

HIPPIELAND: BOHEMIAN SPACE AND COUNTERCULTURAL PLACE IN SAN
FRANCISCO'S HAIGHT-ASHBURY NEIGHBORHOOD

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the birth of the late 1960s counterculture in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood. Surveying the area through a lens of geographic place and space, this research will look at the historical factors that led to the rise of a counterculture here. To contextualize this development, it is necessary to examine the development of a cosmopolitan neighborhood after World War II that was multicultural and bohemian into something culturally unique. It was within this space that a wellspring of drop-out culture evolved from a combination of psychedelic drugs, experimental lifestyles, and anarchistic thought. The contention of countercultural place was fully realized in the lead up to and during the "Summer of Love" in 1967. This pinnacle moment was also its demise as the massive influx of young people into the area stressed the area and the idea of a local hippie movement to a breaking point. The final part of this thesis looks at how this experience changed the area, and how the countercultural moved on to become a national movement, while its key practitioners moved their countercultural place making to smaller rural communes, where the lessons of the Haight-Ashbury could be applied. Collectively this work examines how a group of young people developed and changed the meaning of the Haight-Ashbury through the development of countercultural place thus inspiring a national movement that would adjust American society in innumerable ways.

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INTRODUCTION

Between 1964 and 1968, San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury was the center for an exploration of youth cultural protest, the American counterculture movement, informally known as the hippies. This movement grew directly out of the 1950s Beat Movement, focused in nearby North Beach. The counterculture's dissent differed from the general left-wing radicalism advocated by other student movements of the time. The counterculture was defined as a social protest eager to reject the "mainstream" establishment culture while also politically rejecting traditional notions of right versus left. This approach was unique to the hippies, as it sought to create a "dropout" culture. The Haight-Ashbury served as both the birthplace and eventually a national gathering point for the like-minded people of this burgeoning group of cultural radicals.

Young seekers, disillusioned with modern life and searching for an authentic experience traveled to the coastal California city in substantial numbers. In relocating to the district, individuals attempted to build a societal model that expressed their values of the community. These values included aspects of spirituality, dignity for humanity, a search for authenticity, as well as social and personal experimentation, which would often manifest itself as wide-open free expression. Core principles to performing these values were psychedelic drug use, rock music, an open sexuality, personal performance, and demonstrations of free expression.

The lexicon used to define these young people is historically wrought with challenge. Popularly they were known as the hippies. This term derived from the beatnik use of the word hip or hipster, and slowly made its way into the popular vernacular to

describe the youth movement attached to the Haight and other bohemian spaces in urban centers. During the 1960s and beyond, this term had pejorative connotations as mainstream politicians and media would use this term to describe any young person with a contrary point of view. Eventually, through commodification and repetition, the term hippie would come to dominate the understanding of this youth culture. Theodore Roszak, in his book, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*, coined the more academic term “counterculture.” Roszak used the term to describe a group of apolitical youth cultural protesters and utopians that sought a drop-out community in reaction to the social and political atmosphere of a late 1960s American society.¹ While these terms are useful for discussion purposes, it is important to understand that young people living in Haight-Ashbury in the late 1960s would not have used these words to describe themselves. Popular self-identification terms would have been “beatnik,” “freak,” “head,” or simply “seeker.” While this research has chosen to favor the terms “counterculture” and “hippie” for clarity and ease of understanding, it must be understood these terms were fluid and malleable. Often times the definition of the group was best found in what it was not instead of what it was. The term “mainstream” suggests a counterpoint to the hippies. This is another fluid term with a variable definition: mainstream should be seen as any part of the dominant culture that was not the counterculture. Music, drug use, clothing, hairstyles, spiritual beliefs, and sexual mores all became signifiers of who was in and out

¹ Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

of the counterculture, or to use the vernacular of the counterculture, who was “turned on” versus who was not.

Another consideration for this research is the demarcation between the local Haight-Ashbury counterculture and the national scene. This neighborhood in San Francisco served as the spiritual home and the center of a countercultural community in the late 1960s. This thesis details that period and that community. Use of the terms counterculture and hippie should be understood through a lens of the Haight-Ashbury scene, unless attached to a larger conversation of the later national movement. There is a complicated and nuanced relationship between what began in San Francisco and eventually spread nationally. Local ideas of a utopian drop-out culture and spiritual enlightenment through psychedelic drug use did not translate directly to a national movement that favored the codification of rebellious norms that blended with other social and political movements of the same period.

As this research traces the rise and fall of a countercultural community within the Haight-Ashbury, it is important to fully recognize that this is a narrative of place. The actors who move through the stage that is this district in San Francisco are important, but they are not the full story. In the context of this research, their interactions within the setting are crucial to understanding how a working-class bohemian community became the central district of a countercultural community that would eventually spark numerous national movements. While many of the personalities that helped to define the Haight-Ashbury are examined, the wider-angle lens of geographic place will at times remove the

personal narrative from the larger history. As the hippie movement within the Haight-Ashbury has been widely studied, these narratives are readily available in other sources.

This thesis seeks to understand the unique features of the bohemian space that existed within the Haight-Ashbury district that would lead to the rise of a local counterculture. Through a geographic lens, this thesis will also recognize ways in which the counterculture contested the meaning of place within the neighborhood. From business owners to anarchist collectives, groups aligned with the counterculture sought to create place through an ongoing conflict with existing aspects of the community. Events like psychedelic rock shows, the Human Be-In, the Summer of Love, and daily expressions of hippiedom all sought to argue countercultural place within an existing bohemian space. These events and actions in the late 1960s had lasting consequences for both the long-term vitality of the neighborhood and a larger national countercultural movement.

Research Considerations

In an effort contextualize how countercultural groups within the Haight-Ashbury constructed and understood place and space, a number of research questions will operate as useful starting points for this project. The first and most pressing question: why the Haight-Ashbury? What social, economic, and geographic conditions existed before the countercultural Haight that made this district the epicenter of a significant cultural protest? What can geographic theory tell us about how urban centers and cultural protest relate to one another?

The Haight would experience a definitive downfall in the district with the counterculture's vision of a psychedelic "City on a Hill" in a complete shamble by 1969. What went wrong and what were the lasting effects on the Haight-Ashbury from this brief but massive social experiment? Understanding the shift of the district from a center of social protest and experimentation to an essentially "hippie ghetto" enlightens this research as to the motivations and failures of these larger goals. Finally, how did the vision of Haight-Ashbury as a countercultural place define later attempts at rural commune living? While outside the scope of the Haight-Ashbury, the movement of thousands of young people from the district to rural communes around the country places the city in the crux of a larger current of hippie mobility.

Historiography

This research eagerly engages the historiography of the counterculture and the Haight-Ashbury district of the late 1960s. Collectively, an analysis of the works within these related ideas will educate this thesis and argue its place within the larger historiography of the counterculture. Additionally, this research will engage geographical theories of place and space. The intersection of these geographic theories with the counterculture experience in the Haight-Ashbury will provide the contextual background for this research. To engage this larger historiography, works of the counterculture will first be discussed, followed by works on space, and, finally, place.

Two works critical to the understanding of the counterculture are Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and*

Its Youthful Opposition (1968) and Timothy Miller's *The Hippies and American Values* (1991).² Roszak's work both explains and defines the 1960s hippie movement. This work operates as a theoretical cultural study with historical context. Roszak depicts the counterculture as a group born into an age of affluence, and the resulting protest as a disillusionment with a consumer, militaristic, and technocratic American society. The scholarship works to contextualize the counterculture, as well as define it as a strict minority of generally young white people who are attempting to remove themselves from a traditional political binary of left and right. Miller, writing in 1991, adds dimension from a position of historical distance.³ *The Hippies and American Values* presents the ethical positions of the counterculture as indicators of core American values.⁴ While Roszak works in the theoretical moment, Miller is able to expand and understand the counterculture through drug use, sexuality, rock music, community, and the oppositional nature of the movement. Together these two works provide the necessary foundation for understanding the counterculture on a national level.

Charles Perry's *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* (2005) and Nadya Zimmerman's *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco* (2008) both provide detailed histories of the specific time and place.⁵ Perry's

² Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* and Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991).

³ The gap in literature between 1969 and 1991 is significant. Roszak as a theorist is arguing the meaning of the counterculture in the moment, while Miller is one of the first to engage the counterculture with real historic distance. After Miller most sources argue the counterculture as part of a larger 1960s youth protest culture that includes the New Left, civil rights movement, and the anti-war movement against American military involvement in Vietnam.

⁴ Miller, *Hippies and American Values*, 21.

⁵ Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* (New York: Wenner Books, 2005), and Nadya Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008).

work is the definitive and popular history of the district and provides a solid general history of the counterculture experience there. This narrative history serves as the base line for understanding the countercultural Haight-Ashbury. Zimmerman's work provides a more developed understanding of both the neighborhood and the various archetypes that constructed countercultural personas within it. Zimmerman's work examines how the outlaw, the exotic, the natural, and the new age personas all combined to create the unique belief structures of the counterculture and shows the various motivations that inspired this dropout culture. Zimmerman is critically engaged with Roszak's theoretical and at times abstract understanding of the counterculture and their place in American society in the 1960s. Both Zimmerman and Perry provide an extensive understanding of the downfall of the counterculture in the Haight, pointing to the darker side of the hippie experience.

Two additional works address gender broadly within the counterculture and specifically within the Haight-Ashbury, Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo's *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (2009) and Tim Hodgdon's *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Counterculture Communities 1965-1983* (2009).⁶ Lemke-Santangelo takes a topical approach to the analysis gender within hippie culture, including an understanding of stereotypes, sexuality, relationships, and body image. Taking a broader approach to the national counterculture allows for an understanding of larger trends. Hodgdon's work provides a more localized analysis of

⁶ Tim Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities, 1965-83* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), and Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

gender through an analysis of *The Diggers* and members of Stephen Gaskin's Monday Night Class as examples of counterculture masculinity. Hodgdon uses *The Diggers* as an archetype for what he terms "anarchist masculinity" and Monday Night Class members as "tantric masculinity" in an attempt to show the full spectrum of counterculture male roles. These two gender constructions seen in unison present a fantastic opportunity to understand the counterculture through a gendered lens, and while the texts do not always engage directly, the relationships are able to be interpreted jointly.

These works collectively show the strength in previous scholarship, specifically gender. It also exposes the gap in understanding of how the counterculture of the Haight-Ashbury used, created, and defined place. This research uses the previous historiography as a solid foundation while expanding the argument.

Beyond the historiography of the counterculture and the Haight-Ashbury, this research critically engages geographical theories of space and place. Both theoretical frameworks have been engaged by numerous scholars; presented here is a truncated version the larger academic debate of place, space, and their relationship.

The roots of space lie within its theoretical partner, place. Space is the more abstract of the two. For the purposes of this examination we will begin in the intangible and move toward the concrete. The importance of post-modern theorists such as Roland Barthes and Antonio Gramsci, who understand the world as a readable text full of significant signs and symbols, allowed for a new understanding of historical environments. Space and place become part of that readable text when considered this way. Additionally, the works of Karl Marx inspired many of the theorists dealing with

space. This enabled an understanding of space in relation to how capital operated and exerted power. It was at this intersection that the core theorist for space, Henri Lefebvre, begins the modern examination of spatial theory.

Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974) works as a deeply theoretical understanding of space through a Marxist perspective.⁷ Lefebvre perceives spatial theory as able to create a fundamental understanding of capitalism. He does this through seeing the production of space as both a commodity and a process, bringing forth the idea of social space. This social space operates similarly to place.⁸ When one produces a space, intrinsically it becomes much like a place, as one cannot produce an abstract void. Lefebvre envisions space well as a historical concept, seeing the history of a space being integral to understanding it, but the history of that space's representation playing into the future understanding of the space.⁹ Within the Marxist framework, Lefebvre argues absolute and abstract space, contradictory space, and differential space. These combine to see Lefebvre's space as defined by both production and a social experience.

Geographer David Harvey, in the essay "From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity" (2007), echoes both Marx and Lefebvre. Key to understanding Harvey's ideas of space is the emphasis that it is a social construct, and varies depending on a particular society's values.¹⁰ "From Space to Place and Back Again" is a definitive work in understanding the interrelationship of place and space. The

⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991). Originally published in 1974.

⁸ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 10.

⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 42.

¹⁰ David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 207.

crux of this relationship is Harvey's definition of place as permanence, while space is challenged, violated, and contested.¹¹ Harvey concludes in this essay that places and spaces operate as readable texts that give insight into "historical-geographical" difference.¹²

The critical works on place most useful to this research are Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), Doreen Massey's *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), and Tim Cresswell's *In Place/ Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (1996).¹³ Writing in 1975, Tuan was among first to break towards a humanistic geography.¹⁴ Tuan identifies the importance of this new perspective, arguing against "central-place" theory and instead an understanding of places for their unique individuality.¹⁵ This argument can be summarized by the statement that "place is a center of meaning constructed by experience."¹⁶ Tuan's intellectual genealogy represents an interdisciplinary relationship in academia, as a geographer embracing the humanities for both examples and inspiration, and shifting geography away from the harder sciences.¹⁷ Still, Tuan's work is rooted firmly in his geographic training, this combination of

¹¹ Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, 292-293.

¹² *Ibid.*, 324-325. This reading of the world as text is rooted in Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics.

¹³ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), and Tim Cresswell, *In Place/ Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). Additionally, Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), is engaged, as this work synthesizes the theories of place, providing both some criteria in defining place as well as an overview of the field as it has been utilized.

¹⁴ This term "human geography" is used in Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden: MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 8. The term is meant to clarify this break of geography from the more traditional disciplines. This branch of geography focuses more on place, space, landscape, and interrelated issues of how humans interact with their environment.

¹⁵ Yi-Fu Tuan, "Place: An Experiential Perspective," *Geographical Review* 65, no. 2 (April, 1975), 151.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁷ Tuan utilizes literature to serve as examples of many of his core arguments, while a number of philosophers including Emmanuel Kant and Claude Levi-Strauss.

traditional geography with the humanities establishes his intention to bring a fresh perspective to geographic place and space.

Massey and Cresswell draw on Tuan's influence. Writing in the mid-1990s. Massey's work of collected essays, *Space, Place, and Gender*, splices these three topics to discuss how "particular aspects of the ways in which space and place are commonly conceptualized, in daily and political life."¹⁸ Massey sees place as an alternative way to look at established social relations. Most significantly, place matters to the construction of gender and gender relations.¹⁹ Cresswell's *In Place/ Out of Place* continues to understand place as a social experience with a person's surroundings, similarly to the previously noted scholars, but argues that someone or something can be interpreted as "out of place" or "in the right place" depending on a number of geographic circumstances. Being inside a place denotes comfort while being outside represents a lack of such comforts.²⁰ Cresswell develops this idea to show transgressions of place as a challenge to those inside the place. This notion echoes Massey's point concerning certain present-day changes to historic places that were seen as not belonging, or out of place. Cresswell and Massey inform an understanding of how places are used through positions of power. Many of Massey's gendered arguments point to the control of place by males in an effort to dictate the rules and norms of a place. Cresswell, in addressing ideology

¹⁸ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰ This idea of being in and out of place is first discussed in Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Ltd., 1976). As Relph's work was not directly available, I have used the summary of Relph's work provided by David Seamon and Jacob Sowers, "Place and Placelessness," in *Key Texts in Human Geography*, ed. P. Hubbard, R. Kitchen, & G. Vallentine (London: Sage, 2008), No page numbers available.

and transgression as they are applied to a place by cultural norms, shows a similar relationship between place and power. Cresswell understands these cultural norms not through a common understanding of the function of a place, but through how transgression identifies norms by counteracting them.²¹ The debate on the use of a place, with claims of social legitimacy and counterpoints to that legitimacy shows agreement between Cresswell and Massey in understanding place as neither frozen in time nor having a single identity.

To define, and to transgress, place, a geographic space must be seen as unique. Place is characterized by special features or experiences that separate it from space as well as other places. While various places can be similar, they are delineated by geography, demographics, landscape, or action as something altogether different.

Two major schools of thought dominate spatial theory, one based in Lefebvre's theories, while the other is rooted in humanistic geography and the relations between space and place represented by Harvey. As posed by these theorists, space is always understood as constructed, social, and contested. In this way, space shares similar experiential aspects with place. The collective theories allow an understanding of space and place as analytical tools with which to interpret human interactions with their environment. While space is abstract in nature, place's fixed position and emotional connections allow it to be understood as both an influence and an expression of people's involvement with their surroundings. Generally, a number of assumptions on place and

²¹ Cresswell, *In Place/ Out of Place*, 9. This idea of transgression implies that place is always contested, an interesting overlap with Lefebvre and his understanding of space as always contested as well.

space can be made. First, adding time into the equation, place and space are core to understanding history. Second, place and space are, at their hearts, experiential, and are best understood through the interactions and experiences of the people who construct and operate within them. Third, place and space should be understood as extensions of power dynamics, and can therefore be transgressed and challenged. The understanding of particular places is always in conflict. Finally, place and space become more important in a period of modernity and increased mobility. Increased challenges of homogeneity have only stressed the importance of place and space.

This thesis utilizes theories of space and place as an investigative lens in which to understand the countercultural experience in the Haight-Ashbury. Observing the evolution and development of a bohemian social space within the Haight-Ashbury in the 1950s and early 1960s into the countercultural place of the late 1960s and early 1970s can be understood through a geographic lens. Additionally, the relationship between residents of the district, civic authorities, and the counterculture can be observed through an understanding of the contestation of space and place in an attempt to understand how power shifts between the groups. This thesis identifies the Summer of Love and the months leading up to that time as the full realization of countercultural place.

Methodology

While the countercultural Haight was a short-lived experience, it has been thoroughly researched in the context of social, cultural, political, and gendered history. The San Francisco psychedelic music and drug scenes have been extensively researched

in academic and popular history texts as well. Building on this previous research, this thesis understands the Haight-Ashbury counterculture through the social construct of geographic place and space. The movement of thousands of young people from across America to one district in San Francisco in an effort to create a dropout society brings with it the unique opportunity to understand how the elements of the counterculture identified bohemian space and contested that to create countercultural place.

Additionally, a counter narrative exists as residents and civic leaders worked to maintain the historic constructions of place and space in the district, resisting the proverbial psychedelic barbarians at the gate. Using geographic theories of place and space allows this research to understand the tension of contesting groups within the Haight-Ashbury before, during, and after the Summer of Love.

To best put this into practice, this thesis utilizes the work of the above-mentioned theorists and geographers. Particularly important will be Cresswell's *Place: An Introduction*. This text provides an amalgamation of the multi-dimensional definition of place and its relationship with space. Cresswell's work achieves a successful blending of ideas from Tuan, Harvey, and Massey to provide a foundational baseline from which to work. Beyond the basic sense of place as coordinates, a location, or a landscape, Cresswell sees place as "a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world."²² This sense of contextualizing the world and understanding how both the counterculture and civic interests viewed the Haight-Ashbury drives the methodology of this research. The work of other geographic theorists is employed as necessary.

²² Cresswell, *Place*, 11.

Chapter Organization

To provide a full context of the both the Haight-Ashbury district and the counterculture period that popularized the neighborhood nationally, these chapters are organized chronologically. Chapter One presents the foundations of the community stretching back to its founding until the earliest days of the Hippies in 1966. It was during this period that an urban bohemian space developed in the Haight. It was within this space that the emerging counterculture began to argue and assign meaning to the district as a countercultural place. Chapter Two explores the Summer of Love. This period was the pinnacle of the counterculture's experience in the Haight, and the year that brought the most change to the area. This brief moment was both the full realization of countercultural place as well as the various ways it was undermined by forces both inside and outside the district. Chapter Three focuses on the aftermath of the Summer of Love and provides an analysis of how much the district was changed by the hippie phenomena. This chapter presents the area as a space of instability, lost opportunity, and counterculture memory. Additionally, this chapter depicts the counterculture as a dispersed vision, as it shifts from an urban to a rural setting with the communal back-to-the-land movement of the early 1970s. This communal movement, while outside the scope of the Haight, provides examples of how lessons and experiences within the Haight were executed elsewhere.

This thesis argues that the counterculture sought to express its unique values and community vision by defining the Haight-Ashbury as a countercultural place. This is best understood through the geographic theories of space and place. By analyzing the meaning

of place across three time periods, this thesis will show the significance of the Haight-Ashbury to defining the counterculture and vice versa.²³

The young hippies that moved into the neighborhood initially contested the space of the Haight-Ashbury with their experimental lifestyles and their challenges to cultural and social norms. The success of this challenge to the district's space gave a new defined meaning to the neighborhood, therefore reconstituting it as a countercultural place.

²³ Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 11.

CHAPTER ONE: HAIGHT-ASHBURY AS BOHEMIAN SPACE

The January 15, 1910 edition of the *San Francisco Call* featured a full page of articles devoted to the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood in its Saturday “Real Estate and Financial” section. The newspaper headline proclaimed: “Handsome Homes Adorn District,” above adjective-laden copy that highlighted the neighborhood’s proximity to Golden Gate Park and picturesque views of the surrounding bay. The article continued by drawing attention to the western business district and the collegiate buildings that would eventually become San Francisco State College. The newspaper’s coverage developed a narrative of progress by emphasizing the attractiveness and quality of the nearly 200 new homes designed by Ms. Fritz and built by her son.¹ These homes were some of the majestic Victorian homes that eventually became iconic in the Haight-Ashbury. A secondary article discussed improvements in the district, while a third discussed the investment of \$3,600 from a Haight-Ashbury district improvement club for arc lights.²

These articles appeared in the *Call* just under four years after the devastating 1906 San Francisco Earthquake. Collectively, they put emphasis on new building technologies important to prospective residents. While the Haight was spared much of the post-quake

¹ “Handsome Homes Adorn District.” *San Francisco Call*, January 15, 1910, accessed November 20, 2015, <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SFC19100115&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>. The article does not give any more information on the family that designed and built these homes beyond “Ms. Fritz” and son.

² “District Shows Steady Progress” and “District Enjoys Many Advantages.” *San Francisco Call*, January 15, 1910, accessed November 20, 2015, <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SFC19100115&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>.

fire damage that devastated the city, articles highlighted how improved fire protection had helped to keep insurance rates down in the district.³ In discussing the homes built by Ms. Fritz, the *Call* argued the homes were the “exceptional work for one woman, assisted by her architect son.”⁴ Explaining that “they stand in a district where costly buildings of good construction are so much the rule that the entire section is admirable in the nature of its improvements.”⁵ The quality of the homes one could buy, as well as the quality of one’s neighbor’s home, would have been critically important to buyers with experiences of earthquake and fire devastation still looming in their short-term memories. While the *Call*’s real estate section was written with as much of an emphasis on ad copy as it was reporting, it still presents the Haight-Ashbury as a unique forward-thinking neighborhood from its inception.

The *San Francisco Call*’s slate of articles promoting the Haight-Ashbury as both a beautiful and visionary neighborhood provides insight into a district that would develop just fifty-five years later into the counterculture’s psychedelic “City on a Hill.” While the Haight’s earliest residents might have few obvious connections to the bohemians who settled in the district beginning in the 1950s through the 1960s and 1970s, there are common elements of community that connect them; this chapter illustrates that narrative. Beginning with a brief history of the Haight-Ashbury district, this chapter explains how this neighborhood was the wellspring for the counterculture community that began to

³ “Fire Protection Greatly Improved” and “Effort to Reduce Insurance Rates.” *San Francisco Call*, January 15, 1910, accessed November 20, 2015, <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SFC19100115&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

form between 1965 and 1966. Was there anything intrinsically unique that made the Haight-Ashbury the birthplace of the counterculture? To understand how the Haight became a countercultural place, elements from the move of 1950s Beatnik culture into the area, the early 1960s Freeway Revolt, the Diggers, the burgeoning psychedelic rock music scene, and hippie spirituality are examined. How did these factors combine to create a bohemian space that made the Haight-Ashbury a unique district within San Francisco? This chapter will end with an examination of the Human Be-In, an event that occurred in January of 1967 and served as a coming out party for the counterculture and the development of the Haight-Ashbury as synonymous with the social movement.

Haight-Ashbury: A Brief History

San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district is located near the geographic center of the city, bordered on two sides by Golden Gate Park and its Panhandle Park extension. The neighborhood emerged as some of San Francisco's first families began to construct elaborate Victorian homes in the early 1880s. Community planning saw houses built on the slopes of Mt. Sutro, with shops and civic infrastructure added to the Flatlands area. Initially seen as a quiet retreat from the busy urban center, the district eventually evolved into a bustling middle-class neighborhood by the 1900s.⁶

The Great Depression and World War II marked significant changes for San Francisco's neighborhoods, and the Haight was no exception. Relaxed building codes in

⁶ David E. Smith and John Luce, *Love Needs Care: A History of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic and Its Pioneer Role in Treating Drug-Abuse Problems* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1969), 75.

the 1940s allowed homeowners, still trying to recover from the Great Depression, to begin converting the grand Victorian homes that dominated the landscape into multi-unit apartments and flats.⁷ The conclusion of the war and the now more affordable housing encouraged an influx of Asian and Eastern European immigrants, working-class whites, and war pensioners into the Haight, diversifying the economic and racial demographics of the district.⁸

It was also after World War II that San Franciscans began to understand themselves differently. The victory in World War II and the city's role as a staging port for troops and supplies overtook the 1906 Earthquake as the defining event in the city's history.⁹ The city began to understand their urban space as a "Bagdad by the Bay," through a narrative of cosmopolitanism and creativity popularized by local newspaper columnist Herb Caen. The Baghdad by the Bay analogy meant to evoke a sense that San Francisco was altogether something unique. As historian Kevin Starr explains it, the city was "an alternative to something else, to some other place, to another way of living American life."¹⁰ Caen argues that culture, geography, and weather had aligned to make San Francisco special, and the post-war years of abundance made the area a place for new Americans and those searching for a new identity to remake themselves.¹¹ Caen identifies something about San Francisco that is creating a notion of place, that is to say a

⁷ Smith, *Love Needs Care*, 75.

⁸ Ibid. "Working-class whites refers to established American citizens from a variety of backgrounds."

⁹ Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance 1950-1963*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 88-90.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

geographic expression of uniqueness and authenticity. As one of the city's central neighborhoods, the Haight-Ashbury was an exemplification of these reflections.

In the early 1950s, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, part of a statewide project to redevelop blighted communities, began urban renewal programs in the nearby Western Addition. This forced many African-American families into the Haight Flatlands, which in turn saw some white residents relocate out of the district.¹² The remaining whites, many with jobs connected to nearby San Francisco State and University of California Medical Center unified with the existing multiethnic residents to help integrate the neighborhood, a rarity for an American urban area in the 1950s.¹³ In an effort to nurture this multicultural community cohesion, residents formed the Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council (HANC) in 1958.

HANC had its origins in the murder of beatnik Connie Sublette on June 17, 1958. The grisly murder of a white woman, whose naked body was found in an alley near Golden Gate Park, and the confession of Haight resident, African-American Frank Harris, to the crime, threatened to challenge the notion of integration that was emerging within the Haight.¹⁴ With the group's formation, HANC leaders announced that the Haight-Ashbury was "a state of mind as well as a geographic area."¹⁵ These words signaled both the construction of identity as well as the importance to protect and nurture their

¹² David E. Smith and John Luce, *Love Needs Care: A History of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic and Its Pioneer Role in Treating Drug-Abuse Problems* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1969), 75.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Christopher Lowen Agee, *The Streets of San Francisco: Policing and the Creation of a Cosmopolitan Liberal Politics, 1950-1972* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 126 and, "Negro Charged In Bay Area Murder," *Lodi News Sentinel*, June 20, 1958.

¹⁵ Agee, *The Streets of San Francisco*, 126.

inimitable neighborhood. HANC involvement was dominated by white, Asian, and Latino residents. African-Americans were drawn to participate in HANC, but in smaller numbers. To their credit, HANC members acknowledged and worked to overcome the racial imbalance. The council's main goal was to seek neighborhood solutions to the challenges brought on by urban life.¹⁶

HANC members understood that their neighborhood possessed unique qualities. Events outside of and within the district directed changes that helped shape the Haight-Ashbury as a working class multiethnic neighborhood that possessed the unique signature architecture of San Francisco's Victorian-era foundation. While the residents racial and class make-up may have shifted from the years of its foundation, the language HANC used to describe their neighborhood nearly echoed the language of the *San Francisco Call* almost one hundred years earlier. These changes in the 1950s were only the vanguard for more on the horizon, as development and new residents continued to shape the neighborhood's complex demographics.

The Freeway Revolt and the Defense of a Cosmopolitan Neighborhood

Following national trends in transportation infrastructure development, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce and local government initiated discussions into new freeway construction as a way to interconnect the Bay Area in the early 1950s. Elements within the Chamber of Commerce saw highways as necessary to maintaining San

¹⁶ Ibid.

Francisco's position as the central commercial hub in the Bay Area.¹⁷ The dense urban landscape, whose development had always been defined by the geographic confines of the San Francisco Peninsula, meant that highway infrastructure development would inevitably infringe on the city's established neighborhoods. It became apparent to many that the municipal plans to develop a freeway system would be a threat to the city's tight knit communities and unique urban identity.¹⁸

Grassroots action, especially from HANC, sought to protect urban culture and unique historic landmarks they saw as important to the city's overall identity. Golden Gate Park, the Panhandle, and sections of the Haight that housed African-Americans became critical battlegrounds for the Freeway Revolt.¹⁹ As urban historian Joseph A. Rodriguez suggests, "Since the gold rush, San Franciscans believed that their city was a special place."²⁰ Citizens believed the architecture, demographics, and social tolerance all created a unique urban character.²¹ Bisecting these neighborhoods and parks with highways threatened to permanently alter the city and its unique urban identity, forcing a suburbanization of the urban neighborhood.

After a prolonged fight, the Panhandle Freeway was nixed by city supervisors during a contentious vote, open to the public. Opponents of the highway used the diversity and unique urban character of the Haight to stand up to powerful state forces.²²

¹⁷ Joseph A. Rodriguez, *City Against Suburb: The Culture Wars in an American Metropolis* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1999), 23.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Rodriguez, *City Against Suburb*, 23, and Smith, *Love Needs Care*, 75-77.

²⁰ Rodriguez, *City Against Suburb*, 23.

²¹ Ibid., 27.

²² Ibid., 40.

The neighborhood action of HANC proved to be a decisive factor in the highway plan's demise. In doing so, HANC reaffirmed the importance of the Haight district as a unique urban and historic neighborhood that could overcome demographic differences for the betterment of the area.

Beatnik Bohemia

From the city's earliest days as a California Gold Rush town, writers were drawn to the area by their work as transient miners, manual laborers, or housewives. Mark Twain moved to the area in 1864 as a journalist, while Scottish naturalist John Muir arrived in 1868, and lived in the area as he used it as a home base while making excursions into the surrounding landscape. Collectively writers cultivated a literary tradition for the young city. As explained by Nancy J. Peters, co-owner of City Lights Books and San Francisco literary historian: "The city's earliest literature was both democratic and anarchic; at the same time, the lawlessness of the city seemed to elicit from some of its poets a nostalgia for classic literary forms and an imagined lost civility of remote times and places."²³ Prominent writers of the 1880s and 1890s were drawn to this "literary frontier" and coalesced around a bohemian community in the present day Jackson Square neighborhood. Notable cultural figures who visited or lived in the area included Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Ambrose Bierce, Sinclair Lewis, Jack London, and Joaquin Miller. This community was focused around the Montgomery Block studio, a

²³ Nancy J. Peters, "The Beat Generation and San Francisco's Culture of Dissent," in *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. James Brook, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy J. Peters, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 200.

space eventually taken over by businesses after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. San Francisco also hosted numerous anarchist, socialist, and feminist activists during this period.²⁴ Collectively these groups and literary figures created an urban space that would fertilize future social, political, and cultural activism in the Bay Area.

The Haight-Ashbury's bohemian roots came first through integration and grassroots community action that provided a unique community identity for the neighborhood within San Francisco. While the long-term residents appreciated their neighborhood's new reputation, it brought with it new residents seeking to live in a multi-ethnic and liberally-minded community. In the late 1950s, gays and lesbians began to purchase both homes and businesses in the Flatlands. Established merchants were not pleased with these new residents and their lifestyle.²⁵

By the early 1960s Beatniks from nearby North Beach began migrating into the increasingly cosmopolitan area. The North Beach community focused around Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Books. Ferlinghetti gained notoriety through the 1957 obscenity trial involving Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl." By the early 1960s, North Beach was plagued by tourists, social issues, rising rents, and police tension. These factors encouraged the young Beats to search for new homes. The Beat Generation was a loosely-defined artistic and literary movement made famous by authors such as Jack Kerouac and Ginsberg. Most notably, Beatniks embraced experimental lifestyles in the midst of 1950s American conformist culture. Many of the young white Beats saw an

²⁴ Ibid., 199-202.

²⁵ Smith, *Love Needs Care*, 76.

opportunity in the Haight as they thought the neighborhood's lower rents and cosmopolitan population as a good fit. Landlords in turn preferred renting to these Beatniks who would put up with substandard accommodations, compared to white retirees or middle-class African-American families. By 1963, the Haight had become home to a small but thriving Beat community.²⁶

The generally middle-class white youth that made up the Beat community in the Haight sought an authentic experience that included a rejection of the materialism of post-war America and the embrace of multiple forms of artistic expression. Many were artists, poets, musicians, or actors, while others were students at either San Francisco State University or the San Francisco Art Institute.²⁷ While they created a small Beat enclave in the Haight, the subculture was not prone to mass gatherings or the type of organizing that would characterize the community in the later years of the 1960s. The bohemian youth made up just another unique demographic in a diverse district.

The establishment of a Beatnik space within the Haight, with its lower rents and multiethnic community, was a crucial element in the development and establishment of what would eventually become the Counterculture. There were distinct differences between the Beats and the Counterculture. The darker clothing and pessimistic worldview of the Beats was decidedly different from the typically colorful costumes that hippies wore and their positive view of the world around them. Still, the connections were evident. Both groups sought an authentic experience and sought it through drug use,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 75-77.

unconventional lifestyles, and religious exploration. The establishment of these out-of-the-mainstream practices broke ground for the hippies to later push social norms to new levels.

While separate movements, historians understand the Beat Generation as a prelude to the counterculture; in many ways, the movement of people into San Francisco to join in with the Beatniks mirrors the way young people later came to the area to join the hippies. Beyond the similarities in lifestyle, many of the most notable Beats and their literary works were revered as part of the Counterculture canon. Works like Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" as well as Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* and *The Dharma Bums* inspired a generation to challenge the conformist nature of the Cold War era mainstream.²⁸ The writing of Kerouac especially inspired what Nancy J. Peters, called the "rucksack revolution," inspiring the young people of the Baby-Boom generation to follow in the footsteps of the Beats and travel extensively, to destinations including the West Coast Beat capital of San Francisco in search of an authentic experience. Beyond Keroac's influence, there are more direct connections between Beat luminaries and the Counterculture. Many popular Beats bridged the two scenes as the Counterculture began to emerge in the Haight, including Allen Ginsberg, Neil Cassidy, and Gary Snyder among others.

²⁸ Dominick Cavallo, *A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 20.

Why San Francisco?

Before engaging with the early years of the Counterculture, it is important to understand the unique position San Francisco had in the American cultural mindset in the 1950s and 1960s. What made the bohemian space of San Francisco unique enough to be the wellspring for the larger late 1960s Counterculture movement? Many American cities had similarly bohemian neighborhoods, most of which would eventually become hippie enclaves as 1960s ended. While this section, and chapter generally, explains why this occurred in San Francisco, it is also important to consider other neighborhoods that did not launch this particular movement. Historically, the 1960s were a period of numerous cultural, social, and political revolutions. The Counterculture shares DNA with the cultural upheaval of the decade. Most major cities in the United States and Canada eventually would host a countercultural neighborhood, with hippies sharing spaces with the New Left, civil rights activists, and anti-war protesters. Only San Francisco's Haight would be the cultural rebellion's birthplace, and uniquely counterculture placemaking.

Critical to understanding San Francisco's role in American culture is the perception of the city as the hub of a massive gold rush in 1849. Gold, silver, and other valuable commodities drawn out of the earth through prospecting and mining brought a massive influx of people and capital into one of the last regions settled in the western region of the United States. These elements possessed the mythical ability to turn manual laborers into wealthy aristocrats in a moment of luck.²⁹ San Francisco through popular

²⁹ Gary Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 17.

myth-making was perceived through a lens of individualistic Wild West tropes that included lawlessness, discovery, self-reliance, and loose morality. Baby Boom children were the first generation raised with access to television, including shows that glamorized ideas of self-sufficiency and self-awareness in the American West. As part of that western imagery, San Francisco and its California Gold Rush history have always created the image of a city that was seen as more lenient with social and sexual mores that existed somehow beyond the law.

The movement of young people west to San Francisco should be observed through a historic understanding of mobility, Westward expansion, and settlement in American history. Dominick Cavallo contextualizes this historic thinking through interpretations of Baby Boomer youth who saw the American West as “defined by freedom of movement, psychological boundlessness, and immersion in the seemingly endless succession of unexplored frontiers of new spaces and new experiences.”³⁰ This thinking was influenced by both an American culture that “found itself in the West” and a popularized image of glamorous, independent western folklore. Young people identified these ideas as seemingly authentic in an increasingly technocratic world. These ideas were first explicated by Fredrick Jackson Turner’s 1893 “Frontier Thesis;” and operated through the belief that America was defined by a moving and conquerable frontier line. It was through this imaginary boundary that American democracy and self-reliant identity was understood.³¹ This theory was widely taught and inspired the “cowboy and Indian”

³⁰ Dominick Cavallo, *A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 81-82.

³¹ Fredrick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 1-39.

dime store novels, television shows, and movies that young Baby Boomers consumed through mass media.

In San Francisco, and specifically the Haight-Ashbury, the trope of the western outlaw took on new meaning among counterculture youth. Similar to the performative way young people identified with the spiritual, exotic, and naturalism personas; an outlaw persona glorified the Wild West outlaw's lifestyle and was drawn to San Francisco as one of the oldest cities in the West.³² This image was partly imported by the group running the Family Dog concert venue, which had first operated as the Red Dog Saloon in Virginia City, Nevada. This image was then blended with admiration of both the Hell's Angels and the Black Panthers. These groups were seen as aggressive separatists from mainstream society, a goal of many who understood the counterculture as a drop out culture.³³ Additionally, the city's history was available for sale in local antique stores, allowing young people to costume their fantasy role-playing of authentic Western outlaws.³⁴ Along with white cowboy imagery, the counterculture was drawn to Native American iconography. This relationship between hippies and Native Americans was complex, with some arguing the young whites idealized native peoples as spiritual, ecological, and communal while ignoring the major social and historical disenfranchisement issues facing these tribes.³⁵ Sherry L. Smith, in *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* is more sympatric to the counterculture, arguing that despite

³² Nadya Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 22-23.

³³ *Ibid.* 22-25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7.

their limitations in understanding, they were at least making contact with Native Americans and attempting to be sympathetic to tribal grievances and needs.³⁶ Philip J. Deloria, in *Playing Indian*, fleshes out these interactions, arguing that counterculturalists who ventured to reservations might have learned “something about individualism and social order” but “most preferred a symbolic life of tipis and buckskins to lessons that might be hard-won and ideologically distasteful.”³⁷ The relationship between hippies and Native Americans was at best always complicated.

This American West was of course imaginary, with the role-playing of both whites and Native Americans exaggerated to caricatured extremes. An ideological and fantasized idea of the West and San Francisco as an outlaw place are central to the way the Counterculture understood the Haight and their place in a larger drama of the social movement that accentuated individualism while rejecting post-war American society, materialism, and technocracy.

Young whites were drawn to the West and San Francisco through a myriad of historical and cultural contexts, but what set the city apart from other large American cities with bohemian neighborhoods? While most American cities had bohemian enclaves to an extent, San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury became uniquely countercultural, providing inspiration for other urban neighborhoods. While many bohemian neighborhoods had their own evolutionary process, it was San Francisco’s that provided an impetus, for the Counterculture to arrive first in the West and then transfer East. Still,

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Phillip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 159.

what set San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury apart from neighborhoods in other large urban centers like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles?

New York City's Greenwich Village has the most legitimate claim as an incubator for the Counterculture. American bohemia's long standing first city was the first home of both the Beatnik and Folk music scenes, two important precursor movements to the Counterculture. The neighborhood holds a legacy as a bohemian community stretching back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Active with both the folk music and Beat literary scene, Greenwich Village had the same lineage as the Haight. For all intents and purposes, the hippie phenomena could have easily begun in the New York neighborhood. It did not, but once the counterculture became a national movement, Greenwich Village became host to a substantial hippie community, unique in their own right. For reasons presented throughout this thesis, San Francisco presented itself as a better incubator for a movement that would challenge American society.³⁸

Chicago's "Old Town" would also eventually become a counterculture enclave. Area historian Ronald P. Martin argues that "Old Town mirrored the Haight in many ways and a comparison is easily made, but the Chicago community had its own local concerns and identity which made it distinct from the better known and documented San Francisco hippies."³⁹ Martin identifies Chicago's Old Town as relatable to San Francisco's Haight, but lesser acknowledged historically. Martin suggests the roots of

³⁸ John Strausbaugh, *The Village: A History of Greenwich Village* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2013), 433-445, and Ross Wetzsteon, *Republic of Dreams: Greenwich Village: the America Bohemia 1910-1960* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 449, 568-569.

³⁹ Martin, Ronald P. *Flowers in Chicago: Counterculture in Chicago in the 1960s*, Loyola University Chicago, 2012, 132.

Chicago's scene are in the Haight through analysis of the rise of a counterculture on the West Coast:

At first, the growth of hippies remained a local story but by 1966, the hippies of the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood attracted national interest. With the mainstream press now reporting on the community, the hippies captured the imagination of their supporters, the ire of their detractors, and a bemused fascination from those in between. Though San Francisco received the most attention nationally and the hippies of the Haight quickly became identified as the very definition of 'hippie,' other enclaves soon appeared in urban areas throughout the country."⁴⁰

One of these areas was within the Old Town area of Chicago.

Further down the California coast, Los Angeles provides a unique comparison. David McBride's discussion of the Los Angeles counterculture cites a number of influences that made that city's scene different. To be clear, McBride argues that Los Angeles's scene should be understood historically as on par with that of San Francisco. This research also produces a number of mitigating factors that challenge the formation of the Los Angeles's counterculture.⁴¹ McBride's thesis argues that the Los Angeles counterculture had a unique experience in American mass culture capital.⁴² This relationship saw the commodification of the counterculture through the mainstream media produced by television, movie, and music production groups in the area. While Los Angeles undoubtedly had a role in the larger national narrative of the counterculture, it would be more accurate to associate it with the commercialization of the movement,

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ David McBride, "On The Fault Line of Mass Culture and Counterculture: A Social History of the Hippie Counterculture of in 1960s Los Angeles," (PhD dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1998), 18.

⁴² Ibid.

not with its roots. This commodification of the counterculture, especially through music, would increase the city's scene nationally.

Place, and more importantly the contestation of it, does not operate within a void. As a geographically important place, San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury is not a single actor and its bohemian wellspring results from both internal and external factors. Relationships exist between urban places. Consider that between San Francisco and New York, the space between the two, and most significantly mobility between places all operate to create Countercultural place in San Francisco beginning in 1965. The movement of Beat writers from New York to San Francisco was critical to the development of bohemian space in the Haight. This developed into a counterculture that would later be transferred back to the East Coast by young people moving between place. Increased consumerism and mass mobility, both keystones of the post-war society, allowed young and generally white Americans to seek authenticity, self-awareness, and social experimentation beyond hometowns and college campuses where social controls of family, friends, and institutions existed. Baby Boom teenagers, first inspired by books like *On the Road* and later by psychedelic rock music and mass media coverage of the counterculture, encouraged these young people to react to the unique push and pull elements during this era. The lure of the West is a constant throughout American mythology, while a generation raised on television became disappointed by the realities of mundane young adult life. These elements explain the mobility into the Haight, while local elements of an existing bohemia are at the same time evolving from Beatnik trends to a fully realized counterculture.

As geographer Richard Hartshorne argues, geography “interprets the realities of areal differentiation of the world as they are found, not only in terms of the differences of things from place to place, but also in terms of the total combination of phenomena in each place.”⁴³ In the case of the Haight-Ashbury, history, technology, and mythology consolidate to help encourage the development of a social protest movement; this is the “total combination of phenomena” that makes this particular place in this particular moment exceptional. This collection of factors made San Francisco unique as the home of a counterculture that eventually spread throughout other elements of American society and left an indelible mark.

Anarcho-Utopians

In May of 1965 the San Francisco Mime Troupe founder R.G. Davis presented an essay entitled “Guerrilla Theatre.” While the essay itself read as a manifesto for radical theater groups to use in an effort to push for social change, the language hints at future Digger broadsides that would appear in the Haight-Ashbury district soon after. The Diggers were a local anarchist countercultural group that branched out of the Mime Troupe. Taking cues from the acting group’s guerrilla theater tactics, the Diggers were a powerful influence on the early counterculture, and a critical element of how social protest was expressed throughout the years of the hippie Haight.

⁴³ Richard Harshorne, *The Nature of Geography: A Critical Survey of Current Thought in the Light of the Past*, (Lancaster, PA: The Science Press Printing Company, 1939), 520, cited in Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction*, (Malden, MA: Wiley and Sons, 2015), 31.

Founded in August of 1966 by Mime Troupe member Emmett Grogan and long-time associate Billy Murcott, the Diggers embraced some of the basic tenets of anarchism, notably that “only in a society without rulers can people be free to act according to their consciences.”⁴⁴ While idealistic, Digger concepts of anarchism dealt expressly with the terminology of “freedom.” While institutional structures could never have been thoroughly eclipsed, power relationships would always exist; through actions Diggers hoped to challenge and adjust those relationships.⁴⁵ The San Francisco Diggers took their name from an English group known by the same appellation. The original Diggers were fifteenth-century radical anarchist agrarians who sought to challenge landholders during the English Civil War by cultivating common lands. Murcott correlated that cause with a more modern sentiment, as explained by another Digger, Peter Coyote: “Billy (Murcott) had intuited that people had internalized cultural premises about the sanctity of private property and capital so completely as to have become addicted to wealth and status.”⁴⁶ Murcott saw freedom as the “antidote to such addictions” with freedom being understood through an anarchistic lens, first articulated by the English Diggers.⁴⁷ These anarchistic ideas of freedom symbolized by throwing off the yoke of capitalism and property would play crucially in the Diggers guerilla street theatre, performance protests, and lifestyle.

While the Diggers operated within the mindset of the world being a stage in which to present their theatrical protests, they channeled anarchistic ideals which were

⁴⁴ Peter Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall: A Chronicle* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 1998), 68.

⁴⁵ Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 6-7.

⁴⁶ Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall*, 69.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

reflected in elements of community building through direct actions. One notable Digger action was free food distribution in the park. Coyote recalls one of his first encounters with the group's food service before he joined up with them: "Emmett asked me if I'd like to eat, and I said 'No, I'll leave it for people who need it.' He looked at me sharply. 'That's not the point,' he said." Coyote then understood that free food was not meant to be an expression of charity but of "an act of responsibility to a personal vision."⁴⁸ Food, and the action of sharing it freely, here provides an insightful example of the Digger belief system in action. These actions were represented in one of their slogans; "It's free because it's yours." This glimpse into Digger thinking can give an insight into how they envisioned the Haight as a true anarchistic social protest community embodied in countercultural place.

The Diggers' anarchistic vision for the Haight had its critics. Sometimes Grogan's tactics could border on bullying. Consider this memory of Grateful Dead lead singer and guitarist Jerry Garcia about how Grogan would go looking for food. When a local grocer offered to donate 25 pounds of carrots, Grogan's response to the offer was: "Fuck you, give me a hundred and fifty pounds of carrots!" continuing to make a scene until the grocer would relent and give in to his demands.⁴⁹ This story illuminates both the uncompromising nature of the Diggers while at the same time highlighting the challenges that developed between the Diggers and non-hippie residents of the Haight. These fault lines only increased the tension over time.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 71.

⁴⁹ Dennis McNally ed., *Jerry on Jerry: The Unpublished Jerry Garcia Interviews*, (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal, 2015), 175.

One group singled out in Digger broadsides was the Haight-Ashbury Independent Proprietors, or H.I.P. The organization was founded in November 1966 by the brothers Ron and Jay Thelin, owners of the Psychedelic Shop. After they were denied membership in the Haight Street Merchants Association, they helped to create H.I.P. to represent the newer businesses catering to the counterculture. The established merchants saw the “hippie problem” as something hopefully temporary, and the inclusion of stores catering to them counterintuitive. H.I.P was founded in an atmosphere of conflict between the established group and the newcomers.⁵⁰ In 1966, the Psychedelic Shop ran into legal trouble for selling books judged as obscene.⁵¹ This event, before the founding of H.I.P., drew New Left free-speech students from nearby Berkeley into the Haight in support of the store. H.I.P was founded with a rally and the reading of a reworked “Declaration of Independence” to incorporate psychedelic philosophies.⁵² This allegiance with the New Left would be relatively short lived, as the two groups had a fundamentally different perception of their movements. The New Left engaged in the political discourse of the “left” versus “right.” This was a notion that the counterculture rejected in principle.

The Diggers commented on the emerging youth culture in the Haight from within and generally opposed H.I.P.’s capitalist narrative, this is evident from this broadside published in the late Fall of 1966; “You’re free to forget. So forget! Follow the calm business tactics of the Psychedelic Shop, the I and Thou, and all other marketeers (sic) of

⁵⁰ Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury*, 104-105.

⁵¹ KRON-TV, “The Psychedelic Shop Gets Raided” filmed November 15, 1966, San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, 1:19, November 18, 2016, Accessed January, 25, 2017 <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/210733>.

⁵² Timothy Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities, 1965-83* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 53 (Advanced Copy).

expanded consciousness ...and dig yourself.”⁵³ The Diggers opposed H.I.P.’s packaging and commodification of the cultural revolution happening in the Haight and, for similar reasons the group would oppose the most significant underground newspaper in the Haight, the *Oracle*. Peter Coyote explained The Diggers in their earliest, most idealistic days, as “fascinated by what life might be like if lived in a constantly improvisational manner, and we awakened others to this possibility.”⁵⁴ The capitalist nature of groups like H.I.P worked against an archaic and expansively improvised life that the Diggers envisioned for the Haight and its countercultural residents. These two elements, existing during the early days of the counterculture in a tentative peace, would continually both continue to shape the urban space of the Haight into a countercultural place, but with conflicting visions for the meaning.

“The San Francisco Sound”

The Haight-Ashbury’s psychedelic acid rock bands like the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, and Big Brother and the Holding Company would eventually become the most visible aspect of the hippie counterculture associated with the neighborhood. In the scene’s early days, between 1965 and the Human Be-In in January of 1967, these bands were in essence local acts. These bands became staples at Ken Kesey’s Acid Tests, new concert venues such as The Family Dog and the Fillmore, and eventually the large outdoor gatherings in Golden Gate Park.

⁵³ “Time to Forget” *The Digger Archives*, Fall 1966, accessed January 25, 2017), http://www.diggers.org/digger_sheets.htm.

⁵⁴ Coyote, *Sleeping Where I Fall*, 66.

Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and his entourage known as the Merry Pranksters were in many ways the first hippies. Forming in 1964, the group bridged the Beats and Counterculture and helped to inspire many of the key aspects of hippiedom. Kesey's Prankster's gained notoriety with a raucous road trip on a bus named "Further." This trip acted as a psychedelic reappropriation of Kerouac's earlier adventures, complete with Neil Cassidy, a main character in *On the Road* as the bus driver. The Merry Pranksters lived communally, advocated the use of psychedelic drugs, and favored long hair and exotic costumes. After their bus adventures, Kesey and his group set up live performance art concerts known as Acid Tests, with the first occurring on November 27, 1965 in Santa Cruz. This first test featured a light show, over 40 hours of projected film from the group's bus adventures, and LSD created by local chemist Augustus Owsley Stanley II, or popularly "Owsley." A second Acid Test was held a week later, and featured the Warlocks, the band that eventually evolved into the Grateful Dead, with their future lead singer Jerry Garcia in the audience.⁵⁵ The plan for the Acid Tests was to bring the psychedelic chaos seen on the bus "Further" into a more accessible venue for wider exposure to psychedelic possibilities and to "turn on" the community.

Between the second and third Acid Test, Bill Graham and the San Francisco Mime Troupe cohosted Appeal II. Similar to the Kesey events, this would be the first acid rock show held at the Fillmore, a venue that would eventually become iconic in the scene. Graham's first memories of acid rock shows with the Merry Pranksters reveal him

⁵⁵ Rock Scully, *Living with the Dead: Twenty Years on the Bus with Garcia and the Grateful Dead* (New York: Copper Square Press, 2011), 11-12.

to be an outsider to the countercultural experience: “Very decent people but just out there. I had not yet seen the acid thing in full force. That night (Trips Festival) I did. It shocked me. They might as well have been offering hand grenades to people.”⁵⁶ By February of 1966, Graham would resign from his position managing the Mime Troupe and begin working full-time promoting his acid rock shows at the Fillmore. Graham would maintain a unique position with the counterculture and its rock music scene by providing crucial space for the acid rock hippie experience while remaining largely outside the community.

Graham’s competition within the acid rock scene came from a group with stronger counterculture credentials. The group known as “The Family Dog” set up a venue in 1965. The group moved back to San Francisco from Virginia City, NV to participate in the happenings there, and held San Francisco’s first acid rock show on October 16, 1965, a “Tribute to Dr. Strange” featured Jefferson Airplane playing for around 1,000 people and a not yet fully developed light show.⁵⁷ The acid tests and this first acid rock concert set the precedent for how countercultural place could be both created and experienced through psychedelic drugs, music, aural visual performances, and the sharing of these hippie sacraments with likeminded young people. The understanding of place as expressed in these interior spaces would eventually be applied to the neighborhood in general as the population of counterculturally-minded people migrated to the Haight. Acid would become a critical demarcation point between those

⁵⁶ Bill Graham and Robert Greenfield, *Bill Graham Presents: My Life Inside Rock and Out*, (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2004), 136.

⁵⁷ Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 23-25.

who were “hip” and “turned on” and those who were straight or mainstream. This duality of communities helped to articulate the Haight as a countercultural place.

The Grateful Dead’s Jerry Garcia explained the earliest days of the Haight’s counterculture and how his band fit into it:

Our background was the sort of deeply cynical beatnik space which evolved into something nicer with the advent of psychedelics and the good-time mentality of the Haight-Ashbury. There really was a good year in there. Maybe a little more than that. And it was special and exceptional and magical. The fun part was before acid was actually made illegal. Because you could go out there fearlessly and you weren’t breaking any laws. It was crazy as hell. And what were they going to do? That was fun. That was like pure fun.⁵⁸

LSD was made illegal in California in 1966, so this year that Garcia discussed is within this early period. What Garcia described summarizes these early days of the Haight’s hippie residents shifting its definitions from a generally bohemian space to a countercultural place. Garcia’s quote also expresses a realization of the importance of LSD and psychedelics to creating the idea of countercultural place. Being “turned on” was a crucial aspect of identity for hippies, and in turn for their understanding of place.

It was within this developing structure of music venues and promotion that the many bands that would bring national prominence to the San Francisco psychedelic rock scene began to perform. Despite their stature being limited only to San Francisco at this time, their music and scene were crucial elements in solidifying the countercultural nature of the Haight. Just as the Beats had their writers and poets, the hippies had psychedelic rock.

⁵⁸ Robert Greenfield, *Dark Star: An Oral Biography of Jerry Garcia*, (New York: It Books, 2009). 104.

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argues that place is an “experience compounded of feeling and thought.”⁵⁹ Acid Tests and psychedelic concerts were invariably full body and mind experiences with place, enhanced by lights, music, spoken word, projected images, and, of course, LSD. These venues were places where the counterculture could immerse itself in the community while experiencing psychedelic rock music under the influence of narcotics. Nowhere were these early seeds of countercultural place better expressed and experienced than in Acid Tests and rock shows in San Francisco.

Hippie Spirituality and the Monday Night Class

Much like their Beat predecessors, the exploration of spirituality was a central tenet of the counterculture. Religious historian Timothy Miller observed: “The counterculture was a movement of seekers of meaning and value, like many dissenting religions, the hippies were enormously hostile to the religious institutions of the dominant culture, and they tried to find new and adequate ways to do the tasks the dominant religions failed to perform.”⁶⁰ This search for new routes to spirituality went through explorations of Zen Buddhism among other religions. The Beats, including Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Snyder all explored Zen Buddhism and wrote about their experiences at length, setting up an interest for the emerging counterculture. Just as sex, music, and drug use were seen as experimental components of a lifestyle of challenging boundaries, Zen Buddhism and other religions and spirituality were both challenging traditional

⁵⁹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 10.

⁶⁰ Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 17.

“mainstream” religions and continuing to push boundaries. “Beat Zen,” as argued by Allan Watts, had a nonconformist mentality that could not in the end escape American constructions of the “self” that ran contrary to Buddhist practice.⁶¹

The Monday Night Class was another expression of this hippie spirituality. While other religious groups, including Buddhists, Hare Krishnas, Scientologists, and evangelical Christian groups all set up shop in the Haight to cater to the influx of youth seekers, the Monday Night Class was a setting to explore broad ideas of spirituality under the influence of LSD. The class began meeting in the fall of 1966 and was taught by Stephen Gaskin, a former Marine turned Beatnik college professor. The class was operated as a freeform question and answer session that explored human spirituality and psychedelic drug use.⁶² The class was part of the San Francisco State Experimental College, which featured a host of classes that catered to the emerging Counterculture, including “North American White Witchcraft,” “Magic, Einstein, and God,” and “Meta Physical Education.”⁶³

While getting its start here in the early period of the countercultural Haight-Ashbury, the Monday Night Class would go on to become a spiritual institution in the area and beyond. The class provides the best example of the roots of hippie spirituality

⁶¹ Michael Kenji Masatsugu, “Reorienting the Pure Land: Japanese Americans, the Beats, and the Making of American Buddhism 1941-1966,” (dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2004), 138-139.

⁶² Arthur Theodore Kachel, “An American Religious Community Using Hallucinogens in 1970,” dissertation, Columbia University 1975, and Michael Traugot, *A Short History of The Farm*, (Self-Published: Summertown, TN, 1994), 3. Stephen Gaskin, interview by Deborah Altus, transcript, 18 October 1995, Commune Oral History Project. There are conflicting dates for the beginning of Monday Night Class, with Gaskin recalling in an interview that it began in 1965, while the contemporary research claims it began in 1966.

⁶³ Ibid.

and is important to the larger notion of the creation of the Haight as a countercultural place. More than simply being an expression of the counterculture's desire to seek a new experimental spirituality, it also represents the physical shifting of San Francisco State classrooms and an insertion of the counterculture into the university's bureaucracy, as some Experimental College classes were available as elective credits.⁶⁴ Considering the Free Speech Movement that occurred across San Francisco Bay at UC Berkeley earlier in the 1960s, a battle between students and administration, the insertion of countercultural classes at San Francisco State is significant.

Golden Gate Park and the Human Be-In

While the counterculture emerged and developed in the Haight in these early formative years, it would not be until January of 1967 that the counterculture was seen as nationally significant. The Human Be-In, also announced as a Gathering of Tribes, sought to bring together the emerging counterculture with their youthful co-patriots from Berkeley's New Left. This mass event and the resulting media coverage gave the Haight counterculture national attention.⁶⁵ Held in Golden Gate Park, the event was more of an expression of cultural radicalism than of anything politically charged. The Human Be-In was organized by H.I.P. members, their friends in the New Left, and, begrudgingly, the

⁶⁴ "Experimental College 1967 Summer Catalogue," San Francisco State University Digital Repository, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://sfsu-dspace.calstate.edu/handle/10211.3/184863>.

⁶⁵ Herbert Gold, "Where the Action is," *New York Times*, February 19, 1967, accessed July 7, 2017 <https://login.ezproxy.net.ucf.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/118054926?accountid=10003>. "San Francisco: Love on the Haight," *Time Magazine*, March 17, 1967, accessed July 11, 2017, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,836798,00.html>.

Diggers.⁶⁶ The event featured Beat icons Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder with music by the Grateful Dead, among other acts. Timothy Miller described the event as having “no anger, no reproach for the act of non-love... some say as many as 20,000 people were present and all seemed filled, contented, and giving.”⁶⁷ While an idealistic remembrance, the event did feature a massive turnout of young people coming together in one place to experience music, spiritual teachings, and collective drug use. The Human Be-In took an experience initially reserved to the acid tests and psychedelic rock clubs of Graham and the Family Dog and made it public. More importantly this event became the prototype for the other massive outdoor music festivals that would define the 1960s in both the Haight and around the nation.

Golden Gate Park itself has always shared a special relationship with the Haight district due to its neighboring proximity. The Haight is bordered on two sides by the park and its Panhandle extension. The park was opened in 1870 and covers more than 1,000 acres. A long planning process saw the conversion of sandy dunes and scrub brush into the ideal public green space in the fashion of other large urban parks. Historian Terence Young argues the park held specific features that fit into Progressive Era beliefs in the power of parks to improve communities. These Progressive virtues centered on public health, prosperity, democratic equality, and social coherence.⁶⁸ These values would dominate how the park was seen and utilized in its earliest years.

⁶⁶ Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius*, 53.

⁶⁷ Miller, *Hippies and American Values*, 104.

⁶⁸ Terence Young, *Building San Francisco's Parks, 1850-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 3.

While Progressive era values and the counterculture are not obviously relatable, Golden Gate Park was understood in a similar fashion by the hippies who used its green space for their daily activities. These would range from using the park for drug use and a sexual retreat to large-scale rock concerts, or “be-ins.” Miller calls these events, relatable to a larger version of a Beat happening, “the epitome of the spirit of love.”⁶⁹

Tim Cresswell’s discussion of Heidegger in *Place: An Introduction* delves into the concept of *dasein*, which translates to “being there” or “being-in” creating an interesting correlation with the hippie term “be-in.” Heidegger argues that being (existence) is not simply existing in place as a container but instead marked by a stronger connection between a thing and its place. Just as putting a broom into a closet defines that as a broom closet, putting 20,000 young bohemians into an open green space argues the creation of a countercultural place. These types of interactions that brought hippies into the coffee shops, concert venues, homes, storefronts, parks, and the streets of the Haight shift the meaning of urban space into a countercultural place.

Throughout the development of the Haight-Ashbury, from the vision of Ms. Fritz to the freeway fight of HANC, residents of the district understood their neighborhood to be a unique urban space. Those who participated in the development of the counterculture and those drawn to the ideas of the hippies would echo similar language in their belief of how the district could be interpreted. Bohemian space is disjointed by nature, with a blend of non-dominant cosmopolitan cultures creating something unique but not

⁶⁹ Miller, *Hippies and American Values*, 104.

homogenous. It was into this unique space that hippies were able to argue their own ideas of countercultural place into the neighborhood's complex demographics.

The rise of a counterculture in San Francisco matches the city's history as a town of outlaws and outsiders. Major social movements require urban space in which to coalesce, but cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles all lacked the fringe status and recusant pedigree required to launch a culture that openly sought to drop out of society. San Francisco, and specifically mid-1960s Haight-Ashbury, provided the bohemian space at the end of an imagined frontier that could foster a movement founded on a rejection of an American technocracy. Most major cities could boast of a literary tradition, radical politics, and bohemian spaces. San Francisco provided a unique tradition of utopian anarchism in an urban space that maintained elements of an American mythological frontier space. This provided a fertile ground for the development of a youth movement that sought to dropout of mainstream society in an effort to reanimate itself as a fully realized psychedelic community based on experimental lifestyles.

In this early days of the Hippie Haight, between the emergence of a counterculture in 1965 and the Human Be-In in January of 1967, groups including the Diggers, H.I.P., concert promoters, and new spiritual leaders were able to argue their vision for the community. More importantly, this vision of place was a beacon to the "young seekers" who began moving into the area to join and interact with these newly established elements of countercultural place. The pushback from established locals in the Haight was minimal and the young people were generally tolerated for their

willingness to live in the substandard housing and add to the neighborhood's unique identity.⁷⁰ The media highlighting the Human Be-In to a national audience would change the context of the counterculture in the Haight, challenge the district's ability to handle the massive influx of young people wanting be a part of the counterculture, and bring critiques from within and outside the burgeoning community.

⁷⁰ Smith, *Love Needs Care*, 102.

CHAPTER TWO: HAIGHT-ASHBURY AS COUNTERCULTURAL PLACE

The success of the Human Be-In and its coverage in the national media vaulted the Haight-Ashbury and its resident hippies into the existing youth-quake of anti-war, New Left, and Civil Rights movements that defined the 1960s. The minor tug of influence between the main organizers of the Human Be-In the H.I.P. merchants, along with their allies, and the Diggers became more complicated in 1967 with more voices attempting to declare and define what exactly the Haight-Ashbury district was in terms of a countercultural place. At stake was what a countercultural Haight would mean and how it would be expressed. San Francisco and national media outlets, civic authorities, and a massive influx of young people drawn to the Bay Area by the images and ideas of the counterculture all challenged ideas of what the Haight would be in 1967 and beyond. Between the months of June and August of 1967, popularly known as The Summer of Love, would become a crucible for the district and its youth culture.

Music, specifically the San Francisco sound of psychedelic rock, played a crucial role in both how the counterculture defined itself and how it was perceived by mainstream culture. Bands such as the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane broadcast the defining elements of hippiedom across national airwaves as record companies began taking an interest in the sound coming out of Bay Area.¹ While both of these bands have

¹ The Grateful Dead's self-titled debut album was released by Warner Bros. Records in March of 1967, Jefferson Airplane's debut *Takes Off* was released in August of 1966, while the popular *Surrealistic Pillow* was released in February, 1967. Two singles off this album "Somebody to Love" and "White Rabbit" were both released in April and June of 1967 respectively.

been cited as popularizing the Haight-Ashbury as a uniquely countercultural place, there were other sounds going over the airwaves vocalizing ideas about the Haight. Scott McKenzie's May 1967 single "San Francisco (Be Sure To Wear Flowers In Your Hair)" and Frank Zappa's album *We're Only in it For the Money* released after the Summer of Love, both provide musical extremes of how those outside San Francisco were defining the emerging social drop-out culture of the Haight.

McKenzie's song, written by The Mamas and the Papas lead singer John Phillips, painted an innocent and idealistic version of the hippie community in the Bay Area. "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)" was released in May 1967, only a month before the impending summer invasion of young people. McKenzie's lyrics suggested that "wearing flowers in your hair" would be sufficient for entry into the San Francisco scene, in which one could expect to "meet some gentle people there."² Without explanation or examination, McKenzie's song suggests the people of the Haight, in tune with the Baby Boomer generation as a whole, have a new way of living.³ While an accurate number would be impossible to assess, the song's theme and timing certainly provided many with an impetus to join the Summer of Love.⁴

In his autobiography Phillips explained, "I thought we should somehow put the word out to the kids that were going to San Francisco, they should come in peace and stay cool during the festival. We did not want riots and violence and insanity on our

² Scott McKenzie, "San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)," by John Phillips, Columbia Records, 1967, 7" vinyl.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Leslie Kaufman, "Scott McKenzie, Singer Known for 'San Francisco' Dies at 73," *New York Times*, August 20, 2012, accessed February 20, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/21/arts/music/scott-mckenzie-singer-known-for-san-francisco-dies-at-73.html?_r=0.

hands.” McKenzie, in looking for a song to be written for him to sing, suggested the theme: “Why don’t you write a song about all the kids coming west for Monterey (Pop Festival), about what they could expect and how they should handle the whole thing.”⁵ The song was successful on the best-selling music charts and credited for setting a peaceful tone for the festival. The song’s message shifted to San Francisco’s hippie scene and was in sharp contrast to the reality on the ground.⁶

A counter perspective to both the innocent image crafted by Phillips and McKenzie and the ideas circulating around the Haight-Ashbury can be found in the music of Frank Zappa and his band The Mothers of Invention. Zappa and his band played in San Francisco for three dates in February and three dates in March at the Fillmore Auditorium in 1967, providing him with a first-hand account of the district and its hippie culture. Critical observations of Zappa’s interactions with the hippies can be found in the 1968 release *We’re Only in it For the Money*. Zappa, from Southern California and a resident of New York City in 1967, saw San Francisco very differently than Phillips and McKenzie’s musical explanation of countercultural San Francisco. Another Zappa account of the city, here in comparison to his hometown of Los Angeles, is chronicled in his autobiography *The Frank Zappa Book*:

San Francisco in the mid-sixties was very chauvinistic, and ethnocentric. To the *Friscoids*’ way of thinking, everything that came from THEIR town was **really important Art**, and *anything* from *anyplace* else

⁵ John Phillips, *Papa John: An Autobiography* by John Phillips (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1986) 172. The Monterey Pop Festival occurred from June 16 to June 18, 1967 in Monterey, California.

⁶ Billboard, “Hot 100 Week of July 1, 1967,” accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.billboard.com/charts/hot-100/1967-07-01>.

(especially L.A.) was dogshit. *Rolling Stone* magazine helped to promote this fiction, nationwide.⁷

This quote offers some context for Zappa's Mothers of Invention album *We're Only In It For The Money*, which provided a scathing critique of the San Francisco counterculture. On the radio documentary show "John Gilliland's Pop Chronicles" Zappa explained the album as a parody of the times.⁸ Songs like "Who Needs The Peace Corps" shows that satirical critique. The first verses are not far from McKenzie's "San Francisco" as the song's protagonist drops out and goes to join the scene in "Frisco." Then, the bite:

I'll stay a week & get the crabs &
Take a bus back home
I'm really phoney
But forgive me
'Cause I'm stoned.⁹

The song finishes with the claim that dismisses the argument of Haight-Ashbury as a countercultural place, as every town has an area in which "phony hippies meet" and "psychedelic dungeons" pop up.¹⁰

This idea of "phony hippies" references the young people who spent time in the Haight on weekends and school breaks without investing in the larger ideas of the cultural protest. The reference to "psychic dungeons" is meant to argue the exploitative nature of drug use, abuse, and the physical abuse and sexual crimes perpetrated on

⁷ Frank Zappa, *The Real Frank Zappa Book* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989) 68. (Quote accented as found in original print.)

⁸ John Gilliland's Pop Chronicles "Show 43 - Revolt of the Fat Angel: Some samples of the Los Angeles sound, accessed March 20, 1967," <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc19802/> .

⁹ Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, *We're Only In It For The Money* "Who Needs The Peace Corps," Verve Records, 1968, vinyl.

¹⁰ Ibid.

vulnerable young runaways. While Zappa expressed these points with the tongue-and-cheek-humor of an entertainer, this was meant to be an indictment of the hippie Haight not living up to its own values and ideals.

As the song ends, satirically, with exclamation, “GO TO SAN FRANCISCO!” Zappa sarcastically mimics McKenzie’s words here to bridge the vastly different versions of what teenagers might find once they arrived in the Haight-Ashbury.

McKenzie and Zappa provide two dramatic visions of what one could expect when they arrived in San Francisco. These outsider perspectives illustrate competing understandings of the Haight-Ashbury as a countercultural place. McKenzie’s song promotes an overly simplistic view of the hippie community in San Francisco, but it does suggest there is something truly unique enough in the district that would signal countercultural place. Zappa’s rejection of McKenzie’s Haight-Ashbury simultaneously rejects any notion of a uniqueness that would be required to be defined as a place with meaning. Instead, Zappa suggests the culture within the Haight is unexceptional and easily replicated in other urban spaces. This chapter postulates that the reality is more nuanced and complicated than both of these outside perspectives suggest.

The Summer of Love and 1967 generally signal a shift away from local elements within the Haight-Ashbury that had to this point been in control of the discourse of countercultural placemaking. The Human Be-In marks this change, as the event is both controlled by more capitalist elements of the Haight and received national attention. This shifts the discourse of the Haight as a countercultural place from the “utopian-anarchist” ideology envisioned by the Diggers and other post-Beats to one that is both popularized

and more commercialized. The Summer of Love influx of high school and college students on summer break echoes these sentiments. Included in this group were a large number of young runaways. Generally, these summer hippies were attracted to the Haight less for the altruistic utopian ideals of the earlier years and more for the thrill seeking values of sex, drugs, rock-n-roll, and doing your own thing. This is, of course not a sweeping notion, and many spiritual seekers still came to the Haight.

This chapter identifies the deep fracture of influence within the Haight between rival interests and ideologies. Three major elements — H.I.P. merchants and their allies, the Diggers, and the media — all created competing visions of what countercultural place within the Haight-Ashbury should and should not be. Additionally, civic authorities, the growing influence of drug dealers, and the massive invasion of youth in the Summer of Love, will complicate these rival visions.

The Commodified Hippie

Gaining momentum from the success of the Human Be-In, its most notable organizers solidified their vision of a psychedelic community within the Haight-Ashbury district. H.I.P. merchants, *The San Francisco Oracle*, and the self-proclaimed “hippie elders” were seen by some as leaders, while others viewed them as exploiters. Collectively, their role as business owners, publishers, writers, and cultural figureheads provided a platform and presented them as a focal point for both the media and new arrivals into the Haight-Ashbury. Some, specifically the Diggers, felt this position gave the H.I.P. merchants and their allies too much weight in the ongoing conversation to

determine the meaning of place within the Haight. The Diggers also felt they were able to use the hippie movement for both personal and financial gain.¹¹

While the efforts of H.I.P. and the hippie elders had an element of independent culture to them, providing an economy and voice for the community, much of this was done through traditional avenues of capitalism and leadership. Psychedelic Shop co-owner and H.I.P. member Ron Thelin was quoted as saying

Suddenly there was a common fact that everyone could identify with. It was right in the middle of town, and it was called the Psychedelic Shop... And then more people started coming in and then pretty soon it was like the whole Haight-Ashbury was the community.¹²

An interpretation of Thelin's words could suggest that he believed the hippie community sprang up around the brother's shop, not that a community was developing and as entrepreneurs they made an investment in catering to that community's needs. In Thelin's defense, business owners can and often did act as community leaders. His leadership role does not have to be read as top-down, but simply as an investor acting in the best interest of his business. Still, in a community of radical social protest this leadership felt too traditional to other actors in the neighborhood.

Poet Allen Ginsberg, a veteran of the earlier Beat Movement in San Francisco and major participant in the Human Be-In, weighed in on the youth-based social protest. Reported in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Ginsberg, at this point 40 years old, argued this phenomenon was not something to be declared "hippie" but instead they were simply

¹¹ Theodore Roszak, *The Making of A Counterculture*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968) and "Uncle Tim's Children," *The Digger Archives*, April, 16, 1967, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.diggers.org/comco/ccpaps2b.html>.

¹² Leonard Wolf, *Voices of the Love Generation*, (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968), 225.

“young-seekers.” As the article continued, Ginsberg maintained a self-congratulatory tone, as he took credit for organizing the Be-In along with Gary Snyder. While concluding that the Haight Street sponsors had organized a clean-up of the Be-In’s site at the Golden Gate Park’s Polo Fields. These comments excluded any reference to community involvement.¹³

Ginsberg’s comments are troublesome for a number of reasons. They read as condescending and paternal. The subtext of the “Human Be-In” was the theme of a “Gathering of Tribes.” This should place the Diggers, the New Left from Berkeley, the Hell’s Angels, and all the various unattached youth in the Bay Area who both attended and added their time, labor, and participation in the event as equal coparticipants. Ginsberg’s comments limit the importance of all but he, his friend Snyder, and his allies in H.I.P.

One month later, Ginsberg, Snyder, Alan Watts, and Timothy Leary held “The Houseboat Summit” on the converted ferry *Vallejo* in nearby Sausalito. Allen Cohen’s *San Francisco Oracle* recorded and reproduced the conversation in the pages of its underground newspaper. The meeting was meant to capitalize on the efforts of the Human Be-In and seek a way forward for the community. While the discussion was varied, much of the conversation focused on how the group interpreted the youth movement as essentially spiritual.¹⁴

¹³ George Dusheck, “‘They’re Young Seekers, not Hippies,’ Say Poet Ginsberg,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January, 22, 1967.

¹⁴ *San Francisco Oracle: The Psychedelic Newspaper of the Haight Ashbury*, CD-ROM, (Berkeley, CA: Regent Press, 2005).

The group (Snyder and Leary mostly) saw the Haight-Ashbury district as a starting point. Leary argued, “The next step-- for many people-- could well be a place like Haight-Ashbury. They will find spiritual teachers, there they will find friends, lovers, and wives. But it must be seen clearly as a weigh-station, I don’t think the Haight-Ashbury district- any city, for that matter- is a place where the new tribal... is going to live. So I mean DROP OUT! I don’t want to be misinterpreted. I’m dropping out step by step.” Snyder interrupts Leary in the midst of his monologue “I agree with you. Not in the city.”¹⁵

The hippie elders’ comments here are troubling for a number of reasons. First, these men were much older than the young people coming to the Haight. Ginsberg was 41 years of age, Leary 47, and Gary Snyder 37 at the time of the meeting. The title of “hippie elder” was not one bestowed by the young people as much as one assumed by they themselves. Their front-and-center appearance at the Human Be-In was orchestrated by themselves and other establishment hippies. The House Boat Summit fits this earlier event, as it does not include any young people, even an audience, and its location is not within the Haight. The summit provided a forum for older men to debate the purpose of a youth-based social movement, talking about it from outside of the area. At the same time, the Diggers were acting collectively to make the urban area of the Haight a countercultural place, Leary, Ginsberg, and Snyder had provided a counterpoint to the Diggers in a closed forum, that was later broadcast via *The San Francisco Oracle*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

This is not to say Ginsberg, Leary, and Snyder were not luminaries to many of the young people who came to the Haight. As poet Michael McClure, another participant in the hippie Haight community who was above the average age of the hippies, “We Beats... were the elder statesmen for these young people; we had their respect and often came to us for advice.”¹⁶ While McClure, along with his fellow Beats, may have had much to do with the origins and organizing of the Haight as a countercultural place they continued to take a dominant role without deferring to the younger hippies. While these elders played an influential role, there is no archival evidence to suggest young people were seeking them out for leadership or direction. Instead due to both age, position, and fame they inserted themselves into the conversation.

Stephen Gaskin and his Monday Night Class provided another example of how a venerable statesman of the Haight could interact with the young people of the area. While acting as a “guru,” he sought a kind of commonality with his followers. The large crowds drawn to his Monday Night Class, at times over a thousand people, packed into the Family Dog weekly to engage in a back-and-forth discussion. This would imply that those who gathered gained something from the spiritual discussion and that Gaskin found a way to resonate with the youth, without speaking down to them.

Hippie elders and business leaders held an important but challenging position within the Haight-Ashbury counterculture. While their vision and experience were important in shaping countercultural place within the Haight, their attachment to

¹⁶ KRON-TV, “San Francisco’s Summer of Love” filmed 2003, *San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive*, 46:28, accessed March 20, 2016 <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/227944>. .

traditional norms of business and social structures clashed with the more radical social protest also creating a place in the district. The counter narrative for countercultural place within the Haight is best exemplified by the Diggers.

The Diggers

On April 6, 1967, *The San Francisco Chronicle* ran a story under the headline “Good Hippies’ Summer Plans.” The article drew the division between good hippies and bad hippies, the good ones were identified as those wearing “quaint and enchanting costumes, hold peaceful rock n’ roll concerts” while the bad ones “live in filthy, crowded ‘pads,’ rush into the street and block traffic, and becloud their minds with dangerous drugs.”¹⁷ Nothing in the article explained the methodology used to draw these distinctions. The good hippies in this case were organized in front of the press to announce their coming together to form a Council for a Summer of Love. The group served as a clearinghouse for happenings throughout the summer and helped the teenage arrivals to settle into the area safely. The council had emerged out of a need, as the civic government insisted it would not aide the hippie youth who had traveled to the area. The council consisted of people from the venues The Family Dog and the Straight Theater, the *San Francisco Oracle*, H.I.P. merchants, religious groups, independent members of the community, and the Diggers.¹⁸ This alliance between the Diggers and the rest of the council would be short lived.

¹⁷ Mike Mahoney, “Good Hippies Summer Plans,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, April 6, 1967.

¹⁸ Ibid.

In 1967 the Digger publishing arm, The Communications Company, began publishing its broadsides, or street sheets, to be distributed and posted around the Haight-Ashbury. Chester Anderson and his mimeograph machine published over 900 sheets in a nine-month span between January 1967 and September 1967.¹⁹ These sheets featured poetry, news, art, announcements, and opinion pieces. While many of the broadsides read as manic stream of consciousness rants that argued ideas and events now lost to history, a number of them exhibit the importance of Haight-Ashbury to the Diggers and their allies.

A Digger manifesto published under the title “plans and hopes” articulates the vision the Diggers sought to create through their presence within the Haight district, as they wanted to control their own narrative, and do so on their own terms.²⁰ The fact that Chester Anderson owned the mimeograph machine allowed the group’s anarchistic narrative to be a constant and up-to-date voice for that vision.

One of their earliest broadsides, dated January 13, 1967, illustrates how Anderson and the Diggers visualized the urban space of San Francisco:

In San Francisco there’s a park on every hilltop and a park in every valley. The city is a gravity machine that rises and falls between these parks. Therefore, wait through the sunrise and then descend slowly, looking at everything, joining the beautiful hippies on the curious swings & slides in the playground, always slowly & with love to Haight Street, and with love.
Haight Street is Walden Pond.²¹

This passage presents the Haight as the center of a neo-transcendental community akin to Thoreau’s Walden Pond: a community of self-reliance and self-discovery beyond the

¹⁹ Chester Anderson, “The Communication Company” *The Digger Archives*, January 1967, accessed January 30, 2016, http://www.diggers.org/com_co.htm.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

boundaries of society, despite its location within a large urban center. Contrast this image to the one provided by the hippie elders who saw the Haight as a weigh station, an expression not of countercultural place, but its mobility. As Chapter Three will later explore, this idea of the Haight as a weigh station will eventually prove true, but not for the reasons Ginsberg and the hippie elders imagined. However, in the Spring and Summer of 1967 the Diggers, along with H.I.P. and the hippie elders were all still attempting to create something unique in the Haight, despite the challenges of The Summer of Love. That creation could also be understood within the larger hippie search for authenticity, that while variable, created a presence in the Haight that was all an expression of counterculture place that existed in contrast and defiance to the homogenous mainstream.

In the wake of the Human Be-In and Trips Festivals, the Diggers threw their own event in February to continue to argue their narrative. The Invisible Circus was planned as an ambitious 72-hour happening that was held at Glide Memorial Church. For undisclosed reasons, the event only survived from Friday night until dawn Sunday morning. It was Digger Emmett Grogan's belief, shared in the memoir *Ringolevio*, that over 20,000 people moved through the multi-sensory "environmental" event before it ended, claiming those who attended had a memorable experience.²² However, if it was the Diggers' intention to shift the tone of the Haight, the Invisible Circus in no way eclipsed the earlier events, and has largely been ignored by recent histories of the Haight.

²² Emmett Grogan, *Ringolevio: A Life Played For Keeps*, (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 2008), 236.

After the Human Be-In, the tone of Digger broadsides also changed. Perhaps the most contentious document printed by the Communications Company was the four-page broadside titled: “Uncle Tim’s Children.” This document, signed by Chester Anderson, held little back in terms of painting a morally corrupt and dystopian Haight-Ashbury in direct contrast to the utopian vision the Diggers had imagined. The document begins with a graphic scenario of a sixteen-year-old runaway given massive amounts of drugs until she passes out, allowing a group of men to use her “temporarily unemployed body.” Anderson punctuated this introduction with the often quoted “Rape is as common as bullshit on Haight Street.”²³

After this graphic account, the document goes on to incriminate Allen Cohen’s *San Francisco Oracle*, the H.I.P merchants, Allan Watts, and Timothy Leary for both luring and profiting off the influx of young people into San Francisco. The implications are that these groups sold the utopian ideals of the community for capitalistic gain while creating a nightmarish scenario of young people being taken advantage of. Those implicated added to the challenges as they were not moved while those implicated were not moved to help feed, shelter, or clothe these groups of runaways.²⁴

The next day, another extensive broadside was released titled “Oh Dear! Oh My!” in which Anderson responded to a phone call from Cohen. While the document hinted of conciliatory language, most of it reiterated the beliefs of Anderson (and one assumes the Diggers he was communicating for). In this document that Anderson’s comments are

²³ “Uncle Tim’s Children” *The Digger Archives*, April, 16, 1967, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.diggers.org/comco/ccpaps2b.html>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

nuanced and layered. For example, Anderson is “willing to concede the point; but even though the merchants aren’t responsible for the kids being here, they still have an accountability towards those kids, simply because those kids are here.”²⁵ Anderson argued an accountability with H.I.P. and their allies existed not because they were merchants, but because they had a responsibility as part of this drop-out community.²⁶ This responsibility was a tenet of Digger philosophy.

Charles Perry, in *Haight-Ashbury: A History*, argues that nobody at the time, even civic officials, ever claimed that anything this bad had been going on.²⁷ Anderson’s account could be understood as a combined version of events or the expression of fears. Considering the age, naivety, drug-use, and potential to be a runaway, numerous rapes would have undoubtedly gone unreported. Anderson could be reflecting on unreported, but known crimes. “Uncle Tim’s Children” and in the response to Cohen “Oh Dear! Oh My!” clearly represented a narrative opposite of the positive mood often associated with the Summer of Love.

“Uncle Tim’s Children” also signaled a split with the Council for a Summer of Love. The Diggers still actively sought to help the new arrivals to the Haight find food and shelter, but not in union with the rest of the council. No documents mention the Council after their initial press conference. It seems the H.I.P. community put on events, the churches and organizations helped the teenage runaways, medical issues were handled by the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic, and the Diggers took care of social services,

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Charles Perry, *Haight-Ashbury: A History* (New York: Werner Books 2005), 174.

but none of this happened through any overly organized system as proposed by the Council.

The split between the Diggers and H.I.P. and their allies continued into May, with another broadside. This one contained a bit of conciliatory language for the Thelin brothers. Actions to take responsibility for the “street kids” and turn the Psychedelic Shop into a co-operative business provided examples to the Diggers that the Thelins were indeed “spiritual brothers.”²⁸

These documents highlight a number of fissures between the two communities. First, and most obvious, they highlight ideas of capitalism versus anarchism as they existed within the Haight-Ashbury district. H.I.P merchants were, regardless of their place in the community, commodifying countercultural place. The Diggers, with their Free Store, free food distribution, and their other free services challenged the notion that the massive influx of youth into the district can be seen through the dual lens of both providing for people in need, but more importantly creating the type of community that fit into their belief system. The Digger broadsides also drew up another difference between the two groups, as the establishment hippies increasingly saw the Haight as a spiritual community the Diggers argued it as a politically utopian anarchist community.

The final act of the Diggers would be a funeral. In October, a happening and a funeral procession called “The Death of Hippie” meant to kill off the now commoditized and media-friendly idea of the counterculture and allow it to be reborn as something

²⁸ “Street News for the Tenth of May” *The Digger Archives*, May 10, 1967, accessed May 6, 2016, <http://www.diggers.org/comco/ccpaps3b.html>.

closer to their original values. The Diggers had begun morphing into a new version of themselves in July, but this funeral meant to signal the death of both the term “hippie” and “Digger,” as both had become exploited. The death was announced in the first issue of *Free City News*:

DEATH OF HIPPY END/FINISHED HIPPYEE GONE GOODBYE
HEHPPEEEE DEATH DEATH HHIPPEE... EXORCISE
HAIGHT/ASHBURY CIRCLE THE HASBURY FREE THE
BOUNDARIES OPEN EXORCISE... YOU ARE FREE. WE ARE
FREE. DO NOT BE RECREATED. BELIEVE ONLY YOUR OWN
INCARNATE SPIRIT... DO NOT BE BOUGHT WITH A PICTURE, A
PHRASE,,,DO NOT BE CAPTURED IN WORDS. THE CITY IS
OURS. YOU ARE ARE ARE. TAKE WHAT IS YOURS.....TAKE
WHAT IS YOURS
THE BOUNDARIES ARE DOWN SAN FRANCISCO IS FREE NOW
FREE THE TRUTH IS OUT OUT OUT.²⁹

Capitalization and playful repetition here both provide a biting critique of what the Haight-Ashbury counterculture had become. The challenges of the Summer of Love invasion and the fractures within the older community all took their toll on even the most dedicated of Diggers. Realistically, The Diggers’ anarcho-utopian vision of building an entirely separate society within the confines of one of the United States’ largest urban centers was never a viable project. The Digger frustration resulted not from the failure of such an undertaking, but the undermining of that project from both fellow hippie residents and the media exploitation of their idealism. Their new incarnation, The Free City Collective and the establishment of Morningstar Farm, a commune outside of San

²⁹ “October Sixth Nineteen Hundred and Sixty Seven” *The Digger Archive*, October, 6, 1967, Accessed May 5, 2016, http://www.diggers.org/images/freecity/fc_c01_1.jpg.

Francisco, punctuated the idea that hippies, Diggers, and a Haight-Ashbury as countercultural place were all bygone ideas by October of 1967.

Media

The third major influence on the Haight-Ashbury during the Summer of Love was the media. The public's first interactions with the counterculture invariably came through three key forms of media. People living outside of the Haight understood the scene through local San Francisco newspapers, the national media, and through the record industry. These were many of the teenage Summer of Love participants' first glimpses of hippies as well.

The San Francisco media kept close tabs on the goings-on in the Haight-Ashbury district. *The San Francisco Chronicle* reported on the district's larger events, hippies' interactions with police and civic authorities, updates on runaways, as well as information on the emergence of drugs as part of the larger scene. Additionally, editorials and letters to the editor discussing various elements of the hippie Haight were popular on the opinion pages many days. *The Chronicle* became an important voice in how the Haight was defined to local San Franciscans and in how it was perceived by locals.

The San Francisco Chronicle's treatment of the hippies of the Haight was varied, and many times quite fair. One end of the spectrum would feature general news reporting on the larger events like the Human Be-In and Invisible Circus and a multiday investigative piece that painted the districts' long-haired inhabitants in a generally positive light. On the other end, there were eye-catching banner headlines warning of the

hippie invasions, new dangerous drugs, and language like “A daily ‘Hippie Hop’ through the ‘Sodom’ of the Haight-Ashbury” gave the impression the paper was providing a negative spin when it came to its reporting of the district.³⁰

National magazines and headlines soon became filled with pictures of psychedelic parties and words conveying the wild lifestyle of the Haight. In its March 17, 1967 issue, *Time Magazine* ran an article “San Francisco: Love on Haight.”³¹ By July, the hippie subculture was the cover story for the national magazine, with a probing article on the “philosophy of a subculture.”³² While both articles worked to explain individually the subculture and the Haight, they dissected the culture in terms of an LSD utopia that would read as bizarre to mainstream America as it was enticing to young people from around the country.

The *New York Times* first announced the emerging West Coast counterculture in an article on May 5, 1967, with a headline “Organized Hippies Emerge on Coast: San Francisco Haight-Ashbury Hippies Have Made It.”³³ A week later, on May 14, 1967, *The New York Times Magazine* ran a feature by Hunter S. Thompson. His article, with the proclamatory title “The ‘Hashbury’ Is the Capital Of the Hippies,” ran with a spread of photographs of colorfully dressed people, a painted Volkswagen Beetle, and other scenes from the district.³⁴ These were the first mentions of the Haight phenomenon in the *New*

³⁰ “To Deepest Hippieland,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, April 4, 1967.

³¹ “San Francisco: Love on Haight,” *Time Magazine*, March 17, 1967, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,836798,00.html>.

³² “Youth: The Hippies,” *Time Magazine*, July 7, 1967.

³³ “Organized Hippies Emerge on Coast; San Francisco Haight-Ashbury Hippies Have Made It,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1967.

³⁴ Hunter S. Thompson, “The Hashbury is the Capital of the Hippies” *New York Times*, May 14, 1967.

York Times, but would be followed in other publications with substantial coverage throughout the rest of the Haight period of the counterculture. More importantly, Thompson, writing from a position within the new community, laid out the roots of the counterculture, tying the disgruntled New Left and Beatniks into a new society with new rules. These were ideas that could be interpreted and reanimated in other neighborhoods around the country.

Newspapers around the country also carried stories about the impending Summer of Love in San Francisco. On April 29, 1967, the *Daytona Beach Morning Journal* ran a story under the headline “Passive Rebels Gather for a Summer of Love” with an article that exalted the psychedelic drug use, communal living, and freewheeling sexual mores of the hippies of the Haight.³⁵ The *Toledo Blade* featured an article as the summer began with the title “San Francisco Happening: Summer of Love, Freaking Out Starts.” The Ohio newspaper lacked the descriptive tone of Daytona’s, covering more of the psychedelic tone found during a summer “solstice happening” in the Golden Gate Park polo grounds.³⁶ Both articles, from newspapers far from the epicenter of the Haight-Ashbury, show both a mainstream fascination and an opportunity for young people curious about the hippie phenomena to access information about the events leading up to the Summer of Love.

³⁵ Claude Burgett, “Passive Rebels Gather for a Summer of Love” *Daytona Beach Morning Times*, April 29, 1967, accessed February 21, 2016 <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1873&dat=19670429&id=Pc8pAAAAIBAJ&sjid=m8kEAAAIBAJ&pg=1255.6066812&hl=en>.

³⁶ “San Francisco Happening: Summer of Love, Freaking Out Starts,” *The Toledo Blade*, April 29, 1967.

While America's youth might have encountered the Haight counterculture through print media, they were more likely to find it through music. The record industry was quick to recognize the unique psychedelic "San Francisco sound" and sign its major practitioners. The Grateful Dead's self-titled album was released in March 1967, while the popular Jefferson Airplane single "Somebody to Love" was released in April 1967. Big Brother and the Holding Company, now with Janis Joplin singing, released their first album in August 1967 as well. While not from the Haight, the extremely popular British group The Beatles had made their turn away from pop by 1966 with the release of "Rubber Soul" in 1965 and "Revolver" in 1966. The June 1967 release of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" would see the band moving into psychedelic territory as well.

While American young people would have consumed media in all forms, including underground newspapers, mainstream newspapers, and the emerging television news, seeking information and inspiration about the new counterculture on the West Coast, music provided an impetus and an ability to feel instantly connected to these new ideas, wherever one might live. Collectively these media sources would have spread the ideas percolating within the Haight to make both a national scene, but also more importantly to the district, a reason to want to join in the pilgrimage of the Summer of Love.

While each person joining the mass migration of the Summer of Love had their own particular reason, popular media was for many their first exposure to the Haight counterculture. Ironically, the same tone that made hippie stories shocking to adult Americans made the social experiment in San Francisco appealing to high school and

college-age youth who finished school terms in May and June. Unfortunately, these simplistic media ideas of the counterculture, much like McKenzie's song "San Francisco" ill-prepared young people for what they would encounter in the Haight.

Authority, Addiction, Exploitation, and Invasion

As the H.I.P and the hippie elders, the Diggers, and the media portrayed differing versions of their Haight-Ashbury countercultural place, other groups acted and reacted in turn. Civic authorities, drug dealers, and the young invaders themselves all took cues from these main groups. These civic authorities, drug dealers, and the new young hippies moving into the area all operated through traditional channels to either attempt to control or exploit the situation, but more importantly argued their own meanings of place within the Haight that would eventually drown any localized notions of a hip community.

In the midst of everything were the more local and conservative elements of the Haight-Ashbury. On February 9, 1967, a group calling themselves "The Squares of the Haight-Ashbury District" called the press together to declare that their neighborhood could absorb the "new community." The group of four residential representatives, included Leon Harris, reverend of the local All Saints Episcopal Church, James Browne, the president of the Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council, Rev. Thomas Dietrich of Howard Presbyterian Church, and Leonard Wolf representing San Francisco State College's professors. Collectively they proclaimed: "Our community has always been capable of absorbing newness." These four came forward with this proclamation signed

by sixteen other organizations meant to counter the negative publicity they all felt the neighborhood was getting.³⁷

With news of an approaching influx of young people coming in the summer also drew a government response. On March 24, 1967 Mayor John F. Shelley announced, in a letter to the city Board of Supervisors, the city's intention to pay closer attention to the happenings in the Haight, while also ordering a strict declaration that traveling hippies would not be welcome in the city: "Such migratory persons cannot be permitted to sleep in public parks or otherwise violate laws involving public health and the general peace and well-being of the community."³⁸

San Franciscans living outside of the Haight were polled about their thoughts on whether the hippies bothered them, with their answers published on July 19, 1967. Of the seven people whose answers were published in the newspaper, none of them took much offense to the emerging counterculture. Most of the respondents took a live-and-let-live attitude, believing the hippies added something unique to the city.³⁹ Polled for the "Question Man" column, a daily feature on the *San Francisco Chronicle's* editorial page, the questions were asked of residents found on the corner of Mason and Geary Streets, far from the Haight and closer to the city's traditional center. While the larger sample isn't available, with no negative answers published, one could assume the majority of those polled had a generally positive impression of their Haight hippie neighbors.

³⁷ Jack Viets, "Haight-Ashbury Squares Groove With The Hippies" *San Francisco Chronicle* February 9, 1967.

³⁸ "Mayor Warns Hippies to Stay Out of Town" *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 24, 1967.

³⁹ O'Hara "Do The Hippies Bother You?" *San Francisco Chronicle* July 19, 1967.

However, when the question was reworded and asked again a few weeks later on the Embarcadero, San Francisco's waterfront, the answers were more complex and varied. The two themes that emerged from these seven answers are ones that echoed tallow worker Joe Lunghi's comments, "They're a bunch of bums, they use the Love Generation idea as an excuse for not working."⁴⁰ The rest have a more conciliatory but practical tone, questioning if those in the Haight were as loving and happy as they appeared to be, but reserving the right for them to live any lifestyle they preferred.⁴¹ The differences in these two responses to the Question Man column could be understood through the type of occupation each group of respondents worked in, with the first set representing white collar workers, while the second were blue collar workers.

While these polls present perspectives of two sets of "straight" groups from outside of the Haight, another group took issues with the hippies from within the neighborhood. African-American members of the neighborhood were critical of how the prominently white members of the counterculture were ruining the neighborhood. Quoting one resident, "These hippies have come in and turned a once nice neighborhood into a slum." African-American residents complained of the level of filth and exposure to drug-use that their children were subjected to, while at the same time concerned that it would be African-Americans who would be blamed for the neighborhood's demise.⁴²

⁴⁰ O'Hara, "How Do You Feel About the Love Generation," *San Francisco Chronicle* August 1, 1967.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² "Negroes Angered By Coast Hippies: White Youths Said to Ruin Haight-Ashbury Section," *New York Times* September 24, 1967.

Even the Diggers identified this racial tension, in a February 1967 broadside: “Haight-Ashbury is the first segregated Bohemia I’ve ever seen.”⁴³ Later in the same sheet, a discussion of a H.I.P. meeting argued that it was these establishment hippies who were racist.⁴⁴

The Summer of Love invasion brought a very different type of person to the Haight-Ashbury. Medical doctor and founder of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic David E. Smith in his autobiographical account of the clinic’s founding, *Love Needs Care: A History of San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic and Its Pioneer Role in Treating Drug-Abuse Problems* discussed the differences between the new residents of the Haight versus those who helped to establish it. According to Smith, what he called the “summer hippies” were younger, psychosocially naïve, and less interested in finding a spiritual awakening through psychedelic drugs.⁴⁵ These younger users, known as “freaks,” were more interested in the escapist or recreational effects of drugs. This is important in understanding the Haight as countercultural place. Drug use for enlightenment, with users known as “heads,” were critical to the “turned on” aspect of hippie life.⁴⁶

Generally, these young people were less committed to a larger idea of the Haight. This is reflected in the derogatory titles of “plastic hippies” or “weekenders” given to

⁴³ Chester Anderson, “Two Page Racial Rap,” *The Digger Archives*, February 9, 1967, accessed May 11, 2017, http://www.diggers.org/bibcit_fulltext_SQL.asp?bib2=148.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ David E. Smith and John Luce, *Love Needs Care: A History of San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic and Its Pioneer Role in Treating Drug-Abuse Problems*, (Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company, 1971), 154.

⁴⁶ Fred Davis and Laura Munoz, “Heads and Freaks: Patterns and Meanings of Drug Use Among Hippies,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol. 9, no. 2 (June 1968) 156-164.

them by the longer-term Haight hippies. The “plastic hippies” were generally middle-class teenagers from suburban, rural, and other urban areas. Best explained by Smith and his colleagues; “They may have appeared unusual because of their costumes, yet they were rather typical teen-agers underneath.”⁴⁷

These summer hippies were disconnected from the elements of the scene that had produced a long-term vision of a community built on social protest. They operated within countercultural place without vision of the movement itself. These young people had arrived in a naïve frame of mind, drawn by media reports and songs like McKenzie’s “San Francisco (Wear Flowers in Your Hair),” and they were ill prepared for the realities of life in Haight-Ashbury. The situation was complicated by a host of people looking to take advantage of these flower children. There was no “psychedelic welcome wagon.” Instead there were criminal elements looking to rob, rape, beat and generally take advantage of them.⁴⁸ Also, police were looking to return runaways, complicating their ability to reach-out for help from authorities when needed. Stories of runaways, both those still missing and those found, were reported in the *San Francisco Chronicle* throughout 1967. Police reported that between January 1 and April 13, 114 runaways were picked up in the Haight-Asbury district, with some being from as far away as Hawaii, Canada, and Mexico. They also arrested 87 juveniles for drug-related charges. The same report claims Park Station (the police station that oversaw the Haight) was averaging 50 messages a week asking them to be on the lookout for runaway juveniles.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Smith, *Love Needs Care*, 154.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ “Runaways in Hippiland Tire Police” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 19, 1967.

In one raid, a number of fourteen-year-old runaways were found. “The cops came too soon. We didn’t get a chance to really see enough. We didn’t get the full experience,” one of the boys told reporters.⁵⁰ The young runaways were found in a house with much older hippies. This shortened psychedelic holiday leaves unanswered what Haight the young people would have eventually lived in. While taken in by older people, they were “taken care of,” as suggested in McKenzie’s “San Francisco” and as understood by the Digger vision, but would more time and experience have left them living within a Zappa hippie dystopia?

While these fourteen-year-olds were sent home, many other runaways entered the Haight and found various fates as the tone of the Haight shifted during the Summer of Love. While the dominant voices of the establishment hippies, the Diggers, and the media continued to debate how and what a countercultural Haight-Ashbury would be, the tide shifted against them. The increased scrutiny from civic officials, criminal elements who sought to exploit the situation, and the massive influx of unprepared young people all broke the Haight counterculture’s vision.

Conclusion

Much as McKenzie’s “San Francisco” and Zappa’s *We’re Only in it for the Money* provided two contrasting artistic representations of how people outside saw the Haight-Ashbury counterculture, the scene itself suffered from similar schisms. While there were internal struggles, it was these outside opinions of the Haight-Ashbury that

⁵⁰ “Visiting Hippies Caught Short” *San Francisco Chronicle* April 26, 1967.

would eventually destroy it. While H.I.P. certainly profited off the Summer of Love, the disaster that occurred was not a part of their vision for the season and was damaging overall to the community. The Diggers, with their unabashed anarchism, would not have been able to sustain their efforts long term. Without a Summer of Love and a massive civic emergency perhaps the utopian vision of the Haight could have survived and evolved into a sustainable community. However, the fractures between the two dominant groups would have existed regardless of the Summer of Love; this event only exasperated it.

The Diggers visualized a Haight counterculture far from McKenzie's naïve image of hippiedom. At the same time, Zappa's harsh critiques of the Haight seem to find some echo in the Communications Company broadsides. The scene that Zappa lampooned on the record *We're Only in it for the Money* was a far cry from the communal anarchist social experiment the Diggers believed in, but fit the idea of the weekender and Summer of Love hippies who found their way into the district in 1967. No matter how flawed the overall experience might have been, The Summer of Love was the full realization of countercultural place within the Haight as the hippies dominated the district through sheer numbers. This brief moment also was ultimately its demise.

David E. Smith, a founding physician of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic recalled the Summer of Love as "both the destruction of a district and the suffering of thousands of people who turned its circus atmosphere into a horror show."⁵¹ This image looms larger than any anecdotal or nostalgic remembrance of the season in the Haight.

⁵¹ Smith, *Love Needs Care*, 151.

Regardless of the intentions of the Diggers, the H.I.P. community, or the hippie elders, the summer had broken the district and any psychedelic utopian dreams. The fracture left by the Summer of Love damaged the coalitions that had argued countercultural place. The idea of the Haight-Ashbury as a unique countercultural place was left in an indefinite flux, while at the same time a commercialized version of hippiedom was taking root nationally. This further eroded the significance of the Haight to the larger hippie movement and undermined any utopian ideas of exceptionality.

As early as August of 1967, local media were discussing a mass exodus out of the Haight-Ashbury of many Summer of Love travelers. The Haight counterculture was becoming the rural communal counterculture. The mass of young people engaging in the Summer of Love had pushed the social protest movement's urban roots to its breaking point. While 1967 was not the death of the counterculture, it certainly was the end of San Francisco as its center. After 1967, the countercultural place of the Haight fractured into a darker version of itself, while some remnants who continued to work for its resurrection, and another migration, this time to rural communes.

CHAPTER THREE: COUNTERCULTURAL RESIDUE, MEMORY, AND NOSTALGIA

Estimates put the number of people who traveled to the Haight-Ashbury during the summer of 1967 between 75,000 and 100,000.¹ The Summer of Love was the pinnacle of the Haight counterculture, the height of a short lived social revolution. Instead of being the beginning of a sustained realization of countercultural place, the flood of young people overwhelmed the fragile roots of the Haight-Ashbury community. Without arguing the individual values or intentions of these young seekers, they simply overran the district, its resources, and the promise established by the Diggers and the H.I.P. community.

An October 2, 1967 photo essay in the *San Francisco Chronicle* captured the feelings of the post-Summer of Love hangover. The young people who had come to the neighborhood as a deluge now left in a slow trickle, “In Threes and Tribes: Hippies Hitch Away” as the headline read. Among the photos of young people with hitchhiking thumbs to the passing traffic and signs looking for passage to major West Coast cities was a caption to put the images into context: “Going, going... real gone- that’s the scene these days with San Francisco’s hippie hitchhikers.”² The text continued to explain that, just as they had traveled and invaded the city during the summer, their journey was continuing,

¹ Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* (New York: Wenner Books, 2005), 282 and Allen Cohen, “Summer of Love,” *Rockument*, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.rockument.com/blog/haight-ashbury-in-the-sixties/allen-cohen-and-the-s-f-oracle/>. Perry puts the number at 75,000 while Cohen has the number “over 100,000.” As with any figures for a mass gathering that lasted over the course of a number of months, the truth is difficult to ascertain.

² “In Threes and Tribes,” *The San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2, 1967.

now away from the city. With the youth now streaming out of the city, it was clear that counterculture and the Haight-Ashbury had both been changed by the events of the Summer of Love.

One of these young hitchhikers was interviewed while leaving the Haight in late October of 1967. He stated, "Leary is a fake. The underground newspapers are fake. Lot of the young kids are fake. Maybe the Diggers aren't fake-- maybe." He continued to explain that he had six bad trips, bad experiences with local police, and had pneumonia four times in the two years he's been in the Haight. He might "go to Colorado or West Virginia, I know somebody there with a cabin." As the "hippie elders" had forecasted, the hippie Haight had been a weigh station for the counterculture movement, but many were leaving frustrated not inspired. This nineteen-year old's view echoed two critical ideas of countercultural place after 1967. The first is that the principle ideas of the Haight, signaled by Timothy Leary, *The San Francisco Oracle*, H.I.P. and the Diggers had lost their appeal as influencers. Second, despite the bad experiences, this seeker was not going "back home" but continuing his search elsewhere. San Francisco did not have the answers, but the questions that inspired a generation of seekers still existed. The young teenage hitchhiker's last statement signaled the larger trend towards the commune and back-to-the-land movements that would define the counterculture into the 1970s.

The Summer of Love was national news, which added the counterculture and their ideas to the larger fabric of youth protests across the country. This chapter examines the post-Summer of Love Haight and how the counterculture adjusted with its role as a national movement. This section begins with an analysis of just how changed the Haight

was after the Summer of Love, including how the major players adjusted their lives to the new realities of a failed social revolution. Just as the scene and neighborhood were changed by the experiences of the summer, a national counterculture emerged more in concert with the other social and political movements of the late years of the 1960s. This collective change indicated a shift to a back-to-the-land communal movement. Additionally, there was a permeability between the counterculture and the New Left and anti-war movements became more present, as young people drifted between youth movements and utilized various aspects of each in their daily lives. Finally, to contextualize these changes, this chapter looks at the shifting meanings of countercultural place and mobility.

“There’s No More Love in the Haight”

By December of 1967, the Haight was a shadow of the former collective community it presented earlier in the year. Dr. David E. Smith of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic referred to it as “America’s First Teen-age Slum” as harder drugs, rampant disease, a massive population of runaways, and endemic crime plagued the neighborhood.³ Shops catering to the hippies were closing, while leaders and their groups were either leaving the area or searching desperately for a new idea to rekindle the positive nature of the scene known before the Summer of Love. While the counterculture all but moved on from the area, the community searched for identity and recovery in its remains.

³ Smith, *Love Needs Care*, 218.

David Breithaupt, another doctor working at the clinic, put the drug abuse situation frankly: “Our experiences show that the Summer of Love was the most intense period of chemical experimentation in the history of the United States. . . The summer maybe over, yet as far as ‘speed’ is concerned, the Haight-Ashbury is only the front of the storm.”⁴ A survey of patients at the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic showed just how prevalent harder drugs had become among the young people in the area. While marijuana and LSD had long been used by people affiliating with the counterculture, drugs like amphetamines (speed) and heroin were becoming more prevalent. Evident in the clinic’s survey, which showed 67% of respondents saying they had used some form of opium, 35% had used cocaine, and 24% had tried heroin at least once. As for amphetamines 69% had taken a pill form, while 34% had injected the drug. The survey indicated that many “true hippie types” had switched to speed after taking LSD and becoming depressed.⁵

Along with the rampant use of hard drugs, the Haight experienced a plague of violent crime. By December 1967, it was reported by the city’s Park Police Station that there had been seventeen murders, 290 assaults, 100 rapes, and over 3,000 burglaries, that year.⁶ On February 19, 1968, the Haight experienced what Mayor Joseph Alioto called a “riot situation” including the “regrettable” use of tear gas against crowds who later cited the situation as police brutality.⁷

⁴ Smith, *Love Needs Care*, 217.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 218-219.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁷ KPIX, “Aftermath of Haight Ashbury Riot,” filmed February 20, 1968, San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, 3:12, March 13, 2014, accessed May 11, 2017, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/218469>.

Increasingly poor conditions, crime and rampant drug use all explain the seismic shift taking place within the neighborhood. The newcomers during and after the Summer of Love pushed the older hippies and other bohemian residents out, along with their businesses. By 1969, there were thirty-six empty storefronts and eighteen that were boarded up.⁸ Key among these, the Psychedelic Shop closed in October of 1967, as the Thelin brothers declared the hippie movement dead.⁹ As the Digger's "Death of Hippie" funeral march worked its way past the closed shop, with signs reading "Don't Mourn for Me, Organize" and "Nebraska Needs You More" were seen in shop windows¹⁰ A contemporary reading of these signs signaled both defiance and disappointment. While the first sign suggested some of the ideas founded in the Haight would continue, the second seemed to express a feeling that outsiders had spoiled the social experiment that many hoped the district could be. Despite their debate over the meaning and direction of the hippie movement, the Thelin brothers and the Diggers both seemed eager to declare the movement dead after their Summer of Love experience.

After the October "Death of Hippie," the Diggers reformed as "The Free City Collective." As the *Digger Archive* explains, "In the summer of 1967, the Diggers gave away their last, final possession-- their name." While the new name itself expressed their vision to expand what had begun in the Haight with their Free Store and free food campaigns, they sought to expand that to other "unique" neighborhoods in San Francisco,

⁸ Perry, *Haight-Ashbury*, 276.

⁹ Michael Taylor, "Obituary: Ron Thelin," *SFGate*, March 22, 1996, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/OBITUARY-Ron-Thelin-2989153.php>.

¹⁰ Perry, *Haight-Ashbury*, 235.

including Fillmore, Chinatown, Castro, Potrero Hill, and Noe Valley.¹¹ The more practical reason for ditching the Diggers name was that it had become overused and meaningless. Everyone and anyone could claim Digger status due to their anarchistic nature. In traditional Digger fashion, the Free City Collective circulated their ideas through broadsides. An April 25, 1968 handwritten mimeograph titled “A Modest Proposal” may have best summarized their vision by laying out five basic tenets. First, that unoccupied city-owned buildings be made available to people to live freely. Second, surplus food and materials be made available to redistribution to neighborhood free stores, of which the rent would be paid by the city. The other points called for the free use of presses, trucks, resources, and public spaces.¹² Assessing the Diggers, 1960s historian Dominick Cavallo argued that the group “tried to integrate personal autonomy with a sense of civic reasonability. The Diggers were no more successful than other radical groups in the sixties in harmonizing individual liberty and community.”¹³ While the Diggers anarcho-artistic approach to self-governance may have proved impossible in the end, the mass of unaffiliated and uninitiated young people during the summer of 1967 diminished their long form rebellious social theater prematurely. The Free City Collective would only be in existence until the Spring of 1968.¹⁴

¹¹ “The Free City Collective” *The Digger Archives*, Fall 1967, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.diggers.org/freecity/freenews1.html>.

¹² “Free News: A Modest Proposal” *The Digger Archives*, April 25, 1968, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://www.diggers.org/freecity/freenews1.html>.

¹³ Dominick Cavallo, *A Fiction of the Past: The Sixties in American History* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 141.

¹⁴ “The Free City Collective” *The Digger Archives*, Fall 1967, accessed May 11, 2017, http://www.diggers.org/free_city.htm.

Another institution to close, *The San Francisco Oracle* published its last issue in February of 1968. Editor Allen Cohen explained, “Just about every group or organization the Haight had developed to deal with the influx had dissolved, burnt out or divided under the strain.” Cohen is philosophical in his post Oracle reflections on the late 1960s Haight-Ashbury, calling both the neighborhood and his underground newspaper “a manifestation of forces that are rare in human history.”¹⁵ His collected reflections do not go into either the closing of the newspaper or the collapse of the Haight as a countercultural center. Later in 1968, Cohen left the Haight and joined with a group of friends to establish a commune in Northern California.¹⁶

In April of 1971, Bill Graham announced he would close both the San Francisco Fillmore as well as the New York location. In an announcement that also declared he was leaving the music industry, Graham acknowledged that “the flowers had wilted and the scene had changed.” In a seven-point indictment of the music industry, he argued that the “Woodstock Festival Syndrome” would ruin everything; two years later, as he closed his venues, he would realize he was right.¹⁷ In the words about the closing he added that the musicians who had now made it big “don’t want to play in small halls anymore, they would rather do one concert in a stadium and spend the other three days resting on a

¹⁵ Allen Cohen, “Summer of Love,” *Rockument*, accessed May 11, 2017,

<http://www.rockument.com/blog/haight-ashbury-in-the-sixties/allen-cohen-and-the-s-f-oracle/>.

¹⁶ Ann Cohen, “About Allen Cohen,” Allen Cohen, accessed May 11, 2017 <http://www.allencohen.us/>.

¹⁷ John Glatt, *Live at the Fillmore East and West: Getting Backstage and Personal with Rock’s Greatest Legends* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 344. Woodstock Syndrome refers to the Woodstock Music Festival held in New York in August of 1969. This large music festival became synonymous with the countercultural music experience.

yacht.”¹⁸ The building turned into a mosque for a short period before it became a punk rock club called The Elite in the late 1970s and 1980s.¹⁹ It reopened as the Fillmore in 1994, but not under the management of Graham.

Still, people came to the Haight on their own personal counterculture pilgrimages, looking through the wreck of what was left. One of these young people was a recent high school graduate from Utah. Larry Bowerman, inspired by images of the Summer of Love in the media, traveled to San Francisco with a friend to experience the counterculture in September of 1967. His experience was not unlike someone who came before or during the Summer of Love, but it was now codified and ritualized. Instead of a “do your own thing” attitude that prevailed before the media attention of the Haight, it had become a set of expectations. These were laid out by the media before Bowerman had arrived, meaning he knew both what to expect and how to act once he arrived in the Haight. Still, Bowerman’s explanation of drug use in the Haight and Golden Gate Park exhibits how, despite his expectations, he arrived with a sense of naiveté. His anecdotal and comic description of purchasing and using marijuana show how Bowerman knew the end expectations of his interactions within a countercultural place, but did not know the finer aspects of how to perform hippie sacraments. A narrative of “doing one’s own thing” was missing from Bowerman’s experience. He settled into the Haight for the next few years,

¹⁸ “Bill Graham Closes Fillmore, Marking the End of an Age,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, July 5, 1971, accessed May 11, 2017, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=K1c1AAAAIABAJ&sjid=dmYEAAAAIABAJ&pg=4536%2C1833599>.

¹⁹ Charles Perry, *Haight-Ashbury: A History*, 286, and “About,” The Fillmore, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://thefillmore.com/about/>.

eventually becoming a street-level dealer in the Haight.²⁰ Bowerman was a seeker of adventure more than some higher meaning. Bowerman's experience, while sincerely expressed in his memoir, acts as performative placemaking through expectations set out by others, specifically the media.

Other new arrivals to the Haight connected with Stephen Gaskin and his hippie spiritual meetings. Still holding on to the search for something deeper through the use of psychedelic drugs and spiritual enlightenment, the group remained in the district until October 1970 when they collectively left. Before leaving San Francisco, Gaskin and his Monday Night Class students tried a number of ways to refocus the remaining spiritual hippies of the Haight, first through a civic organization known as "The Commons," which was largely unsuccessful and short-lived.²¹ He also organized two "Holy Man Jams" to bring countercultural and psychedelic icons like Alan Watts and Timothy Leary together with other spiritual leaders in a public setting. While these events did little to reignite the Haight, it did serve to solidify his following, an important process in creating the community that would join him on their national tour, the Caravan.²²

While the narratives of people coming and going into the district dominate, demographic statistics yield a different story. The Haight-Ashbury neighborhood had a total population of 6,434 in 1960. In 1970, that population remained virtually the same at

²⁰ Larry Bowerman, *Acid Man: I Was a Haight-Ashbury Drug Dealer 1967-1969* (self-published, 201), Kindle.

²¹ Arthur Theodore Kachel, "An American Religious Community Using Hallucinogens in 1970," dissertation, Columbia University 1975, 83-84.

²² *Ibid.*

6,251, reflecting an out migration of only 183 people.²³ Of course, this demographic stat only reflects the raw data of population, meaning it is within the scope of reason to assume some residents moved away as the hippies took over the area, and their numbers were replaced by residents who would align themselves with the counterculture.

Similarly, given the nature of their social rebellion, many hippies living in the Haight could have intentionally avoided census workers or not given thoroughly honest answers about how many people were living in certain dwellings. The raw data presents part of the changing demographics in the Haight, the statistical subsets allow a closer analysis.

Looking closely at information from the census in this ten-year period, there are indicators of both stability and change. One statistic that suggests stability is that of the population living in the same home as they were five years previously. When the population of people over the age of five is considered, there were 5,889 people in that category in 1960 and 5,741 in 1970. Again, these population figures have little variation. However, when you look at the change between 1955 and 1960, the number is considerably lower, with only 1,677 who people lived in the same house in 1960 as they had five years earlier. By 1970, that number had nearly doubled to 2,324.²⁴ The population had stabilized. As only the very earliest days of the Haight counterculture

²³ United States Bureau of the Census, "San Francisco- Oakland, California Census of Population and Housing Tracts: 1970," Characteristics of Housing Units and Population, by Blocks, Table 2.

²⁴ United States Department of the Census, "San Francisco: City Blocks, 1960," Characteristics of Housing Units by Blocks, Table 2. United States Bureau of the Census, "San Francisco- Oakland, California Census of Population and Housing Tracts: 1970," Characteristics of Housing Units and Population, by Blocks, Table 2.

began in 1965, it should be assumed that most of these residents were not connected to the hippie movement.

Resident ownership versus rental properties adds complexity to the above data. As mentioned previously, in the 1950s the large Victorian homes that defined the Haight-Ashbury began to be separated into individual apartments, showing that by the 1960 census the area had a high rental population. The data for the 1960 census shows 312 homes were lived in by their owners, while 2,396 households were rental. These numbers do not adjust dramatically over the ten-year period, with 259 owner-occupied housing units, and 2,206 renter-occupied homes in 1970.

The census data also enables a view into the racial composition of the neighborhood. In 1960, the total white population in the Haight was 4,920, while the African-American population was 1,093. Remembering that the overall population in the district does not change dramatically, the ratio of white to African-American residents did alter considerably, shifting to a white population of 3,655 and an African-American population of 2,596. The population of residents from “foreign stock” had a considerable change, from 2,735 in 1960 down to 1,104 in 1970.²⁵ There is a statistically small Latino population in the Haight that shifts up from 1960 to 1970 from 336 residents to 537.²⁶ Block-by-block data also shows that in both census years, the African-American and white populations were generally integrated, with a better ratio of integrated blocks in the 1970s.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid. The term foreign stock includes the foreign-born population and the native population of foreign or mixed parentage.

²⁶ Ibid. Includes both Spanish language speakers and Spanish surnames.

²⁷ Ibid.

While these census records give a glimpse into the demographic composition of the district over this ten-year period, what does their interpretation explain about the change in the district? Most significantly, for a neighborhood that experienced an influx of between 75,000 and 100,000 young people between the two census years, the relative composition of the area remained largely the same. This could be interpreted to mean that a substantial percentage of Summer of Love participants were short-term residents and few stayed in the area. Variations in integration rates and the changes in long-term occupancy are the only substantial statistical changes, and these could easily be symbolic of something happening within the city, region, or nation, just as much as it could be attached to anything relating to the counterculture. Second, it is important to understand that census boundaries do not conform to neighborhoods directly, but in the case of the Haight-Ashbury, surrounded on two sides by Golden Gate Park and the Panhandle extension and with Buena Vista Park taking up a considerable part of the northern boundary, these census zones are relatively static over time. As noted previously, the Haight-Ashbury operated as a geographic “center” of the counterculture, but it certainly permeated San Francisco outside its district boundaries. For this research, as it attempts to understand how the counterculture argued and changed the meaning of place within the Haight, these boundaries are useful and accurate.

The Changing Nature of the 1960s and the Expanded Counterculture

While the Haight changed after the Summer of Love, 1960s U.S. society as a whole evolved with the intensification of the Vietnam War, the expansion of the anti-war

movement, significant political assassinations, and the flaring of violence in cities across the nation and globe in 1968. The nature of the counterculture changed as it became a national scene. The stark demarcations of an anti-political drop-out culture became at times indistinguishable from the anti-war movement and New Left, especially among those not “turned on” in mainstream America. The Woodstock and Altamont music festivals, the Manson family murders, and Abbie Hoffman and his Yippie movement all signaled a changing tone for the 1960s, the counterculture, and the diminished importance of Haight-Ashbury in the narrative. Additionally, the expanded presence of the hippies nationally brought significant mainstream and conservative critiques.

Rock music and the large outdoor festival had been an important aspect of the counterculture since the Human Be-In and Monterey Pop Festival announced the hippies and the acid rock sound to the nation. Live music gatherings were a constant attraction in Golden Gate Park by bands like the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane. Historian Timothy Miller called the large outdoor festivals the “definitive gatherings of the countercultural faithful. . . They helped shape rock and provided the best opportunities for massive indulgence in the sacraments: dope, nudity, sex, rock, community.”²⁸ What had once been commonplace only in the Haight-Ashbury, its rock clubs, and Golden Gate Park had now become aspects of a larger national culture.

The Woodstock Festival in August 1969, despite disastrous organizational problems and poor weather conditions, became the national hippie moment, for many eclipsing the Summer of Love as the full expression of countercultural place. An

²⁸ Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 82.

estimated crowd of 400,000 descended on a upstate New York farm to experience the sacraments of hippiedom that Miller described. Despite conditions most would describe as a disaster area lacking food and with poor sanitation and medical facilities, most walked away with memories of the people coming together and showing the best sides of what both humanity, and hippies specifically, were capable of when cooperating and unified.²⁹

In December of 1969, members of the San Francisco community sought to recreate the positive experiences of Woodstock with their own large outdoor concert, which would eventually become known as the Altamont Music Festival. The initial idea for the festival had come from Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead. The Rolling Stones signed on to provide free beer, t-shirts, and food for the event. Security was to be provided by countercultural allies and frequent bouncers for Haight concerts, the Hell's Angels.³⁰ Unable to secure Golden Gate Park, the event shifted to Altamont Raceway in nearby Livermore, California. It was at this point that the Grateful Dead also pulled out of the event. The festival eventually drew 300,000 concert goers, but mayhem defined the Altamont festival, as Hell's Angels, armed with knives and pool cues, beat several concert goers, and killed an African-American man.³¹

Viewed collectively, these two concerts signal an eclipsing for the Haight counterculture as a countercultural place. First, the success of Woodstock on the East

²⁹ Ibid. 82-83.

³⁰ Despite being part of the organization efforts for the festival, the Grateful Dead eventually canceled their participation and did not play the concert.

³¹ Nadya Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 162-163.

Coast and far from the former epicenter of the counterculture meant the Haight had been fully deposed as the major influencer of the hippie scene. The collective ideas of a small neighborhood in San Francisco were now acted out in cities and small towns across the country by young people who had never read *The San Francisco Oracle* or eaten free food with The Diggers. Secondly, the violence at Altamont showed the darker side of everything happening in the San Francisco scene. Participant Todd Gitlin reflected on his experience at Altamont in his book *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*; having left before The Rolling Stones set, “by the time I left, in the late afternoon, Altamont already felt like death.”³² His narrative of the day conveys that he was not the only one who felt that way. Philosophically, he reflects, “The effect was to burst the bubble of youth culture’s illusions about itself... We had witnessed the famous collectivity of a generation cracking into thousands of shards... Who could any longer harbor the illusion that these hundreds of thousands of spoiled star-hungry children of the Lonely Crowd were the harbingers of a good society?”³³ Gitlin pointed out that Altamont was the worst of what the counterculture could be, and certainly nothing about it was recognizable from its initial utopian vision.

It is perhaps unfair to pin the tragedy of Altamont fully on the Haight-Ashbury scene. Despite the original site for the concert being Golden Gate Park and organized by the Grateful Dead, the venue shifted out of the city and under the management of the Rolling Stones. This took it out of the hands of locals and the countercultural place of the

³² Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 406.

³³ *Ibid.*

Haight. While the Grateful Dead had recommended the Hell's Angels as security, The Stones ended up using an outside chapter of the biker gang, less familiar with the allegiances between hippies and Angels.³⁴ The devolving leadership within the Haight community meant that the days of Golden Gate Park happenings had shifted to something altogether irresponsibly dangerous. The other reality of Altamont is that any hope of crafting and creating a conscious drop out culture with shared values and goals had to be admittedly lost.

Sharing the headlines with the Altamont tragedy was the arrest of Charles Manson. He along with his communal "family" committed a string of notoriously savage murders in Southern California. Details emerged of his "family" or group of followers had their origins in San Francisco. Manson's time in the area came after he was released from jail in March of 1967. For obvious reasons, most people in the counterculture always distanced themselves from Manson, but his experiences in the Haight during the Summer of Love were not unlike most people's. Manson explained, "We slept in the (Golden Gate) park and we lived on the streets and my hair got a little longer and I started playing music and people liked my music and people smiled at me and put their arms around me and hugged me-- I didn't know how to act. It just took me away. It grabbed me up, man that there was people that are real."³⁵ After leaving the Haight, the "family" traveled in their converted school bus and lived communally in the Southern California

³⁴ Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 162-163.

³⁵ Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry, *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001), 163. Interview with Steve Alexander from the underground newspaper *Tuesday Child*.

desert. The Manson Family's actions were in line with many other counterculture groups who streamed out of the Haight in 1967 to various points.

A December 15, 1969 *San Francisco Chronicle* article (reprinted from the *New York Times*) titled "The 'War on the Long Hairs'" identified the challenges the high-profile murder of a former (short-term) Haight-Ashbury resident placed on the counterculture. The article is brilliantly nuanced, expressing both the concerns for "mainstream" Americans who had apprehensions in their daily interactions with people appearing to look like the Manson family who were all over the news at the time. At the same time, the article correctly identified the variations on the hippie theme, and argues that Manson and his followers, despite looking the part, were not actually hippies.³⁶ Manson and his followers never shared the utopian vision of the hippies, and were instead more symbolic of the thrill-seeking elements who came to the Haight with the Summer of Love.

Just as Haight-Ashbarians were learning that a mass killer had once lived among them, they dealt with a brutal sensational crime on their own streets. Sharing headlines with Manson was the death of Kristine Peterson, a seventeen-year-old hippie who had been found in a Haight-Ashbury alley raped, beaten, and mutilated "beyond recognition."³⁷ The newspapers were quick to promote both her attractiveness as well as her status as a high school drop-out, a runaway, and her experimentation with drugs.³⁸ Her assailant was a twenty-seven year old escapee from Napa State Hospital who had

³⁶ "The 'War on the Longhairs'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 1, 1969.

³⁷ "Haight-Ashbury victim dies" *Florida Today* December 18, 1969, accessed November 21, 2016, <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/124966767/>.

³⁸ "Runaway Girl Near Death After Attack in Haight" *San Francisco Chronicle* December 10, 1969.

been convicted both of rape and attempted murder in the past.³⁹ This crime, despite the random tragedy, fit the long-running narrative of the Haight-Ashbury as a place for danger, especially for young women.

On the same day, deeper inside the newspaper, was another article, this one reporting on how street dealers were replacing the mild hallucinogens requested during street buys such as LSD or mescaline and giving people a drug by the name of STP. This was “a psychedelic drug much more potent and with effects much longer lasting than LSD.”⁴⁰ The media coverage fit with Dr. Smith and the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic’s narrative that harder and more addictive drugs were finding their way onto the streets of San Francisco, creating a different experience for the young people making their way to the Haight after 1967,

More potent drugs sold by predatory dealers, chaos at music festivals, and vulnerable young women being charmed by psychotic gurus or, even worse being attacked, raped, and killed had long been the fear of parents whose children came to the Haight to join the long-haired hippie tribe. These were the headlines that both caught attention as well as shifted public opinion against the counterculture. Charles Manson’s face, framed with long shaggy hair, and knowledge of the brutal crime against Kristine Peterson only visualized existing fears. To the people who lived in the Haight and may have been hopeful for a resurgence or at least stabilization these events fit the running dystopian narrative. Music and cultural historian Nadya Zimmerman said of this current,

³⁹ Ibid.

“Altamont and Manson showed the counterculture sensibility as an empty signifier when it was disconnected to the fragile communal ecosystem in the Haight-Ashbury.”⁴¹ These events collectively undermined any utopian or anarchist visions of countercultural place that may have lingered in the district.

Finally, outside of the Haight the counterculture became a national movement, different from the original drop out apolitical ideal presented in the Haight in the days before the Human Be-In. New York, Los Angeles, as well as other major American cities and college towns had their own enclaves of hippies, making the necessity to travel to San Francisco less imperative. The national movement also merged with the anti-war and New Left movements, symbolized by Abbie Hoffman and his Yippies who took their acts of protest straight from the Diggers handbook. Hoffman would later be arrested and charged for his part in organizing the violence surrounding the Chicago Democratic National Convention riots of 1968.

Communalism

The counterculture experienced a boom in the founding of rural communes after 1967; it was in many ways part of their initial philosophy. Urban communes and crash-pads had long been a part of the Haight-Ashbury scene. Drop City in rural Colorado had been founded in 1965 as a social experiment not unlike what people in the Haight had been planning in their urban space. In the earliest days of The Diggers and the H.I.P. businesses the Haight operated as an urban collective. The transition to a rural space to

⁴¹ Zimmerman, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 170.

recreate the social experiment of the Haight as a countercultural place of social protest on a smaller scale was a natural progression after the failures and frustrations experienced in the Haight during and after the Summer of Love.

One crucial communal theme, pastoralism, was rooted in the same ideas that drew the Baby Boomer's parents to the suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s. There was irony in this multigenerational search for the authentic experience of pastoralism the Baby Boomers left suburban homes to find. Bennett M. Berger, a sociologist of 1960s communes, points to the difference being that hippie communes lacked the established hierarchies and rules associated with other suburban communities.⁴² Still this drive to find something authentic and unique is mirrored in both generations' search for an American pastoral.

Leo Marx writes in his 1964 work *Machine in the Garden* that "The pastoral ideal has been used to define the meaning of America ever since the age of discovery, and it has not yet lost its hold on the native imagination. The reason is clear enough. The ruling motive of the good shepherd, leading the figure of the classic, Virgilian mode, was to withdraw from the great world and begin a new life in a fresh, green landscape."⁴³ These ideas of utopianism and a back-to-nature pastoralism are echoed in Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counterculture*, as a rejection of the larger technocracy of American society.⁴⁴ Considering Cavallo's point that the young hippies were searching for something in an imaginary untamed West, while this was initially in the urban center of

⁴² Bennett M. Berger, *The Survival of a Counterculture: Ideological Work and Everyday Life Among Rural Communards*, (Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers), xiii.

⁴³ Leo Marx, *Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 3.

⁴⁴ Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 178-186, 240.

San Francisco, as shown through both Marx and Roszak, this imaginary frontier was a became a pastoral one, a rural communal space in which to relaunch the place making project of the counterculture.

Most of the Haight-Ashbury hippie community shifted their vision of countercultural place to numerous smaller communes in Northern California and across the country. The Diggers established a commune, the Hog Farm, in 1967, while the Grateful Dead and other bands spent time with large groups of followers in large rural homes.⁴⁵ The period between 1967 and the earliest years of the 1970s saw the largest boom in the founding of communes in American history.⁴⁶ While counting these communities is nearly impossible, as hippies moved back to the land in groups as small as two or three and as large as hundreds, Miller estimates the number to be in the thousands.⁴⁷

Gaskin and his followers' establishment of the county's largest and one of its most successful communes, The Farm, in 1971 outside of Nashville, Tennessee provides a lens for the larger commune movement. Gaskin's religious caravan returned to the Bay Area on February 1. During their four-month road trip the group had gained a cohesiveness and began to consider their long-term plans. The degradation of the Haight neighborhood seemed to no longer mesh with their lifestyle and vision. Ten days after

⁴⁵ "The Free City Collective" *The Digger Archives*, Fall 1967, accessed May 11, 2017, http://www.diggers.org/free_city.htm.

⁴⁶ Timothy Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 67.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

returning to San Francisco, Gaskin announced during a Sunday morning sunrise service the group's intentions to find some land and start a commune:

Whatever you put your attention on you get more of. Whatever you put your attention on you amplify and make that thing stronger and more so in the world. And I've been teaching that in San Francisco for about five years. This trip we took out across the country, like all good trips, expanded our consciousness. I've been saying that about attention for so long that I believe it myself now. Therefore, I can't put my attention into a city scene anymore. Because the worst thing happening on the planet is the cities. Like the cities are the major causes of warfare, poverty, totalitarian police state whatnot...

After the services, the caravan's going to take off to Tennessee and get a farm. Because what you put your attention into you get more of, and I need more trees, more grass, more wheat, more soybeans, more healthy babies, more good-looking sane people, people that can work. That's what I really what I want to see a lot more of and that's what I'm going to put my attention into.⁴⁸

San Francisco had provided a weigh-station, something Timothy Leary had eluded to during the House Boat Summit years earlier. Urban space allows for large numbers of people to coexist in small spaces. Gaskin and his followers would have never come together en masse had it not been for an urban center. Collectively the cultural protest that had brought group members to the Haight-Ashbury became something they decided to express rurally. This was tied to the community goals they were unable to fully form in an urban space growing ever more dangerous.

In many ways, the neighborhood wide experiment of a countercultural Haight was recreated in small scale in these thousands of communes. Ideals were practiced, but unlike the Haight, not every person walking down Haight Street had to be allowed; both the rural setting and the private property allowed for a level of exclusivity and control of

⁴⁸ Stephen Gaskin, *The Caravan*, (Summertown, TN: Book Publishing Company, 2007).

members. This did not discount the addition of undesirables, but it gave communards more control over their vision. It also allowed for various versions of a countercultural community, be it spiritual, egalitarian, or even those living outside of selective social norms. The commune became a place from which they could challenge both capitalism and technocracy while exploring their own needs for community and experimentation.

Place and Mobility

While this paper argues the changing nature, and meaning of place in the Haight-Ashbury, there is another crucial aspect of Baby Boom Post-War culture that is critical in understanding the counterculture. As suggested and discussed previously, the movement of young people seeking something authentic in the American West was connected to a larger American idea of finding or reinventing oneself on the “frontier.” For a generation, self-defined by their search for meaning, this narrative fit well into a historic American dialogue. The crucial element to the placemaking of a countercultural Haight-Ashbury or the rural commune is mobility.

In America’s post-war production and consumerism boom, automobile ownership expanded quickly.⁴⁹ Between 1960 and 1970 the rate of automobiles per 100 people in the United States rose from 34 to 43, a rate more than twice that of France, West Germany, Great Britain, or Italy.⁵⁰ Inspired by Cold War defense fears, the Interstate Highway system also expanded. It was within this framework that American individuality

⁴⁹ Rudi Volti, *Cars and Culture: The Life Story of a Technology*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2004), 87.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 89.

became synonymous with the open road. Automobility historian Cotton Seiler spoke to this “The act of driving became... a sort of palliative ideological exercise that was seen to reverse, or at least arrest the post-war ‘decline of the individual’ and the deterioration of the ‘American character’ of a heroic and expansionist past.”⁵¹

Just as the mainstream had their narrative of automobility, the counterculture had their own mobility anti-heroes to look to when seeking inspiration to challenge the “decline of the individual.” From Jack Kerouac’s existential crisis of a road trip in *On the Road*, Ken Kesey’s psychedelic bus trip in *The Electric Acid Kool-Aide Test* or Hunter S. Thompson’s rebel classic *Hell’s Angels*, the Baby Boom hippies had go-to manuals for their own need to find oneself in America’s vast landscape. Significantly, Kerouac, Kesey, and Thompson were all writing texts that were at least in part based on true events. If Jack Kerouac could leave the East Coast and end up in the literary romantic surroundings of San Francisco so could anyone, hopefully having similar experimental life-affirming adventures along the way.

This mobility allowed them to leave home and experience the birth of the counterculture in the Haight-Ashbury. Despite the district’s bohemian roots, a significant number of outsiders were the ones who sought to shape and define countercultural place. While concepts of place inspired the founding hippies to see the Haight-Ashbury as a “psychedelic city on the hill” and the mass invasion of the Summer of Love, it also inspired people to leave the area. The Haight, despite every attempt to create something,

⁵¹ Cotton Seiler, *Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 72.

had fallen too far from the ideals of the young seekers. The pull of place shifted from the Haight to smaller visionary communities in the form of mostly rural communes as well as more localized scenes in large urban areas across the nation. The fact that mobility creates the weigh-station envisioned by Leary and the hippie elders is crucial to the mass migration of 75,000 to 100,000 people into the Haight during the Summer of Love and their eventual exodus.

The counterculture was dominated by a language of mobility, of searching, of movements, of trips. Discomfort with the stability of mainstream life and a feeling of “settling” pushed them away from homes and families and into the mass experiment of the counterculture.⁵²

Conclusion

For all the hope and psychedelic utopianism, The Haight-Ashbury counterculture community had sought, the reality on the ground was in the end a failed experiment. Instead of the “psychedelic city on the hill” that would teach people an improved way of life in defiance of both capitalism and violent technocracy, the district became a center for youth crime and drug abuse. Founders, leaders, seekers, and followers sought other avenues for their personal visions of a better society, now broken into thousands of dispersed communes in a hippie diaspora.⁵³ These failures are lost among the avalanche

⁵² Cavallo, *A Fiction of the Past*, 78, 80.

⁵³ Kevin Mitchell Mercer, “The Farm: A Hippie Commune as a Countercultural Diaspora,” (BA honors thesis, University of Central Florida, 2012), 8-9.

of anecdotal and nostalgic retellings of the Summer of Love as a moment of psychedelic utopia.

While the neighborhood was forever changed by the hippie period, and challenged with the “youth ghetto” left behind after the Summer of Love, the area continued to develop a unique bohemian spirit. In 1972, local television station KRON-TV created a short documentary film called “What’s Happening in the Haight: A Report from the Neighborhood.” While the neighborhood certainly presented its best for the documentary film crew, progress is visible as politicians, residents, business owners, and local activists all look to recreate the Haight.⁵⁴

The Summer of Love was the undoing of the vision for the Haight-Ashbury as a countercultural place. Just as the situation in the Haight was failing, a national counterculture emerged with no magnetic center or loyalty to San Francisco. These local and national shifts helped to inspire a mass back-to-the-land movement for disillusioned young people to continue their journey of self-discovery and challenges to mainstream ideals and culture.

⁵⁴KRON-TV, “Assignment Four: What’s Happening in the Haight” filmed 1972, *San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive*, 25:25 <https://diva.sfsu.edu/bundles/218071>. (Accessed May 11, 2017). May 15, 2014.

CONCLUSION

While full realization of countercultural place in the Haight-Ashbury may have only lasted for one year, the meaning and memory of what occurred in San Francisco continue to attract debate. The summer of 2017 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Summer of Love. Past anniversaries have featured memorabilia auctions, concerts in Golden Gate Park, and repackaged compilations of the bands from the psychedelic rock scene of San Francisco during the late 1960s. The fiftieth anniversary has taken a notable tone of importance. Anthea Hartig, executive director of the California Historical Society explains: “We didn’t expect this a year ago, the realm of cultural response has been even more exciting than we thought.”¹ That response has been due, in part, by what the *Sacramento Bee* calls “rocky political times.”² Each passing anniversary of the Haight-Ashbury’s Summer of Love has been reinterpreted through a contemporary lens.

All of these anniversary celebrations have focused on the Haight-Ashbury as a remembered countercultural place. Despite the fact that the Haight no longer serves as the central city of what eventually became a national movement, the importance of the district is memorialized by those who were involved with or inspired by the events that took place there in the late 1960s. The Summer of Love proved to be a transformative moment for many young people in the 1960s. Despite the challenges outlined in this thesis, the Summer of Love has benefited from a historical distance that remembers less

¹ Katherine Seligman, “Glitter Bombs and Haight-Ashbury Tours: Celebrating Summer of Love in San Francisco,” *The Sacramento Bee*, February 19, 2017.

² *Ibid.*

about the negative effects of 100,000 young people moving into an area and more about the utopianism and authenticity they sought. The Summer of Love, and with it the Haight-Ashbury, have come to symbolize an idealistic simpler time, irrespective of the accuracy of such a memory.

Groups like the H.I.P. merchants, the hippie elders, the Diggers, and Stephen Gaskin's Monday Night Class acted out their agendas to argue countercultural place and its larger meaning. They had tapped into something existing within the Haight's bohemian space and worked to craft that into community. However, it was the sheer volume of participation by young people who aligned themselves with an incomplete vision of the counterculture who defined the meaning of the Haight-Ashbury during the Summer of Love. While groups had worked to realize utopian or idealistic psychedelic visions of the neighborhood from 1965 to 1967, those plans were derailed. Regardless of whether the success of the early Haight counterculture had been hijacked by the media and the image of the commodified hippie, or simply tapped into the needs of a generation of young people seeking something different than the future provided by mainstream the Haight was changed by the summer of 1967. The Summer of Love diverted the direction of the counterculture in the Haight, sending most of the original actors into semi-permanent exile on thousands of communes. As the Haight had been the site of countercultural placemaking, it was now these communes spread out over Northern California, the West, and across the United States where the idea of countercultural place would be understood. Communities like The Farm in Tennessee took lessons learned in

the Haight-Ashbury and applied them to this new rural space as they sought to continue their goals of countercultural placemaking.

Future research should focus on how countercultural communes understood place and space, both within their isolated boundaries and as they fit into a larger national “back to the land” movement that occurred in the 1970s. As the people of the Baby Boom generation consider their role in the 1960s counterculture, more journals, photos, and letters should become more available to researchers. The research of this project, while effective in looking at the Haight as a place through the eyes of prominent members of the community, was challenged by the lack of personal accounts by general participants. These important perspectives could add vital details about the relationship between these participants and countercultural place. Finally, just as the Haight has been examined here through the lens of place and space, effective research looking at the numerous social and political movements of the 1960s that occurred in the Bay Area through an interrelated understanding of place and space could be insightful. There were interactions between the Diggers and H.I.P. with the New Left in Berkeley, the Black Panthers in Oakland, the Native American occupiers of Alcatraz Island, and the Hell’s Angels in San Francisco at large. How each of these groups utilized their own ideas of place is a natural progression of the research started here.

The importance of what happened in the Haight-Ashbury during the second half of the 1960s should not be overshadowed by the eventual failures of the counterculture and the demise of the neighborhood. Arguing the meaning of a place based on authenticity and utopian idealism in a period better defined by Civil Rights conflicts,

domestic instability, the constant threat of a Cold War inspired nuclear holocaust, and the mass destruction of the Vietnam War feels both privileged and naïve. The failures of the counterculture within the Haight in the early 1970s read like a cautionary tale of selfishness and overindulgence. Yet, at the core of what the H.I.P. business owners, the hippie elders, Stephen Gaskin, and the Diggers all sought when arguing countercultural place was to provide an example of how people could live. To carve out of this urban center into a place of social protest. Those arguing the meaning of countercultural place understood this was an experiment in how one community could organize itself in a way to resist the perceived negatives of contemporary society and instead live by collective ideals.

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