The Hills are Alive:
Summer Arts and Culture in Aspen from 1880 to 1980

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Introduction

On a quiet day in 1939, two ski-toting visitors from Washington D.C. arrived at the Paepckes' ranch in Colorado Springs, Colorado, to find a house full of water and confusion. The pipes had burst. Elizabeth [1] and Walter Paepcke owned the ranch, known as Perry Park, and realized that this water dilemma would prevent their two guests from staying at their place. Elizabeth knew that the visitors wanted to ski and recalled that another friend had told her about Aspen's skiing possibilities. While Walter stayed behind at the ranch, Elizabeth and her visitors traveled from Denver to Glenwood Springs on a train, and then, from Glenwood Springs, drove to Aspen in a snowstorm. They arrived around midnight and spent the night in the Hotel Jerome, an old and dilapidated piece of housing that had been quite brilliant in Aspen's heyday. After spending a night in the drafty rooms, they left early in the morning to ski. They hitched a ride with some miners, and halfway up to the backside of Ajax Mountain, they popped on their skis and proceeded to experience the unpacked snow of the mountainside.

This moment defined significant change for Aspen. Elizabeth returned home after three days in Aspen and tried to persuade Walter to visit the town in the summertime, when the temperature would rise considerably on the ranch. Walter proved less than anxious to visit Aspen, however, and refused to journey to the little town. WWII ceased any discussion of a trip to Aspen, but

[1] Elizabeth was also known as "Pussy." During Elizabeth's childhood, her mother gave her this nickname because of her fluffy hair that resembled a cat's soft coat. Walter liked the nickname and so continued it into Elizabeth's adulthood. Paul Anderson, "An Incredible Life: Elizabeth Paepcke at 90," Aspen Times, 22-23 Aug. 1992.

after the war, Paepcke decided that he indeed wanted to visit the once-prosperous silver mining town. With his first visit, Paepcke began to extract Aspen from its sleepy quiet years and initiate its ascent as a burgeoning cultural mecca.[2]

Beginnings

Before Paepcke arrived, Aspen had already experienced a cultural life during the late nineteenth century, when it earned its place as one of the most prosperous silver mining towns in the West. By the early 1880s, Aspen had opened its doors to theatre and culture. In 1881, the "Theater Comique" welcomed sparring and wrestling matches among its early repertoire. In mining camps, the synonymous theatre and opera house composed an integral part of life among the inhabitants. As Malcolm Rohrbough asserts, "The theater...was a symbol by which the camp established its identity and documented its growth." The structure of the Theatre Comique "became a benchmark in the town's progress and performance. The construction of a permanent building transformed the theatre from a vehicle of entertainment...into a symbol of civic pride."[3] The people of Aspen built the opera house out of self-confidence and the house, in turn, encouraged further pride and entertainment. Corkhill's Opera House opened in December of 1881 and by the summer of the following year, it "had established itself as a stop on the touring circuit." The tour offered musicians from the Denver Opera House, who performed fourteen musical numbers and

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[2] Kathleen Krieger Daily and Gaylord T. Guenin, "Elizabeth Paepcke," Aspen the Quiet Years, Aspen, Co.: Red Ink Inc., 1994, 550-552, and Elizabeth Paepcke, Memories of Aspen, 4, Elizabeth Paepcke Biography File, Aspen Historical Society.

[3] Malcolm J. Rohrbough, Aspen: The History of a Silver Mining Town, 1879-1893, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, 46.

played glasses, instruments, and anvils.[4]

In addition to the entertainment of the Opera House, the townspeople sometimes used their leisure time in more intellectual ways. Mrs. Henry Gillespie, Margaret Cowenhoven, and Katy Cowenhoven founded the weekly Aspen Literary Society in 1881. High attendance and participation at the public programs proved its success. Mrs. Gillespie and the female Cowenhovens, along with 13 other women, established a sabbath school and a literary paper and organized dances, musicals and events at which they would prepare creative meals for the townspeople. This participation in the camp, along with the many other social events year-round, reflects the pride the residents felt for their mining town. As Rohrbough states, "These individuals and families proclaimed to themselves and to the world a quality of life that made the new mining camp of Aspen a place where progressive people could lead civilized, cultured lives."[5] As life in Aspen prospered, Aspenites grew increasingly proud of their situation and felt eager to boast, both to themselves and to others around them.

As Aspen's cultural life grew, the little camp transformed into a larger and more successful town. The riches swelled, more people came to settle, and cultural acts and activities multiplied. Aspen's wealth led to the arrival of the first pianos in 1885 and to an increase in both local talent and imported professionals.[6] To satisfy the demand of both the townspeople and the artists, Aspen needed a larger opera house. The smaller ones

[4] Ibid, 47.
[5] Ibid, 28, 46, 49.
[6] Ibid, 126.

had been satisfactory, but the people wanted more. The man who would give it to them had arrived only a few years earlier.

Jerome B. Wheeler was born in 1841 in Troy, New York, and eventually married Harriet Macy Valentine, the niece of Randolph H. Macy, the founder of Macy's department store. Between 1877-1879, three of the company partners died and Wheeler split the Macy's stock with his cousin Charles B. Webster. In 1883, Wheeler arrived in Aspen and soon bought two lots on the corner of Mill and Cooper, where he opened Aspen's first bank, J.B. Wheeler and Company. The same year he arrived, Wheeler bought the Spar mine and four years later, brought the railroad to Aspen. He had already significantly contributed to the growth and prosperity of the town, but in 1889, he opened the Hotel Jerome on the corner of Mill and Main Street and completed the Wheeler Opera House. These two additions would cause the town to grow even more, and would pull it through the quiet years of the near future. Rohrbough states the reason behind Wheeler's generosity:

> Every successful mining city could boast of a brick hotel and an opera house. The leading figure in the development of the city often built the opera house as a token of appreciation for his good fortune. Horace A.W. Tabor had done so in Leadville and Denver.[7]

Like Tabor, Wheeler wanted to thank Aspen for the prosperity he had enjoyed as a resident of the town. He had made some money from his bank and mines and this was a way in which he could give something back to the townspeople and increase his own wealth. The hotel provided a place for visitors to stay while they enjoyed the town, but the Wheeler Opera House provided something permanent residents could enjoy all year, and when it opened, Aspen

[7] Ibid, 168.

residents rejoiced.

On April 20, 1889, the Aspen Daily Times, one of Aspen's three daily papers, presented an article in preparation for the opening of the Wheeler Opera House a few days later. It described the ticket prices as a "very reasonable" two and a half dollars, and stated that the seats would "doubtless all be sold by this evening."[8] The tickets did sell quickly and by the day of the opening night, the town and paper could not contain the excitement. That day, in an article entitled, "The Opening Night: Scenes That Will Burst Upon the Vision at the Wheeler Opera House," the Times described the emotions of the town: "The opening of the Wheeler Opera House to-night by the Conreid Opera Company, with the 'King's Fool,' will be one of the most notable events in the history of Aspen's most eventful year." It continued with a detailed description of the house and portrayed the awesome sight that greeted its patrons:

> ...The chandelier is the crowning glory of this beautiful house, being of hammered brass, hand made, trimmed with silver and set with three dozen incandescent lights, each with an opalescent shade, flaring out at the end in the form of a flower. These lights are so regulated that their strength can be increased or decreased as the scene may require, by ingenious apparatus on the stage.[9]

Clearly people of the town felt pride and excitement in their new opera house. It attracted top touring companies and held a beauty that other opera houses could not claim. The following day, the Times reported that eight hundred satisfied people attended the opening performance, "a picture," the paper proclaimed, "such as

[8] Aspen Daily Times, 20 April 1889, 4.

[9] Ibid, 23 April 1889, 4.

would be looked for in New York, but scarcely in Aspen."[10] Aspen could not claim a population equal to New York, but it could boast that its culture rivaled that of the Big Apple.

In the years between the opening of the Wheeler Opera House and 1894, both local and visiting talent offered Aspen such entertaining performances as musicals, burlesque, Shakespeare, comic opera, concerts, vaudeville, minstrels, and boxers.[11] The town enjoyed its cultural aspects as much as it did its mining ones. While Aspen gained a reputation as a cultural attraction of Colorado, it also grew in people and popularity, and by 1893 only Denver and Leadville exceeded it in size. The progressive little city contained a post office, three banks, a city hall, a jail, a courthouse, three daily newspapers, a hospital, an hotel, paved streets, a municipal water system, a municipal streetcar system two miles long, and two electric light and power companies.[12] The town had grown quickly and magnificently in the short time it had existed. The town's prosperity resulted in a burgeoning culture, which pulled more admirers into town. The Wheeler Opera House both sparked and reflected Aspen's pride.

In 1893, the crash in silver prices drove Aspenites out of their town towards the bigger cities where more plentiful jobs awaited. Most of the miners and their families left as Aspen settled into its "Quiet Years." Arts and culture followed Aspen's inhabitants into this slumber that would last for more than 50 years, but it seemed to perish altogether with two fires that struck the Wheeler Opera House in 1912. Some stated that "lighted

[10] Ibid, 24 April 1889, 4.

[11] Bertha Louise Shaw, "History of the Wheeler Opera House, Aspen, Co, 1889-199," M.A. Thesis, Western State College of Colorado, 1965.

[12] Rohrbough, 15.

matches or cigarette stumps" caused the first fire, while others blamed faulty wiring. Most believed that arsonists set the second fire, however, and called them "fiendish firebugs."[13] Regardless of why the perpetrators set the fire, they succeeded in destroying most of the opera house and along with it, strong symbols of the prosperous days two decades previous. The town would not experience similar times again until the Paepckes' arrival, although during the "quiet years," the townspeople enjoyed picnics, dances, and their new Isis Theatre.

The Resurgence of Culture

When businessman Walter Paepcke arrived in Aspen in 1945, he immediately realized its opportunities as a business venture. As he toured the town, he noticed that it needed development and business. The dilapidated houses spoke to his insight and he saw the lowly-populated town as a new beginning, a fresh start where he could shape it to his vision of a prosperous cultured attraction. His image of a perfect community led him to buy a piece of property:

> I saw Aspen for the first time at noon of Decoration Day, 1945. By 5 p.m. I had bought a house. I had seen other ghost towns. There are plenty of them in the West. But only Aspen had the atmosphere, the physical evidence of a community such as I had visualized.[14]

Paepcke did not accurately describe Aspen's status when he labeled it a "ghost town;" it did contain inhabitants. Yet before the end of the first day he had ever visited Aspen, Paepcke knew he had found his town. His wife, Elizabeth, did not share his

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[13] Aspen Democrat Times, 13 Nov. 1912, 21 Nov. 1912.

[14] Charles Leavelle. "Design for Real Living Found by Chicagoan in Ghost City He Revived," 1947, Walter Paepcke Biography File, AHS.

excitement. When he told her he had bought a house, she cried, and thought only that it was yet another place to care for and clean along with her other responsibilities to an apartment in Chicago, an estate in Sandwich, Illinois, the ranch in Colorado Springs, and their three children. She later stated that she had felt so overwhelmed that she "could have shot Walter; instead I burst into tears."[15] Gradually Elizabeth's feelings changed, however, as she realized that Aspen provided her with her true home.

By September, Walter had bought a few more properties for himself, one of which included "Sardy's," the town hardware store. He also listed 14 ways in which he could further change Aspen for the better. Some of the points included: restoring the Hotel Jerome, creating a laundry, purchasing a fire truck, and installing a sewage system.[16] Some of his ideas worked, while others clearly failed. For example, Walter offered free paint for the home of any Aspen resident, with the understanding that Herbert Bayer, an artist and lover of bright hues, would choose the color of each home. Conflicting reports say that either one person or no one accepted the offer; the residents knew Bayer's taste in paint. Elizabeth attributed the lack of excitement for the idea to stubbornness:

> ...the American is an individualist who likes to make his own choices, especially if he lives in one of our peculiarly independent western states. No city-slicker was going to blow into Aspen and tell...the Aspen citizen what was good taste or bad...Who did Paepcke

[15] Loren Jenkins, "Elizabeth Paepcke: The Conscience of Aspen," Aspen Magazine, Midsummer 1990.

[16] Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "The Way It Was ...and the Way It Is," The Aspen Times, 21 Aug. 1975.

think he was? God?[17]

Elizabeth was probably correct in her assertion that the townspeople did not entirely trust Paepcke and his "city-slicker" ways. One resident felt that Paepcke had been "a little bit underhanded in a way that he didn't say, 'Look, I'm buying everything.' I think there was a motive there; I mean he made money on the deal."[18] Others also felt anger and resentment towards the new-comers and it showed in their refusal to obey his commands. They could not prevent him from buying property, but they did not have to agree to Bayer's paint colors on their homes.

Paepcke did not let some of the townspeople's feelings stop him. In 1946, he leased the Hotel Jerome from Laurence Elisha and subsequently closed it for remodeling for the first time in 35 years. The same year, he leased the Wheeler Opera House and closed it for remodeling. The Aspen Times declared that "Aspenites and former Aspenites who can remember the Wheeler as it used to be may once again be privileged to sit and listen to the lines and music of topranking artists."[19] Clearly the town began to accept Paepcke and the wonderful advancements he could offer.

Whether the townspeople liked the Paepckes or not, all agreed that they radiated strength, decisiveness, and confidence. The couple busied themselves improving the town in a quiet manner, buying a piece of property here, interior designing another there. Some people based their opinions of the couple on looks alone. Peggy Clifford and John Smith described Walter as "A medium, sharp-featured man with calm, blue eyes, who always looked a

[17] Elizabeth Paepcke, "Memories of Aspen," n.d., Elizabeth Paepcke Biography File, AHS.

[18] Peggy Rowland, interview by Jon Coleman, May 1995, tape recording, AHS.

[19] The Aspen Times, 27 Mar. 1947.

little awkward when he smiled..." They also assert that it was his confidence that alienated some folks in the the town:

> His confidence in his right to do what he did never faltered. Indeed, it sometimes seemed to verge on arrogance. It was natural that his manner - cool and sure - alienated some Aspen residents. What they thought, he knew. Where they hesitated, he moved forward, seemingly unruffled by occasional community indignation, seemingly amused when - during a birthday party at the renovated Wheeler Opera House -one lady said, 'To Walter P. Possible who has made everything in Aspen Paepcke.'[20]

While residents appreciated what he done to the town, they resented the change from the quiet days they had known. Walter had indeed made everything in Aspen possible, but as the woman noted, he also made everything Paepcke. It was his town. Some described him as both an arrogant and shy man who "believed that he could make Aspen pure...He wanted to remake America, to turn it away from things and back to ideas."[21] This would be the impetus for the music festival that would boost and change Aspen beyond Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke's fantasies.

A Pre-festival

As noted earlier, Aspen's cultural history originated with the town's creation. Walter Paepcke did not bring culture to Aspen, he reignited it. And although his music festival would spark that ignition, there had been a small festival in 1948, the year before he organized the Goethe Bicentennial. The Aspen Times first remarked on the event in April of 1948, stating that native Aspenite "ladies" who wished to remain anonymous suggested at a

[20] Peggy Clifford and John M. Smith, Aspen/Dreams and Dilemmas: Love Letter to a Small Town, Chicago: The Swallow Press Inc., 1970, 44, 46.

[21] Peggy Clifford, To Aspen and Back: An American Journey, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980, 59.

recent tea party that the town have an Aspen Summer Festival. The other women who attended agreed and "enthusiastically received" the idea. By April 15, Mrs. William Shaw and Mrs. Frank Willoughby had revealed their identities and announced that the summer program tentatively included Carl Sandburg, a Haitian drummer, a couple who would perform Native American history, a violinist, a pianist, a harpist, and Mr. and Mrs. Dyer-Bennett, key organizers of the event. The paper did not mention the Paepckes. The event opened on July 9, 1948, when Reginald and Gladys Laubin, supposed honorary members of the Lakota tribe, appeared in the Wheeler to perform "colorful and informative recitals of Indian dances, music and lore."[22] This event did not create the grand production that the Paepckes' music festival would, but it shows that once Aspen had become an active town again, people grew anxious to renew the popular culture that the town had known at the end of the 19th century. People wanted the Goethe Bicentennial.

The Goethe Bicentennial and Music Convocation

The women of Aspen had planned <u>their</u> Aspen Summer Festival only a few months before it occurred. Walter Paepcke, whose father was German, grew up reading the works of Goethe and so had wanted his celebration for several years. He had known that Aspen would provide the site since he had first visited. In December 1948, <u>The Aspen Times</u> announced, "Goethe Bicentennial Plans Making Headway," and used the opportunity to explain that Johann Van Goethe had penned "more than 80 volumes of poetry drama, novels and literary and scientific writings," works that had made a

[22] <u>Aspen Times</u>, 1 Apr., 15 Apr., 8 July 1948.

"timeless contribution...to Western ideas and thoughts."[23] This short biography of Goethe did not help the townspeople understand their connection to him or why they would celebrate him. To prepare the town for the Goethe Bicentennial and Music Festival, The Aspen Times ran a series of "Who Is This Man Goethe" articles, which didn't seem to help: even after the festival, Aspenites did not understand why the celebration had occurred.[24] As the event drew closer, however, residents became more excited and looked forward to the event that would offer Herbert Hoover as the honorary chairman, and included Albert Schweitzer, Jose Ortega y Gasset, Thomas Mann, the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, and singers from the Metropolitan Opera.

Supposedly, Paepcke could not afford a permanent auditorium and so settled for a tent in which the festival would take place. He hired the architects, Saarinen and Saarinen, to design a canvas tent that he could use again once the celebration finished.[25] Saarinen and Saarinen finished the Aspen Amphitheatre in July of 1949, and many described it as a circus tent:

> Yes, the finest circus tent you ever saw. The only part that is not a permanent instillation is the huge canvas top that can be stored away for the winter in a safe dry place until next summer. Heavy winter snows in Aspen makes for a permanent cover for the Amphitheatre impractical, so, the idea for a removable top is mighty good judgment, we think.[26]

The town grew more excited as the festival neared. The Aspen

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[23] Aspen Times, 2 Dec. 1948. For a detailed look at the Goethe-Aspen connection, see James Sloan Allen's The Romance of Commerce and Culture: Capitalism, Modernism, and the Chicago-Aspen Crusade for Cultural Reform, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, 187-189.

[24] "Who Is This Man Goethe?" Aspen Times, 31 Mar., 7 Apr., 14 Apr., 21 Apr. 1949.

[25] "Huge Tent for Goethe Convocation Being Built," Aspen Times, 12 May 1949.

[26] "Aspen Amphitheatre Completed This Week," Aspen Times, 23 June 1949.

Times followed every aspect of the festival and its preparation. Although some of the townspeople still had some misgivings, most of Aspen seemed anxious for the festival to begin. As the Bicentennial drew closer, more and more people rushed to Aspen to witness this highly publicized event. Collier's magazine reported on what it called, "Culture-Crazy Colorado:"

> This is the greatest swarm of culture addicts ever to invade the Wild West. Aspen, which has a population of around 2,500 is unable to put up with a fraction of them. Ranchers, resort operators and summer residents within a radius of 50 miles are providing beds and food, and are pledged to charge the lowest prices possible - $55 for 10 days, plus $2.50 a day for food. Concert and lecture tickets are included in this rate. The hotels and guesthouses are a little more expensive - $150 to $250 per person for the 10-day period, but this also includes meals, lodging and admission to concerts and lectures.[27]

Clearly the turnout both shocked and amazed the town. Residents could feel the pressure of the many people on their tiny town, but at the same time, it allowed them to capitalize on their position as the home of this famous event.

Albert Schweitzer

The Bicentennial included lectures and music by many famous people, but Albert Schweitzer was the man who interested everyone. He never had visited the U.S. before (and would never return), yet Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke lured him to Aspen in 1949. In The Quiet Years, a compilation of stories by Aspenites who lived through the period, Elizabeth states that she gave her husband the idea to have Schweitzer come to the Bicentennial. Walter offered him money to come to Aspen, but the doctor, too busy to leave his patients in Lambarene, Africa, declined. Walter then decided to

[27] Collier's, 9 July 1949.

donate 2 million francs ($6100) to his hospital there. Schweitzer accepted.[28]

Schweitzer's visit would not be easy for him. Before traveling to the U.S., he researched the location of Aspen in his old world Atlas, but failed to locate the town. Because the invitation had arrived through the University of Chicago, Schweitzer assumed Aspen was a suburb of the large metropolis. It was not until he arrived in New York that he learned the true location of the tiny town and realized that the altitude and long travel might jeopardize his health. Still he continued his journey.

Once on the "California Zephyr," the train from Chicago to California, Schweitzer and his wife had more difficulties to encounter. Due to snow, the train could not make it all the way to Glenwood Springs and so had to reverse the course back to Colorado Springs. Walter Paepcke left in the middle of the night to retrieve Schweitzer and when they finally arrived at the Paepcke's home, Pioneer Park, it was early morning. At 8 a.m, Dr. and Mrs. Schweitzer left the guest home, a carriage house, and approached the main house. At the same time, the pipes had burst and Walter and Elizabeth hurried to clean up the deluge of water in their home. Elizabeth still wore a bathrobe and curlers when she answered the Schweitzers' ring at the door. Elizabeth explained to the guests that the pipes had broken, to which Schweitzer replied in German, "I see, Mrs. Schweitzer and I are just in time to witness the second Flood."[29] Although Schweitzer

[28] Daily and Guenin, Aspen: The Quiet Years, 556. Allen H. Merriam, "Albert Schweitzer in Aspen," Colorado Heritage, Colorado Historical Society, 1986, 4.

[29] Allen, 187-189.

met these various difficulties, he did enjoy his time in the town. The nation focused on this visit to America and watched Aspen's cultural event closely. The American press loved Dr. Schweitzer, as did most of those around him. Fans constantly asked him for his autograph, to which he graciously complied, never refusing one. So many people followed him around, in fact, that The Aspen Times pleaded for everyone to leave him alone:

> We have a sure cure for most of the eager beavers swamping Dr. Schweitzer for autographs and that is charge from $10 to $25 per signature...For a man of his age and duties, Dr. Schweitzer should not be bothered with signing his name over and over again for curiosity seekers...Give the man a break, leave him alone to enjoy Aspen to the fullest for his heart is already under a severe strain because of the altitude.[30]

Clearly the Aspen Times thought in a way that would never occur to Schweitzer. He did not and would not charge for signing his name on a piece of paper. The newspaper made a good point, however, in drawing attention to the man's health. The altitude did put stress on his heart and he was happy to leave Aspen for that reason, although he enjoyed the beauty of the town very much. He admitted to Walter Paepcke that Aspen was "a little too near heaven for me."[31] He may have meant the altitude, but it is likely that he also referred to the beauty of the town.

Post-celebration

After the celebration and the visitors had left, the townspeople had a chance to reflect on the outcome of the event. It pleased many of them, but left others still wondering why it had occurred. The Saturday Evening Post remarked on these

[30] "Why Autographs?" Aspen Times, 7 July 1949.

[31] Allen, 187.

feelings:

> It would have been difficult to select a more highbrow event or one which, at first glance, would have been of less interest to the town. Aspenites shook their heads and muttered that they couldn't even pronounce Goethe's name, and wondered why they should have such a celebration shoved down their throats.[32]

Not all Aspenites felt this way, although the Aspen Times reported that some believed that the program could have offered more familiar music so as to be less "high hat."[33] Most, however, enjoyed the event enough to support its return the next year. After all, it lengthened the tourist season and offered an ideal climate for summer visitors. And even though the celebration lost $150,000, many of the people that had visited said that they would return the following year if Aspen held another festival.[34] Aspen welcomed the attention and the revenue.

The Music Festival and School

In addition to the various programs it offered, the Bicentennial marked the start of the Aspen Institute for the Humanities, a "defender of the humanities against science,...[and also] a champion of high culture against low, of the noble man's elegance against the mass man's sloth."[35] The celebration also initiated the Music School in Aspen, which would later draw some of the best musicians in the country. In the early years of the music festival, performers such as Igor Stravinsky, the Paganini

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[32] Joe Alex Morris, "The Cities of America: Aspen, Colorado," Saturday Evening Post, 14 Oct. 1950, 178.

[33] "What they think about Aspen Institute Programs," Aspen Times, 28 Sept. 1950.

[34] Sidney Hyman, The Aspen Idea, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975, 87.

[35] Allen, 217. For a thorough look at the Institute, see Allen's Romance, and Hyman's Idea.

String Quartet, the Julliard Quartet, the Alberneri Trio, and others made an appearance.[36] In these early days, the small audience gave a feeling of intimacy that could not be provided elsewhere. Jeanne Jaffe, a long-time resident of Aspen, expressed the enjoyment she would get at the music concerts:

> You'd go to a concert...and there'd be 15 people maybe. And they'd play music that was quite unknown that other big orchestras all over didn't play and I thought that was all very exciting.[37]

Others agreed. Attending a concert at that time filled participants with wonder and excitement. Alice Rachel Sardy, another long-time Aspenite remarked of the pleasure she gained in going to the concerts: "We would get season tickets into every concert and my son and daughter would go to concerts with me." She also recalled a time she attended a music concert during a rainstorm. The tent leaked and so the musicians had to stop until the rain subsided.[38] Even with minor setbacks, the festival still brought back happy memories.

Not only did the audience enjoy the music festival, but the performers did also. Adele Addison, a singer who joined the festival and school in 1957, described both Aspen and her participation in the event as "wonderful." She enjoyed the size of the audience and the closeness she felt with it when performing: "It was smaller. You'd look in the audience and you would see people from the post office, and what was then the market, Beck and Bishop's...You felt much more integrated into the

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[36] Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, "First Annual Report, In Memory of Walter Paepcke: 1950-1961," Walter Paepcke Biography File, AHS.

[37] Margit Stein and Jeanne Jaffe, interview by Judith Gertler, 19 Aug. 1992.

[38] Alice Rachel Sardy, interview by author, Tape Recording, Aspen, Co, 1 July 1996.

town."[39] An aspect that both participants and audiences appreciated, that close-knit feeling would not last long as Aspen's name grew. And as the festival became more world-renowned, problems with the Paepckes occurred.

The Music Associates of Aspen

During the early 1950s, the Music Festival and School felt the pressure of its greater international prominence. Walter Paepcke grew tired of competition from other cultural acts in town and wanted the townspeople to focus on the music festival. On August 30, 1954, Paepcke announced that he thought that the teachers and performers on the board of the Music Associates of Aspen should "consider organizing themselves to take over the complete responsibilities, administrative, artistic, academic and financial, which had been largely his own the past five years..." He stated that he would cover the 1954 deficit to support them and added that the musicians would have "free use" of both the Wheeler Opera House and the Aspen Amphitheatre, providing they paid the maintenance on them.

The artists and teachers unanimously voted to accept Paepcke's offer and organized an advisory committee and a temporary executive committee. Three days later, an unprecedented extra edition of the Aspen Times reported that the community had donated $17,000 at a meeting of the MAA the night before to assure its continuance. The community supported the MAA completely. Although it now existed independently as a corporation and management, it still cooperated with the Aspen Institute, "in the

[39] Adele Addison, interview by author, Tape recording, Aspen, Co, 11 July 1996.

recognition that for any part of the summer program to succeed, all parts must succeed."[40] So while this incident severed most of the relationship between Walter Paepcke and the MAA, enough of it remained so that the festival could continue as a strong, significant piece of Aspen culture.[41]

Jazz

In 1962, The New York Times called "the little town in Colorado...the scene of what artistically is the finest music festival in America."[42] In July of that same year, the music school added jazz concerts to its repertoire and The Aspen Times announced their arrival:

> It's jazz, man, Saturday Evening at the Red Onion when groups of normally long-hair cats from the Aspen Music School display their talents in a manner more akin to their tin-pan alley brethren. And it's a benefit, man - like to the scholarship fund of the music school. But mainly it'll be cool...

The event proved popular enough so that the jazz festival returned every year after that until 1967 and 1968, when it appeared in Vail. In 1969, however, it returned to Aspen.[43] Like the traditional performers of the festival, the famous artists drew plenty of crowds to Aspen. Some of those that performed included Teddy Wilson, Jack Lesberg, Ralph Sutton, and Wild Bill Davidson.

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[40] "Town Meeting Tonite To Decide Music Future In Aspen," Aspen Times, 2 Sept. 1954; "17,000.00 Raised for 1955 Music Festival and Music School at Town Meeting Last Nite: Objective---Minimum of $25,000 Before Concert Sunday," Aspen Times, Extra Edition, 3 Sept. 1954; "Music Associates to Report to Fellow Aspen Citizens," Aspen Times, 28 Apr. 1955.

[41] The Music School and Festival continued to gain strength and in 1964, obtained a permanent site for the Music school, expanding the potential for the program even more.

[42] Harold C. Schonberg, "Music: Bastille Day at Aspen Festival," New York Times, 17 July 1962.

[43] "Music School Sets Two Concerts Sat.," Aspen Times, 20 July 1962; "Jazz Party To Return To Aspen," Aspen Times, 17 July 1969.

After Davidson's visit, he was arrested in New York City. During the Jazz Party, he was presented with a pistol. Later, in a New York City cab, he took it out to show his driver and a bullet discharged, "whistling by the driver's ear and through the windshield." Police charged Davidson with illegal possession of a weapon, but later released him on $2000 bail.[44] This event did not deter Davidson from returning to future Jazz festivals, however. In 1966, the popularity of the Aspen Jazz Party led to the arrival of the first annual Aspen Jazz Festival. The festival, separate from the School, drew artists such as Count Basie and Bill Henderson.[45] Although the two events overlapped, Aspen residents clearly hungered for more diversity in their summer culture.

Ballet West and Dance

In 1957, Aspen included dance in its summer festival, widening its audience and preparing it for the arrival of Ballet West in 1970, an event that would change the dynamics of the festival by adding yet another level of entertainment. Before creating a ballet program at the University of Utah in 1951, William Christiansen had worked with the San Francisco Ballet. In 1963, he created the Utah Civic Ballet, which changed its name to Ballet West in 1968.[46] Two years later, he brought his troupe to Aspen as part of the summer festival. Tenley Taylor, a dancer with Ballet West from 1969-1976, described "Mr. C." as a

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[44] "Jazz Buffs Congregate Here For Jazz Party," Aspen Times, 13 Sept. 1963; "Pistol From Aspen Results In Arrest of Jazz Musician," Aspen Times, 20 Sept. 1963.

[45] "Sept. 19, 20 - 1st Annual Aspen Jazz Festival," Aspen Times, 1 Sept. 1966.

[46] "Art of Dance to Be Part of Summer Festival," Aspen Times, 13 June 1957; Ballet West Program: 1974-1975, Ballet West 1970s File, AHS.

"benevolent grandfather," a warm and supportive, yet demanding, director.[47]

After their first performance, Christensen decided that Ballet West would return the following summer. And it did, but that year, the company announced that "unless their stay is economically more successful, they will be unable to return in 1972."[48] The problems that would plague Ballet West all of its summers in Aspen had already started. Fortunately, the community enjoyed the addition to its summer culture and worked to keep it in their town. Ballet West, like the music festival, needed money to continue to visit Aspen, and the townspeople often contributed generous amounts of money to ensure its existence.

In 1974, the company again stressed the need for money to stay in Aspen, citing limitations in housing for artists and in performance and practice space as reasons for the financial stress. In July of that year, Pat Dasko, Aspen Coordinator for Ballet West, stated that several problems had forced ~~him~~ her to wonder about the ballet's significance to Aspen:

> ...the celebration of a Fifth Anniversary Season in Aspen, Colorado, started off as a very meaningful event for us, but the incredible myriad of business negotiations, false starts, vandalism [to ballet studio and housing] and plain untangling is causing us to feel quite alone and wonder if the community of Aspen really wants Ballet West or if the stars are crossed in our disfavor...it becomes rather dismaying to see our names and pictures in brochures that sell the town when we constantly are forced to lose money to even come here to create these contributions that we make![49]

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[47] Tenley Taylor, phone interview by author, Tape Recording, Aspen, Co, 16 July 1996. Taylor also was a Ballet Mistress with Ballet West and taught at the Ballet School in Snowmass.

[48] "Ballet West Fund Drive Announced," Aspen Times, 10 June 1971.

[49] "Would the Arts Abandon Aspen?" Aspen Times, 11 April 1974; "Cultural Organizations Lack Housing," Aspen Times, 27 June 1974.

Clearly the financial stresses that the company had to continuously greet while staying in Aspen started to outweigh the benefits and enjoyment of including Aspen on their tour. Ballet West had chosen Aspen because "it needed a town with the right atmosphere " and it felt that, "Aspen already being a cultural leader of the West...all it needed to be complete was the dance."[50] The people of Ballet West wanted to remain part of Aspen culture, yet also realized that finances might not allow that. Still, the company managed to return year after year. To the dancers, Aspen offered a "special place [whose] atmosphere magnifies emotions [and] affected performances on personal levels."[51] Not surprisingly, Aspen lured the dancers back each year. The company enjoyed the town as much as the people loved the company.

In 1977, Ballet West had a record-setting season and lengthened its stay in Aspen from four weeks to six. By 1978, however, the company again felt financial pressure. Richie Cohen, a member of the Aspen Board for Ballet West, stated that Ballet West "actually dances more here than in Salt Lake...We have to make a home for them." The home he called for was a performing arts center that would house theatre, music, and the ballet. Two years later Cohen would threaten that unless Aspen provided a performing arts center, "it could lose Ballet West."[52] Although the company had been performing in the high school gymnasium,

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[50] Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "Christensen: Ballet is a Way of Life," Aspen Times, July 10, 1975.

[51] Taylor interview.

[52] "Ballet West has record-setting season," Aspen Times, 25 Aug. 1977; "Ballet Seeks Aspen Financial Support," Aspen Times, 25 May 1978; "Ballet West Needs Performance Center," Aspen Times, 17 July 1980. In 1978, William Christensen retired as the director of Ballet West and gave the position to Bruce Marks, co-artistic director of the company: "MR. C. Retires as Ballet West Director," Aspen Times, 22 June 1978.

which was not comfortable for the dancers or the audience members, it did not receive its center.

To stimulate finances, Ballet West opened a ballet school in the early 1980s. Not only would it provide much-needed revenue for the company, but also the instructors could train dancers to enter the company. As Tenley Taylor, one of the dance instructors, stated, "It means that young people who want to dance seriously don't have to go to New York."[53] Aspen now provided dancers with an alternative to the Big Apple. Aspen's reputation as a cultural mecca continued to soar. The school, however, failed to generate the revenue necessary to keep Ballet Aspen as the sole dance company in Aspen.

In February of 1982, The Aspen Times announced that Aspen would be offering more variety in the dance portion of the summer festival. In addition to Ballet West, other companies would visit and perform. Ballet West would perform for two weeks rather than five and Ballet West in Aspen would now be called Ballet Aspen. Neither Ballet West nor Ballet West in Aspen initiated the change. Rather, those involved noted that finances did not allow for a full season for the company, and that the local and visiting Aspen audience simply wanted more variety. A few months later, Mary Apple, executive director of the Aspen ballet program, confirmed that financial problems led to the decision to invite other companies:

> The truth of it is that Ballet/Aspen...'needed a substantial amount of more money to come here. We had been paying the Ballet West Company $38,000 a week to come to Aspen...while other comparable companies would be paid $60,000 to $80,000. The fact that they kept coming shows how much Ballet West wanted to be a part of

[53] Mary Kavanbaugh Hayes, "Tenley Taylor Explains Ballet School," Aspen Times, 28 Jan. 1982.

> Aspen. But it couldn't keep on.' And although Ballet West will no longer be the only ballet company here, it will serve as the cornerstone for Ballet/Aspen's new Ballet Festival concept.

Although the company was no longer the only dance company in town, it remained a significant part of Aspen's culture, and its history of culture. In 1989, Ballet/Aspen changed its name to Dance Aspen to reflect the new direction from classical ballet to "a mix of modern, ballet, and experimental."[54] Still, Ballet West remained a part of the summer culture and retained its honor as the first Festival dance company.

Anderson Ranch

While Ballet West struggled throughout the 1970s, other types of culture appeared on the horizon. Paul Soldner, a sculptor, moved to Aspen in 1955 after several trips to the area. He and his wife, Ginnie, decided to settle in the town because they loved the mountains and "thought the town was pretty unique. In those days, you didn't have all this sophistication. People were very real and stores were funky and we liked that." An art community did not really exist, aside from Herbert Bayer and one or two stores like the "Tom Thumb." It was not until 1965 that a woman named Alice Scutter approached Soldner and told him that a group of townspeople wanted him to teach them how to make pottery and ceramics. He agreed, if they could find a place. They leased "Tenny's Restaurant" and worked there until they lost the lease. In 1966, the Janss Corporation offered the group of artists the

[54] Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "Ballet Programs to Change in 1982," Aspen Times, 25 Feb. 1982; "Ballet in Aspen is in for Changes," Aspen Times, 20 May 1982; "William Christensen's Dance School Celebrates 20th Year," Aspen Times, 6 July 1989.

use of any one of the ranches it had just bought. They chose the Anderson Ranch because "it was nicely located up above a meadow and had a rustic quality made of logs. So we said, 'We'll take that.'"[55] The artists now owned a substantial piece of property. But first they had to clean it.

When the artists moved into their new home, the ranch needed a lot of work. So the students embarked on remodeling the area. They performed jobs such as installing bathrooms, planting pine and aspen trees, constructing kilnsheds, and building a chicken coop. A publication by the Anderson Ranch Association at that time stated that the Ranch was "concerned with the creative spirit, the making of meaningful objects and dedicated to the belief that self-sufficiency can be learned by developing a personal work ethic."[56] The students understood this and practiced it often during their days at the Ranch. The school acted as a college, but the students did not take classes to earn a degree, and did not receive credit for their work. Rather, they learned both art and life skills.

In addition to the hard work of cleaning and building, students could take classes in etching, ceramics, photosilkscreen, and glassblowing, among others.[57] Paul Soldner recalled that a typical day involved both types of work:

> Well, the mornings were spent...doing whatever we told them to do. And usually it was some physical labor: building, digging, and repairing. Then the afternoons, everybody had their own studio and they could disappear and do their own thing. We never conducted classes, per se,...we were an alternative to college so, whatever

[55] Paul Soldner, interview by author, Tape recording, Aspen, Co, June 28, 1996.

[56] T.A.R.A. (The Anderson Ranch Association) publication, n.d., Anderson Ranch Biography File, AHS, 8.

[57] "Anderson Ranch Craft Classes Set," Aspen Times, 18 May 1972.

> colleges did, we didn't do...It was kind of communal. I never thought of it as a real commune, but it was certainly a sharing.

Soldner, the director of Anderson Ranch, ran the school so that the students would not attend to receive credit or grades. The Ranch offered its classes through Colorado Mountain College, but Soldner stressed that the classes provided an alternative to college. He wanted to accept students by competition, like the music school, to try to make it as professional as possible. Unfortunately for him, more powerful people intercepted his plan.[58]

In 1972, Snowmass American Corporation did not renew the lease under which Colorado Mountain College operated the Ranch. Instead, it gave control of the Ranch over to an independently-formed Anderson Ranch Arts Center, headed by Mary Martin. At the same time, Cherie Hiser, who founded the Center of the Eye in 1967, moved this photography workshop out of the basement of the Hotel Jerome to the Ranch. The Center of the Eye had also operated out of Colorado Mountain College and so the new change affected its students as well.[59]

To complement his new neighbor, Soldner decided to call his workshop the Center of the Hand. Soon the Center of the Eye offered classes for beginners and, for those more experienced, studio work as an alternative to graduate study.[60] Before long, Soldner felt that Martin wished to take the Ranch in a different

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[58] Soldner interview.

[59] "Anderson Ranch Becomes Art Center," Aspen Times, 27 July 1972; Barbara Thompson O' Neill, "Cultivating Culture: The Anderson Ranch Arts Center," Paul Soldner Biography File, AHS; In addition to the Colorado Mountain College, the Center of the Eye also operated with the help of the University Without Walls, the University of Colorado, and the Aspen Public School System. See "Center of the Eye Lists Fall Program," Aspen Times, 31 Aug. 1972.

[60] "Center For the Hand Classes Begin," Aspen Times, 20 Sept. 1973.

direction from what he had envisioned, and so retired as director. From then on, the Ranch became less for professionals and more for locals. In 1981, the Snowmass Company gave the deed to the land to Anderson Ranch with the stipulation that the occupants could never use the Ranch for anything other than a cultural institution. Today Soldner states that he feels "like a godfather out there. I show up to kibitz, or do a workshop, or see what's going on."[61] The Ranch today is not the same institution as when it began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but it still provides an aspect of culture for local Aspenites that they cannot get in other nearby places. Like the music festival and the dance, the Ranch offers summer entertainment for both the community and visitors, and offers year-round enjoyment for international professional artists.

The Aspen Art Museum

In the late 1970s, Dick Carter, Diane Louie, and Missie Thorne decided they would harness the community's excitement for contemporary art and start an art museum. They formed a Visual Arts Committee and asked for the city's permission to begin a Visual Arts Center at the site of the old Holy Cross Building, an old hydroelectric plant that generated electric power for the town, making Aspen the first city west of the Mississippi to have electric mine hoists and street lights. The proposal for the museum acknowledged this fact and stated that "the Holy Cross Building is a part of Aspen's history. As the site for a visual arts center, the building would retain their integrity

[61] "Cultivating Culture," AHS; Brad Miller, "When Life and Art are One," Aspen Magazine, Holiday 1993/94, 160.

necessarily, for the tone they set is the tone the center needs."[62] The city agreed and offered them the money to remodel the old building. Nancy Lovendahl, an artist who involved herself with the museum from the start, describes the old building as a "shell" and states that there were "some fabulous old machinery in there that were almost rusted to bits."[63] The building needed renovation and Aspenites supported the desire for a new visual arts facility.

Before the museum moved onto the site of the old Holy Cross Building, the Visual Arts Board began planning. It decided to name the museum the Aspen Center of Visual Arts. By December of 1977, the Aspen Times announced that the center would hold a library, offices, and exhibitions of ceramics, photographs, paintings, sculptures, and weaving. The Times quoted Dick Carter, one of the founders, as saying, "If Aspen grows as an art center...this will create a better climate. It helps everyone."[64] The museum would add yet another layer to Aspen's already rich cultural history.

The following year, the museum hired a director, Philip Yenowine. He had worked at the Metropolitan Museum in New York City for over 5 years and had been the director of education at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. His goal as the director of the Aspen Center for Visual Arts was to make it a "comfortable, inviting place."[65] Lovendahl describes him as exuberant and attributes to him the success of the museum:

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[62] "Holy Cross Moves Early For Visual Arts," Aspen Times, 26 Oct. 1978; "AFA asks for New Visual Arts Center," Aspen Times, 3 Feb. 1977.

[63] Nancy Lovendahl, interview by author, Tape recording, Aspen, Co, 11 July 1996.

[64] Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "Visual Arts Board Sets to Work," Aspen Times, 8 Dec. 1977.

[65] Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "Director Named for Visual Arts Center," Aspen Times, 31 Aug. 1978.

> Philip was one of the people persons, more charismatic and more energy than you could imagine. He had a love of art that I had never known...He felt that art was a spiritual experience. He felt that it was the most significant element to reveal ourself to ourselves. He had all the finest integrities of what art was about.

Yenowine took on most of the responsibilities of running the museum, including overseeing the remodeling, fund raising, and organizing the first boards and advisors of the museum.[66] He proved instrumental in making the museum work. The founders moved into their new building in 1979 and through their hard work and dedication, the museum would prove to be successful in its endeavors to bring to Aspen another layer of culture.

In 1984, the center changed its title to the Aspen Art Museum "to simplify the name and to describe more accurately the museum and its functions." The purpose of the museum, however, did not change. It remained committed to educating the community and at the same time providing visitors with another aspect of Aspen culture. Like Anderson Ranch and unlike the music tent, the museum is a permanent fixture that art lovers can visit year-round. Although changes in the Ranch during the 1970s transformed the original idea of the place, the museum has not changed dramatically over the years and continues to display the importance of visual art both to the townspeople and to Aspen's history of culture.

Conclusion

In the 1880s, Aspen began as a small mining camp. Within only a few years of its founding, the prosperous silver mining transformed the camp into a populated, rich town. The inhabitants

[66] Ibid.

built a theatre so that they might enjoy themselves while away from the mines. With the arrival of Jerome B. Wheeler and the construction of the Wheeler Opera House, Aspenites found the importance of a grand theatre where visitors and inhabitants could relax and find entertainment.

In 1893, silver crashed, and with it, the town dwindled. People fled so quickly that they literally left behind houses full of furniture and items. Those that stayed behind witnessed the desolation of a town without mining. Some culture remained, but it did not exist like it had in the heyday of Aspen. Throughout the beginning of the 20th century and into the 1930s, enough inhabitants remained in Aspen so as to prevent its definition as a ghost town. It maintained a tranquility, compared to the booming 1880s and 1890s, however, and residents called this period "The Quiet Years."

In the late 1940s, people like Friedl Pfeifer, Billy Fiske, and Andre Roch, among others, showed an interest in starting a ski industry in Aspen. WWII intervened, but when the men of the 10th Mountain Division returned home to Colorado, they reinstated their plans. At the same time, Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke moved to town and started their own ideas for Aspen. Walter wanted to unite the mind, body, and spirit in the tradition of the Greeks and so chose Aspen as the site for the Goethe Bicentennial Celebration. He saw in Aspen the potential for a mixture of high art and culture. He wanted a "higher" class of citizens to occupy the town to ensure the success of his image of the perfect city. He would start with culture.

Since 1949, Aspenites have carried Paepcke's dream farther

than he could have expected. It started out with lectures and music, but has since expanded to include dance and visual art, each of which has transformed itself from traditional to contemporary. Some people don't like the changes; some would like it better if the town existed as it had in the early 1950s. Regardless, Aspen has continued the tradition of the mind, body, and spirit connection in its continuous pursuit of culture. Certainly, the high cost of living acts as an unwanted result of the creation of a town built on high ideals, but the summer festivals bring much-enjoyed revenue into the town as well as an experience that people cannot receive many other places. It is not necessarily the existence of arts and culture that make Aspen unique, but rather the unparalleled transformations that occurred to create that culture. Not only does Aspen's history hold significance for its residents, but it benefits anyone who wishes to study the vast changes that can occur when a community unites to ensure the existence of culture.

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