Times* biggest national advertisers, the

¹⁹ Lamoreaux, *The Great Merger Movement in American Business*, 1-5.

²⁰ Robertson: *Capital, Labor, and the State*, 107-113; Lewis Lorwin, *The American Federation of Labor*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1933), 59-61, 70-75, 78; Richard W. Gable, "Birth of an Employers' Association," *The Business History Review*, 33.4 (Winter, 1959), 535-545; Jeffrey Haydu, *Citizen Employers*, 136.

horrified Post flatly refused. The union responded by calling for a boycott of Post's products, putting out the call in labor magazines and newspapers across the country. Post, who felt that boycotts were nothing less than a conspiracy to subvert the market, went ballistic. He launched a ten-year, multi-million-dollar campaign to destroy what he called the "labor trust."

Post always claimed that he wasn't against labor unions in principle, but rather certain practices employed by the more aggressive unions. He deplored strikes and boycotts, believing them to be illegal and monopolistic restraints on trade that too often led to horrific and unnecessary violence. Workers were welcome to join unions, he believed, but those organizations should never try to use their collective power to disrupt another man's business. His views were rooted in the business/booster ideal of the independent economic actor and everyone's responsibility to the larger community. Any organizing within class lines (which included the business trusts) violated both the spirit of American individualism and the foundation of American society. He saw workers and owners as equals in a labor market, each hire was a contract between two individuals, the worker selling his or her labor to owners for a certain price, a particular position, and a designated number of hours a week. Owners like Post agreed to pay that wage to deliver the number of hours of week agreed upon, and to provide a safe, comfortable work environment. Workers had an obligation to perform their work efficiently and with great care. For someone like Post, and this sentiment was shared across the class of independent company owners, there was, in the words of Harold Laski "a basic harmony of interest

between capital and labour."²¹ Labor unions, in laying claim to negotiate on behalf of a company's employees effectively negated the rational operation of the labor market, which men like Post saw in individualistic terms. By using collective power to influence change, labor unions had, in his mind, become a monopoly. For the economic system to work, he explained in one of his first public addresses on the subject, employers must keep the right to "discharge incompetent or unsatisfactory employees." Workers had to keep the right to sell their commodity, their labor, as individuals. These two precepts were the foundation of the "natural laws of commerce."²²

Post still clung to the republican ideal that wage labor was a temporary status in the life of a worker. At that stage, he believed that they were "working capitalists": Individuals, intended by God to one day, "rise by his experiences into an ever greater power to master matter and conditions."²³ Organizing into labor unions would subvert that natural tendency and rob the individual worker of his destiny. Employers too, he believed, had an obligation to see their workers as ambitious proto-capitalists building a stake. "Let the employer get into the shoes of the workingman and see things from his standpoint. Then let the workingman borrow the shoes of the boss and see things the way he will see them when he becomes boss."²⁴

²¹ Harold J. Laski, *The American Democracy*, 204-206, quote from 206.

²² Post speech is reprinted in *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Convention of the NAM* 1903, 114-130. Quotes from 115, 116, 117, 123. For coverage of the speech see *The Nashville Tennessean* 15 April 1903. The 1903 annual meeting also featured a declaration of principles introduced by Post that outlined the open shop approach.

²³ Post, "A Step Forward" *The Square Deal* 4, 2. For other good examples of Post's individualism and republicanism informing his business conservatism see in particular "They're After You," *Washington Post* 13 March 1908 and "Mob Coddling by Congressmen," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* 19 July 1910; "Unionism is a Chronic Disease," speech before the NAM, reprinted in *L.A. Times* 30 July 1905.

²⁴ Post quoted in Eaves and Richardson, *Post City* 39.

The solution for Post was the “open shop”, a fully-articulated expression of his individualistic understanding of the labor market. Over a decade’s worth of speeches and newspaper broadsides, Post defined the open shop as the policy that no employee should be forced to join a union in order to work for a company or in an industry. This would, he argued over and over eliminate the “tyranny” of the unions and reinstate the power and responsibility of the individual. In reality, the open shop basically outlawed unions; employers refused to hire union members nor would they recognize trade unions as legitimate representatives of workers’ interest. Open-shop was the most radical of the anti-labor doctrines in an emerging movement of business conservatives. Its primary vehicle was the National Association of Manufacturers.

Post was among a handful of anti-labor zealots who took over the leadership of the NAM in 1903, converting it into the “anarchist” wing of business conservatism. Formed less than a decade earlier, the NAM, to that point, had a been a sleepy organization of harrumphing businessmen who spent their time hand-wringing about tariffs and trade agreements. When the AFL began a concentrated push to organize craft unions in the thousands of independent factories in the small cities of the Old Middle West, the owners of those factories looked to join together to find a way to stop what they saw as the takeover of their business. A recent victory by labor unions in a nationwide coal strike in 1902 in which, the United States government stepped in to mediate the conflict (itself an unprecedented move) led many to believe that they were under siege. Along with other NAM leaders like automaker David Parry, an open-shop zealot from Indianapolis, James W. van Cleave, the president of Buck’s Stoves and Range Company of St. Louis, and

Dayton hardware manufacturer John Kirby, the NAM became the tip of the spear of the anti-labor movement. Post was so excited to begin his new life of saving America from the tyranny of the labor trust that he moved to New York and took over the presidency of the Citizen's Industrial Association of America (CIA), a NAM spin-off tasked with forming local associations.

Post had two jobs as head of the CIA: first, his stated duty to create city-based chapters of employer's associations. These were groups of local booster/businessmen who agreed to band together to keep unions out of their towns. Members signed a pledge to refuse to hire union members or allow their employees to organize. Sometimes these associations were formed at the industry level, stove manufacturers for example formed their own association. As a natural extension of the kinds of businessmen's groups that already enjoyed great popularity in small cities and large towns, the associations spread quickly. Using Battle Creek as his model, Post was explicit in making the open-shop part of a larger booster argument for economic and demographic growth. CIA organizers, who gained a reputation for persuasiveness and aggression, worked on a form of commission and had set territories like the salesmen they basically were. Led by its communication director, up and coming Kansas City newspaperman George Creel, the CIA provided its member associations with an astonishing volume of open-shop propaganda that included a monthly magazine, *The Square Deal*, published out of Post's Battle Creek offices and directed by Post (who usually contributed an article or essay or two in each issue) and a

regularly-updated stream of “progressive-sounding talking points.”²⁵ The group also provided members legal aid, management training, and access to the organization’s network of strikebreakers and spies. By 1909, the CIA represented over 400 local associations.²⁶

But the CIA’s real influence came in the field of public opinion. And this is where Post shined. The man who invented modern advertising put his prodigious talents to work to convince Jane and John Q. American, of the pernicious evil of labor unions and the value of the open shop. Post was the first public figure in modern times to buy ad space in the nation’s newspapers solely to give his opinions on current events. For close to a decade, in addition to the millions he was spending advertising Grape Nuts and Postum, he spent millions more buying up quarter pages in the nation’s dailies and weeklies to excoriate the labor trusts and promote the open shop. His essays appeared in *New York Times* and *Hartford Courant* as well as tiny newspapers like the *Bronson Pilot* or the *Tuscumbia North Alabamian*. In a *nota bene* that closed many of the ads, Post explained to readers that he had personally purchased the space for the essay.²⁷ Not that the newspapers really had any choice but to run the ads, Post made it perfectly clear that

²⁵ Creel, as head of Wilson’s Committee of Public Information during World War I, became one of history’s great propagandists.

²⁶ That open shop advocates saw themselves as patriotic progressives is a major theme of Chad Pearson, *Reform of Repression: Organizing America’s Anti-Union Movement*, 8-14, 65-74. That year the CIA morphed into the National Council for Industrial Defence.”

²⁷ His first overtly anti-union screed “On a Boycott” he sent out to newspapers across the country expecting that they would run the piece gratis. Many did and Post kept careful track of the responses to the piece both good and bad. He had staff contact those papers that refused to run it and tallied their reasons for refusing. After that he just took to paying for the ads. He also made it clear that refusal to run his political opinions would also mean losing the Postum, Grape Nuts, and other accounts.

refusing to publish his treatises meant the loss of the Postum Cereal account.²⁸ Each “essay” ran into the thousands and thousands of words; even the shortest took up a full quarter page. Organized in a similar fashion, the first two-thirds of each essay described the damage that labor unions had inflicted upon the nation – violence, economic disruptions, the devastation that unions or strikes had brought to certain innocent families. Unions, he explained, were the real trusts and labor leaders were petty tyrants who victimized the workers they claimed to represent. He ended most of the ads with an explanation of how it was time for the common folk reclaim the economy and demand the open shop. The essays were pitched at the same customers as his other products, the American middle-class, confused and scared of labor violence and the strange new workings of the American economy. Post actually saw his “campaign for industrial peace” as his philanthropic contribution to the nation; “some men endow colleges,” he once explained, “others build libraries. Both educational. I preferred to devote to newspapers my contributions toward education, warning the people to protect themselves against the greatest, most tyrannical and dangerous trust this country has ever seen.”²⁹

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²⁸ McCaughlin, “The Second Battle of Battle Creek,” 325. For a good sample of the ads see the “Result of a Boycott,” *NYT* 17 January, 1905; “You Are Your Brother’s Keeper,” 11 July 1905, *Harrisburg Telegraph*, and “They’re After You,” *Washington Post* 13 March 1908.

²⁹ C.W. Post, “A Round Up” published across the country in winter 1912. *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* 1 February 1912. Post “philanthropy” was a peculiarly strange form of what Kathleen Davis called “tycoon medievalism.” Kathleen Davis, “Tycoon Medievalism, Corporate Philanthropy, and American Pedagogy,” *American Literary History* 22.4 (Winter 2010), 781; Allen M. Wakstien, “The Origins of the Open-Shop Movement, 1919-1920,” *The Journal of American History*, 51.3 (Dec., 1964), 460. See also Albert K. Steigerwalt, *the National Association of Manufacturers 1896-1914*, University of Michigan Press, 1964, 103-117 for a sympathetic but important account.

Despite the legend that grew up around Post City's founding, Post didn't set out to build a utopia, that would come later. Like a lot of the newly rich in those days, Post thought he should own a ranch. And why not? There were still millions of acres in West Texas for sale at rock-bottom prices, anything more than two days from a railroad was still selling for two or three bucks an acre. It hadn't gone up in price since Post first started thinking about West Texas real estate back in his Fort Worth days. And, he figured, he could always carve it up and sell it off if land values rose. He expected to spend a part of each year on the ranch enjoying "the outdoor life and its health-giving air." He turned to "Uncle Tom" Stevens, a prominent Fort Worth ranch broker to help him find the appropriate property. Keeping the whole thing on the down-low, Post and Stevens arranged to buy the Curry Comb and parts of several other nearby ranches over a few months for a total of almost 190,000 acres covering a huge chunk of Garza County and parts of Lynn. After closing the first big deal, at a celebratory barbecue where the spirits were flowing and mood was high, Post spoke to the future of his property and that's when the utopia stuff started. Whether being boastful or just full of in-the-moment vitality, Post promised a great town, full of beautiful homes with electricity and running water. He spoke of the railroad he would bring and the production of the farms that would form the basis of the economy. Most of the cowboys looking across a prairie full of stubby mesquite trees and millions of prairie dogs, assumed he was full of air. There wasn't a town in the

entire county, not even a crossroads village. There were no roads and no people for forty miles.³⁰

A testament to his vision, work ethic, commitment, and fortune, Post was making a city a reality within the year. He poured millions of dollars into men and materials, hiring an army of builders, drivers, grubbers, masons, mule skinners, and other laborers to build Post City and hauled every board, nail, plumbing fixture, cabinet, seed, windmill, window, countertop, bolster of cloth, and scrap of food from Fort Worth and other cities. Running the whole operation was a company he formed and named the Double U, which was responsible for building, transportation, managing local businesses, and real estate and business sales. Post himself was a regular visitor to the site and micromanaged every detail by mail for the next several years.³¹ It would be difficult to overstate what he was able to accomplish in that first year and all but impossible to comprehend the reality of Post City by 1912, a full-blown plains town with 1400 people where every cute little cottage had a yard and fence and shade and electricity and indoor plumbing. Where large and stately stone buildings anchored a thriving downtown with the best hotel and the largest mercantile establishment in the region. The city had beautiful parks and the only golf course between Dallas and Denver. It had a thriving cotton mill producing luxury

³⁰ Eaves, C.W. Post's Colonizing" 74; *Big Spring Daily Herald* 14 August 1936; Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City, Texas*, 33-37; Post quote from 35.

³¹ There is some speculation about the origins of the name of the company, some of it wrong and some silly. One theory goes that that he named it after the nearby U Lazy S Ranch. Another is that it stood for "double utopia." The most logical explanation is that it's a play on his middle initial. This is not a man, after all, with any hesitation to name things after himself; it's his default. Paxson spends several paragraphs wondering about the name without coming to any concrete conclusions. *Charles William Post*, 277-279.

sheets, four churches, and a high school whose baseball team was regularly thrashing Lubbock High. The railroad, as promised, reached the town in 1910.³²

The early isolation of Garza County allowed Post maximum creative control over his new community, but also meant building his town in a place with no modern transportation access, no water, and no nearby sources for food (except beef and game). Everything one would need to build a town and farming community would have to be produced locally or brought in by wagon train from the nearest railroad in Big Spring – eighty miles away. So, Post first built a road between Big Spring and the townsite, which everybody just called Commissary and ordered twenty-four specially-built wagons from Studebaker. He purchased a quality 72-mule remuda to pull the train and had it shipped down from Missouri. The first wagon train arrived in Commissary in early March 1907, unloaded, and immediately began the four-day trip back to Big Spring. For the next four years, the wagon train's eight-day cycle governed life and time in Post City. Nothing slowed down construction; when informed that his new townsite needed to be moved three miles closer to county center to be eligible to be county seat (Garza wasn't even yet surveyed), he shifted the entire operation in a few days.³³ By April, a great tent city, visible for miles, had grown up at the base of the caprock. Post had every intention of getting farms up and running by that summer and implemented his marketing strategy. To build the type of home and business structures he wanted, he had a quarry established to provide stone. The first two permanent structures were the store that provided the

³² Post spent three years personally negotiating with the head of the Santa Fe railroad, his neighbor in Santa Barbara. Paxson, 275-277.

³³ Texas law that required new county seats to be close to the center of the county, a testament to the flexibility that the uniform landscape and newness of the country provided.

essentials for the workforce and a feed barn for the animals. By June, the city had fifty houses.³⁴

Those homes were the key to Post's utopia. His philosophy wasn't terribly complicated or out there; just the opposite. He, like most Americans, believed the key to the political economy was privately-held property. In communities where large percentages of the population owned property, especially in homes and small businesses, there was greater harmony and opportunity. Citizens were investors in towns with a shared interest in its future and a shared goal in growth. Post made it clear: "a prosperous community is best built by men who own their homes and their business buildings." But for prosperous wasn't just measured in profit or growth, but in having a place in a community. A home was the essential requirement for family stability. It was a sanctuary, a hedge against bad times, a place to live out your last years, a place to pass on to your children. A home made a family a part of a community where they and their neighbors formed special bonds. It was a place where Americans took pride in the beauty of their home and the warmth of their hearth. Creating large populations of home owners and independent businessmen had been the goal of every frontier community for a century. What made Post City utopian wasn't the uniqueness of its guiding philosophy, but the application of it, the scale of it; through his control of the community, Post could create an entire world where every single citizen would own their home and every business would be independently owned. Home ownership, was, he believed, America's best hedge

³⁴ Material on Post City, Fannie Sprague Talbot Papers, Bentley Historical Library. In November 1907, the *Battle Creek Enquirer* (which Post owned) sent a reporter, Fannie Sprague Talbot, to Post City, her coverage which appeared throughout the month and her notes provide the basis for this description. See also Eaves, C.W. "Post's Colonizing" 74-81.

against socialism and tyranny. "Our national need," as he explained his efforts in Texas, "is individualism as contrasted to socialism. Those who are strong enough to do so should aid others to stand on their own resources, to maintain their own homes, and to live their own lives as becomes independent American citizens."³⁵ Only homeowners, Post believed, were legitimately free to participate in society. A home in fee simple removed the "ghost of apprehension" that haunted renters. "A man without a home which he actually owns. . . feels that he is, in a way, only a transient, not really a part of the government, not one of the real solid oak timbers in the great structure, but that he is only one of the chips to be swept out when the owners wish." A homeowner, on the other hand, "is a self-sustaining and self-respecting individual – to my mind the best type of citizen, the most reliable, and helps to form the most prosperous community."

Post City would prove his theory. The Double U tightly controlled the population. Speculators were strictly forbidden, only those willing to "cast their lot with the pioneers and build up a city of homes, a city of contented industry, a city unlike any ever before founded" were welcome. The Double U company interviewed each potential resident, demanded references, and even once approved, kept residents on probation for eight months.³⁶ Rather than traditional booster advertising, Post went subtle, placing stories about his efforts in Texas in national magazines like *Harper's* or *Pearson's* to generate excitement. In one great example, in December 1907, he distributed a national story about the discovery of "silver relics" most likely from the Coronado Expedition in a cave

³⁵ *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* 29 June 1907.

³⁶ Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 36-49, quote from 76.

near Post City. After three paragraphs describing the find and some background, the article extends for another eleven paragraphs on Post City, its government, his housing plans, the general store, the water system, the coming railroad, the climate, and potential for agricultural production.³⁷ Post was seeking the kind of investor who would respond to this more subtle approach. But it was the team at the Double U in Post City who bore the brunt of the demand for information that Post's teaser-trailer campaign had unleashed. Rather than even allowing an informational brochure, Post stuck to the boutique approach, requiring the Double U to respond with a personal written response to every request. To sell off the Post City businesses he placed ads in business-specific magazines and journals explaining the philosophy of the enterprise at Post City and how he planned to unwind his mercantile business in the town in favor of individual business owners: A store for "boots and shoes," one for clothing, another for drugs. He offered a turnkey business, but at a premium, with an initial down payment of upwards of \$10,000 and Post would finance the rest. But, he promised, "growing city and country" and a "good opening to make money on the start and as the country grows."³⁸

Post charged a premium for his home and his farms. And rightfully so, he was building a paradise. He oversaw every detail of construction, right down to interior color schemes and the types of shingles for the homes. Every house was pre-wired for electric, phone, and sewer service. They were smallish cottages; Post had concluded that "workmen" prefer homes with six to eight rooms in the contemporary style. In 1907, that

³⁷ The story ran nationwide. See *Raleigh Times* 24 December 1907 for one example.

³⁸ Quotes from *Hardware Dealers' Magazine* July 1910.

meant row after row of California style bungalows, about the coolest thing going. Each home was unique with its own color scheme and interior details. The homes sold for between \$1500 and \$3000 and on the installment plan. Residents needed a healthy down payment and had four years to pay the note.³⁹ In 1907, the construction gangs of the Double U was completing a house every eleven days, the next year, they had it down to every six. Every home had a lawn, a sidewalk, shade trees, hedges, and flower gardens. Post sponsored an annual contest for the most beautiful yard and some years was even in town to serve as judge. There were small parks scattered about the town and trees lined every street, even the ones leading out of town. He built his own nursery on the edge of town to grow the fast-growing species he had selected for Post City, mostly Ash, Poplar, Locust, and Catalpa. Regular watering and maintenance of the trees was done by the city. The Double U had trouble keeping up with demand for the houses.

The first major building was a massive retail space that measured 160 feet square and housed eight different establishments. Across the street, he built the largest and nicest hotel in West Texas, the Algerita. Post loved a good hotel and he took particular care in its operations, right down to the menu for the restaurant where he sent along detailed instructions for the cooking of beefsteak and ideas for the menu and its wording. Quality came at a price, in this instance \$2.50 night. As the sign Post had ordered hung behind the front desk read "THERE ARE PLENTY OF GOOD BOARDING HOUSES IN TOWN AND PLENTY OF ROOM IN THE MESQUITE. FOURFLUSHERS, KICKERS, AND OTHER

³⁹ Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 53-60, quote from 12.

SUSPICIOUS CHARACTERS FIND BOARD WITH THE SHERIFF. WHEN IN DOUBT, HIT THE MESQUITE.” He also built a theater, a Masonic lodge, the school, and several churches.

The farms were a tougher sale. He had, like everything else, a particular set of ideas in mind about the farms and the farmers. “It is my purpose to keep the farms rather small, in order to induce what is called ‘intensive farming’ under which the farmer really raises more crops and makes more net money by skillfully working his land, to have the number of acres not too many but that he and his family can give farming ample attention.”⁴⁰ He experimented for years on the best type of crop, even allowing tenants for a few years to help him determine best practices. He was fascinated by the new forms of scientific farming and devoted hundreds of acres to dry farming and other techniques. Over the first few years, he found good success with long staple cotton and hogs. But Post experimented with grains, vegetables, forage, and others both on the farms and in a massive company garden. He took great care and moved deliberately in the marketing of the farms, even halting sales for a couple of years to allow the town to grow and to make sure his farms were perfect. What Post was selling on the farms was the opportunity to skip the entire pioneer stage of frontier agriculture and move right into modern commercial farming. Each farm was a turnkey operation, complete with four-room houses, barns, wells, a three-acre orchard protected by hedgerows, windmills, and fencing. There was easy access to the latest agricultural technology (farmers had to demonstrate proficiency in the use of agricultural implements in their interviews). Each farm was already on a graded road with

⁴⁰ Quoted in Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 113

easy access to town. In a ring outside the farm land, Post set up small four-section ranchettes, all watered with homes on the property. He was careful in those years in keeping sales slow and steady, he knew he had to prove the concept, his land sold for \$20-\$30 an acre, a premium price for West Texas, ten times the going rate for unimproved land.⁴¹

The real key for Post was recruiting the right sort of citizen for his town. He made his plans clear:

I am enlisted to demonstrate that a city and country made up of individual owners can, so far as practical results, wealth, comfort, peace and concerned, "rope and hog-tie" any outfit of socialists and rainbow-chasers that ever existed or ever well in our day and generation.⁴²

The old "Lord of the Manor" idea doesn't fit America. Someone able mentally, physically and financially must be found to start a community of this sort, but as fast as possible ownerships should pass to the individuals. I am enlisted to demonstrate that a city and country made up of individual owners can, so far as practical results, wealth, comfort, peace and concerned, "rope and hog-tie" any outfit of socialists and rainbow-chasers that ever existed or ever well in our day and generation. [Post City] is individualism contrasted with Socialism.⁴³

Post City would be a place where, he promised, residents could "stand on their own resources, to maintain their own homes, and to live their own lives as becomes independent American citizens."⁴⁴ Everyone would be a capitalist: "I want every mechanic and workman to own his own home, every merchant his own store." For Post, this meant

⁴¹ Eaves, C.W. Post's Colonizing" 82-84; Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 50, 122, 147-153, Post quote on 113 ; Blodgett 80; % *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* 29 June 1917

⁴² Moore, "Making Dreams Come True," 523

⁴³ Moore, "Making Dreams Come True," 523

⁴⁴ Quotes from a story about the founding of Post City that appeared in newspapers across the country on its ten-year anniversary. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* 2 June 1917; *Jackson Daily News* 2 June 1917.

great care “in selection of citizens” so that no “sorry hombre” slipped through. In Post City “every citizen thus become a landed proprietor and a defender of peace and prosperity. Responsibility and ownership,” he explained, “don’t breed socialists or anarchists.” There would be no land speculation, no renters, no unions, no saloons, no African Americans. The company not only interviewed every potential resident, but also demanded references.

The danger of drought had been demonstrated for four decades by that point, a fact that could seriously impeded sales. But Post believed he had a secret weapon that could terraform West Texas holdings into a more humid climate. He thought he could make it rain by using dynamite. Post had always had a thing for pseudo-science and he wasn’t the only believer in atmospheric alchemy. This was after all the great era of “rain follows the plow.” Post was particular fascinated by the power of dynamite and had come to believe in “pluiculture”, a quack theory that held that rainfall could be produced by recreating large military battles. It was based on some pretty slim evidence – apparently after some of the largest battles of the Napoleonic and American Civil Wars it rained a lot. So, Post and his fellow rainmakers set about trying to replicate the conditions of battles, the “experts” called it concussionism, and the key was to “agitate the air.” For Post, in Post City this meant launching thousands of pounds of dynamite (provided below cost by the DuPonts) from the caprock into the skies above Post City trying to make it rain. Like everything else in Post City, he sent his team very explicit directions about how the “rain battles” should

be conducted. He was convinced that his experiments were yielding results and that soon, his farms, with the added benefit of rainfall on demand would be the most prized agricultural acreage in the world. All summer in 1912, Post ordered up "battles." His generals had standing orders to launch 3000 pounds of dynamite at regular intervals every time conditions were ripe. Curious about the right time of day, Post ordered they start as early as 4:00 a.m. or as late as 11:00 p.m.. For hours, dogs howled, horses spooked, children cried, windows rattled, and houses shook. In just a few years, Post spent \$50,000 trying to make it rain, results were, ahem, inconclusive. When he died, there were still 50,000 pounds of dynamite stored up on the caprock. The good citizens of Post City, not surprisingly, had no interest in continuing the experiments. In a terrific display of paranoia and Yosemite Sam type problem-solving, city leaders, terrified by what the potential German saboteurs in their midst might do with all that dynamite, attached a long fuse to the whole mess and blew it up in 1917.⁴⁵

As the owner of an entire town, Post was able to install its exact form of government. No surprise here, C.W. had a lot of thoughts on the matter. Post wrote out a constitution for the town - he called a "Dedication" - and deposited it with the new Garza County Court. Again, providing the purest distillation of the West Texas booster town, Post's plan located ultimate political power with the city's business class and voting privileges only extended to the property-owning class. On the surface, that might seem undemocratic, but keep in mind in Post City, by design, every resident would be a

⁴⁵ C. W. Post, "Making Rain While the Sun Shines," *Harper's Weekly*, 27 February 1912; Eaves, "Charles William Post, Rainmaker"; Michael Whitaker, "Making War on Jupiter Pluvius."

property owner, making the system wholly democratic. At times reading more like the CCRs of fascist homeowner's association than a founding document of a community, residents had to adhere to a strict code governing sanitation and property upkeep. Alcohol, prostitution, gambling were banned. There was even a curfew. Land speculators were forbidden. So were African Americans. Every resident had to swear they were not a member of labor union. The Double U Company would be the town's only builder. Post favored the new Galveston Plan of city government, eliminating aldermen and mayors in favor of a city commission. The city commission of Post City would include C.W. and three men chosen by Post. The other two positions were selected at-large after the population of male property owners exceeded 150. To change the system required a two-thirds vote among the property owners.⁴⁶

The company was unambiguous on labor unions. "We believe in the open and free shop, and free right for every man to work in his own chosen line so long as he does not interfere with his neighbor." Labor unions "are not desired here at all." In the "silver relic" ad, it was spelled out clearly: "Labor union activity is not permitted in Post City. The public sentiment and the power behind the laws seems efficient to prevent interference with men who wish to work without bowing down for contributing from their earnings to support agitators."⁴⁷ The local post office refused to accept or deliver copies of the socialist paper *Appeal to Reason* and the newspaper editor only kept his job by printing anti-labor

⁴⁶ The widely distributed "silver relic" article/advertisement contained a detailed description of the governmental system. See *Raleigh Times* 24 December 1907; Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 57-59. See also Rice, *Progressive Cities*.

⁴⁷ *Raleigh Times* 24 December 1907

editorials and stories.⁴⁸ Even having a copy of the paper could get you kicked out of town. When W.T. Estes, a socialist from Lubbock, took it upon himself to distribute the paper in May 1911, Post confronted the man and threatened him with jail or violence or both. He then gathered up the leading citizens of the town to ask the Grand Jury to stop the distribution of the newspaper because of its “vile and obscene” subject matter. When Estes came back in July, he was beaten up and chased out of town.⁴⁹

On May 9th 1914, Post shot himself in the head with a rifle in his Santa Barbara Mansion. He was fifty-nine years old and worth \$10,000,000. He had just finalized a set of plans to begin a massive new sales push of the agricultural lands. He wrote the copy himself:

I feel that we are offering such opportunities to deserving homeseekers as assure the establishment and building up of a prosperous community. I am providing completed home farms for those who have a little money and are sufficiently enterprising to enter upon owning a home for themselves and their families. . . . There has been a substantial growth and development at Post during the few years of my ownership of property there, and I feel that the time has now come for me to share its future prosperity with those who are in earnest about wanting to prosper. You will be greeted with hearty sincerity at Post and assisted in every reasonable way towards getting along. There is real happiness to be derived from fresh air and sunshine and growing crops and values, where the big part of the growth and increase comes to the man who is earning and getting it.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 84;

⁴⁹ *Appeal to Reason* 17 June 1911, 22 July 1911, 5 August, 1911.

⁵⁰ Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 147.

After Post's death, the local boosters, organized as the Post City Commercial Club, took over the sales and marketing of the C.W. Post Home Farms. They sold 95 farms that first year and 300 more the next. All at premium prices. The Club ran emigration trains, printed up brochures ("NO NEGROES IN THE COUNTRY. NO MALARIA. NO COMMERCIAL FERTILIZER USED"), and continued the financing plan initiated by the Double U. The Postex Mills, using locally-grown cotton, was cranking out 23,000 sets of the most popular sheets in Texas. There was a telephone exchange, a hospital, four good-sized churches, a movie palace, a new modern school, a laundry, the nicest hotel and biggest retail establishments for a hundred miles. There were three hundred homes, a bank, a weekly newspaper. The local economy produced over a million dollars of goods a year including award-winning livestock and 6000 bales of cotton.

In 1917, Post (the Commission dropped the "City" from the town's name after Post died) entered the Texas Tech sweepstakes with a \$110,000 commitment from Post's daughter Marjorie (then running Postum) and local boosters. The project was run by W.C. Hawk Post's longtime second-in-command. It was a legitimate pitch; Post City was well located, served by the railroad, was already been the site of a decade's worth of agricultural research (estimated at \$3,000,000), and was easily the most modern, tech-forward city in West Texas. In a particularly controversial decision that we will cover in greater detail later, the site was awarded to Abilene. (The city made another pitch in 1923, but lost out to Lubbock.)⁵¹ Marjorie Post kept her father's dream alive for a few more years, relaxing payment plans and even loaning money to farmers during some tough times in

⁵¹ Eaves and Hutchinson, 156-158; See also Rutland, "Beginnings of Texas Technological College."

the late 19-teens. She remained the largest landowner in the county and enjoyed a massive windfall in the 1940s when Garza started producing over five million barrels of oil a year in the 1950s. She, thanks to the oil and several shrewd business decisions, including founding with her then husband E.F. Hutton, the world's first food conglomerate, General Foods, was the wealthiest woman in America and one of its most important philanthropists.

In 1957, on its fiftieth anniversary, Marjorie Post returned to the town as its guest of honor. The celebration was about as West Texas an event as one might conjure. A barbecue for 4000 (twenty beeves worth of meat), a fiddle contest, a dominoes tournament, a beard contest, the mayor handing out plaques for Marjorie Post and other longstanding members of the community, boy scouts doing "Indian dances", a "cavalcade" of three hundred and fifty people recreating the history of Post.⁵² The primary speaker at the Dedication ceremony was former Texas Tech University President D.M. Wiggins who spoke to C.W. Post's creative vision. He also credited Post with the political vision that still defined West Texas:

Mr. Post was a powerful exponent of the dignity of individualism and the concept of free enterprise as basic essentials to what he thought of as the American way. In no instance was this principle better amplified than in the colonization of his vast West Texas interests. He practiced the doctrine of helping those who showed a willingness to help themselves. Sometimes I think that's rather a far cry of some of our practices in our modern governmental operations.⁵³

⁵² The event was widely covered in the local press: See *Lubbock Avalanche* 14 September 1917; *Waco News-Tribune* 17 September 1957.

⁵³ Audio tape of Dedication ceremonies, PFP.

