INTRODUCTION: THE “PEOPLE’S THEATRE”:
CREATING AN AUDIENCE OF MILLIONS

6. The Historical Records Survey would join the ranks of Federal One under the jurisdiction of the Federal Writers’ Project in November 1935; it became an independent member of Federal One in October 1936. William F. McDonald, Federal Relief Administration and the Arts (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969), 214.
7. Flanagan, Arena, 23.
9. Burgess Meredith first compared the cost of the FTP to the cost of building a battleship in December 1937 in Equity. At that time, FTP expenditures approximated 22 million dollars, or about one-half the price of a battleship. Flanagan, Arena, 434–6.
11. Barry Witham documents Edwin O’Connor’s attempts to establish a showboat FTP unit in Seattle, a project scuttled by Don Abel, director of the Washington state WPA. The WPA district director in southern California, Colonel Connolly, bluntly stated that he defined a good theatre project as “anything that ke[pt] out of the papers,” a theory that he exercised repeatedly

12. In New York City a number of Broadway Theatre managers negotiated a strict agreement with the FTP regarding theatre locations, effectively banning it from the Broadway Theatre area (between 42nd and 52nd streets). The FTP violated this “gentlemen’s agreement” on numerous occasions, which earned the rancor of the managers as well as angry letters of protest and petitions. Flanagan, *Arena*, 40.

13. Ibid., 42–44.


23. Ibid., 6.


26. Ibid., 88.

1 DANGER, DISEASE, AND DESPOTISM: BALANCING ON THE TIGHTROPE OF CHICAGO

2. Harry Minturn was the third and final director of the Chicago FTP. Quoted in Flanagan, *Arena*, 134.
3. Many of the newspapers, including the *Chicago American*, the *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, and the *Chicago Daily News* contained varying degrees of anti–New Deal sentiment, while the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the *Chicago Times*, and the African American *Defender* supported Roosevelt’s programs. The *Chicago American* and the *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, both owned by William Randolph Hearst, were “friendly but […] governed by [anti–New Deal] policy.” On May 6, 1938, the *Chicago Daily News*, a staunchly anti–New Deal paper, ran a front-page story titled “Plain Intolerable Intimidation,” in which it referred to Roosevelt as “power-drunk” and compared his administration to the Nazi regime. In contrast, the *Defender*, one of the most widely circulated African American papers of the time, typically supported efforts of the FTP’s Negro Units. The democratic *Chicago Daily Tribune* was pro–New Deal and often supported the efforts of the WPA and FTP. “Meeting in Chicago Minutes: Publicity and Promotional Activities, Great Northern Theatre, Blackstone Theatre and Negro Theatre,” May 2, 1936, NARA, E839, Box 15, Midwestern Region; “Plain Intolerable Intimidation,” *Chicago Daily News*, May 6, 1938, 1.
5. George Kondolf, interview by Lorraine Brown, Rumson, New Jersey, tape recording, WPA Oral Histories Collection, Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University, February 21, 1976, 4.
7. John McGee was an integral member of the FTP national administration and a close friend of Hallie Flanagan. The story surrounding *The Swing Mikado* was fraught with turmoil and documented closely. The report cited here was labeled “Personal and Confidential” and only declassified by the National Archives in 1999. “Narrative Report of Events Leading to Dismissal of John McGee as Regional and State Director of the Federal Theatre Project,” NARA, E839, Box 15, “Mikado”—Rpt. RE: Dismissal of John McGee & “Mikado”—Investigations.
10. Ibid., 325, 330.


16. *Model Tenement*, much like *One Third of a Nation*, dealt with the nation’s housing problems by presenting both sides—tenant and landlord—sympathetically, ultimately supporting Roosevelt’s federal housing projects. The content was particularly relevant to Chicago because of the number of people displaced from their homes by the Great Depression.

17. Meyer Levin, whose *Model Tenement* would fall prey to the Chicago censors, described Kondolf as a “troubleshooter” who “tried to please everyone.” Meyer Levin, interview by Ellen Vanas, Herzlia, Israel, index of tape recording (no transcription available), WPA Oral Histories Collection, Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University, January 4, 1978, 3; “Meeting in Chicago Minutes,” 4.

18. George Kondolf, to Hallie Flanagan, May 18, 1936, NARA, E839, Box 13, George Kondolf.

19. Meyer Levin was the president of the Free Speech Association of the Midwest and on the editorial board of *Esquire* magazine. *Esquire* offered to finance a lawsuit against the WPA if evidence that the WPA stopped *Model Tenement* came to light. Flanagan’s investigations into the matter were inconclusive. Hallie Flanagan, “Visit with Mayor Kelly of Chicago…,” undated, NARA, E839, Box 15, Midwestern Region, 1–3.

20. Ibid., 2–3.


25. Because none of these scripts were dated, I based my determinations on a comparison between the scripts, the production bulletin, and the program. It is interesting to note that this production—geared so very much toward the city of Chicago—was translated into Spanish for production in Tampa. Even more curious, Hedley Gordon Graham, director of the Chicago version, also directed the well-received Tampa version in spite of his inability to speak Spanish. The FTP hired translators for rehearsals.


27. Kondolf Interview, 3.


38. All ellipses are quoted directly from the script. Ibid., 21.
39. Ibid., 18.
40. Ibid., 83.
41. Ibid., 38–9.
44. Widely seen by many immigrants as “a way of establishing the hegemony of traditional American values, and traditional Americans, over new values and new people,” nearly 90 percent of Chicago’s immigrant populations voted against Prohibition. In four opinion referenda regarding Prohibition occurring between 1919 and 1930, 73–83 percent of Chicagoans voted against Prohibition, with immigrant populations voting against the measure in even greater numbers. Allswang, The New Deal and American Politics, 4.
46. Kuller, Golden, and Charig, O Say Can You Sing, Produced Version, 76.
47. As a playreader, Sundgaard read and reported on two plays each day. However, Glaspell had plans for Sundgaard; in order to allow him more time for playwriting, she began giving him “bad plays” to read so as to “keep [his] burdens as light as possible.” Sundgaard was a self-professed “expert on bad plays,” noting that he could complete his daily quota in the morning and have the rest of the day to write, research, or explore Chicago theatre. Arnold Sundgaard, interview by John O’Connor, Boston, Massachusetts, tape recording, WPA Oral Histories Collection, Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University, September 5, 1976, 4–5.
48. It is interesting to note that Spirochete (the play itself, rather than the topic) became the subject of a pitched battle between the national administration and the rights of writers on the FTP. In the case of Spirochete (written almost entirely on Sundgaard’s own time), Glaspell was a strong advocate for Sundgaard’s rights; she wrote several letters of support, elicited the assistance of the Dramatists Guild, and threatened to leave her position as head of the Midwestern Play Bureau. She and Sundgaard ultimately prevailed, but the process irreparably tarnished her relationship with the FTP, and she left the project not long after the resolution. Ironically, the victory ultimately cost Sundgaard his job with the FTP; the royalties that he earned for the numerous FTP productions of Spirochete made his income (briefly) high enough that he was no longer eligible for relief.
51. R. A. Vonderlehr, “Are We Checking the Great Plague?” Survey Graphic (April 1, 1940); Thomas Parran, “Public Health Control of Syphilis,” Annals of Internal Medicine 10 (July 1936): 65; Allan M. Brandt, No Magic Bullet: A
Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 129.


55. The free blood tests proved so popular that the state changed from the Wassermann to the Kahn method because it could be completed more quickly. Developed in 1906, the Wassermann Test had an incubation period of two days with a 95 percent successful diagnosis rate. The cheaper Kahn Test, evolved from the Wassermann Test, showed results in two hours but with less reliable accuracy. Most authorities used the Wasserman test as a confirmation for samples that received a positive from the Kahn Test. “New Tests Supplant Wassermann in City,” New York Times, January 4, 1947, 30; “Chicago Speeds Blood Tests,” New York Times, August 2, 1937, 21; “Adopt Kahn Test For Use in City’s War on Syphilis,” Chicago Daily Tribune, September 3, 1937, 13; “Polls Chicagoans on Syphilis Tests,” New York Times, July 25, 1937, 10.


58. Harry Minturn to Hallie Flanagan, March 1, 1938, NARA, E839, Box 26, “Spirochete.”


60. Arnold Sundgaard, letter to anonymous recipient [probably Hallie Flanagan], 1938, NARA, E839, Box 13, Spirochete.

62. Mercury—in the form of an ointment, pill, or steam—was one of the primary treatments for syphilis for centuries, though its effectiveness remains unclear. Administered weekly for a year or longer, the correct combination of arsenic and chloride could cure 60–80 percent of those who had been infected for a lengthy period, and 80–90 percent of recent syphilitics. Penicillin would replace these methods in the 1940s. Sundgaard, “Susan Glaspell and the Federal Theatre Project Revisited,” 9.

63. Florence S. Kerr to Hallie Flanagan, March 12, 1938, NARA, E839, Box 13, “Living Newspaper—Syphilis (Chicago).”


71. When *Spirochete* premiered in Philadelphia, the Knights of Columbus strenuously objected to the idea that Columbus was responsible for the spread of syphilis throughout Europe and the new world. Sundgaard refused to change the scene. Finally, someone suggested that the play simply refer to an “unnamed sea captain” who sailed to the Americas in 1492. Surprisingly, the Knights of Columbus and Sundgaard both agreed. The name of Columbus was removed and the “unnamed sea captain” that took his place became an inside joke that nearly everyone in the audience understood. Flanagan, *Arena*, 251.


73. Ibid., 22–5.

74. Ibid., 62.

75. Ibid., 73–4.

76. Ibid., 83.

77. Ibid., 102.

78. Ibid., 85.

79. Ibid., 84–87.

80. Ibid., 88–90.

81. Ibid., 90.
2 DEMYTHOLOGIZING AMERICA: PAST AND PRESENT COLLIDE IN BOSTON

1. In spite of the impression this quote gives, Boston had a number of theatres regularly producing work prior to the arrival of the FTP. Philip Hale, “The Theatre,” Boston Herald, November 23, 1930, Harvard Theatre Collection, Boston—Copley Theatre, clippings file.


4. Quoted in Flanagan, Arena, 225.


17. Flanagan, Arena, 228.

18. From the Salem News, quoted in Flanagan, Arena, 228.


24. The third version of Created Equal, available at NARA, is a marked copy of the abbreviated radio version. This production was the third in the “Federal
Theatre of the Air” Series, and was broadcast on Station WEVD, New York, December 22, 1938, from 10:00–10:45 p.m. EST.


29. Ibid., 3.


32. It is interesting to note the complex historical implications of choosing Phillip Schuyler as representative of the American ideal because a historical figure by the same name lived during the colonial era. The real Phillip Schuyler was an English gentleman and soldier who came to the colonies, was elected to the First Continental Congress, served as a Major General in the Continental Army, and remained active in politics until his death in 1804. His daughter Elizabeth married Alexander Hamilton in 1780 thereby offering Hamilton access to powerful political circles. The irony of the character of Phillip Schuyler—young gentleman-turned-frontiersman—turning to Hamilton (his historical son-in-law) for assistance is powerful. Though it is hard to believe that Booth could have so thoroughly researched colonial history for the play and missed this connection, no evidence remains to document his intent. For more information on Hamilton’s relationship with the real Phillip Schuyler, see John C. Miller, Alexander Hamilton: Portrait in Paradox (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 62–80.


34. Created Equal includes a number of specific grammatical choices, all of which have been retained throughout this chapter in quotes from the text. John Hunter Booth, scene attached to letter, Blanding Sloan to Emmett Lavery, TL, 26 May 1938, NARA, E839, Box 5, “Created Equal #2.”

35. Ibid.


41. Ibid., 58–9

42. Booth, Created Equal, Revised Edition, 82.

46. Ibid., 131–2.
47. Ibid., 133.
49. Ibid., 123–4.
50. Ibid., 124.
51. Ibid., 124–127.
55. Gen. 3:16 (English Revised Version).
57. Mrs. Guy W. Stantial (Emma?) to Hallie Flanagan, April 30, 1939, NARA, E840, Box 40, “Lucy Stone.”
62. Finch expressed grave concerns over his lack of credit in letters to Russak. Finch argued that he had spent an extraordinary amount of time on the revisions—much of which was unpaid—expressly because he believed his name would be publicly associated with the play. Robert Finch to Ben Russak, April 29, 1939, LOC, Box 1034, “Lucy Stone—Correspondence & Research.”
63. Robert Finch to Ben Russak, April 29, 1939, LOC, Box 1034, “Lucy Stone—Correspondence & Research”; Robert Finch to Ben Russak, received March 13, 1939, LOC, Box 1034, “Lucy Stone—Correspondence & Research.”
64. Many different versions of *Lucy Stone* are available at NARA, LOC, and GMU. In my analysis of the FTP production text, I am using the script described as the “2nd Revised Boston Version,” dated June 16, 1939, which is the latest version available. Maud Wood Park, *Lucy Stone*, revised by Robert Finch, LOC, Box 701, 6. Hereafter, Park, *Lucy Stone*, revised by Finch.
66. Ibid., 79.
68. Ibid., 71–2.
69. Ibid., 76.
71. Ibid., 93.
72. Ibid., 96.
74. Ibid., 84.
75. “Woman Candidate to Open Her Campaign,” *Boston Herald*, December 5, 1921, 16.
76. “Most of Council Candidates Unknown,” *Boston Herald*, December 5, 1921, 3; “Mrs. Chipman opens her campaign,” *Boston Globe*, December 7, 1921, 8; “Boston Women Making Their Political Bow—Is It a Debut or a Fight?” *Boston Globe*, December 4, 1921, 2.

3 “THE GREAT AMERICAN THEATRICAL DESERT”: FEDERAL THEATRE IN THE SOUTH

4. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 81.
7. McGee, Foreword to *A Brief History of the Federal Theatre in the South*.
9. Though the recent discovery of additional archival documents has altered part of my *Altars of Steel* analysis, much of this section is from “Yankee Consternation in the Deep South: Worshipping at the *Altars of Steel*,” by Elizabeth Osborne, published in *Theatre Symposium: Tours of the South*, © 2005 by the University of Alabama Press.
17. Ibid., 274.


30. John McGee to Mary Weber, January 14, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 62, “AL—Correspondence #1.”

31. The only other correspondence addressed directly to Bancroft that I have located is a telegram to Bancroft, which noted an “excellent,” unnamed script. John McGee to J. W. Bancroft, September 24, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 62, “Correspondence #2;” John McGee to J. W. Bancroft, September 9, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 62, “AL—Correspondence # 1.”

32. John McGee to Frances Nimmo Green, November 11, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 62, “AL—Southern Play Bureau.”

33. John McGee to Frances Nimmo Green, November 3, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 62, “AL—Southern Play Bureau.”
34. Louis Solomon, a playreader for the FTP’s Play Policy Board in New York, commented that *Altars of Steel* showed an “improbable simplification of a complex problem [and was] too naïve to merit consideration.” John Rimassa, another playreader, also rejected the play, writing that it was “very bad! […] The conclusion rammed at the audience is: benevolent corporations with assets up to $25,000,000 make for a happy humanity while very large corporations spell disaster for mankind.” Playwright John Wexley’s report was most damning though, “My most serious criticism of the play is […] that it is hardly a play;” he then proceeded to rip apart the structure, theme, characters, and plot, and suggested that FTP audiences would find the play “very uninteresting” and “ludicrously unreal.” Letter, John Wexley to Hiram Motherwell, 27 March 1937, LOC, Box 138, *Altars of Steel*; Louis Solomon, “Playreader Report: *Altars of Steel*,” LOC, Box 138, *Altars of Steel*; John Rimassa, “Playreader Report: *Altars of Steel*,” LOC, Box 138, *Altars of Steel*.

35. Lentz noted that the Atlanta FTP shared its theatre space with a boxing ring every Friday night; this required that design elements be carefully chosen so they could be packed and moved each week. Lentz, interview, 4–5, 13.


37. Just as *Altars of Steel* slipped through the numerous rejections of the various playreaders, Hallie Flanagan was in the process of instituting a new policy for play approval. During the fall of 1936, buoyed by Harry Hopkins’s promise to support any FTP play that had her personal approval, Flanagan insisted that all production plans be made at least three months in advance and pass through the Play Policy Board. While this procedure was still in the process of being implemented when *Altars of Steel* began rehearsals, it is clear that the intended January production was subject to this system, as is evidenced by Verner Haldene’s proposal for the first quarter of 1937, in which he places the opening of *Altars of Steel* in late January. Mathews, *The Federal Theatre*, 96–7; Poole, *The Federal Theatre Project in Georgia and Alabama*, 56–59; Haldene, “Production Bulletin for three-month period beginning January 1, 1937.”


40. The Birmingham audience submitted only 22 surveys, which serve as the basis for this report. Dana Rush, “Audience Survey Report for *It Can’t Happen Here*,” November 23, 1936, NARA, E907, National Play Bureau Audience Survey Reports, Box 254.


42. Verner Haldene, “Production Bulletin for three-month period beginning January 1, 1937.”
43. John McGee to Frances Nimmo Green, November 11, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 62, “AL—Southern Play Bureau.”
44. John McGee to Harriett B. Adams, November 5, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 62, “AL—Correspondence #2.”
45. John McGee to Josef Lentz, December 15, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 62, “AL—Correspondence #2.”
47. Hall-Rogers, Altars of Steel, 88.
53. Hall-Rogers, Altars of Steel, 8.
54. Ibid., 15.
56. By 1917, officials at TCI concluded that they could increase productivity (and decrease labor unrest) from the workers if they provided better work conditions. John Eagan, chairman of the American Cast Iron Pipe Company, revealed his “Golden Rule” approach to big business in 1921. McKiven, Jr., Iron and Steel, 115–7.
57. Hall-Rogers, Altars of Steel, 15.
59. Several different versions of the play exist, each of which is structured slightly differently and features a different ending. In the version on file at NARA, Worth’s son is killed at the end of the play as his father tries to diffuse the angry mob of workers. The version discussed in this chapter was produced for Atlanta and Miami audiences.

60. Much of this portion is from “Storytelling, Chiggers, and the Bible Belt: The Georgia Experiment as the Public Face of the Federal Theatre Project,” by Elizabeth Osborne, published in Theatre History Studies, © 2011 by the University of Alabama Press.

61. Quoted in Flanagan, Arena, 92.

62. Ibid., 92.

63. Ibid., 91.

64. Herbert S. Price, “Federal Theatre Community Drama Program in Georgia,” NARA, E952, Box 523, “Price File—Rome.”

65. Four of the five drama consultants were a part of the community drama training program in New York City at the time of their assignment, earning $95.44 monthly. Mary Dirnberger, the representative assigned to Savannah, was working in North Carolina at the time of this assignment, and continued on that salary at $125 monthly while working in Georgia. Herbert Price to Ellen S. Woodward, undated memorandum, NARA, E952, Box 523, “Price File—Community Drama, General.”

66. Herbert S. Price, “Federal Theatre Community Drama Program in Georgia (Rome to be included),” NARA, E952, Box 523, “Herbert S. Price, Correspondence.”


69. Each of the five drama consultants was to have been preapproved for travel expenses and a per diem of three dollars per day for the first 21 days in the field. However, subsequent communications between the drama consultants and various FTP administrators document that this process was not a smooth one and that most of the drama consultants were forced to place their belongings in storage, live in cheap hotels or with new acquaintances, and self-fund their work-related travels for the majority of their time in Georgia. Herbert Price to Madalyn O’Shea, December 1, 1936, NARA, E952, Box 523, “Price File—Community Drama, General.”


74. Edward J. Hayes to Charlotte Holt, Received March 23, 1937, NARA, E952, Box 523, “Price File—Rome, GA.”
76. These verses focus on the meeting of Mary, future mother of Jesus Christ, and Elisabeth, future mother of John the Baptist, during Elisabeth’s pregnancy.
80. Edward J. Hayes to Herbert S. Price, April 6, 1937, NARA, E952, Box 523, “Price File—Rome, GA.”
81. The records of the Marietta Journal are unfortunately incomplete, particularly between January and March of 1937, and as such, fail to chronicle the search for a community drama consultant or the efforts of Hayes to work within the Marietta community. “Theatre Group to Present Play May 21–22,” Marietta Journal, May 7, 1937, 3.
83. D. G. Nichols to Gay Shepperson, November 17, 1936, NARA, E952, Box 523, “Price File—Community Drama, General.”
86. It is important to note that these data are, according to the cautionary note on the census, “seriously incomplete”; hampered by lack of funds and cooperation from churches, the survey results in “significant undercounts for many denominations throughout the South,” noting particularly the strangely low numbers of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Thus, the referenced percentages are likely at least somewhat lower than a historically accurate count would have been. In calculating these percentages, I excluded all individuals under the age of 14 because the numbers provided by the Census of Religious Bodies considered only those individuals


89. Herbert Price to Dorothy Braley, undated memo, NARA, E839, Box 5, “Community Drama—Herbert Price.”

90. Charlotte Holt to Mary McFarland, April 29, 1937, NARA, E839, Box 5, “Community Drama—Herbert Price.”

91. Herbert Price to Hallie Flanagan, May 4, 1938, NARA, E839, Box 5, “Community Drama—Herbert Price.”

93. *Federal One* was produced by the Institute for the Federal Theatre Project at George Mason University. The article Price responded to was a brief excerpt of the story told by Flanagan in *Arena* and was printed following the “Curator’s Column” in the October 1976 volume (1, no. 4, page 16) of *Federal One*.


96. *A Brief History of the Federal Theatre in the South* includes a section that outlines the productions of each city as an overview; one of the features is a short statement about the audience reaction to the show. In the Atlanta section, the majority of the productions are described as “excellent,” “fair,” or “very good.” *Altars of Steel* is the only production that stands out in this regard; its audience reaction is labeled “very interesting.” Writing in *The Leader*, critic Dudley Glass similarly wrote, “Whether ‘Altars of Steel,’ given its first performance anywhere at the Atlanta Theatre Thursday night, is a great drama, I don’t know. […] I’ve never seen anything like it. This can be said with conviction: It is intensely interesting.” *A Brief History of the Federal Theatre in the South*, 2, 10.

### 4 THE FADING FRONTIER: EXCAVATING THE PORTLAND FEDERAL THEATRE PROJECT


4. Ibid., 301.

5. NARA contains correspondence regarding project proposals and early funding problems between late 1935 and early 1936, a few documents from late 1937 centering on a local political conflict, some information from the spring of 1939 on a proposed radio show and the Paul Bunyan festival, one Audience Survey Report and a few regional reports that briefly mention the Portland FTP. The LOC collection includes several production books with varying degrees of information, as well as scraps of publicity information, playreader reports, and a script of E. P. Conkle’s *Paul Bunyan and the Blue Ox* (the script proposed for the Paul Bunyan festival). George Mason University possesses one oral history and brief notes from another untaped interview. It is also worth noting that many of the Portland FTP productions centered on dance
Notes

and movement, a characteristic that makes these scripts less telling than dramas or musicals. While it is certainly possible that more information regarding the Portland FTP is available, it is not easily located in the archival collections connected to the FTP, nor do contemporary histories cite other personal or private archives where additional sources might be located. The most helpful secondary source was written by Karen Wickre, one of the staff members involved in the organization of what is now the Library of Congress’s collection when it was on loan to George Mason University; *An Informal History of Oregon’s WPA Federal Theatre Project* is an unpublished document that describes many of Portland’s productions.

6. The numbers of employees in each branch during 1936 and 1939, respectively, were as follows: Maine (36 to 46), Colorado (26 to 44), Oregon (34 to 53), and Louisiana (50 to 114). The figures for the fifth state, Georgia (0 to 13), are misleading because the FTP did not begin in Georgia until January 1937, when all Birmingham FTP personnel were transferred (along with *Altars of Steel*) to Atlanta. Flanagan, *Arena*, 434–35.


8. Nick Chaivoe, interview by Shirley Tanzer, Portland, Oregon, transcript, WPA Oral Histories Collection, Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University, January 18, 1978, 44.


11. Guy Williams to Hallie Flanagan, January 15, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 69, “OR—Project Proposals #1.”


13. Chaivoe, interview, 49.

14. E. J. Griffith to Evan Roberts, April 20, 1939, NARA, E839, Box 17, “Oregon.”

15. “Dumb acts” referred to scenes or bits without sound. These popular vaudeville pieces were typically performed at the very beginnings and endings of shows and allowed noisy audiences to enter and exit the theatre while enjoying a bit of entertainment. These scenes also allowed non-English-speaking immigrant populations to attend and enjoy the theatre.


19. Hallie Flanagan to Bess Whitcomb, March 6, 1939, NARA, E839, Box 29, “Western Region #1.”
24. Miller sent his letter to Mary McFarland; she sent an extended quotation from the letter to the named recipients, which is the source of this quote. Mary McFarland to Mr. O’Brien and Mr. Krimont, May 21, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 69, “OR—Project Proposals.”
29. *Yellow Harvest* is inexplicably catalogued with the CCC scripts at NARA (and unavailable anywhere else). To the best of my knowledge, this production was not linked to the CCC, and was performed only during the flax festival on Mt. Angel. Frederick Schlick, *Yellow Harvest*, NARA, E917, Box 355, “Yellow Harvest,” 8.
34. The script of *Yellow Harvest* contains many dashes, ellipses, misspellings, and otherwise ungrammatical punctuation. I have replicated all of these stylistic choices in my quotations of the text. Schlick, *Yellow Harvest*, 2.

35. Ibid., 8.

36. Ibid., 21–2.

37. Ibid., 22.


40. Hoffman Smith, interview.

41. Griffith’s report estimated local contributions of $28,620, placing the total cost of the project at $275,513. When President Roosevelt decided to dedicate the building in 1937, last-minute rush funding poured in to the project; apparently there is no record of exactly how much money arrived and how it was spent, so the final cost of Timberline Lodge is unavailable. The resulting investigation came to no conclusions. Jean Burwell Weir, “Timberline Lodge: A WPA Experiment in Architecture and Crafts, Volume One,” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1977), 37, 68–71, 292.

42. Guy Williams to Hallie Flanagan, January 15, 1936, NARA, E850, Box 69, “OR—Project Proposals #1.”


44. Poem attached to letter from E. J. Griffith to Hallie Flanagan, December 4, 1937, NARA, E839, Box 29, “Western Region #2.”


46. “*Timberline Tintypes* Production Book,” LOC, Box 1081, “Timberline Tintypes,” program.

47. Frank’s hugely successful marionette adaptation of *Pinocchio* played in Los Angeles, Portland, Boston, and many other cities nationwide. It was this production of *Pinocchio*, in fact, that played on Broadway in one of the last performances of the FTP. Instead of the traditional ending in which Pinocchio transforms into a real boy, Frank rewrote the ending so that shots offstage interrupted Pinocchio’s change. A voice announced “Pinocchio is dead,” and proceeded to list the names of all of the Congressmen who voted against the FTP appropriations. The cast collected around the body of Pinocchio onstage, mourning his demise. *Life* magazine photographed the event, and the dead Pinocchio became the symbol for the death of the FTP. Lowell Swortzell, ed., *Six Plays for Young People from the Federal Theatre Project* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 3; “Pinocchio Dies in New York as Federal Theatre Drops Curtain,” *Life* (July 17, 1930): 20.

49. Log bucking is the process of cutting a felled tree into smaller pieces. Historically, it was a popular competitive sport in which a pair of loggers would race to complete the cutting first and colleagues would wager on the outcome.


51. Hugh Antoine D’Arcy’s “The Face on the Barroom Floor” provided the basis for a short 1914 Charlie Chaplin film by the same name. The “face” is one that the storyteller, a former painter, attempts to draw on the floor of the bar to show the sailors with whom he is drinking the beauty of his lost love. In both the ballad and the film (and Timberline Tintypes), the storyteller dies before completing his drawing.

52. Yasha Frank, Timberline Tintypes, NARA, E914, Box 332, “Timberline Tintypes.”


54. The program states that Margaret Barney directed Timberline Tintypes, and credits Yasha Frank with the arrangement of the piece. The Director’s Report is unsigned. Though Karen Wickre attributes the report to Frank in her Informal History of Oregon’s WPA Federal Theatre Project, the tenor of the writing and the fact that Barney is listed as director suggest that Barney wrote this report for the production book. “Director’s Report,” “Timberline Tintypes Production Book,” LOC, Box 1081, “Timberline Tintypes,” 7.

55. Created in the mid-nineteenth century, tintype photographs were produced on a metallic sheet. This cheap and simple form of photography remained popular in many rural locales through the early twentieth century, and would have been another way to evoke the nostalgia that Timberline Tintypes so consciously created in performance.


57. “‘Tintypes’ Pleased First Night Crowd at WPA Theatre,” Oregon Journal, April 25, 1938, 16.


61. “Minutes of Meeting of Paul Bunyan Celebration Committee,” recorded by Bernadine Whitfield, March 1, 1939, NARA, E839, Box 17, “Oregon.”


63. Ibid., 302.


65. Chaivoe went on to earn a law degree from Northwestern University and practiced law in Portland into the 1990s. Chaivoe, interview, 61.
5 THEATRE “IN THE WILDERNESS”: THE FEDERAL THEATRE PROJECT TOURS AMERICA

2. Flanagan, Arena, 78.
5. Ibid., 5.
6. Quoted in McDonald, Federal Relief Administration and the Arts, 559.
10. President Roosevelt’s efforts to preserve national resources are frequently noted as an early step in conservation in the United States, particularly via the CCC. Mitchell, Depression Decade, 328–30; Guy-Harold Smith, Conservation of Natural Resources (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1950), 19; Henry Jarrett, Perspectives on Conservation: Essays on America’s Natural Resources (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958), 14.
11. The CCC’s achievements included planting more than 2 billion trees, developing 800 state parks, constructing 46,000 bridges and 13,000 miles of hiking trails, eliminating 400,000 predatory animals, and much more. CCC director Robert Fechner’s Annual Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps: Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1939 is quoted in Neil M. Maher, “A New Deal Body Politic: Landscape, Labor, and the Civilian Conservation Corps,” Environmental History 7, no. 3 (July 2002), 437.
13. Free shows for schools and other institutions originally began with a grant through the Civil Works Administration. The program eventually
transferred over to the Public Works Division of New York’s Emergency Relief Administration, and then to FERA. According to Variety, the CCC programs were so popular that they were virtually assured automatic extensions until more permanent relief measures could be taken. Mathews, The Federal Theatre, 5–6; Jack Pulaski, “The Year in Legit,” Variety, January 1, 1935, 134; “CCC Free Drama Units Continue; More Shows, Talent May Be Added,” Variety, January 22, 1935, 53; “$5,000,000 Relief Program, Equity Files Bid in Wash.,” Variety, February 27, 1935, 59; Witham, Federal Theatre Project: A Case Study, 37.


21. At House’s request, Hayward later revised the script to reduce the number of actors from 12 to eight. This would allow the touring companies to travel with only one automobile, rather than the two required to transport the cast of 12. This version of the script appears to have gone into production in the late spring or early summer of 1937. All references to the script in this analysis are from the 12-actor version, which is more readily available and appears to have been produced more frequently.


25. Hayward, CCC Murder Mystery, xi.

26. Ibid., ix–x.

27. Myron B. Farwell to Arthur Roberts, September 19, 1936, NARA, E839, Box 4, “CCC.”


31. Based on the well-liked comic strip of the same name and subtitled “She’s not as dumb as she looks,” “Dumb Dora” was slang for a sweet, silly, addle-headed woman during the 1920s and 1930s. Gracie Allen played a particularly popular version of the “Dumb Dora” character in her vaudeville act with George Burns; Allen’s version of the “Dumb Dora” character was one of her trademark roles, which she created for television, radio, and film.

32. Hayward, *CCC Murder Mystery*, 32.

33. I have omitted the majority of the stage directions in this quote. Emphasis is from the script. Ibid., 9.

34. Ibid., 17.

35. Ibid., 25.

36. Emphasis from the script. Ibid., 19.

37. Ibid., 53.

38. Ibid., 58.


42. Lieutenant Martin A. Primoschic to Grace Hayward, January 6, 1937, NARA, E839, Box 4, “CCC.”


49. Minstrel shows were some of the most popular entertainments in CCC camps nationwide. In addition to the FTP troupes that toured with various minstrel shows, minstrelsy scripts distributed to camps often came with specific directions on how to recreate the humor and add local flavor. Moren, *The Federal Theatre Project of the Works Progress Administration and the CCC*, 8–10.
52. Much of this section was originally published in my article, “A Nation in Need: Disaster Relief and the Federal Theatre Project,” *Journal of American Drama and Theatre* 22.2 (Spring 2008). Copyright © 2008 Martin E. Segal Theatre Center. Reproduced by permission.
54. In the mid-1930s “concentration camp” was not yet a term loaded with the horrors of World War II. Instead, it was the term of choice for locations that harbored refugees.
59. Renowned filmmaker Pare Lorentz immortalized the Flood of 1937 in his 1938 WPA film *The River*. It is interesting to note that Lorentz’s film actually deals with the 1936 flood and the resulting legislation, but since he was filming in the midst of the Flood of 1937 (and had significant budget constraints), he simply shot footage of the 1937 flood and used it in the film instead.
64. American Red Cross, *The Ohio-Mississippi Valley Flood Disaster of 1937*, 17.
65. Ibid., 78.
68. American Red Cross, *The Ohio-Mississippi Valley Flood Disaster of 1937*, 121.
70. Ibid., 11–2.
72. Ibid., 1.
81. Ibid., 9.
83. Though there are many songs called “Goin’ Home,” it is likely that Price is referring to a spiritual based on the second movement of Antonín Dvořák’s *Symphony No. 9*. Frequently requested at funerals, some rank it second only to “Amazing Grace” as a hymn for solemn occasions.
88. One important exception to the generalization of scholars skipping over the activities of the CCC Division is Barry Witham’s *The Federal Theatre Project: A Case Study*, in which he explores the FTP’s tours for the CCC in the state of Washington.

**EPILOGUE: AN AMERICAN AUDIENCE FOR THE “PEOPLE’S THEATRE”**


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