

MIGRATION OF A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE PATTERN

Leavenworth and Pacific Northwest Fabricated Communities

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Passing through Leavenworth, Washington, can be deceiving, if not confusing. The merging of Native American, European, and American identity on this Pacific Northwest landscape (an evolving process over the last 200 years) has resulted in a small, unique community that appears to be a great crossroads. These differing images supply historians with endless sources of information about how individuals shaped the human-created landscape of Leavenworth and tell a story of local development much different from that of other local communities. The town of Leavenworth is a composite—a historical encounter zone—of nature and human action. The process has imparted dramatic landscape alterations and architectural preferences shared by residents. Appearances suggest that a new type of community has emerged—a unique cultural landscape.

Every community experiences these processes, and cyclical change can easily be monitored. But some national and local cultural patterns have such a great impact that they influence multiple cities and areas across a region. For example, the strong Scandinavian heritage in the Pacific Northwest has shaped the style of regional architecture in several communities. Another example would be the similarities in design and layout of small Columbia River fishing villages or logging towns across the Pacific Northwest. Once a style of community life is proven to be economically viable and draws additional people to the area, it tends to be imitated in other places featuring similar assets. Leavenworth is a modern example of a new style of community—the fabricated theme town, a community designed to promote tourism through a false sense of communal heritage, similar to the intent of an amusement park. Appealing to mass identities and perceptions, theme towns usually ignore uniqueness and local tradition and instead promote names like "Old Town," "Western," or "Bavarian," and define unauthentic placeless landscapes in older retail districts. They usually sprout in areas featuring open, inexpensive, land on the fringes of metropolitan areas or in small communities where citizens seek new ways to attract investment and visitors to a shrinking town. In Washington, the latter pattern has been the most prevalent.

Leavenworth is a city ostensibly linked with European heritage relying on altered local buildings to create the look of an authentic ethnic landscape (Bavarian), although there is no historical link between the city and migration from Bavaria. Leavenworth's great architectural change instead showcases a cultural encounter that appears to have been primarily shaped by economic factors. Since the recent past in the Pacific Northwest is so predominantly American in terms of landscape development, the adaptation of European historical identity in Leavenworth is a major change, one that defies historical patterns in central Washington in the 20th century.

This Leavenworth encounter began in the early 1960s and was fostered by a local women's club and a University of Washington study. The town's citizens made a conscious effort to create an alpine village around a Bavarian theme after studying several tourist theme options. For over 30 years, members of the community have continuously increased the number of "Bavarian" landmarks within the boundaries of the town. Although the historical development of theme towns like Leavenworth and their contrived landscapes is often chronicled as an event by historians, the cultural impact that these communities have on other places in their region has been largely ignored. The impact of the cultural encounter that established Leavenworth as a Bavarian theme town in the early 1960s is an important development in the recent history of the Pacific Northwest and is a movement that continues to perpetrate similar encounters across the region.

Common Early History

Leavenworth was founded primarily by second-and third-generation immigrants who had long established their American citizenship. There are some individuals in Leavenworth who descend from German heritage, but no more than come from Scandinavian or other central European backgrounds. So the perception that the city was founded by German immigrants is false. Most of the people now living in the Leavenworth area trace their families to the southeastern and midwestern United States. Many migrated from Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Kansas, Alabama, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Pioneer recollections suggest that the state responsible for the most settlers is Missouri. Local heritage is not mentioned in interviews, promotional material, or committee reports as being a factor in landscape and tourism decisions. There is only one definitive historic landmark in the town—a small pictorial kiosk placed in City Park in 1996.

The development of Leavenworth prior to the 1960s was typical of the Pacific Northwest. In March 1891, F. A. Losekamp made his way north through the Wenatchee valley. He ended his journey on the south shore of the Wenatchee River in a spot well suited for viewing the Cascade Mountains. Losekamp established a trading post that served local Indians who enjoyed the cold fishing waters. After men and women joined him (bringing critical merchandise and supplies) at the new township, he became postmaster of the new town of Icicle. By June the Great Northern Railway laid tracks up the Wenatchee valley near the mouth of Tumwater Canyon, next to Icicle, and the first railway construction crews brought the promise of commerce. Icicle's early days were founded on the southern side of the Wenatchee River.

In October 1892 the Great Northern acquired a one-mile strip of land with 400-foot easements on the north side of the river, which was to be a new division point. Word spread that this 800-foot-wide parcel would become the heart of a new town. Soon the railway depot, the roundhouse, and the coal merchants of Icicle moved across the river and railway crews and loggers set up camp, encouraging speculation in the form of the Okanogan Investment Company, headed by Captain Charles Leavenworth. An official townsite was formed next to this promising railway development, and the community was named after the company's major investor, a cousin to the man for whom Leavenworth, Kansas, was named.

By February 1893 about 700 people lived in Leavenworth, and the next 50 years were defined economically by a local marketplace driven by the Great Northern and local logging companies. Since Leavenworth served as one of the railroad's primary division points, this transportation corridor spawned additional service industries and lumber mills. Discriminating visitors can still view traces of this railroad landscape. For example, the city has a central main street that

parallels U.S. Highway 2 and serves as the linear pathway of commerce for merchants and visitors alike. Since this street once faced the railway and was designed to serve all necessary functions of cargo delivery and community distribution, and because Highway 2 was built in the same narrow valley, Leavenworth's town layout has not been altered dramatically in its 108-year history—even as automobiles and trucks replaced rail cars in the 20th century.

Another reason this retail landscape has not changed over the years relates to economic stagnation. In 1922, the Great Northern moved its division point to Wenatchee, and by the late 1930s there were 24 empty storefronts on the two-block stretch of Front Street. The abrupt decision by railroad executives to reduce services in Leavenworth made it difficult for local citizens to draw visitors to their community for over 40 years. Following World War II, Leavenworth was a small eastern Washington town with a dwindling economic base. The United States Forest Service and National Fish Hatchery, a few orchards and a handful of gyppo logging companies were the chief employers. ("Gyppo logging began as a system of working by the piece, an alternative to the newly established eight-hour day." Since the logger could work as an independent contractor, this process was viewed as an advantage to both employer and employee.) Many of the city's residents qualified for welfare in the early 1960s, and the cost of living was so low that the county sent other welfare recipients to live there. Improvements to Highway 2, which followed the path of the Great Northern, cut driving time to Wenatchee to only 25 minutes. The former hour-long drive had discouraged residents from making the trip, and many Leavenworth residents began to consider their community a colony of nearby Wenatchee, a town of nearly 30,000, which lies due east. People chose to drive to Wenatchee to do their shopping; the retail infrastructure of Leavenworth was dying. An existence as a struggling logging town engendered economic frustration for many; jobs featuring living wages for local loggers and farmers were hard to find.

Tourism and retail development have been among the instigators of cultural encounters in the West since the mid 19th century. For example, continental railroad journeys for gentlemen were promoted heavily in the late 1860s and early 1870s, and the concept of "dude ranching," or taking paying guests to areas like Colorado and Wyoming for recreation, began soon afterward. Early in 1869 *Atlantic Monthly* began promoting trips to the West that would validate the popular perceptions of which writers such as Horace Greeley, Samuel Bowles, and Albert Dean Richardson spoke. Soon \$500-a-month visits to the Wild West were available, where tourists would witness a "friendly Indian Village," among other sites. The unique landscape variations of the West were consistently cited as reasons for travel to the region. Colorado was touted for its "natural history." Promoters claimed the geological age of their "ruins" made them far older than the man-made ruins of Europe. One Union Pacific pamphlet promised a Colorado visitor would be satisfied because "he has seen nature face to face, he has learned more of the world's ancient history and the lives of ancient peoples than a whole library of books could ever teach him."

American Indians were key components of this historical advertising. The discovery of the first cliff houses in southern Colorado and New Mexico proved the presence of ancient cultures in North America. This glorification of Indians did not undermine the bigotry expressed about "uncivilized" Indians found by white settlers in the American West. Tourism guides taught that Indian "savages" were becoming tamer. One author of a guidebook exposing the ancient beauty of Colorado wrote, "Beyond a doubt the people who possessed the country and built the improvements are of a much more civilized race than those found inhabiting it when visited by our earliest explorers."

World famous resorts like the Hotel Del Monte in Monterey, the Hotel Raymond in Pasadena, and the Hotel Del Coronado in San Diego quickly followed these developments by promising the comforts of eastern living on the other side of the country. One promoter for the Hotel Raymond bragged in 1889 that visitors would experience, "all the appliances of eastern cities of a century's growth—a refined and cultured community, with a vestige of the rude elements that have formed an integral part of the western towns."

Focused presentation of tourist sites in the West has continued to evolve in the 20th century. The transformation of mining towns into ski resorts has been a popular movement in the region. In its heyday as a mining town, Aspen rivaled the camps of the California gold rush, Virginia City in Nevada's Comstock Lode, and Leadville in its own state of Colorado. Between 1887 and 1893 Aspen was the richest silver-mining center in America. At one point the city held some 12,000 inhabitants and offered services that included six newspapers, two banks, an opera house, electricity, telephones, a streetcar system, a waterworks, schools, and numerous churches. In July 1893 the price of silver dropped sharply, and after a week all the mines in the town closed. By 1930 the city was a shadow of its former self, with a population of only 705. Soon another group of investors from the east realized that Aspen had much to offer visitors in terms of skiing. Now snow has replaced silver as the essential commodity. Other communities like Park City, Utah, and Breckenridge, Colorado, have followed parallel patterns of growth.

The influence of Solvang, California, the "Danish Village," has been enormous among 20th-century theme towns in the West, especially Leavenworth. Situated in the Santa Ynez Valley of southern California, the town was founded over 80 years ago by midwestern migrants with Danish heritage who sought to establish a colony complete with a Danish folk school and a Lutheran Church. Danes in America had established colonies on the East Coast and in Wisconsin and Michigan in the late 1880s, but the West was then considered new territory. The centerpiece of the colony idea was the school, designed to provide Danish Americans with training and education in the Danish way of life. The institution was to be patterned after folk schools in Denmark. The group searched California thoroughly before 9,000 acres were found for sale in Santa Barbara County that featured a good climate, fertile soil, and adequate water. The name of the venture was the Danish-American Colony Company, incorporated on October 1, 1910. This persuaded several Danish families to make their way to Solvang via the narrow-gauge railroad, which stopped at nearby Los Olivos. The railroad companies advertised in Danish and promoted the concept of a Danish culture town. By the end of the year the company had raised the necessary capital and on January 23, 1911, and purchased the parcel from the Santa Ynez Valley Development Company for \$360,000, or \$40 dollars an acre. Members of the group immediately named their new settlement Solvang, which translated to "Sunny Field."

Solvang has been affected by multiple types of migration patterns, effectively altering the cultural landscape of the community. The Danish-American Colony Company was only the latest group interested in the gentle hills of the Santa Ynez Valley. When the Colony Company agreed to purchase a large portion of the land grant Rancho San Carlos de Jonata, they joined Chumash Indians, Mexican citizens, and Spanish explorers and migrants, whose ancestors came to Solvang long before it became the "Danish Village." Members of these previous groups sustained a more natural connection with the climate and the surrounding land and signs of their impact on the local landscape are still evident in places. Anyone visiting from Santa Barbara will immediately notice the exquisite Mission Santa Ines as they reach the Solvang city limits. The mission was founded in 1804 (over 100 years before the Danes arrived) and is a prime example of Catholic and Spanish cultural influence. While this beautiful building sits on the bluff of a hill with a

wonderful view of the valley, it is a landmark now ignored by many who come to Solvang to view Danish architecture. Adding to this misunderstanding is the fact that most visitors to the city are not familiar with the local diversity of the population. The current population of Solvang is approximately 5,000, three times as large as Leavenworth, and the local Latino population is responsible for about 20 percent of this total, although the main streets of Solvang do not provide any examples of Spanish and Mexican-American influences on nearby architecture. The town's modern emphasis on tourism is only 40 years old. Local residents developed a provincial Danish appearance after World War II to draw attention and visitors to the community, and their successful promotion of this Danish veneer and theme has resulted in prodigious visitation. Tourism is responsible for about two million visitors per year, and the success has led to interest in similar programs by other communities.

Leavenworth leaders copied many of the ideas, the architecture, and the strategies Solvang's citizens developed in order to cater to tourists with similar interests. Multiple 20th-century theme towns have also followed the lead of communities like Solvang to promote popular vacations centered on auto tourism to enhance their local economies. The theory is that bringing plenty of visitors to a city will draw subsequent visits and lead to growth in the community's retail business corridor. This philosophy of growth tourism has additional origins in theme parks, amusement parks, outdoor historical museums, and Hollywood, which helped, in turn, to model Solvang. Among the first theme sites were trade shows and world fairs such as the World's Colombian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 and the 1939 New York World's Fair. These government and industry-sponsored environments featured futuristic theme displays promoting ideal homes, new communications systems, and other modern technology. In the 1920s, staged settings of the past began surfacing as outdoor museums, which led directly to the creation of Colonial Williamsburg, a city replicating life in pre-industrial America, by preserving an entire village. Old Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts, and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, followed Williamsburg's changes, serving as the creations of elite businessmen and collectors who erected them as monuments to Americanism. The tradition has been further refined through the successful introduction of amusement theme parks like Knotts Berry Farm and the Disney properties. These encounters continue to influence theme towns like Leavenworth through the advent of new methods of developing kitsch historical presentation.

The Action

Leavenworth's citizens took a direct approach into solving their economic difficulties through thematic tourism. The Leavenworth Women's Club provided instant rejuvenation with their tireless efforts. The group had only 12 members but had persevered to launch formidable community projects in the past. The Leavenworth fire station now stands because of their efforts, and the club successfully campaigned for a bond issue to build a new high school after the measure had failed eight times in the past. In 1962 the club was determined to pursue an even larger project and came up with an idea for community development they titled LIFE, Leavenworth Improvement For Everyone. In late 1962 club members contacted the University of Washington's Bureau of Community Development. Soon afterward, a few University of Washington staff members visited Leavenworth and held a preliminary meeting to discuss community needs and interests, seeking to determine how Leavenworth's residents could study their own situation and find solutions to some of the town's major economic problems. The women's efforts did not go unnoticed. In June 1964 the club won a \$10,000 national prize from the General Federation of Women's Clubs and the Sears Roebuck Foundation for its community improvement project.

"LIFE" truly began for Leavenworth in September 1962 when a citizen's committee of about a dozen people held several meetings to discuss ideas for community development. Dirk Anderson, of the University of Washington, had been guest speaker at a chamber of commerce meeting early in September and had discussed the topic of community self-study. Interest peaked and Anderson was invited to a well-publicized meeting late in October. He outlined how committees covering various phases of community life could be formed from volunteers in the city and how these groups could create reports full of statistics gathered to present to the public. A few more meetings were held during which additional residents were constantly introduced to Anderson's ideas. Eventually, a hierarchy of participants developed and several of Leavenworth's most prominent citizens and business owners accepted responsibility for the proposed project.

Fifteen committees were established for LIFE. These groups studied education, churches, youth, agriculture, trades and services, beautification, and labor and industry. The university agreed to set up a committee to study tourism, which recommended remodeling the town in order to draw visitors. Community involvement was impressive. Of the original 15 committees, 13 completed their respective reports. Two of the groups had difficulties—the Agriculture Committee collapsed after several changes in the group's administration (fortunately much of the research required of the committee was included in the Labor and Industry Report) and the History Committee was also inactive, which may lend credence to the assumption that Leavenworth's citizens have ignored the past while following a path of tourism. The high number of Leavenworth residents involved in the study suggests that citizens saw an opportunity for economic revitalization and took the LIFE project seriously. More than 200 people from the community and its surrounding areas became involved. Each committee was open to everyone, developed mimeographed surveys, and produced extensive typewritten reports. The LIFE project received an economic boost when the Vesta Women's Club began distributing their \$10,000 prize. The money accompanied planning within the business community by paying for the construction of a bandstand in City Park. Soon afterward, a local media blitz began. The local newspaper (*The Leavenworth Echo*) published its first "Sonnenschein Edition" (a yearly production that focuses on advertising and promoting travel to the Bavarian Village) in 1964. This date coincided with the occasion of Leavenworth's first Washington State Autumn Leaf Festival. Leavenworth citizens began to sense that they could establish economic autonomy.

For maximum use of tourism, the university's Bureau of Community Development recommended a "Gay Nineties" theme. Two other themes were suggested during the LIFE study: Western and Alpine. The residents of Leavenworth voted, and the Alpine motif won. After the theme was selected, the specifics of the architecture were discussed. A coffee-table book about Bavaria, belonging to Leavenworth citizen Pauline Watson, inspired the tourism committee to narrow its architectural taste to that section of Europe. Switzerland and Austria were also considered by local pundits, but LIFE participants did not spend much time pondering options—they moved ahead with intense local promotion. Lederhosen-clad residents staffed a booth at Seattle Center in 1966, telling potential visitors about the Autumn Leaf Festival and exhibiting scale models of Leavenworth buildings. Later that year several people began driving from Seattle and Spokane to view this changing marketable community. One visitor from California, Earl Peterson, even had a tremendous impact on future design ideas.

Peterson came to town to discuss buying the *Leavenworth Echo*, and while talking to Leavenworth citizen Russell Lee he learned that the city was in the process of creating a

Bavarian theme. Peterson had been the designer and architect for much of Solvang, California's Danish Village. He offered his services, and starting in 1966 he met with the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce on several occasions to provide design help and consulting. Although Bavarian and Danish architecture are similar, they are not identical. But Peterson knew that development of the theme and fabricated motif were key when promoting Leavenworth, not historical accuracy. He urged the Leavenworth designers to use gabled roofs on buildings to make them look authentic. Peterson's advice was respected during construction and throughout the design stages of the town by Leavenworth citizens and business owners because of his experience with Solvang. Peterson showed multiple slides and pictures of past work, and his patterns were copied effectively.

Leavenworth as a Regional Example

Social diffusion within landscapes is an endless process. Changes in Leavenworth have initiated similar economic movements toward tourism in other towns in the region and across the country, preserving a permanent connection among these faraway places. The city's community development program received considerable attention in places as distant as Atlanta, Georgia, where the *Atlanta Constitution* and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce researched the community development taking place out West. The LIFE project, with its emphasis on group committees and individuals within the city, had numerous admirers. In recent years community leaders in Sundance, Wyoming, have toured Leavenworth to learn how local citizens sell their Bavarian theme to visitors.

Locally, several cities have followed thematic initiatives seen in Leavenworth. In early 1994 members of the Kellogg, Idaho, Chamber of Commerce toured Leavenworth to keep abreast of new architectural and retail developments. To their surprise, several business owners in Leavenworth refused to speak with them, contending that Kellogg was "stealing their ideas." It is ironic that Leavenworth's business representatives would make such a claim, considering their penchant for emulating Solvang's success. This brewing contentious relationship verifies the effects of migrating ideas due to cultural encounters. In 1972 local leaders in Winthrop, a small community in Washington's Methow Valley, northeast of Leavenworth along Highway 20, determined that it would also like to create a theme-town atmosphere—and Leavenworth was the community they sought to emulate. After residents decided they wanted to create Western imagery, they established a contractual relationship with the designers of Leavenworth, who developed a visually pleasing Western-style motif.

Even the small town of George, Washington, is slowly evolving into a modern theme community. Dedicated on July 4, 1957, and incorporated in 1961 as a fourth class city, George was created to solve a geographic distribution problem in Washington's Grant County. Nearby farming necessitated supply sites within striking distance of county residents. After determining that the towns of Quincy and Moses Lake were too distant for these purposes, leaders of the Bureau of Reclamation offered a 339-acre parcel for bidding, hoping local investors would launch a planned city. Their desires were realized after Quincy pharmacist Charlie Brown and two co-investors were awarded the bid and retained the services of Myer Wolfe, the city planning instructor at the University of Washington, who planned a road, power, and water system. Bureau of Reclamation officials recommended that the city be named in honor of the nation's first president, and George was born.

Present-day George sits approximately 170 miles east of Seattle and 130 miles west of Spokane, adjacent to Interstate 90. The town is less than an hour's drive from Leavenworth, which lies

north and a little west of George. In 1994 Bellevue developer Louis Leclasio announced that he would bring a colonial Virginia landscape to George to take advantage of the town's natural connection with George Washington. Announcement of the plan drew a half page of coverage in the December 18, 1994, *New York Times*. Leclasio conceived the idea after watching the success of modern theme towns, including Leavenworth, and stopping by the community for gas on the way to visit his children who were attending Gonzaga University in Spokane. To understand the development of tourism in these towns, Leclasio met with the regents of Mount Vernon, Virginia, and architects from Disneyland. The transfer of ideas about how to sell history is very much intact. The curators at Mount Vernon wanted Leclasio to focus on the western aspects of George Washington's life that are not covered in detail at President Washington's fabled home. The first president's background in scouting and surveying was suggested as potential subject matter. Leclasio also met with Ray Wallace, an 80-year-old veteran of Disney and founder of fabricated landscapes in Long Beach, San Diego, and Disneyland itself. Modern cultural encounters in places like George prove that cultural diffusion continues to impact landscape patterns in the Pacific Northwest.

New Identity

The infrastructure of a city is the most definitive aspect of its landscape. Buildings and streets set boundaries and parameters, signs and murals lend description and direction. These human devices create the angles and outline of what we interpret as a community. The current Leavenworth landscape features large eaves with scrolled support beams, windows framed with decorative painting, and low-angled roof lines. To enhance and continue this spread of the city's artificial landscape, Leavenworth leaders established a design review board in 1995 which works with architects and builders to maintain acceptable adherence to the adapted Bavarian style. The group encourages the use of low-pitched roofs with overhangs, balconies with scrolled slats and flower boxes, arched doorways, windows with shutters or decorative trim, exterior murals, scrolled woodwork, and specialized coloring. The design board must approve a building's design for commercial development, and their decisions can be appealed to the City Council.

When local architecture and natural community design boundaries are altered dramatically, it is as if a new town is created within the confines of an older place. Once someone ventures behind the shops on Front Street in Leavenworth they see residential dwellings that look like turn-of-the-century box houses with sloped tin roofs, and American designed gable houses with large front porches. These houses remind people of the community landscape in numerous logging and mining towns in the Pacific Northwest. The old style homes of Leavenworth look very much like homes in the mining towns of Roslyn and Ronald (which are situated approximately 50 miles southwest of Leavenworth), or homes found within the boundaries of fellow Highway 2 logging towns Sultan and Gold Bar. Surrounding both the old and the new of Leavenworth are the jagged snow-capped peaks of the Cascade Range, which only enhance the new-found alpine identity in tourist Leavenworth.

When viewing any local landscape, we witness basic differences among neighborhoods and cities. These individual patterns showcase how community encounters impact the cultural landscape. For example, in many coal towns of Pennsylvania, onion domes topped by three-barred crosses decorate the towers of Greek Orthodox and Byzantine Rite churches, illuminating traditional community symbolism merging with modern extractive industry. In New Orleans, narrow one-room-wide and three-or four-room-deep rectangular buildings, measuring 13 by 65 feet, with a gable front and small porch extension, are examples of the basic shotgun houses

that grace several streets throughout the South. Although built in frame construction, the style has been traced back to half-timbered antecedents in Haiti, an architectural tradition brought by free black migrants in the 18th century. There is evidence that wattle and daub versions in Africa were emulated in Haiti, making the architecture of New Orleans a venerable cultural graveyard. Unlike these examples, Leavenworth's local architecture is misleading. Local buildings offer a glimpse of Bavarian design that is simply a façade placed over the top of an older, standard 20th-century American concrete or brick building. Further, much of the design was influenced by experts from a community that is not even Bavarian in respect to theme—Solvang, California, the "Danish Village."

Leavenworth's cultural alteration in the mid 1960s has established the community as a unique locale in the Pacific Northwest and a national tourist site. In addition, the town has become a symbol of change and ingenuity for many small communities in the Far West, even though local heritage is virtually ignored. Communities that feature residents who eschew their recent cultural development and instead revert to heritage and theme identity from their distant past, or borrow ideas from places with no historical connection to their city illustrate how powerful images derived from specific encounters can be. Current iconography of Leavenworth alters perceptions about the town's recent past but helps explain similar patterns in other local communities. The migration pattern continues.

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