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This is to certify that Lydia Regan has fulfilled the  
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Back to the Land: The Revival of American Communes in the Late 1960s

BY

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*Doing your thing means doing what you want - actualizing your vision. Becoming your own poem... Life as a social art form... It means doing it! It takes no ideology to feed people. It takes no ideology to give something to someone who doesn't have it.*

- Peter Coyote, one of the founder of the Diggers

I dedicate this work to my core group at Wheaton, you know who you are. I thank you all for becoming your own poems these past four years and helping me to become my own.

## **Preface:**

I was first introduced to the idea of communes while I was taking Professor Tomasek's course Sex & Culture at Wheaton College in the Fall of 2015. During this class we focused on studying the history of sex in America. Through our studies and readings I was introduced to the nineteenth-century idea of Free Love movement. Free Lovers rejected the ideas and principles of traditional marriage, viewing it as a form of social and financial bondage for women.<sup>1</sup> Some women saw free love as a way to give American women more power in sexual relationships, including marriages.<sup>2</sup> However, the definition of free love was never solidified by its core leaders and spokespeople. Therefore, the practices of free love took on many different forms and was used in different ways by different people. This, ultimately, led to backlash against the free love movement and those who claimed to be free lovers.

As I studied Free Love I learned about the Oneida Community, an example of a group of people attempting to create a Utopian society within America. Their attempts to create this utopian society resulted in the separation of themselves from the rest of the country.<sup>3</sup>

John Humphrey Noyes founded the Oneida Community in New York State in 1848. Members of the community practiced an idea that was titled “complex marriage,” which meant that group marriage was encouraged.<sup>4</sup> Women and men were encouraged to

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<sup>1</sup> John C. Spurlock, “A Masculine View of Women’s Freedom: Free Love in the Nineteenth Century.” *International Social Science Journal* 69 (1994): 35, Accessed October 22, 2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons.* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press), 75.

have sex with one another if they both wanted and had the desire. Historian Lawrence Foster, wrote that when he referred to “free love” in his own essays he is referring “to the system used at Oneida, not to what anyone else may have fantasized free love to be like. Oneida free love was in many ways anything but free.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, free love in the Oneida Community represented one of the nineteenth century’s most radical institutional efforts to reimagine the relationships between men and women.

At the Oneida Community, women were freed from unwanted pregnancies through a complicated birth control practice referred to as male continence. Women were also liberated from the strains of child rearing because the Oneida Community made the responsibility of raising children a communal process.<sup>6</sup> Women and men were encouraged to have casual sexual relationships with one another if they both desired to do so. In fact, exclusiveness was discouraged in the community, and Oneida defined their sexual practices as a new stage of civilization. Noyes’ followers convinced themselves that they were searching for a community that valued the concepts of free love. However, historian Jason Vickers has argued that many of the men and women who joined the Oneida community were actually just socially dislocated.<sup>7</sup> Rather than making the women in their community free, Oneida ended up imprisoning women in a web of group marriages and other complex sexual regulations.

Learning about Oneida was my first historical experience hearing of an alternative community, and immediately I became interested in how this and other alternative

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>7</sup> Jason Vickers. “That Deep Kind of Discipline of Spirit: Freedom, Power, Family, Marriage, and Sexuality in the story of John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community.” 14, (21012) 5. Accessed December 16, 2015.

communities formed in United States. I wanted to understand why groups of Americans felt they would be more satisfied with their lives they completely separated themselves from society.

Although I had completed my work on the Free Love Movement and the Oneida Community by December 2015, I still had a strong curiosity about alternative communities in general. A part of me felt cheated by historians because I had never realized that alternative communities like Oneida even existed in America. I began to explore alternative communities in America whenever I had the opportunity.

A few months later I was invited to write an Honor's Thesis and gladly accepted the challenge. During the time that I made this decision I was visiting California. This was my first trip to the West Coast and for me it was eye opening. I felt like I was able to see how large the United States of America truly was for the first time in my life. This feeling is hard to describe, but it was definitely a mixture of disbelief and appreciation. During my time in California I challenged the things I thought I already knew about the West Coast, and I wanted to learn more. I was not in California long enough to discover on my own, so I did research. I looked at maps, read books, and studied pictures. I did this not because I had to, but because I was interested. By the end of the trip I was beginning to really wonder about two concepts'. First, I wanted to understand what it meant to be a part of the hippie movement. I was interested in the flower children, the Summer of Love, and San Francisco. Second, I wanted to research some sort of community and really try to understand what made people call that community home. These concepts sparked the framework for my thesis.

After I spoke with my advisor, Professor Tomasek, about a few of my ideas and interests she directed me to look at alternative communes in modern American history. I understood the entire process of writing an honors thesis was long and complex, therefore I knew I needed to be really interested in the topic and able to find research on it. As I began looking in the direction that Professor Tomasek pointed me into I quickly became obsessed. In a short amount of time, it was clear to me that I would focus the rest of my work on American communes. Specifically, modern American communes that are considered to be hippie communes.

As I began my research it became clear to me that there was a large increase in the number of communes in America during the years between 1968 and 1972. In other words, there was some sort of revival of communes during the late 1960s and early 1970s. One question kept coming to mind: Why did the number of communes in America increase so quickly between 1968 and 1972? In other words, I wanted to discover the reasons for this revival. I wanted to know what drove so many Americans to leave everything behind and dive into communal living during this time period.

## **Introduction:**

Every Monday night during the late 1960s Stephen Gaskin would host weekly meetings in San Francisco. Stephen Gaskin was a pot-smoking hippie and important member to the Haight-Ashbury community. The meetings that Gaskin would host were called “Monday Night Class,” and they began with around twelve members steadily. However, this number grew quickly from twelve to one thousand to over fifteen hundred members. Gaskin, would sit at the front of the large lecture rooms cross-legged as he guided the conversations. The conversations ranged from describing self-image to addressing issues within their community to comparing their various LSD trips. In one of those meetings, Gaskin said:

Thoughts of perfection can be dangerous if you think it means that you’re so perfect that you don’t have to consider change. Change also takes great, pure effort, like most worthwhile things.<sup>8</sup>

This is a specific quote from a lecture that was about transforming your views of yourself. The quote means that it is okay to think of yourself as being perfect, however it is not okay to think that what you are in one moment is the end product. It is unacceptable to think that you are so perfect that you do not need to evolve, change, and transform. Gaskin admits that the process of change is not easy, but it is still necessary. Change takes effort, but it also is much more rewarding. As Gaskin spoke about this topic he would capture the minds of thousands of Americans. It was these sort of discussions that so many in the Haight-Ashbury were looking for, and that is why Gaskin was able to

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Gaskin, *Monday Night Class*. (Summertown, Tennessee: Book Pub. 2005.) 82-82.

lecture crowds of more than fifteen hundred people even though he was far from the only hippie giving lectures in the city.

After the decline of the Haight-Ashbury, Stephen Gaskin and many of his followers began their journey to creating a hippie commune. They assembled by creating a parade of VW busses, cars, trucks, and school buses that traveled to forty-two states. This was what they called the Caravan. After the traveling across the nation Gaskin and his followers decided it was time for their community to settle down and they worked together to create a hippie commune in Tennessee. This was the birth of The Farm, one of the most successful hippie communes in the United States.

The Farm was just one example of a hippie commune that was created in the late 1960s. However, it was far from the only one of its type. Starting in 1968 there was an explosion of communes in America. There were all sort of hippie communes to be developed after 1968, another example is Twin Oaks in Virginia. Twin Oaks was created by a smaller group of Americans who were frustrated with the way things were looking in America. They began their plans to build Twin Oaks while at a conference that was discussing the work of B.F. Skinner, an American psychologist. Both members of the Farm and Twin Oaks were alternative thinkers who were inspired to create something bigger than themselves. The similarities and differences between their communities display the fact that there was not a single blueprint for what a hippie commune should look like, yet they both created beautifully unique communities that are still sustaining themselves in 2017.

**Thesis:**

There was a revival of American communes between 1968 and 1972 because many Americans felt an absence of community and were frustrated with increasing violence. Commune founders were influenced by the Beats, aspects of counterculture, and hip neighborhoods, like the Haight-Ashbury, to begin the journey of creating alternative communities.

**Historiography:**

A commune exists when a group of individuals chooses to live with one another because of a shared interest to create an alternative to the larger society. In order to be considered a commune, a group of individuals must share the majority of their belongings and have the intent to grow together as a community. In *West of Eden* the editors, Iain Boal, Janferie Stone, Michael Watts, and Cal Winslow, explain that generally people understand that an intentional community is a group whose members are intentionally separating themselves from the general public, or dominant society, rather than simply being a group that wants to live near one another.<sup>9</sup> In *The Roots of the 1960s Communal Revival* Timothy Miller suggests that the real definition of a commune is a group of people pooling their energy, belongings, and money together to establish a community that works for an established and shared common good.<sup>10</sup> Meaning that the new community members work together to organize how the community should function. In

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<sup>9</sup> Iain Boal, Janferie Stone, Michael Watts, and Cal Winslow. *West of Eden* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012). 3.

<sup>10</sup> Timothy Miller, "The Roots of the 1960s Communal Revival." *American Studies* 33, no. 2 (1992): 73-93

order to do this organization the members dedicate their time, effort, and belongings into creating that community together.

In the book *A Necessary Evil* the historian, Garry Wills, suggests that it is possible for an elite group of people to withdraw from political life for motives that resemble that of the elite individuals who make up the group.<sup>11</sup> These individuals are anti-governmental in the way that living their lives by the laws of the general public does not provide them with an enlightened form of social life. These elite individuals would prefer to have nothing, or as little as possible, to do with the government laws and the society it influences.<sup>12</sup> It is a way for groups who withdraw and focus on themselves, and their own community goals. And, in some cases build a community that they think could become a model for the greater society.

These definitions provided by historians include important details of communes. However, when read independently they insufficient. In order to fully understand the definition of a commune these definitions must be tied together. A commune needs to include the idea that there is a group of individuals who want to work together and share their belongings in order to create a substantial alternative to the greater society of that country. And, it is necessary to understand that a commune is just one example of an alternative community.

Like alternative communities, there are many layers to a commune. In the 1972 monograph *Communes USA: A Personal Tour* by Richard Fairfield it is argued that

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<sup>11</sup> Gary Wills, *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government*. (New York: Simon & Schuster. 1999). 279.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 279.

alternative communities can be split into different subgroups. These subgroups include communes, collectives, cooperatives, intentional communities, and experimental communities. In each of these subgroups there must be an arrangement of at least three people whose primary bond comes in the form of sharing rather than a legal or blood bond. The level of sharing among these groups varies, for example some groups may simply share the land in which they live, while others may share the land and then everything ranging from their incomes to kitchen supplies. The most dramatic subgroup of alternative communities are communes because members are required to share the most amount of things. There have been many communes known to share land, incomes, and sexual partners.<sup>13</sup>

The task of creating a new community is very difficult because it requires a group of individuals to completely isolate themselves from the greater society of their country from ground zero. And, these group members constantly need to make adjustments to make their new communities sustainable. Many individuals who create communes are very driven to do so because they believe that something is deeply wrong with the larger society and that the only way for them to fix the problem is to recede from it and create an alternative. These individuals are often past the point of trying to incorporate their ideas into the current and larger society. And, they may even think it easier to create something new rather than try to change the larger society. Often, there is one theme that a group of individuals would like to see change within society and that theme becomes the purpose of their commune.

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Fairfield, *Communes USA: A Personal Tour* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1972). 3.

There are many themes for communes and they range from all sorts of ideas. A popular theme for communes is religion. Religious communes are drawn together by a leader. Or, by the idea of the group “becoming one” within their souls or consciousnesses.<sup>14</sup> Another theme of communes is one that attempts to follow the Ukrainian society model. The Ukrainian society model is when a community tries to become an example for the larger society to look at for guidance as they attempt to improve. Other communes are developed with the intention of creating relationships. For example, a commune is created by a group of individuals who feel a lack of connection in their current society. Therefore these communes reflect a family or a place where all members feel comfortable enough to be themselves. A final example of a theme for communes is politics. A political commune is meant to focus on the political work in the particular neighborhood that it is settled in. But, like in any case, there are specific communes that cannot so easily be categorized because they are developed for more than one purpose.<sup>15</sup> These are just a few of the various themes that a commune can be created from.

Communes tend to be created with the intention of creating a better alternative to the larger society. For this reason there is a strong connection between communes and utopias that exist throughout history. Traditionally a utopia is thought of as an imagined community, or society, that is nearly perfect. A utopia is a community that is highly desirable by its citizens and fulfills all the needs of those citizens. The definition of

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<sup>14</sup> Kathleen Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1973). 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4

“utopia” was first introduced by Sir Thomas Moore, and Englishmen, in his book *Utopia* which was written in the year 1516. The purpose of *Utopia* was to describe a fictional island society located in the Atlantic Ocean. The word “utopia” derives from Ancient Greece and it literally means “no-place.” Therefore, the word strictly describes any non-existent society.<sup>16</sup> However, the meaning of utopia has narrowed. Modern day intellectuals tend to describe the perfect non-existent society nowadays,

Ron E. Roberts, author of *The New Communes: Coming Together in America*, describes that most of the early utopian thought beliefs includes the idea that man has potential goodness and that it can only be fully achieved when he is placed within a proper and perfect society.<sup>17</sup> Roberts declares that the essence of early utopian thought was a movement against the status quo. The quest, or journey, to perfection means a rejection of the present by definition. Therefore, Roberts states that if early utopian schemes all involve a rejection of the present society and acceptance of some sort of social experiment then utopias do not differ that much from alternative communities, or communal living.

A communes can be regarded as a subgroup of the larger category of Utopias.<sup>18</sup> However, a modern commune differs from a Utopia in three different ways. First, a modern commune rejected the concept of hierarchy and levels of social status.<sup>19</sup> Second, modern communes maintain the idea that the organization of modern society is too large.

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<sup>16</sup> Ron E. Roberts, *The New Communes: Coming Together in America* 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 10

<sup>20</sup> And, finally, that modern communes are all anti-bureaucratic in their structure.<sup>21</sup> When studying a commune , particularly a modern commune, it is necessary to look for themes of motivation of membership, group maintenance, and constituency when studying modern communes because they truly help a person understand that it is a commune, and a level of utopia.<sup>22</sup>

The history of communes in America is extensive. The history has various layers to it because communes have existed in America for many years. The history of communes is closely related to the various purposes of communes that were laid out earlier. For example, when we look at the revival of communes in the late 1960s it was the result of people needing to find a community. The communes that were developed during this time had a huge focus on sharing and creating that sense of community, that is why these communes became known as hippie communes.

The first communes in America tended to be created by various religious sects. One of the most well known of these commune groups are the American Shakers. The American Shakers were a religious sect of christianity and many believers created a commune. Another well known commune that existed early on was the Oneida Community. These types of communes were then preceded by a number of sectarian, nonsectarian religious, and nonreligious communities that were developed in America.<sup>23</sup> It is at this point that the history of American communes begins to unravel in various directions. Each direction was the result of a commune existing for its own specific and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 14-17.

<sup>23</sup> Ron E. Roberts, *The New Communes: Coming Together in America*. 19.

individual reasons. Therefore, there were various communes existing for different period of time in America for a very long time. It is hard for historians to compare all of these different communes because each existed for its own rhyme and reason in different areas of the country.

However, during the late 1960s and early 1970s something changed in communal history. All of the sudden, there was a huge revival in the number of communes during this time period and they became classified as hippie, or hip, communes because of the cultural moments going on in America during the time. The growth of these modern communes was not particular to one place because it happened in all parts of the nation. The network of communes stretched from New England to California, but the majority of these communes were found West of the Mississippi.<sup>24</sup> This revival of communes in the late 1960s was so important to the overall American history. In the journal article “The Roots of the 1960s Communal Revival” Timothy Miller argues that many factors influenced the growth of hippie communes in America, including the Beats and shifts in America post 1965.<sup>25</sup> Then Miller argues that Drop City, located in Trinidad, Colorado, became the first “full-blown hippie commune” to be developed and it provided a framework for other communes. Drop City incorporated many of the major themes of hip communes that historians have pointed to as evidence for calling them “hippie” communes. These themes include anarchy, pacific sexual freedom, drugs, open membership, and art, all wrapped together into one package, or one community.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, “*Takin’ it to the Streets*” *A Sixties Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). 333.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 88-89

Timothy Miller's article, *The Roots of the 1960s Communal Revival*, provided a solid argument regarding the revival of communes from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. It also provided a great argument to compare primary sources to. There were an abundant amount of primary sources from this time period. The sources included manuscripts of lectures from Stephen Gaskin's Monday night classes, books published in the early 1970s that included interviews with commune dwellers, autobiographies, newspaper articles, photographs, and magazine articles. In the primary source *Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community* Kathleen Kinkade argues that many Americans created and joined communes as an attempt to feel related to something greater than themselves.<sup>27</sup> Richard Fairfield, author of *Communes USA: A Personal Tour*, makes the argument that communes became home to people who were on the journey of self-discovery and he also gives multiple first-hand experiences of hippie communes from the years of 1968 to 1972 in his writing.<sup>28</sup> These were sources compared to personal narrative of Stephen Gaskin that appears in the introduction of *Monday Night Class* and to other primary sources located in "*Takin' it to the Streets*" *A Sixties Reader* edited by Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines.

The voices that these primary sources included the voices of many white Americans from similar socioeconomic status. Many of these Americans also had similar educational experiences. Therefore, the argument that was created is based on this one specific group of people and it does not include the voices of those from minorities or from different socioeconomic statuses. There were indeed communes developed and

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<sup>27</sup> Kathleen Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community*.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Fairfield, *Communes USA: A Personal Tour*. 17-18.

sustained by black Americans, however there were not as many sources regarding these communes or sources that could be accessed during this time. Therefore the rest of this argument is primarily focused on one group of Americans.

**Methodology:**

This thesis is broken down into four chapters. Each chapter includes multiple subsections. The first chapter provides a brief history of America post the Second World War until the 1960s, including descriptions of the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War. However, this history does not include all events post World War II. And, only includes things that are necessary to know based on this topic. These descriptions are included because they help display the frustrations that many Americans were having in the 1960s. These frustrations were with the state of the union, and the fact that many Americans felt disconnected from one another and the overall American society. The second chapter describes the influence that the Beats had on these Americans, as well as counterculture. The third chapter describes the small, yet popular, neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury located in San Francisco. This chapter includes the part of my argument that the Haight-Ashbury, and other hippie communities like it, inspired future communes. The final chapter, briefly describes the various types of communes that were created during this revival of communes and it also looks at two examples of hippie communes, the Farm and Twin Oaks. The development, as well as some of the similarities and differences between them are described in this final chapter.

## **Chapter One: Building Frustrations**

Between 1968 and 1972 there was a revival of alternative communities in America. This revival of communes did not happen overnight, and it was a reaction to the fact that so many Americans felt an absence of community during the 1960s and were frustrated with consistent violence after the Second World War.

### **The 1950s: Building Block to the 1960s**

The 1960s began with the inauguration of John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts. President Kennedy was one of the youngest men to sit at the desk in the Oval Office, as well as the only Roman Catholic. He, and his even younger wife, Jacqueline, were seen as celebrities in a time where many Americans valued and obsessed over the various forms of media and the press including newspapers, television, and Hollywood. Many Americans welcomed the youthful spirit of President Kennedy and viewed his presidency with an air of openness and experimentation. According to Charles Perry, the author of *The Haight-Ashbury*, the election of Kennedy promised an end to the feeling of stasis.<sup>29</sup>

Under the leadership of Kennedy the White House became a pioneer of the arts, the couple's style was rubbing off on the position as they invited more intellectuals and celebrities to the home, and celebrated art.<sup>30</sup> These very things about President Kennedy allowed him to connect to various groups in America in a time when many Americans were beginning to feel disconnected from each other.

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury*. 248.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

President Kennedy followed the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower's. Eisenhower, also known as “Ike,” was an older American Army general who had served during World War II. Under President Eisenhower, America experienced a time of unbalanced prosperity. White Americans, collectively, were having more opportunities to buy homes, seek a higher education, and save more money than they ever had before. One of the main reasons that white Americans were experiencing these new and positive changes was because of the GI Bill.

The GI Bill, or the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, was in full swing by the time Eisenhower was serving as President.<sup>31</sup> The GI Bill was an attempt by the US Government, under President Roosevelt, to prevent an economic and social crisis in America. Following the First World War, many American veterans came home and flooded the workforce. America began to struggle economically. There were many factors that were going on in America and they all combined to create the Great Depression. During this time, American veterans were not given the substantial aid from the government that was promised, causing a huge rift between veterans and the U.S. Government. In order to prevent these social and economic crises from happening at the end of World War II American politicians pressed the Senate and Congress to approve a bill that would provide aid to American veterans when they came home from war.<sup>32</sup> On June 12, 1944, the Senate approved the final form of the bill and on the following day the House of Representatives approved it as well. President Roosevelt signed the bill on June

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<sup>31</sup> “History and Timeline” *U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs*. Last Accessed: May 6, 2017. <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/history.asp>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

22nd. The bill outlined the responsibilities of the Veterans Administration which included carrying out education and training provisions, loan guaranty for homes, farms, or businesses, and to deal with veterans' unemployment pay.

Before the GI Bill, owning a home or receiving a college education was an unreachable dream reserved for upper class white Americans. As a result of the GI Bill, college and homeownership became within reach for the average white American. The GI Bill provided Veterans with the option of receiving federal funding while going to college or even a training school.<sup>33</sup> By 1947, Veterans accounted for forty-nine percent of students in college. By the end of the war 7.8 million of 16 million World War II veterans opted to receive an education from a college or training program. Millions of American veterans also took advantage of the home loan guaranty option. From 1944 to 1952, the Veterans Authority backed almost 2.4 million home loans from World War II veterans.<sup>34</sup> Although the GI Bill was meant to aid veterans, it really only benefitted white veterans because black veterans were unable to secure home loans or enter college because of the color of their skin. The GI Bill helped prevent another economic crisis in America because it created so many opportunities for white American veterans, it also prevented a social crisis because many white American veterans were in positions to make more money or own homes which they may not have been able to do without the bill.

For the first time in American history, the majority of white males were working a single well-paid job and possessed either a high school or college diploma as well as owned their own home. Other white male minorities including, Jews, Catholics, and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

European immigrants, were also experiencing an increase in their livelihood. These men were entering college or vocational schools for the first time and were able to buy suburban homes and join the middle class in unprecedented numbers.<sup>35</sup> The proportion of the American population who completed high school rose from 24% in 1940 to 52% by 1970. And the proportion of the population who completed a bachelor's degree increased from 5% in 1940 to 11% in 1960. That is more than double for each category.<sup>36</sup>

Under President Kennedy's predecessors, there was an increase of funding by the Federal government into public education, industry, agriculture, and major highway construction. These investments by the Federal Government stimulated the market economy and promoted home ownership, suburbanization, a baby boom, and consumer demand for millions of products.<sup>37</sup> One of the greatest examples of this new trend of American life is the fact that by the year 1950 a little more than half of the American population lived in what was known as suburbia.<sup>38</sup> These American families were responsible for one of the largest baby booms that the nation had seen. The baby boom was the result of young soldiers who had come home from the war and were eager to get married to their loved ones and start a family right away. The babies born between the years 1946 and 1964 were labeled as the baby boomers, and they are the largest generational group in American history.<sup>39</sup> There was a feeling that the entire country was

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<sup>35</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*. New York: McGraw Hill. 2015. Print. 741.

<sup>36</sup> Robert S. Einzig, "Tomorrow's Markets: The Competitive 1960s" *Financial Analysts Journal*, Vol.19, no. 3. 91-97.

<sup>37</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*. 735.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 737.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 741.

experiencing a new stage of prosperity. For example, the proportion of the American population that owned a home increased from 44% in 1940, to 55% in 1950, and to 62% by 1960.<sup>40</sup> It was these advances in America that so clearly created and popularized the classic images of the 1950s. The images include “White middle-class families, suburban homes, backyard barbecues, big American cars with tailfins, Little League and Girl Scouts, peace, prosperity, and harmony.”<sup>41</sup> However, not all Americans were experiencing this time of affluence.

Many white Americans were experiencing new economic and social positives. However, the truth was that many Americans were left out of this new America. For example, gender roles were still set in stone. In fact, many American women were experiencing confusion over gender roles during the 1950s. During World War II, women had been given more freedoms and responsibilities because the majority of the men were away at war. However, the end of the war meant that the men were coming back to America and ready to regain control over industry and the homes, where women had just found a little bit of independence.

America, at this point in time, was still a segregated county. Minorities were experiencing continued segregation and discrimination. Many of the segregation was due to government tasks falling in the hands of local government. Local governments controlled the administration of schools, college loans, and many housing options. Therefore, many programs that were there to benefit minorities were purposefully underfunded or given less attention by local government officials. This was especially the

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<sup>40</sup> Robert S. Einzig, “Tomorrow’s Markets: The Competitive 1960s” 91-97.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, “*Takin’ it to the Streets*” *A Sixties Reader*. Introduction.

case in Southern states where local agencies controlled which Americans were eligible for particular federal benefits. In Southern states many members of minority groups were simply disqualified from eligibility. In Mississippi the state government guaranteed about three thousand home loan mortgages for Veterans in 1947, but only two of those were given to African Americans.<sup>42</sup>

Another result of the unbalanced prosperity that many Americans were experiencing occurred because of suburbanization. In many of America's major cities there was a "white flight" from cities. As more white Americans began to move out of the city and into the suburbs, minorities were able to move out of their crowded neighborhoods in the city to nicer areas that had originally been home to white Americans. Racism and segregation quickly grew in these cities because many of the white Americans who could not afford to move out of the city were outraged that their neighborhoods were changing.<sup>43</sup>

The largest minority in America during this time was African Americans. In 1950, 88.6% of the population was white and only 10.5% of the population was black or African American.<sup>44</sup> The advances that so many white Americans were having did not go unnoticed by the African American community. And it was during this time that the heroic Civil Rights Movement was born as a response to these injustices and continued segregation that black Americans were facing. The various moments of the Civil Rights Movement helped influence other and smaller minority groups to begin their own fights

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<sup>42</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*. 741.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 742.

<sup>44</sup> Robert S. Einzig, "Tomorrow's Markets: The Competitive 1960s" 91-97.

for freedom and equality against local, state, and the Federal government. It was the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement where leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X began to sprout up. To many youngsters, King became the image of courage, justice, purity and morality.<sup>45</sup> His presence alongside that of Kennedy made things seem more hopeful in the beginning of the 1960s.

### **The Early 1960s**

The era of the 1960s was unique in America for so many reasons. One of the reasons that this era was unique is the shifting population that was going on in the country. 18 million Americans had been born between the years 1946 and 1950. Therefore, about 60 million Americans did not enter the household formation stage, meaning people ranging from 20 to 24 years old, until after 1965. There were predictions that the nation could expect another 22 million babies to be born in the first half of the 1960s and then another 26 million babies born in the second half of the 1960s. These numbers display the massive increase of younger Americans in the country. The median age of an American in 1950 was 30.2. This number dropped to 29.5 years old in 1960. And, then, the median age dropped down again in 1970 to 28.1 years old.<sup>46</sup> The result of this imbalance in population was a large age gap between America's youngest and oldest citizens.

Since many white America entered a higher economic status by the 1960s, the roles of American families were changing. For example, many white American children were able to stay in school longer than previous generations. For example, many students

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<sup>45</sup> Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury*.248.

<sup>46</sup> Robert S. Einzig, "Tomorrow's Markets: The Competitive 1960s" 91-97.

finished high school because the pressure for them to drop out and make an income had disappeared.<sup>47</sup> It was this younger generation of Americans that would become the college students of 1960s and 1970s.<sup>48</sup> And, it was during those years that many younger Americans became so dissatisfied with America.

The 1960s began under the young president, John F. Kennedy. Under his leadership many Americans felt hopeful about their ability to change the nation in a very positive direction. This positive energy began with President Kennedy's inauguration speech, on January 20th, 1961, when he asked every citizen to evaluate the ways they helped the country. To begin the speech Kennedy stated that the future of America was in the hands of its citizens and not merely his own. He continued with this theme as he stated,

now the trumpet summons us again — not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are — but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, 'rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation' — a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.<sup>49</sup>

Here, President Kennedy was declaring that it was the job of Americans to hear the call to bettering their society and respond to it. President Kennedy then asked whether American citizens would join him to make history by changing the course of mankind and fighting those very battles. The speech concluded when President Kennedy declared that only few generations of Americans have been given the chance to defend the ideals

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<sup>47</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*. 770.

<sup>48</sup> Robert S. Einzig. "Tomorrow's Markets: The Competitive 1960's." 91-97.

<sup>49</sup> "Inaugural Address, 20 January 1961." *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*. Accessed February-May 2017.

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/BqXIEM9F4024ntFl7SVAjA.aspx>

of freedom, and this generation would not shy away from that responsibility. The speech ended with these famous questions, “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.”<sup>50</sup>

President Kennedy helped to set the tone for what he wanted the next four years to look like with that speech. One of the first examples of the hopefulness President Kennedy described began with the visions of the Freedom Movement, where both black and white students joined together to show the world the horrors of segregation in America. The teamwork between the students of different skin colors was sparked by the idea that President Kennedy was a partisan of civil rights, compared to his predecessors who had to be mere referees in the fight. President Kennedy was seen in this light because of his invitation of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to the White House.<sup>51</sup> The movement was jump-started by black students in the South who took part in a series of sit-ins at lunch counters in the segregated south. Not only did these students want the segregation to end in the South, but they also wanted the federal government and the entire nation to stop condoning the violence, discrimination, and inequality black Americans faced daily.<sup>52</sup> With this message as its mission the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed in Raleigh, North Carolina and thousands of young black Americans joined. The peaceful message by the students opened the eyes

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid,

<sup>51</sup> Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury*. 248.

<sup>52</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*. 795

of many Americans to the silent injustices that were going on all over the country. It woke up the Americans that President Kennedy urged to act. Therefore, many young Americans from the North who had not originally been involved in politics joined the Freedom Movement as well. White students from the North became exposed to the horrors of Jim Crow laws as they witnessed blacks students show the brutality of the laws just by entering segregated businesses. Their new exposure to Jim Crow urged them to become involved in something that was far bigger than themselves and had more meaning than anything else they had been part of. These students were awakened by the idea that simple suburban lives could be filled with much more meaning and feeling. As one SNCC member described they “lived on a fuller level of feeling than any people I’d ever seen.”<sup>53</sup>

These moments of the Civil Rights movement influenced the communal movement. There were two huge factors that ran through the biographies of both black and white students who spent time working for SNCC.<sup>54</sup> First, there was the realization that institutions promoted and maintained caste-like race relations and they were very unbreakable. They witnessed a repressive society whose local governments condoned violence and the mistreatment of others just because they looked different.<sup>55</sup> The second theme was the discovery of soul. To have soul means to have a sort of authenticity or a “non-phony” experience. For the first time many white Americans felt a real sense of community as they worked with the black community. One upper middle class activist

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 795.

<sup>54</sup> Ron E. Roberts, *The New Communes: Coming Together in America*. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 4.

expressed to Ron E. Roberts that she had never felt so “alive” until attending her first church service in a rural, black Mississippi church.<sup>56</sup> Another white girl from Virginia expressed her feelings about community and the things going on in America when she said, “finally it all boils down to human relationships. It had nothing to do with governments. It is the question of whether I shall go on living in isolation or whether there shall be a we. The student movement is not a cause ... it is an I’m going to sit beside you.”<sup>57</sup> This nonpolitical statement gives evidence for the desire to become apart of a community, to become part of a society that cares. Such desire that was strong for so many Americans because they were unable to feel those emotions in the larger American society.

The work of those Americans continued and it included protests, sit-ins, and freedom rides. The work was not easy and it contained many hardships because the violence was so great. But, soon the violence caught the eyes of the Federal government, and after much debate the the Federal government became involved. This was one of the goals of SNCC, so many were hopeful that new legislation would be passed under President Kennedy that could spark a new era of hope in America for all of its citizens. But, then in the middle of this progress President Kennedy was assassinated.

### **1963: America Grieves**

President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963 in Dallas, Texas. He was shot during a presidential motorcade and his death left the country in a dark state of shock. His death created a shift in the country. According to *New York Times* columnist

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 4.

James Reston, America had lost “not only the president, but the promise.”<sup>58</sup> The promise was that America would have that fresh new era in the the 1960s. After his death there was a noticeable shift in America. America no longer felt like a country that was in order with a plan to peacefully modernize all of its citizens. It became unclear whether the nation would remain peaceful because so many Americans saw the nation entering a new chapter of violence. Americans were starting to become frustrated with the violence and all of the loss. The movement to change society more drastically came from the younger generations who felt the threat of the war and the frustrations of a very separated society.

In 1963, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was forced to accept the death of his running mate and was sworn into office. Quickly, Johnson was able to push different bills through Congress including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Both these bills were meant to secure specific things for Americans who had been left out of the prosperity that so many Americans experienced during the 1950s. President Johnson’s initiatives helped drop the unemployment rate to under five percent, and help millions out of poverty by increasing educational opportunities for them. During the 1964 election, President Johnson ran on the idea that America was building a Great Society that would put an end to racial injustices and fight a War on Poverty, while fostering an environment in which all children could learn. Many people, including students, were fond of the ideas that President Johnson put forward and rallied for Johnson to get them through their frustrations with the violence that the country had

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<sup>58</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*.. 798.

endured with the assassinations of President Kennedy. President Johnson, at first, was considered another beacon of light with the ability to change the course of America.<sup>59</sup>

However this honeymoon period did not last. Mary Beth Norton, an American historian, described the years between 1963 and 1967 included a great deal of violence, but many felt that most Americans were in “a kind of a national sleepwalk.” The novelist John Hersey wrote that Americans were ‘aware, on a dream level, of black rage; of the undertow of Vietnam ... of the way Lyndon Johnson’s credibility gap was beginning to show.’ But in 1968 the sleepers awoke to a series of violent quakes.”<sup>60</sup> The author of *The Haight-Ashbury*, Charles Perry, agrees with Norton when he states that there was some sort of strange feeling of desolation going on in America during those years of activity. Perry links it to the shock of President Kennedy’s assassination and the terror that many Americans had of a nuclear confrontation with Cuba.<sup>61</sup> In other words, it seemed like things were going well under President Johnson, but as time continued more Americans were used to the idea of Johnson in office then they began to realize the horrors that were going on in America and outside of America in places like Vietnam.

### **The Vietnam War:**

But, as the 1960s continued so did America’s involvement in the Vietnam War. America became involved in Vietnam in 1950 when they sent military advisors over. President Johnson had inherited the war from his predecessor John F. Kennedy, and

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 799.

<sup>60</sup> Mary Beth Norton, David M. Katzman, Paul D. Escott, Howard P. Chudacoff, Thomas G. Paterson, and William M. Tuttle, Jr. *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1986. Print. 955-956.

<sup>61</sup> Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury*. 4-5.

Kennedy had done the same from Eisenhower. During the summer of 1964, it became one of President Johnson's' primary goals to repel both the Viet Cong, or the National Liberation Front, and North Vietnam's communist government. In order to do this, President Johnson was looking for reasons to help persuade Congress to authorize and fund a larger war. In August, the opportunity presented itself when a series of reports were given to those in Washington D.C. that North Vietnamese boats had fired on a U.S. destroyer which was located in the Gulf of Tonkin. This “attack” secured Johnson the support he needed and Congress allowed him to ‘take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.’<sup>62</sup> However, shortly after it was learned by the public that this “attack” had only involved one single bullet that hit the ship’s hull.<sup>63</sup>

Although President Johnson received the go-ahead, he waited until 1965 to begin a larger war in Vietnam because he was afraid an escalation in the war before 1965 would affect the 1964 election.<sup>64</sup> It was in 1965 that President Johnson authorized the first of hundred of air raids on north Vietnam and the mass deployment of U.S. troops to South Vietnam. The war grew quickly, and by 1968 there were over a half-million American troops shipped over, and over three million tons of explosives dropped on Vietnam.<sup>65</sup>

The Vietnam War was beginning to lose the support of many Americans, especially younger generations of Americans. The Vietnam War was a war that was

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<sup>62</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*. 803.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* 803.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 804.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* 804.

dependant on the manpower of the younger generations. In previous wars fought by American soldiers the typical age of soldier ranged from eighteen to forty years old. These men tended to be from all classes and backgrounds as well. This is drastically different than the Vietnam War. During the Vietnam War the soldiers tended to be blue-collar, impoverished youths. The average age for soldiers in the Vietnam War was nineteen, compared to twenty-six in World War II. The largest minority of soldiers were only seventeen years old. More than two-thirds of the soldiers who served in the Vietnam War were volunteers and did so to pursue the economic opportunities that was promised by military life, for many of these young men it was the only way for them to get out of poverty. All American men over the age of eighteen were eligible to be drafted. However, many middle-class and affluent men were able to legally defer their service by enrolling in college or graduate school. Or, they were able to use family connections to serve in the National Guard at home rather than go to Vietnam. Others opted to illegally dodge the draft, about 60,000 fled to Canada or Mexico, while about 170,000 declared to be conscientious objectors. Others claimed insanity, received a doctor's note, or admitted to homosexuality. All in all, there were 3.5 million servicemen in Vietnam and a nursing force of 11,000 women from 1965 to 1972.<sup>66</sup>

Not only were these soldiers practically children, they were highly inexperienced to be in a war. American teenagers were fighting a group of people they did not understand in a land that seemed alien and for reasons that did not make sense to them. The enemy knew the land of Vietnam far better than the best trained American soldiers,

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 804.

therefore they were able to catch American soldiers in all sorts of traps and were able to lead lethal ambushes on American soldiers.<sup>67</sup>

Due to inexperience many American soldiers were unable to distinguish fighters from civilians while in Vietnam. There were reports of widespread anti-Asian racism and it led to activity hostility among American soldiers and Vietnamese citizens. In some cases, U.S. forces killed thousands of Vietnamese civilians. One of the worse examples of this was in 1968 when 105 G.I.'s from Charlie Company, which had lost several men due to attacks by the Viet Cong, executed over 400 women, children, and elderly people in a single village. This example was known as the My Lai Massacre and it remained secret for little more than a year.<sup>68</sup> Vietnamese forces responded by mistreating prisoners of war and even torturing them.

The war continued to rage in Vietnam. The American Army began to use all sorts of tactics to try to sway a victory in their direction including using special chemicals that would set fires off and clear the jungles, or other that would kill the enemy's food supply. By 1968, nearly one in three Vietnamese citizens had lost their homes because of these methods of war, and about fifty-two civilians had lost their lives. Hundreds of thousands of Americans were opposing the war. With no end in sight, the government was forced to pass a tax increase to help fund the war. This cut from many of the Great Society programs, and it angered many Americans.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 804.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 804.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 809.

## **Chapter Two: The Beats and Counterculture**

Many Americans were starting to open their eyes to the horrors of segregation and inequality at home as well as becoming frustrated with the war abroad. At the same time, these Americans were looking for refuge in literature and within themselves. Quickly, the literary works by the Beats became a huge source of influence for these Americans. Ultimately, it would be the Beats and movements for peace and community that would help spark a desire for Americans to talk about their feelings of isolation within the larger society and inspire groups of Americans to continue their journey towards building hippie communes.

### **The Beats:**

One of the most well-known cultural groups to come out of the 1950s and express their frustrations with the larger American society were the Beats. This group of poets and novelists included a number of intellectual Americans who rejected the consensus culture that was developing in America during the 1950s. The Beats were more of a literary movement compared to a social movement and compared poets like Allen Ginsberg, poet and novelist Jack Kerouac, and novelist William S. Burroughs. However, they did provide an image of dissent for young, dissatisfied writers.<sup>70</sup> Rather than viewing themselves as revolutionaries or superior to the 1950s, the Beats viewed themselves as victims of the 1950s because they were beginning to fear and resent conformity, rather than holding opinions of disdain.<sup>71</sup> Many of the Beats opposed the strict conformism of suburban life had created for heterosexual relationships that characterized the postwar

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<sup>70</sup> Ron E. Roberts, *The New Communes: Coming Together in America*. 2-3.

<sup>71</sup> Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury*. 250.

era. They rejected the rigid gender roles that were seen in these heterosexual relationships.<sup>72</sup> The Beats were associated with personal experimentation of mind-alternating drugs which ranged from alcohol to marijuana to peyote. The Beats used drugs for pleasure, and for intellectual insight.<sup>73</sup>

Commune documentarian Ron E. Roberts wrote that the Beats were into cool jazz, drugs, interracial sex, and even Zen Buddhism as they rejected all things that would be considered one hundred percent American.<sup>74</sup> They rejected those very images that modern day Americans visualize when they speak about the era. The Beats criticized the suburban way of life by referring to it as empty and soul-destroying.<sup>75</sup> They worked outside of American culture to create literary pieces that they thought could stand alone. The theme of the Beats became *Pour epater la bourgeoisie*, which translate to “shock the bourgeois.” The conformity that was demanded by American communities was rejected by the Beats as they advocated for artistic integrity, voluntary poverty, and social disengagement.<sup>76</sup> The Beats grew into its own culture and would have a prolonged influence on what would be called the counterculture in the 1960s.

Some of the most well-known members of the Beats include Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and J. D. Salinger. It was these literary folks who created pieces that would later inspire younger generations of America to wander away from the status quo, or to the conformity of American communities. The Beats aimed to transform and grow

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<sup>72</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*. 755.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ron E. Roberts, *The New Communes: Coming Together in America*. 2-3.

<sup>75</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*. 741.

<sup>76</sup> Ron E. Roberts, *The New Communes: Coming Together in America*. 3.

in their lives. It was not their goal to simply be. This theme comes through in their writing. For example, their main characters are often heroes who are on journeys and never really satisfied with finding one place to be or to rest. These characters keep transforming.<sup>77</sup>

In the 1957, Jack Kerouac published *On the Road*. The central theme that is preached throughout the piece is that each moment of life is sacred, especially those moments shared with friends. It incorporates the idea that all humans are of one piece, therefore each person will share in everyone's sorrow and in the end all people will be delivered to heaven together in the end. Now, this goes into a deeper level but it stresses the importance that people feel and share moments which becomes a huge theme during counter culture. It was not only in *On the Road*, but also in *The Subterraneans*, and his short story "October in the Railroad" that Kerouac expressed the themes of the Beat movement. His main characters in these stories had casual sex hitchhiked around the nation, and committed themselves to being themselves, or being an individual.<sup>78</sup> These were just a few of the themes that helped set the Beats apart from the rest of America in the late 1950s.

These themes are also seen in the novel *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger. The main character of the novel is a teenage boy named Holden Caulfield. He is a production of the Beats because in many ways he can identify the ugliness in the world and feels victim to it, as the Beats do with reality. In one passage of the novel the boy describes

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<sup>77</sup> Stephen Prothero, "On the Holy-Road: The Beat Movement as a Spiritual Protest" *The Harvard Theological Review*. Web. 205-222.

<sup>78</sup> Ron E. Roberts, *The New Communes: Coming Together in America*. 3.

how he hates his school because he was surrounded by “phonies.” He describes how the his school's' headmaster, Mr. Haas, was the largest phonie he had known because he only treated people right when it benefitted his agenda.

On Sundays, for instance, old Haas went around shaking hands with everybody's parents when they drove up to school. He'd be charming as hell and all. Except if some boy had little old funny-looking parents. You should've seen the way he did with my roommate's parents. I mean if a boy's mother was sort of fat or corny-looking or something, and if somebody's father was one of those guys that wear those suits with very big shoulders and corny black-and-white shoes, then old Haas would just shake hands with them and give them a phony smile and then he'd go talk, for maybe a half an hour, with somebody else's parents.<sup>79</sup>

He continues by describing how it made him feel, “I can't stand that stuff. It drives me crazy. It makes me so depressed I go crazy.” Here, the narrator is clearly frustrated with the way the individual act towards one another because of how fake it is, and often how forced. These quotations show how so many people confirmed to a particular way of life rather than just being themselves.<sup>80</sup>

It was the behavior discussed in the above paragraph that the Beats felt victim too. And, it was the literary works of the Beats that were studied by the younger generations of Americans in the 1960s. The members of the 1960s who were feeling the angst that the Beats had felt a few years before them looked to the Beats to find ways to express that, and to find assurance that it was not just them feeling that way. The Beats became an important influence to the Americans that would begin the counterculture of the 1960s and go on to inspire the development of the hippies and their “happenings.” It is the idea

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<sup>79</sup> J.D. Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye* (Boston: Little Brown Company, 1951).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

that the Beats presented in their works that also worked to inspire Americans to leave the “empty” society all together and create meaningful communities later in the 1960s.

### **Against the War: The New Left and Counterculture**

During the second half of the 1960s was when things really began to shift in America. As stated above, many Americans were feeling more confident that things were not right within American society during the 1960s. As these Americans looked at the Beats, they felt more confidence with rejecting the ways of America and suggesting alternatives. This resulted in the opposition for the war growing quickly throughout the country.

By 1967 there was an antiwar coalition and the first mass antiwar demonstration of the this time period drew about four thousand protesters to New York City, and a poll reported that less than half of the population still supported the war.<sup>81</sup> The opposition of the war began to reach out to other groups of Americans who were frustrated with the violence they were seeing in America and the little change that was happening for American minorities. The opposition, including Students for a Democratic Society, sparked a New Left movement that gripped younger generations of Americans. The New Left wanted to make more radical changes in America. The student movement called for an end to war, and various other things including freedom of speech on campuses for various reasons. These movements paved the way for alternative thinking in the 1960s, and paved the way for a revival of communes on the late 1960s.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*. 810.

<sup>82</sup> Claire Dederer, “Tune In, Turn On, Sell Out: In a Memoir of the Commune Movement, Tom Fels Drops in on his Fellow Former Residents and Finds they’ve Gone on the Make.” (New York

One of the other reactions to the violent years of the 1960s was to recede from it. These Americans fought back by “being.” This, and the various students movements, sparked the beginning of counterculture which would grow into many forms. It was all of these political and social events that caused the spike in the number of communes during the years of 1968 and 1972. Counterculture was not a movement that included every American, it represented a smaller portion of the youth of America. Yet, it became something that was so different than other themes of American society that it attracted a lot of attention. Those apart of counterculture had been inspired by the Beats and the ones who came before them because they were aware something was wrong with deep American society and they knew it was time to find a new way of living.<sup>83</sup>

One of the greatest examples of this awareness comes from Kathleen Kinkade, a pioneer for the Twin Oaks commune which was established during the late 1960s. She describes how the American way of life in the later half of the twentieth century did not seem particularly bad. People in America were not necessarily starving, there was not a civil war of any kind, education was still being provided for free, for the most part. However, all of these great things in American society were achieved at the cost of personal relationships.<sup>84</sup> And, that is what the younger generations were beginning to understand in the 1960s especially after they witnessed the death of their president, and then their friends who were away at war. It is evident that they felt this way. For example,

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Times)

<http://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/897789213/51DC8361219B4955PQ/10?accountid=15020>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Kathleen Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1973).

the slogans of the New Left and of Counterculture all had similar themes and said things like “Make love, not war!” or spoke of “happenings” and “be-ins.”<sup>85</sup> What these ideas are about is having Americans connect with one another in appropriate and productive ways that create community.

These slogans and the ideas they stood for helped to create the frameworks for the hippie movement. The Hippie movement began in the mid to late 1960s. The name “hippies” developed from a few different sources. One of the sources was the word “hip,” which originated from black Americans and the culture of jazz.<sup>86</sup> This idea transformed from “hip” to “hippie” as members of the Beats began to nickname this new group “the hippies.” Although many members of the Beats thought that “hippie” was a nickname that clearly showed that this new generation of outsiders were a lesser value of themselves, the hippies liked the new nickname and ran with it.<sup>87</sup>

The Hippie movement was nationwide and it began to take many forms. However, one specific neighborhood in San Francisco began to encompass many of its themes and it became a great example of the movement. This neighborhood was known as the Haight-Ashbury. Quickly, the Haight-Ashbury became a pivotal moment in the history of American communes because it became one of the largest influences for what could be achieved by a commune. The community that was established in Haight-Ashbury began to guide the thoughts of Americans who had their eyes opened by counterculture and influenced individuals want to create communities.

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<sup>85</sup> Kathleen Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community*

<sup>86</sup> Henkin, David and Rebecca McLennan. *Becoming America: A History for the 21st Century*.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 811-812

## **Chapter Four: Haight-Ashbury**

In the 1960s the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood in San Francisco became a place for many hippies and alternative American thinkers to experiment with a style of life that differed significantly from the suburban trends of white, middle class families. Richard Alpert, a former professor at Harvard, wrote:

The Haight Ashbury is, as far as I can see, the purest reflection of what is happening in consciousness, at the leading edge of society. There is very little that I have seen in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, that is giving me the hit that this place is because it has a softness that is absolutely exquisite.<sup>88</sup>

When Alpert says softness he means its actual state of being. This softness was very different than the violence Americans were seeing, that the neighborhood quickly gained attention from all sorts of Americans. The Haight-Ashbury not only put counterculture and the hippie movement on the map, but it also became a huge source of influence for what a hippie commune could be. However, after a few years the neighborhood became too large and it was no longer able to sustain the life its community members were preaching. It was the decline of Haight-Ashbury, and its similar hippie neighborhoods, that helped to influence so many Americans to move forward with their ideas of alternative lifestyles in more rural settings and helped push the revival of communes from 1968 to 1972.

### **The Neighborhood:**

The small and quiet neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury stood at the edge of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, California. Haight-Ashbury was bordered by a wider strip of

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<sup>88</sup> Anthony Ashbolt, "Go Ask Alice: Remembering the Summer of Love Forty Years On," *Australian Journal of American Studies*, December 2007. 35.

land known as the Panhandle. The neighborhood was home to huge Victorian homes that had survived the earthquake of 1906. The homes had been turned into rooming houses and this housing pattern allowed for a diverse population to call the area home. Quickly, the neighborhood became a popular spot for Irish workers.<sup>89</sup> The working class and labor union involvement of the Haight-Ashbury made the area known as a solid district with a progressive reputation prior to the WWII and before it became a hippie neighborhood. At the end of the WWII and in the beginning of the 1950s there was a flight from the neighborhood by middle-class families for various reasons including government plans for a commercial re-zoning of the area and the construction of a new freeway nearby. Although the freeway was successfully opposed by residents there was still an exodus of middle-class families from the neighborhood that resulted in a decrease of the property values.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, a great deal of the properties were opened up to a larger population of lower-earning people by the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Due to the inexpensive living prices in the area and its convenience to other neighborhoods, Haight-Ashbury was favored by San Francisco State students. The ride was only a short bus ride to campus and the rooms of the Victorian homes were quite inexpensive to rent for students. In some cases it was as little as twenty-five dollars to rent a room for a month. At the same time, the property values in the North Beach area of San Francisco were steadily increasing. This caused the area of North Beach to be less available for many who were looking to move to San Francisco. North Beach was known

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<sup>89</sup> Jim Marshall and Joel Selvin, *The Haight: Love, Rock, and Revolution, the Photography of Jim Marshall* (San Rafael, CA: Insight Editions, 2014).

<sup>90</sup> Anthony Ashbolt, "Go Ask Alice: Remembering the Summer of Love Forty Years On," *Australian Journal of American Studies*, December 2007. 35.

to be the home of the San Francisco Literary Renaissance and became the West Coast home to the Beats. In the late 1950s the North Beach area had been embraced by popular leaders of the Beats, including Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. The prices of property in North Beach jumped in the early 1960s and sparked many from these groups to look elsewhere for homes. Beatniks, or members of the Beats, looked towards Haight-Ashbury as their new home. As did the students of San Francisco State.<sup>91</sup> The connection between the hippies and the Beats became more prominent in San Francisco than anywhere else in the nation. Yes, there were major differences between the two groups including differences “of style, temperament, philosophy, and appearance.”<sup>92</sup> But, many of the elder Beats became leading figures of the Haight-Ashbury during its beginning.<sup>93</sup> However, Haight-Ashbury was becoming a neighborhood that was developing its own identity, like North Beach had done so many years before.

In a short matter of the time the Haight-Ashbury was gaining specific attention from younger generations of Americans who were becoming apart of the hippie movement. The Haight-Ashbury became one of the places ‘to be’ during the 1960s. One of the sparks that helped light the fire in San Francisco, particularly in the the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, was Jack Kerouac’s novel *On the Road*. Kerouac’s main characters are two friends named Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise. Their friendship is fascinating and it sparked three years of journeys across the country. Although this novel was published years before the hip movement, it was picked up by many Americans in

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 36.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 36-37.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 37.

the 1960s who were on that same spiritual journey as the main character of *On the Road* was. Shortly, the novel became a bible to the students of the 1960s drawing thousands upon thousands of college-aged students to the city from across the nation. As was stated above, many of these students began to settle in the Haight-Ashbury due to its cheap prices.

Stephen Gaskin described the city as being home to a couple of thousand hippies. The new norm was to smoke marijuana or to be tripping on LSD. Haight-Ashbury was attractive not only to younger generations of Americans, but also very creative Americans. Various musical stars called Haight-Ashbury home, including the Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin. It was cheap to buy and easy to find drugs at Haight-Ashbury. Gaskin describes Haight-Ashbury well in this one sentence, “every circle on the street had a joint circulating around the inside, and the rock halls were jammed with stoned trippers.”<sup>94</sup>

Haight-Ashbury became the place to be for youthful Americans who were trying to understand the workings of the world. In the monograph *The Haight-Ashbury* Charles Perry describes how the effects of the war were very hard on many Americans, but for some the Haight-Ashbury became a safe haven. Perry described how everything in the Haight-Ashbury “amazingly everything fit together.” The community came together quickly and without too much effort.<sup>95</sup> As early as 1966, America was still in the midst of war abroad and the Civil Rights Movement was shifting at home, the Haight-Ashbury became its own unique scene that housed thousands of young Americans. The

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<sup>94</sup> Stephen Gaskin, *Monday Night Class* (Summertown, Tennessee: Book Pub, 2015).

<sup>95</sup> Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury* (New York: Random House, Inc. 1984)

community hosted light, music, and literature shows, was visited by rock stars, a group of people who wholeheartedly believed in sharing, and filled with youths trying to solve the nation's toughest questions as they experimented with psychedelic drugs.

In a short period of time the Haight-Ashbury developed its own personality. Different businesses in the Haight-Ashbury were becoming "headquarters" to the neighborhood like the Blue Unicorn coffeehouse. The Blue Unicorn was north of the Panhandle, and known to be in a quieter section of the Haight-Ashbury, but like the rest of the neighborhood it was beginning to attract countless bohemians. Bohemians are those that practice unconventional lifestyles and was a term used to describe the hippies. Owner Bob Stubbs, created the Blue Unicorn in December of 1962. He settled for the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood because he was looking for a cheap rental place. In 1965, the business was sold to Herb Jager for the price of \$2,500 and a kilo of marijuana. Jager was a musician, political activist, and union organizer who was originally from upstate New York. He had moved to the Haight after spending time in the hip communities of New York City. Although he owned the Blue Unicorn, he did not run the business in a normal way. Rather, he allowed the coffeehouse to develop within the surrounding hip culture of the Haight. There were almost no rules established by the owner or those who worked in the Blue Unicorn. 1965 to 1969 are considered the golden age of the coffeehouse.<sup>96</sup> The location of the Blue Unicorn can be seen below in the drawn map of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood.

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<sup>96</sup> The Blue Unicorn. *The Blue Unicorn Coffeehouse* Accessed April 28th, 2017. <http://www.freewebs.com/blueunicorn/>



striving for *realization* of one's *relationship* to life and other people<sup>99</sup>

This means that what was going on in the Haight was its own revolution and outsiders were beginning to notice it. Many began to imitate the themes that were going on in the Haight, but it is key for those who are actively involved to continue to understand their relationships to life and others. Men and women, who were experiencing more freedoms in the Haight, that were living in the Haight-Ashbury that made it so unlike anything seen in American history. They were making themselves a hip community in an American city that was trying to respond to the deep issues they within society.

One member of the community was Carolyn "Mountain Girl" Garcia. She lived at 710 Ashbury Street with members of the Grateful Dead, she describes her experiences of living in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. Garcia describes herself as being "just kind of aghast at the amount of people that showed up down on Haight street every day."<sup>100</sup> She went on to say that it was an incredible number of young people throughout the neighborhood. She states that these people wanted an alternative to the present American culture. She describes the time period, "in 1967, the Vietnam War had been going on. There was the draft. There was a lot of unemployment. People needed something else to look at. I think between folk music and beatniks and Black Panthers and the anti-war movement and the Civil Rights movement, there was a lot of questioning and unrest going on, mental unrest. People weren't satisfied with the status quo thinking and wanted

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<sup>99</sup> The Blue Unicorn. *The Blue Unicorn Coffeehouse* Accessed April 28th, 2017.

<http://www.freewebs.com/blueunicorn/>

<sup>100</sup> Jim Marshall and Joel Selvin, *The Haight: Love, Rock, and Revolution, the Photography of Jim Marshall*. 109.

to grow up to be something different.” After describing potential social issues that were happening in America, Garcia noted that people no longer wanted to conform to a particular way of life. She states, “I think that a lot of it’s about having given ourselves permission to be weird. You gave yourself permission. We also gave other people permission to be weird - to try to think outside of the box of convention. I think that’s been terribly useful.”<sup>101</sup> Garcia summed up emotions that were occurring in Haight-ASHbury. She identified how it was okay for people to have the freedom to be themselves. When she said they were being weird she meant that these people we all feeling comfortable enough to be their true selves. She provided insight to the specific experiences people were having in the actual neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury, rather than just with the hippie movement.

### **The Diggers:**

The Diggers were at the forefront of the Haight-Ashbury community. The Diggers, and their hopes of creating a community based on sharing, became a huge influence to the Americans living in the Haight-Ashbury and ultimately those who would spark the revival of communes in the late 1960s. The Diggers were able to contribute to the communes by promoting specific themes of hippie communes in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood.<sup>102</sup>

The Diggers was a theatrical group who came together to help create a free society. The Diggers actions inspired a generation to create a model of Free Association

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 109.

<sup>102</sup> Anthony Ashbolt, “Go Ask Alice: Remembering the Summer of Love Forty Years On,” *Australian Journal of American Studies*, December 2007. 42.

and they became legends in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. They called themselves the Diggers after the original English Diggers who existed from 1649 and 1650. These Diggers were radical Protestants and are often thought of as anarchists. The English Diggers had created a vision of society that would be free from owning private property and all forms of buying and selling. It was the intention of the original Diggers to reform social order with a focus on agrarian lifestyle. The San Francisco Diggers based themselves on the ideals of the groups before them. The more modern Diggers went about their goals in much different way, however they were still highly influenced by their predecessors. They were able to combine street theater and art happenings with direct action that helped their agenda of creating a Free City, these ideas would have a huge influence on those who would ultimately develop alternative communities only a few years later.<sup>103</sup>

The Diggers were a very active group in the Haight-Ashbury for various reasons including the fact that they published their work, ideas, and news for the community. The Diggers created a Free Press that allowed them to do this. During August in 1968 the Diggers were able to make a deal to have 40,000 copies of the Digger Papers when a member, Emmett Grogan, made a deal with a printer, Paul Krassner. It was the mission of the Diggers to give their papers away to the world and for the world to have a model of a Free Association.<sup>104</sup> The Papers included new articles along with some of the best pieces

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>104</sup> The Digger Archives. Diggers.org. Publication Date: February 14, 2017. Last Accessed: May 12th, 2017. <http://diggers.org>

from the previous two years. The centerpiece of the papers was the article “The Post-Competitive, Comparative Game of a Free City,” and “Trip Without a Ticket.”<sup>105</sup>

In “The Post-Competitive, Comparative Game of a Free City” the Diggers acknowledged that it was up to them to create these free cities within the urban environments of the Western World. They wanted to do this by incorporating various groups into their vision, for example they wanted the “families, communes, black organizations and gangs of every city in America coordinate and develop Free Cities where everything that is necessary can be obtained for free by those involved in the various activities of the individual clans.”<sup>106</sup> The mission of the Free City was to provide the needs of the community, but to do so for free by involving the entire community and encouraging them to work together. The hope was that these organizations would be very enthused to help and this would cause them to want to work even if there was an overload. In order to create a Free City, the Diggers urged a sense of commitment as the foundation for their work. This foundation would allow workers to have the ability and the excitement to make sure that a Free City was actually created.<sup>107</sup> However, these were all ideas and it was harder to do this sort of community building in reality.

The Diggers had many goals for the creation of their Free City because, to them, the opportunities for the city were endless. In one published piece a Digger wrote about their dream to create a free pool area. It is described in the following way, “a Free public structure in the Panhandle where individuals can swim in vinyl pools ... and carry-on

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

such as they want until they think it is beautiful to stop.”<sup>108</sup> This is just one example of the endless opportunities that the Digger community members saw for San Francisco. This quote is also important because of the language it uses. The Diggers have a beautiful way with words that show how much freedom they expect and want people to have. In this quote the author writes “until they think it is beautiful to stop.” This language shows the audience that what the Diggers really want is for people to choose to do things that make them happy, and not to conform to a bigger society. The idea of not being restricted and having the freedom to be yourself, is so important to the themes of the Diggers. It is these themes, and the evidence that a sharing community works, that they gave to the Haight-Ashbury community and eventually to those that would develop hippie communes.

### **The Human Be-In:**

The Diggers and other members of the Haight-Ashbury community began to host as many free events, games, concerts, theaters, as they could in order to help establish the attitude for a Free City and for the hippie Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. These events made the neighborhood one of a kind, and also helped to put the Haight-Ashbury community on the media map.

In January 1967 the community members of the Haight-Ashbury, led by LSD evangelist Michael Bowen and Allen Cohen, editor of *Oracle*, asked the city government for a permit to use the Polo Fields on January 14th, 1967. The Polo Fields were a massive

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

set of open fields on the west end of Golden Gate Park.<sup>109</sup> They were granted permission from the city, and began to plan the large event. They planned what was called the Human Be-In. The Human Be-In was set-up as a large concert, but it really became an opportunity for community members of the Haight-Ashbury to introduce and announce what the Haight-Ashbury stood for to whoever wanted to know. The posters that were around the city called the Human Be-In a gathering of tribes. This is an example of how the Diggers were really trying to build that community within Haight-Ashbury.

The Human Be-In attracted so many people that the event flooded the fields they had been permitted. About one hundred thousand people had the intent of being on the Polo Fields, but not all of them could fit at the event. The size of the crowd showed how powerful the need for a community like the Haight-Ashbury was in America. It also showed the development of people who were starting to catch on to the feelings that some of the first community members had long before. The event not only attracted masses of young Americans, but it also attracted Beats including Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gary Snyder, and Allen Ginsberg, and more random groups like Hell's Angels, a motorcycle club whose members primarily ride Harley-Davidson motorcycles. The groups that attended the Human-Be-In were all able to work together. For example, Hell's Angels were able to locate lost children at the Human Be-In and find their families. Those in the crowd were fed with the help of the Diggers who served thousands of free turkey sandwiches. Those at the event were asked to "turn on, tune in, and drop out" by LSD guru Timothy Leary. The event also took city officials and city police

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<sup>109</sup> Jim Marshall and Joel Selvin, *The Haight: Love, Rock, and Revolution, the Photography of Jim Marshall* (San Rafael, CA: Insight Editions, 2014). 121.

officers by surprise because it was a very peaceful afternoon filled with poetry and music and enjoyed, however the crowd size was that of a small city.<sup>110</sup>

The event provided a small view of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood to the American public.. Michael McClure, an American poet, describes his time at the Human Be-In “I was sitting onstage next to Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder. Timothy Leary was up there and Lenore Kandel. I sang one of my poems. ‘The God I Worship is a Lion.’ It was the first great congregation of young seeker people, known as the counterculture, who were drawing together to create their own huge family, and to celebrate it in their own huge tribe, and to celebrate it with music and dance and song and psychedelics and some real good political things. The spirit still exist in the faces and bodies and stances of so many people I see around me.”<sup>111</sup> Here, McClure is describing how the Haight was drawing together its own family that incorporated various themes and helped inspire people to talk about things like politics, relationships, music, and drugs. It is the idea of relationships that really make this event, and the entire community of the Haight-Ashbury, a blueprint for the late 1960s commune movement.

### **Summer of Love: The End of the Haight-Ashbury**

After the Human Be-In, Haight-Ashbury community members planned the Summer of Love. The Diggers and other community groups created a Council for the Summer of Love in April 1976. The purpose of the Summer of Love was to create an event that could act s a “holy pilgrimage” to the Haight-Ashbury for Americans who

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

were frustrated with their lives and craved the feelings of “alive, human and divine.”<sup>112</sup> Although the intentions of the event were pure, the event became too much for the community and caused a huge influx of people to go to the Haight-Ashbury that did not have the same intentions as its original community members. This resulted in the decline of the Haight-Ashbury. It was the decline of the Haight-Ashbury that sparked many hippies to escape the city and move out to rural areas and create smaller communes.

The Summer of Love created an unsustainable population growth in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. The growth of the population in the small neighborhood of the Haight combined with people moving to the Haight-Ashbury for the wrong reasons, for example people moving there for cheap drugs, and bad media attention caused the neighborhood to slip into a downward spiral. As one person put it, there were “simply too many with flowers in their hair flocked to the Haight and the chilly winds off the Bay fuelled a culture of despair more than one of hope.”<sup>113</sup> It was difficult for community members of the Haight-Ashbury to keep the themes of the hip community pure. Some members of the community were able to predict that this would happen prior to the Summer of Love, including the Beat poet Lew Welch. Welch urged many of those living in Haight-Ashbury in groups before the Summer of Love occurred because it was too much.<sup>114</sup> Some members of the Haight listened to Welch and helped to get the communal movement going in Northern California, while others disregarded the advice

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<sup>112</sup> Anthony Ashbolt, “Go Ask Alice: Remembering the Summer of Love Forty Years On,”

<sup>113</sup> Norton, Mary Beth, David M. Katzman, Paul D. Escott, Howard P. Chudacoff, Thomas G. Paterson, and William M. Tuttle, Jr. *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*.

<sup>114</sup> Anthony Ashbolt, “Go Ask Alice: Remembering the Summer of Love Forty Years On,”

and stayed for the Summer Love. However, there was an exodus after the events of the summer passed.

Many were frustrated with how things were going on in the Haight-Ashbury after the Summer of Love. For example, Bill Graham, a rock club promoter in the neighborhood, was upset over the end of the community. During a colorful exchange, Graham was reported to have said “What the fuck has this community ever done for itself? Do you know what you got here? You get a fucking vacuum.”<sup>115</sup> Graham was describing that the community fell in on itself and he went on to describe the loss of the community as the greatest personal tragedy to happen to him the past twenty years. It was a tragedy because he was involved, and when you are so involved you can see how great something can be into the future. People, like Graham, were upset that the community was not able to sustain itself because it had done so much in such a short amount of time and it could have gone on to change the ways America thought.

However, the truth is that a community like the Haight-Ashbury could not go on for much longer. The community was too alternative. Its members were looking to change the way Americans thought while they were closely being watched. Yes, the Haight-Ashbury did many things. And, yes it was a huge influence for hippie communes, but it was not a hippie commune. As the decline of the Haight-Ashbury, and other hip neighborhoods, began many community members had to weigh their options and decide what to do next. They were left with two options. The first option was to conform back to the American way of life they hated so much. Or, the second option, continue to pursue

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 43

alternative ways of life by creating smaller alternative communities based off some of the ideas from these hippie neighborhoods with people they felt a connection with. This second option was the one many Americans chose and it is the source for the revival of communes in the late 1960s.

## **Chapter Five: Hippie Communes**

The decline of the Haight-Ashbury began after the Summer of Love in 1967. The images of the Haight-Ashbury post the Summer of Love included images of a depressing neighborhood with drug problems, crime, and a sense of helplessness. Many Americans looked at the decline in the Haight-Ashbury and, incorrectly, assumed that this symbolized the death of the overall movement that was going on in America. However, that is not the case. The Haight-Ashbury, as well as those things before it, pushed many Americans to continue to expand their views of alternative communities. And, it was after the decline of the Haight-Ashbury that many Americans moved from the hip neighborhood to the countryside.

It was in the countryside that these Americans could build new communes to work out their hippie vision. As the hippies began to fade from major news headlines and the general American public's view, new hip communes were quietly developing all over the nation. This was the beginning of the revival of communes in America during the late 1960s and it continued until the early 1970s. It was these hippie communes that represented the new chapter in the overall history of American communes.

### **A New Chapter of Communes:**

There were hundreds upon hundreds of communes that were beginning to be developed in the years between 1968 and 1972. These communes, because of the time that they were created, are considered hippie communes. Although so many of hippie communes were created around the same time, they differed from one another in many ways. There were various layouts, themes, and purposes for these modern hippie

communes. Some of the hippie communes that ranged from urban crash pads to full out communities in rural America.<sup>116</sup>

Some of the first hippie communes to pop up in this new wave of communes were the simple urban communes that tended to consist of an apartment or home. Urban communes had a higher dropout rate because there were a less rigid type of commune and allowed for a shorter commitment from members. There were three main reasons that people dropped out of these type of communes. The first reason was that some of these members realized commune life was not for them and they went back to their homes. The second reasons was that they constructed some sort of disease from the living habits which meant they usually went home. Or, the third reason was that they pushed themselves to move on to another commune that was more serious and took the commitment and ideals of a commune more seriously.<sup>117</sup>

The next level of hippie communes often tended to be more religious groups in urban cities, or communes with one distinct purpose. These communities depended on a group of people who shared a single passion or function and wanted to live together while exploring that passion. Finally come the most radical communes, which are the communes that required a departure from the larger civilization by a group of people who have the intention of creating their own self-sufficient civilization. In this case, it was groups of Americans who wanted to recede from the larger American society and become part of a commune in the open country. Within these three levels of communes there are various subgroups. The most radical of these subgroups were the communes that were

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<sup>116</sup> Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, "*Takin' it to the Streets*" *A Sixties Reader*. 330-340.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

developed in the open country, or very rural settings. There are five different subgroups. First, there were communes made up of mostly young and city-born folks that were determined to farm and go back to the land. An example of this subgroup would be the New Buffalo commune located in New Mexico. The second subgroup of communes were the ones that resembled semi-religiously retreats that taught new styles of perception. This subgroup tended to have a strict ban on drug use, for example the Lama Foundation, also in New Mexico. Third, are the communes that are willing to creatively self-experiment with eugenics, or the science of improving the human population through breeding. Animal Farm was a commune known to fit into the third subgroup. The fourth subgroup of communes referred to themselves as rural “decompositional chambers” for over-urbanized youths who fled the city and hit the road. One of the most well known examples of this subgroup is Drop City located in Trinidad, Colorado. Finally, the fifth subgroup of communes are the ones that stretch over landscapes in an unorganized fashion. These communes tend to be home to a group of gypsies living together across scattered tents, caves, and abandoned cars. An example of this fifth subgroup of communes would be the Wheeler’s Free.<sup>118</sup>

Although there were many types and levels of hippie communes in the late 1960s and early 1970s, identifying their specific type does not really matter because they all were created in an attempt to practice the ancient of communal living. It was the practice of putting a group's energy, time, and belongings together to give life to a special vision.

<sup>119</sup> These Americans who participated in the communal revival were attempting to give

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

life to new ideas and as they did so they were attempting to give their own lives a higher purpose and to rediscover their connections with other Americans.

### **Members of the Communal Revival:**

There were a great deal of Americans who were living in hippie neighborhoods like the Haight-Ashbury that had a lot to do with the revival of communes in the late 1960s. Many Americans who had been living in the Haight-Ashbury, and similar communities, or were away at college understood they were simply not to be able to readjust to their parent's ways of life. However, these were not the only Americans who lived in hippie communes. It was also the Americans who had watched counterculture, the hippie movement, and neighborhoods, like the Haight-Ashbury, who wanted to join and develop an alternative style of life of their own.

During the 1960s already so many younger Americans were experimenting with nontraditional lifestyles. Many white middle-class college students, were skeptical of the larger more mainstream American society. It was these Americans that were rejecting American institutions and looking for that alternative type of community to become apart of. These Americans realized that communities like the Haight-Ashbury were no longer the place to escape to. So, they find the next best thing. It was the quieter alternative, hippie communes, that they found.<sup>120</sup>

The growth of hippie communes from 1968 to 1972 was incredible. The communal movement of the late 1960s and 1970s revealed strong similarities to the communes of America's past. These modern communes can be characterized as a

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

rejection of the dominant ideals of American society in favor for a new emphasis on rural, communal and largely anarchistic lifestyle which appealed to many younger Americans. These hippie communes varied in size, geographical regions, and in their fundamental goals and beliefs. But, they were all apart of the revival of communes. The Farm and Twin Oaks are two examples of hippie communes that were developed during this period time. These two communes are very different from one another. For example, one was born from members of the Haight-Ashbury and the other was born from a group of people united by a psychologist research while at a conference in Michigan. However, both are hip communes that were developed during the years of 1968-1972, and both still exist today.

### **The Farm**

The Farm was on the most successful hip communes that developed during counterculture. The idea of the Farm originated from a group of American who lived in the Haight-Ashbury during the 1960s. The Farm was the brainchild of Stephen Gaskin, a true American hippie who had moved to San Francisco after serving in Korea as a Marine. The Farm was based on many themes that were seen in the Haight-Ashbury. Over the years it has evolved into its own entity and is still located in Tennessee.

Stephen Gaskin was a former U.S. Marine who joined the world of academia after ending his service to the nation. Gaskin was a member of the Fifth Regiment, U.S. Marine Corps and he landed in San Francisco after he had witnessed combat in Korea. He was a riflemen, BAR man, and fire-team leader. This means that he received and drew fire. He briefly summarizes how he would carry his severely injured or wounded friends

from battles to their camps, and he went on to call Korean “no-man's land.” Gaskin had joined the Corps on February 26th, 1952 and he was discharged on February 26th, 1955.<sup>121</sup> After he was discharged, Gaskin, his wife, and his baby moved to San Francisco from San Bernardino. Due to the GI Bill inative, Gaskin was able to attend San Francisco State College. He went to school full-time and received \$135 a month from the government. Gaskin explains in the introduction of the book *Monday Night Class* that with the help of acid and marijuana, he turned his life experiences into a beatnik experience which has caused him many revelations during his life. He received his Bachelor of Arts in 1962, and then received his Master of Arts in 1964. From 1964 to 1966, Gaskin taught at his alma mater.<sup>122</sup>

Gaskin describes himself as following in love with the hippie movement.<sup>123</sup> In the introduction section of *Monday Night Class* Gaskin describes how his own hippie path began. A group of his students approached him and explained that they liked him, but they thought he did not understand what was going on. By this he meant the students believed that Gaskin did not understand what the alternative or countercultural was truly about yet. Gaskin, who wanted to be taken seriously by his students, asked them what the movement was about. Rather, than explaining it the students advised him to see *A Hard Day's Night*. Gaskin did as he was advised to and he describes that after watching it he had fallen in love with John Lennon and he began to recognize the power of youth that the hippies were representing. This is how his road to becoming a hippie began.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Stephen Gaskin, *Monday Night Class*. 8.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

In 1966 Stephen Gaskin was not rehired as a professor, as he reflected on the situation in *Monday Night Class* he does not blame the college and claims that he was getting a little too weird to be rehired. During this time he traveled to Mexico and the Yucatan peninsula in a Volkswagon bus. He enjoyed his time, however as he was gone he was missing the revolution that was going on in America and he moved back to San Francisco. Gaskin attempted to be rehired by the college, but it remained clear that his heart was not really into teaching and conforming back to a regular American life. He stayed in San Francisco and continued to get more stoned. One day he met with Ian Gran, the head of the Experimental College, at San Francisco State and it was then that Gran gave Gaskin a shot. Gran gave Gaskin Monday nights at the San Francisco State's Gallery Lounge to host a lecture. This became the founding of Monday Night Class in 1967.<sup>125</sup>

When Monday Night Class began it was meant to be a meeting place for trippers to discuss their experiences on LSD and the entire psychic and psychedelic world with other trippers.<sup>126</sup> Monday Night Class began with a group of twelve people. Then the group dropped down to six members, but the number of members climbed its way past its original twelve to almost fifteen hundred. The number of members that Monday Night Class was able to have was incredible because these meetings were not the first of its kind in the Haight-Ashbury. There were many spiritual speakers all over the city hosting lectures every night, yet this particular lecture was still able to become this popular.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 10.

The size of the lectures resulted in the meeting areas of Monday Night Class to have to change rapidly. The group moved from the Gallery Lounge to the Glide Memorial Church, then to the Straight Theater which was on Haight Street, then to Chet Helms Family Dog Ballroom on the Great highway. Discussion during Monday Night Class had a range of topics including sex, dope, God, war, peace, enlightenment, free will, and anything else that a member brought up.<sup>128</sup> They discussed their community as well. For instance, when drug dealers from the East Coast came to the Haight to sell heroin and crystal meth, they had a discussion about addiction during Monday Night Class. Or, when the shooting at Kent State occurred they discussed violence and advocated peace at Monday Night Class. Or, even when a specific person crashed or went crazy they opened it up a discussion.<sup>129</sup> The members studied tripping, fairy tales, legends, and anything else. Gaskin describes the environment of Monday Night Class as being a group of stoned members who created an honest and truthful environment. And, Gaskin became their spiritual leader. Gaskin could tell when a discussion was going to be a hit, he writes “I could see the expressions move across those thousand faces like the wind across a wheat field. It was like being inside a computer with a thousand parallel processors.”<sup>130</sup> Gaskin explains that the most important thing to come out of Monday Night Class was the unity that members found during meetings. Every decent thing to come out of Monday Night Class was a result of the simple hippy values which included a belief in Spirit, nonviolence, collectively, and social activism.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 10.

As the decline in the Haight-Ashbury began, there was a greater need for the themes of Monday Night Class to expand beyond the neighborhood. The idea to expand was in part influenced by a group of ministers and theologians from the American Academy of Religion that had attended one of the Monday Night Classes. This group of ministers and theologians was called the American Academy of Religion and the suggested that Stephen Gaskin go on a speaking tour to churches across America .In the Spring of 1970 it became clear that the members of Monday Night Class could only expand their views by exploring new areas. The next step to making the Farm commune was a cross-country speaking tour led by Stephen Gaskin. This speaking tour would become better known as the Caravan. The tour included about forty-two states and about three hundred members from Monday Night Class.<sup>132</sup>

The Caravan was made up of about two hundred of Gaskin's followers and various automobiles including school buses, delivery vans, cars, and trucks. The group tried its best to stay organized by leaving as a uniformed group and having small responsibilities being taken over by members, but it was no doubt difficult to coordinate the movement of over a hundred people traveling in so many different ways. The Caravan automobiles were painted white on top in order to help distinguish Gaskin's busses from that of other caravans that were traveling across America at the time. The busses that were apart of Gaskin's caravan had the slogan "Out to Save the World." Americans were in awe of the Caravan. Policemen welcomed the caravan, rural

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 10.

Americans were shocked by the Caravan, and even the famous newscaster Walter Cronkite addressed the hippie caravan during one of his CBS broadcasts.<sup>133</sup>

In 1971 the Caravan continued across America. It began to not only stop at churches, but also went on a speaking tour on college campuses. The purpose was no longer to simply speak at congregations, but also to spread their ideas among various college campuses. As time went on the Caravan was joined by other young members who were looking for this type of community. It was upon the Caravan's arrival back to San Francisco that so many members understood what their next step would have to be, to create a community.<sup>134</sup>

When the Caravan members returned to California it was evident that they needed to make the next steps to becoming a community. Members decided to pool their money together in order to buy land. It was hard to find land in California for very cheap and many other groups like those from the Caravan had settled in California so the group looked elsewhere. They settled on the idea of Tennessee where land could be bought in abundance for very cheap. The location of the Farm is very peculiar because it is lying close to a scattered Amish settlement, but is also less than forty miles away from the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan. However, a group of Gaskin followers arrived at the Martin Farm in Summertown, Tennessee and it was there that they put a down payment on the Black Swan Ranch which had about 1,050 acres of land.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Jim Windolf, "Sex, Drugs, and Soybeans" *Hive (Vanity Fair)* (April 2005)  
<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2007/05/thefarm200705>

<sup>134</sup> "The Farm Community" *The Farm*. Accessed Last: May 6th, 2017. <http://www.thefarm.org>

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

The Black Swan Ranch was south of Nashville and it was there that the Farm Community was founded. The Farm was founded with the purest intentions. Those who joined the Farm cared for one another, fed one another, helped cloth and provide shelter all for one another. It was these morals of the group that made the Farm became known as a religious commune. Those who were apart of the commune referenced the Book of Acts, which is is the fifth book of the New Testament and explains the Christian church and spreads the message of the Roman Empire, and often presented this ideal to their Tennessee neighbors so that they would understand the pure goals of the commune and not categorize it as a dirty hippie group with poor drug habits.<sup>136</sup> It was the goal of the Farm to change the world and they saw their new home in Tennessee as the promise land. It was on this land they would be able to build their dreams of a functioning commune. Throughout the years The Farm did not only change the world, but the world helped change The Farm and over its long history it grew to truly resemble the various members that called The Farm home.<sup>137</sup>

In order for the Farm to be successful those living there needed to give their full attention and commitment to the community that they were responsible for building. There were only two types of people living in the Farm those that had the plan of making it their home, and the others who were passing the Farm as it grew to become something of great importance. Those who were on their way to be enlightened began to learn the importance and virtues of hard work, working land, and becoming a community. The

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<sup>136</sup> Douglas Stevenson. *The Farm: Then and Now, A Model for Sustainable Living* (Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2014).

<sup>137</sup> "The Farm Community" *The Farm*. Accessed Last: May 6th, 2017. <http://www.thefarm.org>

Farm became a hotbed of activity for its members who were responsible for doing all of the the things that make a community work and be able to move forward. In order to join the Farm members were ushered to the Gate. At the Gate the first agreement was made by hopeful member if these potential members sane and were curious about the Farm they were able to stay for three days time. After the three days potential members were asked if they wanted to continue to take the steps to become a member of the Farm, is so they were allowed to stay and if not they were asked to leave the community. In order to become a true member it was necessary to sign a vow of poverty, accept Stephen Gaskin as your teacher, and turn over your money and belongings to the group which, like a all communes, was built on sharing.<sup>138</sup>

The population of the Farm grew very quickly. By 1980, the population was over twelve hundred people. In order to continue to survive the Farm needed to make adjustment. Between the years of 1971 and 1983 the Farm was a traditional community in every sense. The Farm had a traditional communal economy meaning that it was a self-sufficient community. However, their finances were very unstable and there was a serious financial crisis that occurred thirteen years after the development of The Farm that forced the community to reorganize itself in order to survive. Nowadays, community members can find work in the neighboring communities and each member must pay monthly dues that contribute to upkeep of the community. The monthly rates are usually between seventy-five and one hundred and twenty-five dollars and are based on a budget that the community drafts each year. Nowadays the community describes itself as a

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<sup>138</sup> Jim Windolf, "Sex, Drugs, and Soybeans" *Hive (Vanity Fair)* (April 2005)

“cooperative enterprises of family and friends living on three square miles in southern middle Tennessee.”<sup>139</sup>

### **Twin Oaks**

Twin Oaks is another example of a hippie commune that began during the years of 1968 and 1972. Twin Oaks had a very different start than the Farm, but it is still considered a hippie commune. Twin Oaks was developed because a group of Americans did not like the way things were setup in the larger Americas society due to social and cultural events going on at the time, and they were inspired by all of those Americans who were receding from the society and creating their own communities. Although it is harder to see the connection between Twin Oaks and the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood compared to the Farm, it did, like all hippie communes, it was influenced by the neighborhood and the overall hippie movement because members were inspired to change their community and make it look how they visioned. Like the Farm, Twin Oaks still exists today.

Twin Oaks was founded by a group of Americans who had been studying the work of B.F. Skinner. Skinner was a popular American psychologist who spent part of his career working at Harvard University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as the Edgar Peirce Professor of Psychology. He became well known for his studies and work dedicated to behavioral psychology. In 1948, Skinner wrote a book titled *Walden Two*. The work, *Walden Two*, was named after Henry David Thoreau’s earlier work *Walden*. Thoreau’s work, originally published in 1854, is a reflection of simple living in nature.

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<sup>139</sup> Jim Windolf, “Sex, Drugs, and Soybeans” *Hive (Vanity Fair)* (April 2005)

The book provides the details that Thoreau experienced as he lived in the nature surroundings Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts for little over two years. However, in the book he compresses this two year experience into one single calden year and uses the four seasons to symbolize his human development during the experience. Skinner wrote his own version of the text in 1945, seven years after publishing *Behavior of Organisms*, where he reported research on the principles used to design a community.<sup>140</sup>

It was B.F. Skinner's vision to see the principals from his first book to be experimented with, but there never really was an opportunity to do so. Skinner was simply guessing the effects that his principles would have on a community. He was unable to really infer or predict what a ten-year community would look if it was created with his principles in mind. Skinner writes, "*Walden Two* was not by any means the first Utopia to minimize punitive control, but it was, I believe, the first to offer substantial scientific evidence of the feasibility of alternative methods. It was not only a plea of love against war, it offered concrete suggestions about how a way of life might be made to work without punishment."<sup>141</sup> Whether or not this sort of life was feasible remained to be determined and that was until the Twin Oaks community was created.

Twin Oaks was founded by a small group of Americans after they had read and researched the work by Skinner. The group built their alternative community, which they named Twin Oaks, in Louisa, Virginia in 1967. Twin Oak became a real life model for *Walden Two*. This group of people was thoroughly impressed by his community that they

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<sup>140</sup> Kathleen Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community*. VII.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, VII-VIII.

wanted to create a real-life experiment to see if this sort of community could work and support a group of them. The original idea of making the ideas from *Walden Two* come to life came from a conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan. For many of those at the conference they thought it would be too expensive and difficult to create this alternative community. But, for a few of those at the conference were so inspired by “Walden Two” that they had no desire to go back to normal life, and felt confident in being able to create something like it. It was these people who saw so many things wrong within American society that they decided it would be better for them to try to fix these problems in a smaller alternative community.<sup>142</sup>

Those in Ann Arbor were able to secure the land from a supporter of the alternative community. The supporter released the land for the commune for three years for only fifty dollars. At the end of the three years the commune had an option to buy the land if the group was still in existence. By the end of those three years Twin Oaks was still in existence and the group opted to purchase the land for good. This is how we come to know the Twin Oaks community. It was established on a 123 acre tobacco farm. The farm was located near a small town in Virginia and was far away from any large city. One couple who joined Twin Oaks was Rudy, and his wife, Dusty. The young couple made the move to Virginia from Atlanta. They were joined by Kathleen, Susan, George, and two others who had arrived from Washington. They settled on the 123 acre farm and called it home on June 16th, 1967. They described it as an energetic spot with a buoyant spirit. Since the beginning of the construction of this alternative community their way of

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 93.

life has reflected the group's core values: cooperation, sharing, nonviolence, equality, and ecology. It was clear among the group members that there would be no group religion because their beliefs are diverse. There were no central leaders, and they governed themselves in the form of a democracy. Responsibility was shared among members who come in the form of various managers, planners, and committee members.<sup>143</sup>

At three months in the community was explored by the author Richard Fairfield. Fairfield was involved with the experimental and intentional community movement since 1966.<sup>144</sup> Fairfield was approached by Penguin Books to write a paperback book about communes. Consequently, this sparked Fairfield's interest in visiting communes and telling their stories as he saw them. Twin Oaks was one of those communes.

As stated above, Richard Fairfield read *Walden Two* prior to visiting Twin Oaks. While he read *Walden Two* he described the book as turning him on because it was a “composite of many previous utopian visions - communal dining, egalitarian economics, professional child-rearing, labor credit system, and so on.”<sup>145</sup> Through research Fairfield learned that a Walden Two community was being created just outside the nation’s capital. Fairfield visited the Virginian community in 1966, which was merely a home in a poor part of Virginia. There were only about two members, one who was Kathleen Kinkade, and a few boarders, all were paying the same for rent and food. It became the goal of these few members to find a new and larger location preferably in the country.<sup>146</sup> After

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<sup>143</sup> Ron E. Roberts, *The New Communes: Coming Together in America*. 90-95.

<sup>144</sup> Richard Fairfield, *Communes USA: A Personal Tour*. 5.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

Kathleen and George, one of the first members, attended the conference in Michigan they were able to gain support from a few other people and secure the 123 acres in Virginia.

Fairfield visited the community for a second time in August 1967, just two months after it was created.<sup>147</sup> Much of what Fairfield knew about the community was learned through an interview with Kathleen during his visit. During this interview Kathleen describes the community as being in it “honeymoon state.”<sup>148</sup> The problems are minimal, but there are still serious threats to the stability of the community. She also described daily life at Twin Oaks and the work of the members. Three years later another interview occurred between the two. At this point the community had grown substantially. There was an average of fifteen members per month in 1968. However, these numbers decreased in 1969. But, then they jumped to twenty-five in 1970, and by the end of December beginning of January 1971 they were up to thirty-one members. Members also considered the community to be financially stable at this time.<sup>149</sup> But, the major problem was that Twin Oaks was unable to afford things outside of what the commune needed therefore members were not granted the opportunity to do the things they would like during their free time. This cause and effect relationship resulted in a constant conversation of standard of living versus growth among members at Twin Oaks.<sup>150</sup>

It was during this second interview that Kathleen Kinkade discussed the effect of people leaving the commune. Members of the community that leave Twin Oaks, left because they never intended on staying. These people differ greatly from other members

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 79.

like Kinkade, who intend to be lifelong members. In 1973, Kinkade wrote in her own book, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community*, “I can write about Twin Oaks because I was one of the people who founded it in 1967 and because I have lived here for all of its five years and expect to be here for the rest of my life.”<sup>151</sup> When a member of Twin Oaks chose to leave the community it resulted in a negative impact on the morale of the overall commune.<sup>152</sup> However, life at Twin Oaks must go on for the majority of its members and that is what it did.

Amos, whose last name was not revealed, was a young member of Twin Oaks. Amos was was a drug addict who found refuge at Twin Oaks. He described himself as finding something to do while at Twin Oaks. He found a job where he canned beans and it felt useful to him, it also was not difficult for him. Amos explains how really found at Twin Oaks was a community in which he felt he belonged. He said, “it’s a healthy place. People give a shit. I hear a lot of talk about how we're not close, loving, caring kind of group , but what I will say is, we’re the closest, most loving, most caring group I ever had anything to do with without being ridiculous about it.”<sup>153</sup> The example of Amos helps to describe the experiences of so many others who joined commune. They all wanted to be apart of something greater than themselves and apart of something they believed in. This is why there was such a spark in the number of communes from the years 1968 to 1972.

Nowadays, this community is economically self-supporting and partly self-sufficient. The members share an income and each member is responsible for

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<sup>151</sup> Kathleen Kinkade, *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community*. 3.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 10.

working forty-two hours a week in the community's business and domestic areas in order for the community to work. Each member of the community is provided housing, food, healthcare, and, even, a portion of spending money from the community.<sup>154</sup> Twin Oaks sells hammocks and casual furniture to help support itself financially. They have also started selling tofu, indexing books, and started growing and selling seeds. However, less than half of the work that the members of Twin Oaks complete goes into these income-producing activities.<sup>155</sup> The rest of the work goes into a variety of tasks that benefit the quality of life for the members for example milking cows, gardening, cooking, and childcare. What both Richard Fairfield's and Kathleen Kinkade's literary pieces show us is that there was a real need for people to find a place that gave them a feeling of belongingness. According to Fairfield, Twin Oaks "offers an alternative to working for the military-industrial complex, an alternative to aggressive, violent, and destructive opposition to the system."<sup>156</sup> It is a form of revolution to drop out of the larger society and truly belong to a community

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<sup>154</sup> "Twin Oaks Community" *Twin Oaks*. Last Accessed: May 6th, 2017.  
<https://www.twinoaks.org>.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Richard Fairfield, *Communes USA: A Personal Tour*. 100.

## **Conclusion:**

There is a long history of communes, and alternative communities, in America. There have been and will forever be numerous communes that exist in America. However, there is a noticeable nationwide revival of communes that occurred between the years of 1968 and 1972. All of the sudden there were hundreds and thousands of communes developing in all parts of the nation. The revival of communes during this time period was the result of many Americans feeling a strong absence of community in America and frustrations over violence during the 1960s due to political and cultural events. These Americans were inspired by the Beats, counterculture, and hip neighborhoods, like the Haight-Ashbury, to create alternative communities which would become known as hippie communes, the Farm and Twin Oaks are two examples of these types of these hippie communes.

## **Afterthoughts:**

The revival of communes was simply another chapter in the overall history of American communes. Not many historians have dedicated much time to this section of history for various reasons. Personally, I believe that the history of hippie communes is not studied by many because it is a history that looks at a very specific group of people. The Americans that sparked the revival of communes, the ones I have been studying for this year, all are very similar. These people are generally white Americans who were apart of the middle class, went to college, and would go on to live rather normal lives. These people tended to not be part of minorities, or experience any particular hardships because of their skin color or socioeconomic status. That being said, these are general

statements and are not true for all who were apart of this revival. But, it is important to acknowledge that these statements are true for many who were apart of the revival.

It is the people that sparked the revival that are so interesting and make this moment in history so important for historians to study. These Americans were pioneers in many ways. They each set off to create something new, something that was bigger than themselves. To do this they needed to be dedicated, committed, and care about others almost more than they cared about themselves. For many of us, this kind of thinking is impossible. As I studied these people and read about their experiences I was humbled. I began to understand how much power each American has. I learned that each American can impact the overall history of America by just being themselves and doing what they love.

For a year, I studied people who so badly wanted to connect with others, who wanted to be different, but also accepted, and who fell in love with ideas of creating homes with their friends. I was able to relate to these people and I inspired by them. One of the greatest things I learned about was soul. I read about how these people found soul as they looked within themselves and their society and asked themselves what positive changes they could make. I loved reading the personal accounts about people finding soul because it inspired me to find soul within my own life. Having soul is about enjoying every part of something no matter what it throws at you and it is about being in the moment. Having soul is amazing, however many ignore it. After reading about the Beats and reading their works I felt like I could relate to these people and their characters. I too

question my place in society, and I too am constantly looking for ways to better my personal relationships. I too want my life to be a journey.

This history provoked my thoughts for a year. The process of writing this thesis was not easy. However, I do not want to let it go. As I reflect on the process I think that I would have approached some things differently. For example, I think I would try to look back on the attitudes of the 1960s and really try to understand that shift that occurred after the assassination of President Kennedy. I believe that when President Kennedy, and then Martin Luther King, Jr., and other major politicians were killed the country was in a state of mourning and blindly moving forward. The shifts that occurred in the late 1960s were very dramatic and show true emotion.

I found comfort in this history. It influenced me and helped me understand what I value in life. It is for all of these reasons that I think this history, and many other smaller histories, need to be looked at and then closely studied. We do not need huge history books on these small moments in time, but we need people to look at them and learn from them. We need to discuss these histories and allow ourselves to be impressed with the people who did these things. It is our responsibility to reflect on these moments in history so that we, Americans, can grow in the future.

## Coda:

One way you can make yourself better is to assume that you're perfect. "Perfect" is a matter of potential as well as stasis, because each one of us is perfect in motion. (A seed is not imperfect because it's not a tree already.) The higher doctrine of perfection (invented by my friend Ed Gilmore) says: 'If I draw a circle, it may not be a perfect circle, but it is a perfect whatever-it-is.' That's especially true for us-each one of us is a perfect whatever-we-are. Being perfect includes the power to change as well as the desire to. Assuming that you're perfect means assuming that you can change (that which is changeable), and that you can become whoever you think you ought to be. (Thoughts of perfection can be dangerous if you think it mean that you're so perfect that you don't have to consider change. Change also takes great, pure effort, like most worthwhile things.) It's important not to obsess on your magic too closely but if you are serious about change, don't be afraid to look at yourself in the mirror either, or to listen to your friends. Our culture has a horror of mirrors, and they put it on you that anytime you look in a mirror, there's something you're supposed to feel guilty about. But that's not true. A mirror is a very good and accurate tool. It shows you, on the physical level, what you look like. You really ought to know how you look at that level-just for yourself. Then keep in mind that everyone is beautiful if they have the juice turned on ... It doesn't have anything to do with the meat part. Everyone is beautiful if they're lit up, because that's what beauty is - being lit up from within.<sup>157</sup>

As I read this passage for the first time I felt different from the passages start to its conclusion. This is a passage from a manuscript of a few of Stephen Gaskin's lectures. Stephen Gaskin was the founder of the Farm, a hippie commune in Tennessee. Prior to the creation of the Farm, Gaskin led spiritual lectures in the hippie neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco. These lectures were called Monday Night Class. After reading this passage I took out my journal and reread the quote. I wrote the quote neatly word-for-word in my journal.

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<sup>157</sup> Stephen Gaskin, *Monday Night Class*. (Summertown, Tennessee: Book Pub. 2005.) 82-82.

This particular passage from the manuscript makes me feel at ease. This feeling differs from the usual feeling of anxiety that grows within me as I think about myself and my place in the world. I allow myself to smile and think about the idea that “I am a perfect whatever-I-am.” The passage makes me reflect on some of the things my friends have told me in the past that I chose to ignore. Briefly, I understand the true value of what my friends say to me, and I am filled with happiness with the ways they encourage me. Later that day when I go back to my bedroom I look in the mirror. I study myself and think that I am perfect. I see changes within myself and understand that what I am looking at is not the final draft.

These feelings stay with me until there is another moment of self-doubt, or until I allow someone else's opinions matter more than my own. This could happen within an hour or could be held off for a week. However, when these feelings occur they hurt so much. They create dark thoughts that leave me feeling alone, helpless, and unable to recover. A little voice in my head reminds me to look in my journal for those words from the Monday Night Class. I open the journal and reread the passage another time. I reread it until it sparks those happier thoughts in my mind. Then, I force myself to open new books, have new experiences, and to learn more about myself. It's a process. The process is constant, day by day I build myself up and begin to have a greater understanding of my surroundings.

It is these reflective practices that began my curiosity of the actual emotions of being at one of Stephen Gaskin's lectures at Monday Night Class. I wonder how a young woman in the late 1960s would respond to hearing this passage. Would she use it to help

guide her, as I have? Would she have feelings of hope, as I did? Would it make her frustrations subside, and allow her to feel at ease? I will never know these answers.

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