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Capitalist Utopia

They constantly try to escape
From the darkness outside and within
By dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to be good.
But the man that is will shadow
The man that pretends to be.
T.S. Elliot

In 1906, when he started construction on his capitalist utopia on the Texas plains, C.W. Post was one of the wealthiest and most famous men in the world. Postum, Grape Nuts, and Post Toasties were household staples. Advertisements for his products and essays on his politics appeared in every newspaper in the U.S.. His Battle Creek, Michigan factory, a prototype for the contemporary corporate campus, was so stunningly beautiful and well organized that he was forced to give tours of the property and publish a coffee table book. Serious and sober people threw his name into conversations about potential presidential candidates. His opinions on currency, advertising, foreign trade, even yacht racing were widely sought. He was also the best-known anti-labor zealot in the country.

He originally went to Texas in 1906 to buy a ranch retreat where he could enjoy the “outdoor life and its health giving air.” He knew Texas well enough; he had lived in Fort Worth in the late 1880s, a real estate developer and solid member of the city’s booster class. His parents still lived there. Working with “Uncle” Tom Stevens, a well-connected and savvy ranch broker, Post was most interested in the remote lands along the breaks of the Llano Estacado. After a few weeks considering properties, he finally settled upon buying the old Curry Comb Ranch, a pretty piece of well-watered property that straddled the caprock. He also bought up a few adjoining parcels. His new spread covered 350 square miles spread across Lynn and Garza counties and C.W. Post was suddenly one of the largest landowners in Texas. If solitude was his wish, he couldn’t have chosen better, across both of the two counties that he now owned most of, there were barely two hundred people. His new home was seventy miles from a railroad. Fort Worth, the nearest city, was 250 miles to the east.

Once the deal closed, Post celebrated by throwing a huge party at his new ranch. Everybody within a two-day ride showed up. Beef, mutton, pies, cakes, breads, pickled vegetables, and other dishes weighed down the tables Post had built for the occasion. Spirits flowed and the mood was cheerful. Post was riding high when the crowd asked him to give a short speech. The breakfast magnate faced the crowd as one of them: black boots, black pants, maroon western shirt, modestly clutching his white Stetson near his waist.¹ Whether it was the anticipatory looks on the faces in front of him, or the morning’s

¹ Post had taken to wearing western garb several years earlier. His white Stetson was something of a trademark by that point.

conversations, or just a burst of inspiration, we may never know, but as Post detailed his plans for the new property, he abandoned his ranch-as-refuge plan and instead vowed he would transform his new property into the greatest agricultural community in America. He would bring in a railroad and divide the dusty and underpopulated land into beautiful farms and ranchettes. As he got wound up, he grew more elaborate, promising a modern and stunning new town with a grand hotel, a water works, tree-lined streets, a telephone system, and an electric company. The cowboys were skeptical. They didn't know C.W. Post.

Within weeks, Post was promoting the project in the national media. He formed a new company, the Double U (a play on his middle initial) to build the town, lay out the farms, and recruit buyers. He put his longtime right hand man Wilbur Hawk in charge. There were, as we have seen, no shortage of hyperbolic visionaries working the West Texas real estate market in those years, but Post was working a whole different game, something much more radical. He was going to build a literal capitalist utopia, a place where property ownership was required, labor unions prohibited, and where every citizen owned a business. Post City, as he decided to call it, was going to be a model community demonstrating the value and logic of a new form of business conservatism, a community ideal predicated on an absolute devotion to what we now call a "business-friendly" environment: city government run by and for business owners, low taxes, every resident a property and business owner, no regulation, and absolutely no labor unions.

There was no one in America better suited to articulate this booster-style politics than C.W. Post.² He was born and raised in Springfield, Illinois, a town practically willed into existence by its booster class, the son of a local farm implement dealer who dabbled in commercial real estate and who had sought his fortune in the gold fields of California. Post's grandfather had led his branch of the family out of New England to be part of a colonization scheme in Ohio. The Post men were a new breed of entrepreneur and settler that spread across the continent over the nineteenth century, leaders of a new type of frontier community, one devoted to a singular ideal – growth. Every venture and village saw itself as the next Cincinnati or Kansas City, an urban colossus, holding an entire state's or region's worth of towns and villages and factories and farms within its gravitational pull. The "go-getters" who dominated these places believed that the key to expanding their businesses was growing their communities. The earliest boosters in place hustled to lure some guarantor of permanence to their town: a railroad, a denominational college, county seat. Landing a state university was a major prize. Scoring the state capitol, as the booster class of Springfield, led by a young Abraham Lincoln, had done, was the biggest prize of all.³

Born in 1854, Post came of age during Springfield's greatest period of booster-driven growth. It had been named state capitol just a fifteen years earlier and the

² Nettie Leitch Major's *C.W. Post: The Hour and the Man* (1963) is an official biography approved and with the cooperation of the Post estate. A better option is Peyton Paxson, "Charles William Post: The Mass Marketing of Health and Welfare." Boston University, 1993.

³ 19th century boosterism is the subject of a few good works including Carl Abbott, *Booster's and Businessmen* (1981); Don Harrison Doyle in *The Social Order of a Frontier Community* (1983); Stephen V. Ward, *Selling Places* (1998); Timothy R. Mahoney "A Common Band Of Brotherhood': Male Subcultures, The Booster Ethos, and the Origins of Urban Social Order in the Midwest of the 1840s," *Journal Of Urban History* (1999); and Jocelyn Wills in *Boosters, Hustlers, and Speculators* (2005).

surrounding area was booming, with new techniques, new lands, and new technologies transforming central Illinois into a major agricultural center. Corn, wheat, wool, and pork were the biggest crops and in Springfield's new mills and plants they were turned into valuable consumer goods. The thriving economy (and the business of the state) brought in a large professional class, plenty of merchants (Springfield had two dozen general stores), and the kinds of construction industries associated with rapid growth.

At thirteen, a restless and ambitious Post left home to attend the new Industrial University in Urbana (now the University of Illinois). He had hoped to become an engineer. He only lasted two years. Back home, he helped his dad around the shop and joined up with the Springfield Zouaves, a ceremonial militia made up of teenagers who would get all kitted up in fancy uniforms and make appearances with the governor. He was gone again before he turned eighteen, lighting out for the Kansas prairies punching cattle and trying to run a store. Two years later, back in Springfield. This time, he got married to Ella Merriweather, his childhood sweetheart, and took a job as a traveling salesman for a farm equipment company covering the Iowa and Nebraska prairie frontiers. An itinerant tinkerer who had literally grown up in the ag machinery business, Post was soon designing custom rigs for his customers. At twenty-seven with a couple of patents in his name, he founded the Illinois Agricultural Works to manufacture a new type of cultivator. It failed. Overwhelmed, Post went into a deep funk and the business collapsed. He lost everything, including the deed to his parents' homestead, when he fell

prey to the machinations of an unscrupulous banker who took over the company. The Posts decided a change was needed and they set out for Fort Worth.⁴

In early 1888, the whole Post clan – C.W., Ella, infant daughter Marjorie, C.W.’s parents, his brothers, aunts and his uncles - liquidated their Springfield holdings and relocated to Texas.⁵ A booster’s dream come to life, Fort Worth was in the middle of a population boom. Over that decade, it had grown from 6000 to 24,000. Taking up offices at 610 Main Street, the Posts had poured \$100,000 into local real estate by July and had plans to invest at least that much more by year’s end. Looking at Fort Worth in the late 1880s, Post saw Chicago just twenty years earlier, a growing city settled into the seam between a continent’s worth of agricultural expansion on one side and a new and efficient transportation system and expanding markets on the other. Any man, he told a Fort Worth reporter, who could not see that the city offered the best chance “turn an honest penny in city property” was simply “too short-sighted to be worthy of comment.”⁶

[Insert – Image Spring Palace Exhibition]

[Insert – Image Fort Worth Land Company Map]

The East Fort Worth Land Company was the Posts’ biggest project. The family bought 400 undeveloped acres just across the Trinity River from downtown with plans to

⁴ Most of the stories from these years play up the villainy of the man who took Post’s company. The reality was a little more complicated and the details played out over several years. Post’s big takeaway was to keep most of his property in his wife’s name which he would do for the next several years.

⁵ Post, usually accompanied by other Springfield investors, had spent the fall visiting potential new homes and investment opportunities mostly in Texas and Kansas. He was advertising in the Springfield newspapers looking for investors in Fort Worth real estate as early as September 1887. He promised returns between 25 and 50%.

⁶ Post interview with *Fort Worth Gazette*, 24 September 1887.

build a modern and upscale sub-division they called “Sylvania.”⁷ It was going to be a planned community where every home would have electricity and running water. Every street would have a sidewalk and be lit by electric streetlights. A streetcar, another Post project, would connect the neighborhood to downtown. C.W. attended to the smallest of details, right down to the types of electric bulbs would be used in each home. His other big project was an enormous woolen mill he had imported brick-by-brick from Missouri and the construction of a working-man’s suburb on the southeast part of town.

The Posts were active boosters. They had been in Fort Worth about a year when the city put on its Spring Palace Exhibition – designed to show off the economic potential of the city. C.W. donated land for the site and put together panhandle exhibition trains. Cousin Willis was the organization/event secretary. C.W. helped design and promote Trinity Park and once hatched a scheme to try to use the loping and sandy Trinity River to provide power to an electric plant.⁸

When he wasn’t boosting or selling real estate, Post was busy running a bunch of small companies he had created to hawk his various inventions: stationary made from cotton seed hulls, a “safety” bicycle wheel (the designs for which he would eventually just give to the Columbia Bicycle Company), a new form of sheet music for player pianos, and what he called “scientific” suspenders that could be worn under a shirt. Keeping a coffee-fueled inhuman pace for thirty-seven months, he collapsed in a heap in January 1891.

⁷ It’s now the Riverside neighborhood of Fort Worth.

⁸ Harold Rich, *Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown* (2014) is a good history of the city.

C.W. could barely walk or talk. Ella put her husband on a train to Battle Creek, Michigan – home of the finest health resort in the world.⁹

II

In those days, Battle Creek was the center of the health fad world, a Babylon of mesmerists, vegetarians, gymnasts, Christian Scientists, water therapists, and other half-serious charlatans promising miraculous cures for the ailments that plagued the Gilded Age's middle and upper classes. At the center of it all was the "San," run by Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, the nation's leading promoter of "biologic living" and one of its most respected medical men. Patients at the San, which over the years included some of the wealthiest and most famous people in the western world, were treated through a regimen of physical fitness, relaxation, a regular rotation of various therapies – hydrotherapy, phototherapy, electrotherapy – and with a particular attention to diet.¹⁰ It was one of the most popular health destinations in the world because it worked. Guests were forbidden meat, alcohol, and caffeine. A strict diet of grains, nuts, and fresh vegetables, often concocted into strange foodstuffs with even stranger names, was accompanied by an equally stern exercise routine. Days were to be spent in mostly quiet reflection with a regular meditation schedule worked in between various therapy sessions. Both breakfast

⁹ I constructed much of Post's years in Fort Worth from the documents in "Financial Matters, 1882-1887" in Box 2 Post Family Papers, Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor and from *Fort Worth Gazette* particularly useful were entries: 27 May 1887; 15 June, 1888, 26, 29 February, 13 June, 31 December 1889, 8 April, 4, 11 May, 15 September, 8 October, 1890.

¹⁰ Among the most famous guests were Amelia Earhart, Mary Todd Lincoln, Eugene Debs, Henry Ford, Sojourner Truth, and Warren G. Harding.

and bedtime came early. Several times a week guests gathered to hear Kellogg lecture on healthy living.¹¹ Not surprisingly, most of the San's stressed-out and out-of-shape guests felt much better after a few weeks of exercise, quiet, and a vegetarian, caffeine- and alcohol-free diet.

But not C.W. Post. The San almost killed him. In nine months, he lost ninety pounds, half his body weight. He had no energy nor appetite. Most days he spent moping around in a wheelchair morbidly whining about his certain and impending death. He was in such pathetic shape that Dr. Kellogg consulted with Ella, urging her to get C.W.'s affairs in order, and quickly. He had maybe a week.¹² A desperate Ella turned to a local Christian Scientist, Elizabeth Gregory, and asked her to speak to C.W. about the miraculous power of positive thinking. The idea that one could recover their health through the power of their own mind was, after all, the kind of solution that a go-getter like her husband might respond to. Ella was right; C.W. took to Christian Science at once. After one session, he set himself up in Gregory's guest room, gobbling up her literature and everything in the fridge. Within weeks, he had regained much of his strength and vigor. And got into the health business.¹³

¹¹ Nicholas Bauch, *A Geography of Digestion: Biotechnology and the Kellogg Cereal Enterprise* (2017) and Brian C. Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living* (2014) are both fine scholarly accounts of Kellogg's and the San's contributions to the history of America diet and exercise. But nothing beats T. C. Boyle's outrageously funny novel *The Road to Wellville* (1993) for capturing the nuttiness of the whole Battle Creek vibe in those years.

¹² The San's failure to cure Post is the opening act in the Post-Kellogg feud, one of the greatest in American business history.

¹³ Like much of the biography of his pre-Postum fame, the story of Post/Kellogg/Gregory and his miraculous recovery suggests some exaggeration. Overcoming weakness and sickness through his own power was a central moment in the story of both Post the man, but also Post the business. The Posts, while never joining the church, were large financial supporters of Christian Science for several years, even donating money for the construction of its church in Battle Creek. Post himself, not surprisingly, developed his own views on religion.

Post partnered with his old nurse from the San and bought an old farm on Battle Creek's outskirts and opened La Vita Inn, a knock-off of Kellogg's place.¹⁴ It was cheaper, and guests were allowed to eat meat (Post loved a good steak). Post, of course, was no physician,¹⁵ but that didn't stop him from replicating Kellogg's lectures at La Vita, with regular discourses on health, faith, and spirituality, most of it an incomprehensible mish-mash of Christian Science, neurology, religion, and mesmerism drawn from a hodge-podge of sources. In 1894, he had choice selections collected in a book he self-published: *I Am Well!: The Modern Practice of Natural Suggestion as Distinct from Hypnotic or Unnatural Influence*. Interspersed with stories about miraculous cures - a regular occurrence at La Vita apparently - the book explained the Law of Harmony and described how to access the Universal Divine Mind. It read like this:

It is only when the ignorance of intellect is displaced by the higher intelligence, the psychic sense, Soul, Life, or Divine Mind, whichever term seems best, that the being gains a knowledge of the plane of eternal principles and of man's connection with his cause. This knowledge unfolds the new man and brings with it, according to law, an endowment of the ponderous power of Life, dismissing the unreal breaking the mesmeric spell, and returning man to a natural, normal state, from the world of illusion to the world of eternal realities.¹⁶

For 150 pages.¹⁷

¹⁴ Post's partner, Jacob Beilhart, had been fired from the San for practicing faith healing. He would go on to form the Spirit Fruit Society, one of America's longest lasting communes.

¹⁵ He was happy, however, to allow rumors to circulate that he had spent time in France and Bavaria studying alternative medicine.

¹⁶ Post, *I Am Well!: The Modern Practice of Natural Suggestion as Distinct from Hypnotic or Unnatural Influence*, Battle Creek: La Vita Inn Company, 1894, 4.

¹⁷ He would hawk the book in various forms for years and even included a short version in boxes of cereal once he established Grape Nuts as a health food.

La Vita never really caught on. Post stayed afloat largely because his “scientific suspenders” were starting to catch on.¹⁸ He began spending less time lecturing or attending to guests in favor of hours in La Vita’s research lab in the barn where he and his assistant tried to replicate various food and health products offered at the San. In 1895, he had his first great success, a coffee alternative made from grains and molasses that he called Postum. Like many Americans, Post tended to overindulge coffee and had grown convinced that the drink lay at the root of his gastrointestinal problems. He gambled that he was not alone in his suffering and set out to convince the nation that Postum was the solution to digestive discomfort.¹⁹ Thanks largely to a well-conceived marketing campaign - sampling stations (like at Costco), letting grocers sell on consignment, and the most aggressive and largest advertising campaign in the history of the U.S. - Postum took off. It was the very first health food, a grocery product that made blood red, nerves steady, and cured “coffee neuralgia” (a disease Post made up from whole cloth). Pouring his considerable profits right back into advertising, Post sought a universal demand for Postum. Thirty percent of his advertising budget - easily the largest in the nation – went for full-page ads in national magazines like *Collier’s*, *McClure’s*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. The rest went to newspaper ads of every type and in every paper he and his marketing department could identify. These were critical years in the food industry, as the

¹⁸ Ads, placed in a growing number of slick magazines, promised that the “unseen scientific suspenders” were perfect for “summer wear, full dress, professional men, well-dressed men, businessmen, athletes” and the “world at large.”

¹⁹ Post always claimed that he got the idea for Postum from his days in West Texas where plains women, far from markets, had created a coffee substitute by grinding up a mixture of baked grains and molasses. His product was, nevertheless, remarkably similar in style and taste to the coffee substitute available at the San. Marketing the product was the second act in his feud with the Kelloggs.

modern supermarket with its branded and packaged products on shelves had begun to displace the storekeeper behind the counter model for selling foodstuffs. Post understood before anyone that to succeed in the new stores would depend on branding, packaging, and advertising. It worked. Post had created a new food category and enjoyed a huge financial windfall. By 1900, he was selling almost half a million dollars of Postum a year.

Then he reinvented breakfast with Grape Nuts (1897) and Post Toasties (1906), two of first ready-to-eat cereals. Post marketed Grape Nuts like Postum, as a health food. Regular consumption of the cereal would make the blood stronger and the mind clearer; “pre-digested” sugars and “phosphate of potash” fed the nerve cells and could cure malaria or appendicitis. (The latter claim led to a nasty false advertising fight with *Collier’s*, which Post lost).²⁰ He pitched his ads, which he wrote himself, to a growing middle-class segment of American consumer. There was often a drawing of a homey scene of everyday life and accompanying text that spoke to the hopes, dreams, and fears of this huge and growing market. Post Toasties, for example, was mostly pitched to busy mothers as a healthy and nutritious morning meal option for children. His tag-line “There’s a Reason” appeared in every ad. Within a decade of going into business, Post ran one of the largest food companies in the world and had created two brand-new food categories which, thanks to his advertising, dominated the market. By 1903, his company was clearing over a million dollars a year in profit.²¹

²⁰ The federal government would not begin demanding truth in advertising until the 1930s. That said, even today, Grape Nuts regularly appears on lists of healthiest breakfast cereals. Robert Collier, *The \$50,000 Verdict* (1910).

²¹ Carson, *Cornflake Crusade*, 165; Paxson, 91.

The Postum Food Company had eclipsed the San as the most important business in Battle Creek and with dozens of imitators in operation at any one time, breakfast cereal had replaced the health business as the engine of the city's economy. C.W. Post was now the town's leading citizen. His manufacturing facility, built on the La Vita Inn property, was a marvel; America's first corporate campus: clean, modern, and technologically advanced. With its manicured grounds and every building painted the same shade of crisp linen white, locals called it "White City." Covering several acres and with 2500 employees, it was the largest food processing center in the world. Dedicated buildings housed the dozens of massive and built-to-order ovens, grinders, kneaders, moulders, slicers, carton makers, packer belts, rollers, evaporators, and roasters. Each machine was tended by identically dressed employees, their uniform reflecting their position in the company. At the center of campus was a beautiful Elizabethan mansion that stood as the company headquarters (and the in-house advertising unit).²² The company's delivery trucks were all new, sparkling, with clean lines and clear advertising. They were driven by scrubbed and fresh young men in sharp white uniforms. Post, who considered himself an enlightened and benevolent employer, paid higher than average wages, offered health insurance, and even established a bonus system. A firm believer in the value of home ownership for all, Post revived his Fort Worth plan for a working-class suburb and put in the Post Addition, a neighborhood of attractive custom homes available to his employees at close to cost. He even arranged the financing.²³

²² *A Trip Through Postumville*, (Battle Creek: Postum Cereal Company, 1920).

²³ Post was a genius at free advertising. One of his great efforts was how he spread the story of his home-building benevolence through Homer Cray's "The Girl who Bought a Home on Nine Dollars a Week" that

Post became the city's biggest booster; he purchased Battle Creek's daily newspaper. He built the Post Tavern, the finest hotel between Detroit and Chicago, with private baths, electric lighting, in-room telephones, and a first-rate restaurant. He financed the construction of the 2000-seat Post Theater. He donated land to factories that wanted to relocate to Battle Creek. The Marjorie Block, named for his daughter and built by Post, was the city's first high-rise business address. Most importantly, Post mapped out a plan that would guarantee the continued growth of his adopted home - "The Battle Creek Way" – a pledge among the city's business leaders to cooperate and keep labor unions out of their town and out of their industries. Essential to any booster dream of growth was an adamant opposition to organized labor.

[Insert – Image Postumville]

[Insert – Image Postum Ad]

[Insert – Image C.W. Post]

III

By 1902, a million boxes of cereal a day were shipping out of Battle Creek: Grape Nuts of course, but also plenty of imitators: Golden Manna, Malta Vita, Nokra Oats, Mapl-Flakes, Grain-o, Grape Sugar Flakes, Ceroloa, and many others. And the Kelloggs hadn't

appeared in *Leslie's Weekly* in November 1912 and, thanks to his marketing department, was reprinted in newspapers across the country.

yet gotten into the game. The breakfast cereal industry employed over seventy percent of the workforce. Post was determined to keep unions out of the business. Battle Creek already had a reputation as an anti-union stronghold; the Seventh Day Adventist Church, which called Battle Creek home, actively discouraged its members from joining unions and the many farm implement manufacturers in the city were bitterly anti-labor. But Post was particularly intolerant, viewing labor unions as a desecration of the laws that governed natural economy and the tenets of the good society.

Even though he had been a businessman for two decades, C.W. Post had never had a lot of employees and his views surrounding management and labor were still stuck in the booster ethic of mid-19th century Springfield. In those years, before the widespread emergence of industrial capitalism and wage labor, working for someone else was a temporary condition. A young person might apprentice for a few years as they learned a trade or work for wages as they built a stake, but always toward a goal of independence. Relationships between employer and employee were personal and often meant working side by side, day after day. Even as industrial manufacturing came online, factories in places like Springfield or Battle Creek maintained some semblance of that relationship. A factory owner was on property, usually with an office just off the shop floor. Owners knew employees by name and had often hired them personally. Men like Post saw employment as a personal agreement between two independent individuals. He still maintained faith that for most, wage labor was still just a temporary condition and that these “working

capitalists" would, after a time, "rise by his experiences into an ever greater power to master matter and conditions."²⁴

Labor unions fundamentally undermined Post's (and an entire class of employer) understanding of labor markets. They saw workers as individual agents, who sold their labor for a certain price and for a pre-determined number of hours a week. An employee was responsible for doing quality work in the hours agreed upon. An owner had a responsibility of paying that wage (and Post paid better than most) to guarantee to deliver the number of hours of week agreed upon, and to provide a safe, comfortable work environment. Further, an owner should recognize talent and reward excellent performance and a worker should perform their tasks with efficiency and with care. These two precepts, he believed, were the foundation of the laws that governed the natural economy. Labor unions, by claiming the right to negotiate on behalf of a company's employees, effectively negated the rational operation of the labor market, disrupted the individualism upon which it was based, and put in a barrier between workers and employers.

The only logical arrangement for Post was the "open shop," a situation where no employee had to join a union to work for a particular business or industry.²⁵ Post knew of

²⁴ Post, "A Step Forward" *The Square Deal* 4, 2.

²⁵ The open shop movement has been the subject of excellent scholarship from the beginning. See John D. "The Necessity of an Open Shop-An Employer's View" in *Publications of the American Economic Association* (1905) and from the same issue, John Graham Brooks "The Issue between the Open and Closed Shop." *The North American Review* that year also had a feature by famed diplomat Henry White, "The Issue of the Open and Closed Shop." See also Richard W. Gable, "Birth of an Employers' Association" from *The Business History Review* (1959); Allen M. Wakstein "The Origins of the Open-Shop Movement, 1919-1920" *The Journal of American History* (1964); Doris B. McLaughlin, "The Second Battle of Battle Creek - the Open Shop Movement in the Early Twentieth Century" *Labor History* (1973) and Rosemary Feurer and Chad Pearson, *Against Labor: How U.S. Employers Organized to Defeat Union Activism* (2017).

course that a closed shop, where a labor union speaks for the entirety of a factory's workers, was the source of power for labor unions, but for him it was not only a violent deviation from the laws that governed the economy but a threat to democracy. Like a lot of Americans, Post feared and loathed strikes and the bloody viciousness that they seemed to trigger. But as a producer of an easily replicated consumer good, his greatest concern was the threat of an organized boycott of his products. In 1902, when an obscure labor publication called for just such a boycott of Postum and Grape Nuts, Post joined the National Association of Manufacturers, the "shock troop brigade" of the anti-labor movement.²⁶

Founded in 1895, the NAM had a been mostly a sleepy organization of overstuffed small-city businessmen harrumphing about tariffs and trade agreements. But in 1902 when President Teddy Roosevelt refused to side with management during a massive coal strike and instead arbitrated an agreement that resulted in a partial victory for the United Mine Workers, things got real in the business world. For decades, capital had come to see the federal government as a loyal and powerful ally in the fight against labor, but Roosevelt's position signaled a major change in the status quo. These were also years of aggressive expansion by the American Federation of Labor seeking to organize craft unions among the thousands of independent factories in the small cities of the Old Middle West. Places like Battle Creek and Springfield. In 1903, NAM membership tripled, and new leadership emerged, mostly drawn from its violently anti-labor faction. Post was the most prominent

²⁶ Samuel Grafton, "Propaganda from the Right, *American Mercury*, (March 1935), 264.

among them. His first speech before the group was called “The Tyranny of the Trade Unions.”²⁷

He moved in as head of the Citizen’s Industrial Association of America, a NAM spin-off that organized local employer’s associations. Starting at home, he founded the Battle Creek Citizen’s Alliance which included every large employer in town. The group pledged to bar labor unions in their factories. Post named the strategy the “Battle Creek Way” and explicitly linked the open shop to a booster philosophy of economic and demographic growth, to “protect” the interests of the city and expand its economy by luring new industries by “guaranteeing them immunity from labor troubles of every kind.” Members of the BCCA promised to pay competitive wages and provide a safe working environment but reserved the right to fire an employee for cause. Employees had the right to leave a job but strikes and boycotts were strictly forbidden.²⁸

As president of the CIAA, Post launched a massive organization campaign. He sent a small army of commissioned agents across the country to organize local affiliates. The coordinators, who gained a reputation for persuasiveness and aggression, helped make antipathy toward labor unions part of the booster creed. At their disposal was an astonishing volume of open-shop propaganda, much of it prepared by the CIAA’s communication director, an up-and-coming Kansas City newspaperman named George

²⁷ See Clarence E. Bonnett, *Employers’ Associations in the United States* (1922); Albert Kleckner Steigerwalt’s sympathetic account *The National Association of Manufacturers, 1895-1914* (1964) and the more recent and thorough Jennifer A. Delton, *The Industrialists: How the National Association of Manufacturers Shaped American Capitalism* (2020).

²⁸ *NYT*, 13 December 1904.

Creel.²⁹ The centerpiece of CIAA marketing was *The Square Deal*, a monthly magazine. It was a slick, high-quality publication prepared by Post's marketing department back in Battle Creek. The magazine's philosophy was clear; organized labor was evil, and that the open shop was the only moral approach to the labor question. Each issue featured horror stories about labor violence and terrorism and a corresponding number of reasonable-sounding articles on open shop, but *The Square Deal* also included news stories, general business advice, fun facts, jokes, cartoons, etc., the sort of magazine that littered the reception areas of thousands of offices. Post wrote several essays a year and the magazine also drew upon a solid roster of other talent: business owners, economists, ministers, sociologists, politicians, political scientists, public figures, and public intellectuals. CIAA affiliates also received legal aid, management training, and access to the organization's network of strikebreakers and spies. By 1909, it represented over 400 local associations.³⁰

Post wasn't content with preaching to the choir and organizing his fellow businessmen. Starting in 1904, he launched an all-out national effort – at his own expense – to warn the American public of the dangers of organized labor and the logic of the open shop. For the next decade, Post bought up huge spaces in seemingly every newspaper in the country where he published lengthy anti-labor jeremiads. His screeds, which ran to the thousands and thousands of words, ran in the big newspapers like the *New York Times* and *Hartford Courant* but also tiny ones like the *Bronson Pilot* or the *Tuscumbia North Alabamian*. While he made it clear in a *nota bene* that closed the ads that he had

²⁹ Creel would go on to great notoriety for the effectiveness of his propaganda campaigns on behalf of the United States' entry into the First World War as the head of the Committee on Public Information.

³⁰ Open shop advocates saw themselves as patriotic progressives. That year the CIAA morphed into the National Council for Industrial Defense.

purchased the space for his essays, newspapers really had no choice, refusing to publish his broadsides, meant losing Postum Cereal account.³¹ Even the shortest of his compositions took up a full quarter page. They were all pretty much alike, with lurid and gloomy tales of the damage labor unions had inflicted upon the nation and vivid descriptions of public violence and devastation to innocent families. Unions, he would declare, were the real “trusts” and labor leaders were a threat to democracy: “The great 90 percent of Americans do not take kindly to the acts of tyranny by those trust leaders openly demanding that all people bow down to the rules of the Labor Trust and we are treated to the humiliating spectacle of our Congress and even the Chief Executive entertaining these convicted law-breakers and listening with consideration to their insolent demands that the very laws be changed to allow them to safely carry on their plan of gaining control over the affairs of the people.”³² Using his considerable talents for advertising, Post pitched his message directly to the middle-class consumers who bought Grape Nuts and Postum; a group scared of labor violence and confused by the strange new workings of the American economy.

[Insert – Image Square Deal Magazine]

³¹ One barely veiled threat went: “Your attention is invited to the enclosed from Mr. Post. He has in the past withheld some heavy display advertisements from papers too much under the domination of the labor trusts to print his announcement seeking the emancipation of the people. Experience proves that mediums which cater most to the relatively small number of labor union readers are not sought by the great buying public, and therefore not profitable for the advertisers of high grade goods.” Grandin Advertising Agency to Publishers, 7 July 1905, Post Papers, Box 1, Advertisements (copy and correspondence about) Misc. [1-5].

³² “Don’t Weep at the Ice House,” *Buffalo Enquirer* 4 January 1910. This article appeared everywhere.

IV

It was in the middle of his open shop campaign when he decided to build his capitalist utopia in West Texas:

I am enlisted to demonstrate that a city and country made up of individual owners can, so far as practical results, wealth, comfort, peace and concerned, "rope and hog-tie" any outfit of socialists and rainbow-chasers that ever existed or ever will in our day and generation. This is individualism contrasted with Socialism.³³

In Post City, residents would "stand on their own resources, to maintain their own homes, and to live their own lives as becomes independent American citizens."³⁴ A democratic expression of the booster ideal, every member of the community would be a "a landed proprietor and a defender of peace and prosperity." Post City would be a place simply incapable of producing "socialists or anarchists."³⁵

Post oversaw every detail: the architecture and amenities of individual homes, the number and type of businesses, the design and function of the surrounding agricultural community, the lay out and aesthetics of the city itself, the editorial stance of its newspaper, the structure of city government. He decided the recipe for the beefsteaks served in his hotel and described where bowls of Grape Nuts would be placed on its breakfast tables. He decided who could live there, demanding references and interviews

³³ Moore, "Making Dreams Come True," *Pearsons Magazine* October 1909, 523.

³⁴ Quotes from a story about the founding of Post City that appeared in newspapers across the country on its ten-year anniversary. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* 2 June 1917; *Jackson Daily News* 2 June 1917.

³⁵ Moore, "Making Dreams Come True," *Square Deal*, November 1909, 316.

with potential residents. No renters nor speculators were allowed in Post City. Newcomers were placed on a six-month probationary period. Farmers had to demonstrate previous success. He ran the government. He strictly forbade labor unions: "No man who comes into Post City will ever be tyrannized over by labor unions."³⁶

Once he decided to build his utopia, Post wasted no time; within six months of his ranch-buying barbecue speech, he was back in Garza County, staking out his town. While actually run out of Battle, his new company, the Double U, was chartered in Texas and had an onsite general manager. Post chose a site atop the caprock about forty miles due southeast from Lubbock. A large tent city was in place before the year was out. Its white canvas structures could be seen for miles. He had established a nearby quarry to cut stone and a lumber mill was onsite to cut material to order. A massive commissary served hundreds of workers. The nearest railroad was still seventy miles away in Big Spring so Post had a supply road graded between his project and the depot and put together the largest supply train in Texas: twenty-four built-to-order Studebaker wagons and a 72-mule team imported from Missouri. For four years, the team trudged back and forth over the four-day trek, hauling all he needed across the Texas prairies. Nothing was allowed to slow development; when a survey revealed that the town site wasn't close enough to the county's geographic center to be named county seat, Post ordered a temporary halt in construction, hopped a train to Texas, and within a few days had picked out a new site,

³⁶ *FWST*, 26 January 1908.

laid out its stakes, and resumed building. (Close City, Texas, named for Post's first son-in-law, sits on the old site.) He spent millions.³⁷

By Christmas 1907, Post City was taking shape. A city-block building complex that would house, among other things, the largest general store in West Texas, was almost complete. Across the street, construction on the Algerita, which promised to be the finest hotel between Fort Worth and Denver had begun. Scattered across various plats, there were *fifty* brand new homes on site, almost all of them occupied. Double U construction crews could build a new house in eleven days. Soon, they had it down to six. In 1908, the sewer and electric systems went in along with the telephone exchange. All the wire ran down the town's alleys. Main Street businesses were open and so was the school and a bank. Three different churches were built. The Algerita Hotel opened and delivered as promised with well-appointed rooms, solid furnishings, and a good restaurant. By year's end there were near 600 residents, a fire brigade, a men's baseball team and a women's basketball team. The Masonic Lodge, a theater, a cotton gin and warehouse, a hospital, a grain elevator, and recreational lake came the next year. So did a golf course. Post designed the trophy for the club championship. Post was rarely in his town for more than a few weeks a year, spending most of his time either in Battle Creek, or on his luxurious estates in New York City or Washington D.C., or on regular long sojourns to Europe. But he still ran the Post City operation through the mail, telegram, and telephone, insisting on

³⁷ Charles Dudley Eaves and C. Alan Hutchinson. *Post City, Texas: C.W. Post's Colonizing Activities in West Texas*, (1952).

regular and details reports from Wilbur Hawk and the managers of the Double U company.

Post was creative in advertising his town. Besides the utilization of traditional promotional literature like the pamphlet "Making Money in Texas" prepared by Wilbur Hawk which he mailed out by the thousands, he also put his own fame and position as the largest newspaper advertiser in the country to work. Across the country in late 1907 and early 1908, the same newspaper article appeared. The uncredited report told how two and half pounds of silver trimming (probably belonging to a member of the Coronado Expedition) had been found in a cave on Post's property in Texas. Only the first two paragraphs (of thirteen) describe the find; the rest of the article is an advertisement for Post City. Literally: its landscape ("a great smooth plain with rich grass-covered land"), its turnkey farms, its orchards, its government ("affairs are conducted in a thrifty, economic manner"), its retail establishments, its "beautiful stone court house," its water system, its climate ("air is dry, sweet and pure"), its potential for agricultural production (cattle, hogs, kaffir, alfalfa, cotton) its creed ("labor union tyranny is not permitted in Post City.")³⁸

Not every gushing story about Post City originated in Battle Creek. His "model town" in Texas got plenty of good press. "Magical" was how a correspondent for the Kentucky *Public Ledger* described Post City in 1908: "One is constantly rubbing his eyes and pinching himself to learn where he is dreaming or not. Rows of beautiful dwellings, splendid reproductions of bungalows, Swiss cottages, half stone and half mansard effect, beautifully dressed stone cut into every imaginable effect, a panorama of fairy tale

³⁸ The story ran nationwide. See *Raleigh Times* 24 December 1907 for one example.

effects.³⁹ The *Abilene Daily Reporter* called Post City “without a doubt the most substantially built city west of Fort Worth.”⁴⁰ A piece for *Hampton’s Broadway Magazine*, that got picked up by the wire services called it “a city free from the evils of speculation” and praised its intolerance for renters, land sharks, saloons, and “gambling dens” and its government run by businessmen.⁴¹ The most fawning story appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* in April 1908, written by journalist/poet Fannie Sprague Talbot who had joined C.W. and Marjorie for an extended visit to Post City a few months earlier.

The same brain that has evolved millions from the manufacturer of foods has now undertaken the stupendous task of building an ideal city, a city that will be a credit to itself, to the state of its adoption and to the builder himself.⁴²

While stories like these might gilding the lily, the fact remained that Post City was, put simply, the prettiest town in West Texas. Post’s attention and money compressed even the shortened developmental stages of planned communities like Littlefield and established an aesthetic impossible without his central planning. Every home was a version of a California cottage, the hottest architectural style going, and were prewired and plumbed. The city’s main street was divided by a handsome tree filled median. At the town’s main intersection stood the huge general store, the hotel, and the bank. Extending out five blocks from the Central Business District were residential neighborhoods laid out in two identical forty-block grids. He grew the 100,000 Ash, Poplar, Catalpa, and Locust trees planted along every street – including the roads in and out of town – in a nursery he

³⁹ Marysville, *Public Ledger* 6 April 1908. See also *Los Angeles Times* 16 November 1908.

⁴⁰ *Abilene Daily Reporter* 28 November 1908.

⁴¹ For examples see *Los Angeles Times* 16 November 1908.

⁴² *Detroit Free Press* 19 April 1908.

built on the edges of town. A modern waterworks brought water down from the caprock. He constructed his high school, courthouse, and hotel from the lovely native sandstone from his quarry. Each was in the same classical prairie style. His liberal use of stone, which even made its way into home construction, gave Post City a look of permanence sorely lacking in most frontier towns.

Home ownership was the key to the Post's utopian vision for his town. He had been involved in neighborhood development since his Fort Worth days and he viewed his Postumville community as the centerpiece of his industrial benevolence, but Post City was his vision for the nation's political economy come to life. Post believed a "prosperous community is best built by men who own their homes and their business buildings" and that homeownership would be the key to reestablishing permanence to a nation that had come unmoored by the vagaries of industrial capitalism. An insatiable need for workers in the nation's new factories over the previous few decades had, Post believed, upended the trajectory of home and land ownership. The transitory millions who poured into the nation's cities, where they were forced to live in squalid tenements, had no commitment nor attachment to their new homes. The cruel nature of this residential volatility was one of the reasons that so many were turning to labor unions and socialism. Consequently, employers had both a moral and an economic interest in improving the domestic stability of their employees. "A man without a home which he actually owns. . . feels that he is, in a way, only a transient, not really a part of the government, not one of the real solid oak timbers in the great structure, but that he is only one of the chips to swept out when the owners wish." A homeowner, on the other hand, "is a self-sustaining and self-respecting

individual – to my mind the best type of citizen, the most reliable, and helps to form the most prosperous community.”⁴³ The workman, he always believed, “who has been shown a way to pay for his home and practice thrift does not need poor laws, workhouses, old-age pensions, or charity of any kind.”⁴⁴

[Insert – Image Post City]

[Insert – Image Post City Home]

[Insert – Image Post City Farm]

Post City bungalows sold for between \$1500 and \$3000. Buyers needed a healthy down payment and had four years to pay off the note. They were built to order and ranged in size from one-bedroom cottages to four-bedroom homes. Toilets, tubs, and sinks were installed even before the waterworks was up and running. They all had fireplaces and came painted and wallpapered. Many had basements and some had summer kitchens and sleeping porches. There was plenty of curb appeal with charming front porches, dormers, custom cut bargeboards, painted shutters, hedges, and plenty of windows. Every home sat on a nice-sized lot with both a front and a back yard. There was an annual contest for the prettiest yard and Post himself named the winner. Within four years, Post City had 1000 citizens.⁴⁵

⁴³ Quotes from a story about the founding of Post City that appeared in newspapers across the country on its ten-year anniversary. *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* 2 June 1917; *Jackson Daily News* 2 June 1917.

⁴⁴ “He Dreamed of Homes for Others,” *C.W. Post – A Memorial*, 13.

⁴⁵ Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 53-60.

The farms proved a tougher sale. Post had, like everything else, particular ideas about agriculture. He had great faith in the commercial family farm where what he called “intensive farming” could be practiced on a suitable scale, where a “family can give farming ample attention.”⁴⁶ He designed the farms of Post City to match his vision. But that vision was expensive, several times the cost per acre in the southern plains. And the land hadn’t been broken. And it was still eighty miles from the railroad. And 1907 was drought year.⁴⁷ Undeterred, Post used the slow pace of sales to conduct crop experiments on his farmlands. He subsidized renters who tried out different agricultural commodities: grains, vegetables, forage, cotton, sorghum, hogs. He also planted a massive town garden. He grew so deliberate in his study that he even took his farms off the market for a couple of years.

When the farms finally hit the market, they were spectacular. Each property was a turnkey operation, complete with a four-room house, barn, stable, chicken house, hog shed, a well, a three-acre orchard protected by hedgerows, a windmill, and already fenced. Like the homes, these were all built to spec by the Double U Company according to a standard set of plans. There was easy access to the latest agricultural technology (farmers had to demonstrate proficiency in the use of agricultural implements in their interviews). Each farm was on a graded road with easy access to town. Ringing the half-section family farmlands were four-section ranchettes, all watered with homes on the

⁴⁶ Quoted in Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 113.

⁴⁷ One of Post’s stranger ideas was that he could solve the problem of loneliness for rural folk through careful location of farm houses. He placed the homes of each farm at the corners of each property where four lots adjoined. He assumed that having homes close together might foster community. Among the very things most farm families after purchasing a Post City farm was to move their home to the center of their property, far from their neighbors.

property.⁴⁸ His farms were celebrated by the nation's agricultural press. *The New York Tribune Farmer* raved: "I very much doubt whether the agricultural history of the United States records such a unique plan, so practical in its conception and so successfully carried out, of building up such a very large farm and highly intelligent community of farmers, and having every detail conducted according to the latest and most improved methods of farm life and practice." Post, the reporter continued, is "materially benefitting hundreds of worthy farmers and their families that go on to his farms to become better citizens, and eventually, they become well to do property owners of some of the best and most production land in the country."⁴⁹

Post even came to believe that he could transform the actual climate of his properties. Perhaps preternaturally drawn to pseudoscience, he became a convert to "pluviculture," the crackpot theory that one can make it rain on demand by blowing up dynamite in the atmosphere. For years the good folk of Post City endured their benefactor's "rain battle" experiments. When conditions were right, and his town managers were to keep him regularly updated on local weather conditions, Post would order up to 3000 pounds of dynamite to be launched into the skies from the caprock just west of town. Four in the morning, noon, supper time, midnight. Dogs howled, horses spooked, babies cried, windows rattled, and houses shook. Honestly believing that his experiments were yielding results, he spent \$50,000 in dynamite one summer. When Post died, there were still 50,000 pounds of dynamite stored in special caverns on site. The

⁴⁸ Eaves, "C.W. Post's Colonizing" 82-84; Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 50, 122, 147-153, Post quote on 113; Blodgett 80; *Sioux Falls Argus Leader* 29 June 1917

⁴⁹ Quoted in Eaves and Hutchinson, 117-118.

good citizens of Post City, not surprisingly, had no interest in continuing the experiments. When the United States entered World War I, in a terrific display of paranoia and Yosemite Sam problem-solving, city leaders, terrified by what the potential German saboteurs in their midst might do with all that dynamite, attached a long fuse to the whole mess and blew it up.⁵⁰

Post also took charge of finding buyers for the businesses of Post City. Like the farms, he tried to make them turnkey operations. Some, like the lumber yard and the stable, were up and running. Others, like the barber shop or the tailor, he designed and advertised in trade magazines. When he failed to find one buyer for his gigantic general store, he split it into different businesses and sold them off to individual merchants: groceries, furniture, hardware, dry goods, confectionary, paint, shoes, drugs, stationary, and more. Each already had regular customers and inventory on the shelves. Depending on the size of the operation he demanded between \$2000 and \$10,000 down payment and offered good terms and a “good opening to make money as the country grows.”⁵¹

The town was effectively governed by the Double U taking its direction from Post or Wilbur Hawk. Eventually Post planned to implement a city commission-style system where the functions of the executive and legislative were combined in a small, elected body of commissioners, each with a specific administrative role. Those commissioners would be drawn from the booster class. Often called the Galveston plan, it was already the most popular form of city government in West Texas. But until the city population

⁵⁰ C. W. Post, "Making Rain While the Sun Shines," *Harper's Weekly*, 27 February 1912; Eaves, "Charles William Post, Rainmaker"; Michael Whitaker, "Making War on Jupiter Pluvius."

⁵¹ *Hardware Dealers' Magazine* July 1910 and *National Druggist*, December 1908.

grew, Post ran the city according to a strict set of instructions he laid out in the city's "Dedication." There was an exacting code governing sanitation and property upkeep. No home nor business was allowed to have alcohol on the premises. Prostitution and gambling were strictly banned. (Once, in his absence, overzealous town leaders prosecuted a pool hall owner for gambling because losers were expected to pay for the game. When he heard about this strict interpretation of his rule, Post paid the fine himself.) There was even a curfew. Land speculators were forbidden. No one was allowed to sublet their home or farm. African Americans nor Mexican-Americans were not allowed to purchase land or lots.

Neither, obviously, were members of labor unions. Or socialists. The newspaper, naturally called *The Post City Post*, followed Post's views on "trade unionism, socialism, and anarchism." When its editor wrote – at Post's urging – a full-throated condemnation of the pro-labor and socialist newspaper *Appeal to Reason*, Post paid to have it reprinted as an advertisement in the newspaper. For a full year, just in case his readers were unclear on the subject. For good measure he also instructed the local post office to refuse to accept or deliver copies of *Appeal to Reason*. Getting caught with a copy could get you kicked out of town.⁵² When W.T. Estes, a socialist from Lubbock, took it upon himself to give away copies in Post City, Post, who happened to be in town, confronted the man and threatened him with jail or violence or both. The next time Estes came to town, he was beaten up and chased out of town.⁵³

⁵² Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 84.

⁵³ *Appeal to Reason* 17 June 1911, 22 July 1911, 5 August, 1911.

In 1912, Post cranked up a new economic engine for his city. Up to that point, he was basically the economy, spending upwards of \$36,000 a month and still micromanaging every detail of Post City. But that year he broke ground on the Postex Cotton Mills, a 136,000 square foot facility, the first of its kind to spin local cotton into a product, in this case, bed linens. There was the luxury brand - Postex, no surprise here – among the finest sheets available in the country and the standard brand Garza also popular. The mill employed 250 people and its power plant served the entire town. It would produce up to 20,000 sheet sets a year until the 1940s.

By 1914, Post was ready to put his farmlands on the market. 500 small truck farms were laid out on the very edges of the city and dozens of four-section stock farms just beyond. The biggest sales campaign in the city's history was set to start on April 1st. For months, Post peppered Texas newspapers with stories and ads for the properties. 13,000 copies of the Post-penned *A Chance to Own a Fine Farm* were mailed out to prospects.⁵⁴ "Breaking up a Great Ranch" another sales pitch started showing up in rural and agricultural newspapers across Texas and the Great Plains.⁵⁵

I feel that we are offering such opportunities to deserving homeseekers as assure the establishment and building up of a prosperous community. I am providing completed home farms for those who have a little money and are sufficiently enterprising to enter upon owning a home for themselves and their families. . . . There has been a substantial growth and development at

⁵⁴ Strangely, Post hated the idea of slick brochures to sell land; he much preferred a more direct approach. All queries, which went straight to Wilbur Hawk were to be answered personally by letter. Post wanted prospects to visit the land, he wasn't interested in selling to folks who were impressed by "flashy literature." When he finally broke down and produced *A Chance to Own a Fine Farm*, it had no photos. Instead Post planned on sending out agents with large photograph books and later even motion pictures to show the land and the town. Blodgett, *Land of Great Promise*, 79.

⁵⁵ The pitch opens with the story of two cowboys wondering what Post was going to do with his Texas lands: "Well, I'll tell y'u Jake, y'u know I heard it confidential, he's goin' to plant it all out to Grape-Nuts." *Nebraska Farm Journal*, 25 October 1913.

Post during the few years of my ownership of property there, and I feel that the time has now come for me to share its future prosperity with those who are in earnest about wanting to prosper. You will be greeted with hearty sincerity at Post and assisted in every reasonable way towards getting along. There is real happiness to be derived from fresh air and sunshine and growing crops and values, where the big part of the growth and increase comes to the man who is earning and getting it.⁵⁶

Post wouldn't live to see the campaign. Laid low and holed up in a Santa Barbara mansion that he had recently built to spend the winters, Post had grown despondent and distressed by a crippling case of appendicitis. He grew convinced that the stomach troubles that had sent him Battle Creek those many years ago had returned. Not even an emergency surgery at the Mayo Clinic relieved his fears. On May 9th, he penned a short note to his daughter and wife (his second), put on one of his best suits and took his own life with his prized Winchester 40-72 rifle. He was sixty years old. He was worth \$50,000,000.

Within hours news of his death reached Post City. The entire city turned out to mourn. A public meeting produced a proclamation "we have lost a friend and a benefactor, a man loved and respected by all, desire to show our appreciation of his many acts of kindness and generosity toward us and the community at large. Mr. Post, with unusual foresight and magnificent courage, planned and developed this city, providing employment to hundreds of people and arranging for their comfort and pleasure in many practical ways. . . . This city and surrounding county will feel his loss most keenly, as all felt his personality to be one of the great influences of good in the future development and

⁵⁶ Eaves and Hutchinson, *Post City*, 147.

prosperity of this section." On the day of his funeral in Battle Creek – attended by thousands – Post City shut down.

Over two days in mid-September 1957, the city of Post celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.⁵⁷ Post's daughter, Marjorie, the wealthiest woman in America, returned as the city's guest of honor. The celebration was about as West Texas an event as one might conjure. A barbecue for 4000 (twenty beeves worth of meat), a fiddle contest, a dominoes tournament, a beard contest, plaques for dignitaries, boy scouts doing "Indian dances," and a "cavalcade" of three hundred and fifty people recreating the history of Post.⁵⁸ Marjorie, who had fond memories of the town from her childhood, was a good sport. On the second day she even headed out in a dust storm to take her place in the parade.⁵⁹

The primary speaker at the Dedication ceremony was former Texas Tech University President D.M. Wiggins. He spoke to Post's vision for West Texas:

Mr. Post was a powerful exponent of the dignity of individualism and the concept of free enterprise as basic essentials to what he thought of as the American way. In no instance was this principle better amplified than in the colonization of his vast West Texas interests. He practiced the doctrine of helping those who showed a willingness to help themselves. Sometimes I think that's rather a far cry of some of our practices in our modern governmental operations.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ It had dropped "City" from its name shortly after Posts' death.

⁵⁸ The event was widely covered in the local press: See *Lubbock Avalanche* 14 September 1917; *Waco News-Tribune* 17 September 1957.

⁵⁹ The storm was bad enough to leave many of the other celebrities, like Jack Benny, cowering in the Hotel Algerita.

⁶⁰ Audio tape of Dedication ceremonies, Post Family Papers.