

MEMORIALIZING THE BACKHOUSE:  
SANITIZING AND SATIRIZING OUTHOUSES IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

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## ABSTRACT

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HELENA SAFRON— Memorializing the Backhouse: Sanitizing and  
Satirizing Outhouses in the American South  
(Under the Direction of Katherine Roberts)

This thesis examines the large-scale adoption of shed-roofed, pit privies into the vernacular architecture and imagined landscape of the American South (1902-1942). Beginning in the early twentieth century, public health campaigns pressed for sanitary changes in the South, particularly sanitary privies. Using the existing vernacular privy architecture, progressive campaigners helped institute material changes that both bolstered and undermined the political power of many southerners. These privy construction efforts peaked during the New Deal. Concurrently, government surveys and photography thrust southern homes and their functional parts into the national spotlight. Outhouses emerged as popular symbols for debasing those with power, such as national leaders, as well as those who had little, particularly rural southerners. By examining the wills that produced these architectural changes, this thesis explores how politics and power manifest on vernacular landscapes and how these political campaigns impacted both the built environment and political identity of the American South.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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### **CHAPTERS:**

<b>I. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	5
CHAPTER OUTLINES .....	9
THE OUTHOUSE WITHIN THE DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE .....	13
<i>Privy Architecture.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Privies as Part of the Home Space .....</i>	<i>20</i>
PERSONAL INTEREST AND ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION .....	24
<i>Vernacular Architecture.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Medical History.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Historical Archeology.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Photographic Studies.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<b>II. HOOKWORM AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT: DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR SANITATION IN THE SOUTH.....</b>	<b>38</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	38
THE EARLY YEARS AND STRATEGIES OF THE COMMISSION.....	41
SANITARY SUGGESTIONS FOR PRIVY ARCHITECTURE .....	47
BEGINNING THE PIT PRIVY CAMPAIGNS .....	51
CONCLUSION.....	57

<b>III. THE PRIVY CAMPAIGNS: THE POLITICS OF SANITATION IN THE SOUTHERN LANDSCAPE.....</b>	<b>62</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	62
CAMPAIGNING FOR PRIVIES.....	65
DECONSTRUCTING THE SOUTHERN HOME.....	74
REGULATING AND INTERPRETING THE OUTHOUSE.....	81
CONCLUSION.....	92
<b>IV. “THE NEW DEAL GOES TO THE PRIVY”: STANDARDIZING, SATIRIZING AND SPOTLIGHTING THE OUTHOUSE.....</b>	<b>96</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	97
THE ROOSEVELT PRIVY.....	100
THE OUTHOUSE AS PROGRESS AND POVERTY.....	108
THE OUTHOUSE AND POLITICAL SATIRE.....	120
CONCLUSION.....	133
<b>V. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>137</b>
 <b>ILLUSTRATIONS:</b>	
I.     IMAGES FOR CHAPTER I   (1.1-1.20).....	157
II.    IMAGES FOR CHAPTER II   (2.1-2.22).....	164
III.   IMAGES FOR CHAPTER III   (3.1-3.29) .....	172
IV.    IMAGES FOR CHAPTER IV   (4.1-4.36) .....	182
 <b>REFERENCES:</b>	
CITATIONS.....	194

## I. INTRODUCTION

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In the national imagination, spiders, splinters and Sears-Roebuck catalogues are more at home in a privy than political campaigns and debates. Historically, though, outhouses effectively served as a derisive place for political satire. Over the centuries, critics used privies to debase or level powerful people and ideas. Example include: a British cartoon ridiculing politicians on the eve of the American Revolution, [Image 1.1]; a World War II bond drive mocking Hitler in a Labor Day parade [Image 1.2], and the more recent parody of southern televangelist Jerry Falwell which appeared in *Hustler* magazine.<sup>1</sup>

Privies have been employed symbolically in politics during various historical and political contexts. My thesis focuses on a particular time and place in which privies became not just a debasing symbol but also a politicized material entity. Over the first four decades of the twentieth century in American South, shed-roofed, pit privies emerged on the southern domestic landscape over the course of mounting political campaigns. These efforts thrust southern homes and their functional parts into the national spotlight as a physical representation of both southern character and government responsibility. Privies were at the forefront of these campaigns.

*Hustler's* caricature of Falwell presents us with a pointed entry into this thesis. In a cursory history of events, *Hustler* magazine and its founder, Larry Flynt underwent

years of moral admonishments from Falwell. *Hustler* responded by running a fake advertisement for Campari, an Italian liqueur in 1983. In the real Campari ads, celebrities discussed their “first time.” While ambiguous at first, by the end of the interview, the reader understands this “first time” is their first time drinking the liqueur. In Falwell’s case, *Hustler* satirized the double entendre, with Falwell claiming in his mock interview that his “first time”—both drinking Campari and having a sexual encounter—was an inebriated and incestuous affair with his mother inside an outhouse.<sup>2</sup>

The incident rose to prominence as Falwell sued *Hustler* for slander. *Hustler* contested the charge all the way to the Supreme Court. Five years after its publication, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled in favor of *Hustler* magazine, defending its right to free speech, citing the “fundamental importance of the free flow of ideas and opinions on matters of public interest and concern.”<sup>3</sup> As a public figure with the power to shape the debate, Justice Rehnquist argued that Falwell could not seek reparations for slander because such a decision could stifle “robust political debate” necessary in democracy.<sup>4</sup>

Though the judicial decision is important, the image *Hustler* painted of Falwell relates more to our interests. By placing this well-known southerner’s scandalous affair satirically inside the confines of an outhouse, *Hustler* magazine taps into a national narrative concerning these structures and what associations they conjure when located within the southern landscape.

Outhouses today communicate an inherent rurality. As cartoonist Al Capp of *Li'l Abner* once said in an interview with *Playboy* magazine, “No cartoonist, no matter how talentless or obscure ... [has ever] drawn an outhouse without making some incidental comment about rustic life in America.”<sup>5</sup> Within this rural narrative, outhouses convey



different associations for the various regions of the country. In popular representations of the American West, cisterns and privies suggest the ruggedness of life for the few who eke out an existence amidst the West's wide and wild expanses. However, placed within a southern context outhouses often convey disparaging conceptions about the makeup of the southern character—with associations including destitution, laziness, and doltishness, often with allusions to immorality and drunkenness.

Outhouses' outsized role as a symbolic part of regional landscapes in part speaks to the humor often associated with its biological function. Unlike other daily structures of the past tied to biological necessities (for example, kitchens or wells) privies like other things that are sexual or excretory in nature, are socially tabooed in western culture. As such, the outhouse is both an intimate but often unmentioned part of daily life. This tension between daily use and social taboo has presented satirists with a well-loaded structure to launch leveling political attacks and critiques. I use the term, political, in the sense that all of these critiques inherently reflect the desire to gain one's own or deface another's power.

But that does not explain why the representation of Falwell resonates so clearly. While obviously connoting negative southern characteristics, such as illiteracy and poverty, what gives this symbolic representation of the southern outhouse such virulence?

In part, I believe, this resonance is due to the inherent socioeconomic aspects as well as political nature of housing in America. Since houses are the largest wealth generator for the population, what type of house you have says something about who you are, how much money you have, and what your values are. They also convey how powerful you are within society. Mansions, simply stated, demonstrate wealth. At one

point in time, building a privy did as well. Privies also illustrated hygienic values and understandings—highlighting a separation between humans and their waste. As sewerage and other indoor plumbing options increased, however, the wealthier parts of the population moved their toilets indoors. This left many people who built privies during the early public health campaigns with an outbuilding that illustrated their inability to keep up with the times.

With special focus on the South in the early twentieth century, outhouses became not merely a rhetorical or satirical device, but a material political entity. Placed within the narrative of “southern distinctiveness,”<sup>6</sup> progressive political campaigns mounted efforts to fix southern problems by building, sanitizing and regulating privies. Public health advocates, municipal officials, and state governments all exerted their power to change the material landscape of the South. Rhetorically, they correlated this structure with southern character flaws during their efforts. With the privy’s culmination in the relief programs of the New Deal, political policies ushered millions outhouses iconically into the lexicon of the southern vernacular landscape.

This thesis follows the political campaigns of the early twentieth century in the American South to build sanitary privies for residents, culminating in the federal efforts during the New Deal. Since my university is in the state of North Carolina, I chose to focus my thesis largely on the legacy of these campaigns in the North Carolinian landscape, while placing these localized campaigns in a regional context. Primarily my research focuses on the campaigns between 1902 and 1942, when campaigners exerted great political effort to build more privies in the American South.

One overarching goal of this thesis is to illustrate the profound impact these campaigns and government policies had on the built environment. These policies shaped architectural designs and pressured southerners to conform to changing national standards of health, hygiene and governance through the construction of these structures. In my life, I also have heard many off-handed comments intrinsically linking outhouses with southern poverty and backwardness. Thus, the second goal is to demonstrate how these narratives are borne not just out of an innate progression of our nation's history, but rather, are a historical product of individual and political wills. Lastly, I wish to show how southerners, responded in various ways to the politicization of their domestic landscape, structures and use-patterns for bodily elimination. Overall, this thesis will examine the impact of political decisions, materially and socially—as these campaigners' aims for public betterment often simultaneously helped undermine the populations they intended to help.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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Prior to the political developments of the twentieth century, southern states provided their residents with meager public health assistance. At that time the focus remained on remedial assistance in the face of epidemics or natural disasters, rather than providing preventive care.<sup>7</sup> In the first decade of the twentieth century, campaigns to eradication hookworm disease began—mostly financed by John D. Rockefeller's

philanthropic expenditures.\* These efforts redirected governmental focus to preventive measure, and pulled the government's hand into the daily lives of its citizens.

During the nineteenth and twentieth century, many regions of the country underwent varying public health campaigns pushing for more hygienic conditions. My thesis focuses on the privy-building efforts spurred largely by Charles Wardell Stiles' discovery of an endemic of hookworm disease in the South in 1902; however, the political impetus for building privies in the South existed within minds of health advocates for decades previous to Stiles' discovery.

For instance, the first *Biennial Report* for North Carolina's State Board of Health for 1879-1880 trumpeted the need for better privies and proposed various designs. One proposal was "The Rochedale Pail System" [Image 1.3].<sup>8</sup> Geared for small cities, this model used half-barrels or pails under the seat, which were to be removed once a week and disposed of on old fields or sold as manure. Another model was "The Dry Earth System," which, similar to the Rochedale, used pails. However, for this system users spread charcoal or dry earth on top of the night soil to help tamp down the smell and compost the waste. The publication also encouraged other hygienic practices including use of disinfectants such as charcoal and the smoke of burning tar, coffee, dried apples, etc. in order to destroy the foul odor of privies.<sup>9</sup> These guides, though, were not widely disseminated or embraced in the state. With meager funding for the State Board of Health, which operated with the mere \$100 in annual support at its inception in 1877,

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\* The state of Florida paid for their own due to a scandal several years before the region-wide campaigns began.

such attempts at materially transforming the design of privies proved to be insubstantial.<sup>10</sup>

These late nineteenth century efforts were part of a long line of reform efforts aimed at hygiene. Well before the Board of Health was established, health advocates and other reformers had offered advice on home sanitation. Agricultural reformers, for instance, suggested ways for keeping slaves healthy in their homes, often as a way for owners to protect their monetary investment.<sup>11</sup> Outbuildings and outdoor structures also became miasmatic targets in regards to their location on the domestic landscape in concert with local climatic considerations. With the miasmatic theory of disease, which explained the spread of disease through the foul air, the smell emanating from privies rather than the contents was regarded as the health problem. For instance, a North Carolinian weekly newspaper, called the *Raleigh Register*, argued on June 29, 1802,

Cleanliness is a virtue, and it is more important in the air than in any thing. Let our stables, barns, barn-yards, dungheaps or stercoaries, hogsties and privies, be placed on the northerly sides of our dwellings, and not too near them. When the wind blows from the north, the weather is less oppressive, or cooler, and our houses are shut up. The foul smells do not reach us then. . . . Tender women, children, sick persons, the aged and infirm, are much hurt by such smells.<sup>12</sup>

In subsequent decades, however, reformers pushed for better designs, not just better placement on the landscape. The advocacy of sanitary models during the late nineteenth century in North Carolina followed a boom in developing urban infrastructure geared towards eliminating public health threats. Compared with rural areas, cities were much more vulnerable to brutal waves of epidemic diseases. With the cholera outbreaks occurring during the nineteenth century, for instance, New York City slowly mounted political support to increase waste and water infrastructure as well as medical treatment

centers.<sup>†</sup> A growing medical awareness for the causes for cholera as well as a budding mandate for more municipal infrastructure produced new ideas for creating more sanitary living conditions in the city.

Privies in cities were chief breeding grounds for these diseases. As public health campaigns there grew, new sanitary designs emerged in the market. Colonel George E. Waring, a leading advocate for expanding municipal services, promoted a model “dry earth closet” as a sanitary replacement for the unsewered urban, suburban, and country residences. Catharine Beecher and Frederick Law Olmstead were also supporters of the earth closet model. Each argued that the earth closet was a better addition and a more sanitary option for the home than the design that won out in the end, the water closet.<sup>13</sup>

Water closets’ appeal grew as sewerage infrastructure in cities expanded and allowed residents to remove waste quickly from their residences. In some parts of town, outdoor privies connected their vaults to the growing sewage system. Sewer lines were attractive because they filled multiple needs, such as drains for both runoff rainwater and street cleaning water. And by using them for human waste as well other wastewaters, cities reduced or eliminated the need for municipal scavenger services, which sanitary earth closets required.

North Carolina’s Board of Health and others such boards across the South attempted to build upon these models to increase sanitation in their own states, yet little material progress occurred in the region. Unlike urban areas in the North, the

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<sup>†</sup> For a brilliant and thorough look at the impact of cholera on public health infrastructure, consult Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

governments had neither the political impetus nor financial capital to undertake such a drastic step.

## CHAPTER OUTLINES

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The body of my thesis begins when progressives found their window of opportunity for pursuing sanitary reforms in the American South. Charles Wardell Stiles' discovery that hookworm disease was endemic in the southern states at the turn of the twentieth century provided this opening. Newspapers catapulted Stiles' discovery into their headlines nationally and internationally because of its sensational implications. Since hookworm caused anemia in its sufferers, newspapers nationally trumpeted the discovery as "the germ" responsible for the South's "proverbial laziness."<sup>14</sup> The publicity surrounding Stiles' discovery also reflected new medical understandings of germ theory, which emboldened progressive advocates for public health. Age-old medical and social conditions now seemed curable, and these medical progressives leapt at the opportunity. Seven years after the initial discovery, John D. Rockefeller and the man in charge of his philanthropic efforts, Frederick T. Gates, announced one million dollars for a public health campaign targeting hookworms' eradication.

The second chapter traces the tactics, rhetoric and sanitary privy models that came out of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease. After beginning their effort with transitory clinic and education events, sanitary advocates realized their strategy was relatively unsuccessful in producing material changes within the landscape of the South. My thesis traces their efforts to rethink their campaign in order to provide future campaigns with guiding ideas and strategies for effecting changes. While earlier privy suggestions were radical and expensive in design, the Sanitary

Commission illustrated that with minor changes, the regional vernacular architecture could be made more sanitary. Subsequent Rockefeller-backed and state-led efforts assumed these tactics to greater successes.

The third chapter follows these localized and sometimes forceful methods that local health directors undertook to exert their sanitary understandings onto the landscape. By the end of the 1910s, many state legislators wholeheartedly joined the effort to build and sanitize these outbuildings. This chapter focuses mostly on the efforts within the state of North Carolina. This state was the first in the South to pass a law regulating privies at a statewide level (during the Sanitary Commission's early years, municipal codes were the only governing mechanism). In the 1920s, state health departments expanded their surveying work which documented sanitary conditions across the state. By deconstructing the house—whether the house was painted or not, had indoor, outdoor or nonexistent plumbing, possessed screens on the windows and porch, etc.—the state increasingly monitored its citizens' housing conditions.

The fourth chapter explores the outhouse campaigns that emerged as the Roosevelt administration dealt with the economic crisis of the Great Depression. As part of New Deal efforts, a new era of privy building was born. For the first time, the federal government explicitly took the lead in constructing new privies as part of both infrastructural spending and unemployment relief. Under the Roosevelt administration, millions of outhouses were constructed nationally, with a majority of the efforts concentrated in the South. These efforts further standardized the privy structure that had emerged from the past two decades' campaigns.



Additionally, the New Deal pushed outhouses further into the popular imagination than earlier efforts, since these campaigns had more national publicity, as well as an explicit effort to target southern economic problems—which they conveyed in surveys and in photographs. Of the photographs, the FSA Historical Section produced some of the most poignant, memorable and political. In both the surveys and pictures, privies figured into the depiction of the South—used as an indicator paradoxically of both poverty and progress. Particularly in the photographs, images of rundown houses, wells, and privies illustrated the poverty of the region. At the same time, images of New Deal privies also demonstrated how government was helping its struggling citizens.

During the New Deal, privies also became a prime satirical device for critics of Roosevelt’s policies. From the left and right, booklets, drawings, postcards emerged, mocking the New Deal policies with this structure. By the 1930s, people saw privies a fading marker of a rural landscape. Often the satire mocked the usefulness of the New Deal’s work by reframing this narrative of the government facilitating progress to a narrative of a regression towards technologies of the past. Within the popular culture of this era as well, privies increasingly marked the imagined southern landscape, and often conveyed negative connotations about its residents.

Implicit in all of these efforts were values that campaigns, photographers, and satirists placed on privies. In the early campaigns, reformers trumpeted the link between morality and privies. Often they predicated their values on the proverb that “cleanliness is next to godliness” and cited parts of the Old Testament to bolster their moral claims. The early board of health publications often built upon this rhetoric, for instance, by equating better architectural designs for privies with “advanc[ing] towards that higher

civilization” and reminding readers of the moral importance of cleanliness.<sup>15</sup>

Rockefeller’s efforts similarly had a religious aspect to them. The Commission’s work crystallized the outhouse as a vehicle by which both modernity and moral salvation could arrive in the South. Historian John Ettling argued in his book, *The Germ of Laziness*, that Rockefeller envisioned the Commission as an evangelizing force, which worked to clean up the South by dispensing both northern industriousness and more importantly, sanitary salvation to southerners. This sort of rhetoric continued in the ensuing efforts into the late 1910s and 1920s.

Beginning with the hookworm campaign, much of the rhetoric hewed to many of the stereotypes associated with the South. In an article announcing Rockefeller’s eradication plans, the *New York Times* described hookworm as “the parasite to which the shiftlessness and laziness of a certain class of very poor whites in the Middle South, known locally as ‘Crackers,’ ‘Sand-hillers,’ or ‘Pine-landers’ is attributed.”<sup>16</sup> Though hookworm infected black southerners as well, poor white southerners rose publicly to the forefront of the campaigns to sanitize the South. This negative image of southerners continued for decades to inform northerners and foreigners, who saw the poor white populace as the “slum element of the South... [which] constituted a rotten core in Southern society.”<sup>17</sup> The image of poor, white southerners and their condition became, for many outsiders, a dissolute one. The reason for this perception was two-fold: Not only did these ‘crackers’ represent the appalling conditions permitted to persist within the South, but, additionally, these poor Southern whites were blamed and maligned for living in this sloth and depravity themselves.

The New Deal, in the context of southern poverty, offered a new formulation for what privies represented. For, rather than blaming southerners for their conditions, the New Deal utilized the Depression as a way to both call for governmental action and present the South as a place possessing morally respectable people, struggling for survival in a systemic economic calamity. But while earlier efforts gained, at most, momentary national attention, the New Deal pointed and held the spotlight at, among other socioeconomic conditions, the housing conditions of the American South. However, this spotlight conjured older pejorative connotations to southern poverty as well. By the early 1940s, urban magazines such as *Esquire* featured cartoons that used privies' presence in their domestic landscape as a visual device to link implicitly southerners to a regional caricature of lazy, impoverished simpletons.

The moral rhetoric surrounding the campaigns for privies focused both on the architecture of the structure and the human behavior affiliated with its design. Therefore, before beginning my thesis, it is important to explain more fully the privy's architecture in the South and how these buildings were part of domestic spaces and use-patterns for the dwellers themselves.

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#### THE OUTHOUSE WITHIN THE DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE

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For this thesis, I use the terms 'privy' and 'outhouse' to refer to the structure and I employ these words interchangeably. Worth noting, though, is that 'outhouse' is a slightly newer phrase relating specifically to an outdoor toilet—as the term outhouse could be used to refer to any outbuilding. For sanitation literature "privy" is often the word of choice during the time period covered in this thesis, though 'outhouse' was also

used. Some earlier medical literature, from the early-mid nineteenth century, referred to these structures as “necessaries.”

Privies enjoyed dozens of colloquial names. Likely this was because of the unpleasant, impolite, but often humorous nature of the bodily functions requiring this structure. Commonly called the outhouse, privy, backhouse, or ‘the necessary,’ this structure could also be referred to through an expansive array of other monikers. These other names included, but are not limited to, the one-holer, two-holer, dooley, pokey, loo, easier, crapper, bopper, chic(k) sale, johnnie, jake, biffy, willie, donnicker, ajax, jericho, depository, willie, Roosevelt, convenience, closet, cloaca, stool, throne, latrine, head, vault, pool, little house, shanty, path, sugar shack, deposit box, post office, federal building, white house, garderope, roadside rest, restroom, can, comfort station, and oklahoma potty.<sup>18</sup> These names vary from descriptive—‘backhouse’ describing its location, ‘one-holer’ meaning that it only has one seat—to evasive—such as ‘path’ or ‘comfort station.’ Humor tinged most of the names as well. Also evident is the impact of politics on the names, such as ‘federal building,’ or the ‘Roosevelt.’

Secondly, in this thesis the term privy or outhouse refers to a building or structure meant for human urination and defecation. In the popular conception of these structures, the outhouse usually is a shed-like building containing at least one holed seat, which rests over a pit that holds the waste. Many remaining structures do fit into this description; however, a wide variety of architectural designs sought to meet this biological need. Differing designs for both the walled structure and the method of waste collection served many people in the South and around the country. Yet, concerning the popular conception of the privy today two points ought to be addressed: 1) this type of the

structure has not always been the most prevalent version of a privy, and 2) the development of this structure was encouraged through political policies which began out of and capitalized upon specific moments in regional and national history.

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## PRIVY ARCHITECTURE

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The most recognizable part of a privy is the housing surrounding the waste receptacle. The house's main purpose is to provide privacy and shelter while one sought relief. Popularly conceived, the privy building usually is the size and shape of a small shed [Image 1.4]. Simply framed and constructed with horizontal or vertical weatherboards, the structure itself is rather humble in appearance. Commonly the roof of the structure was a shed design (sloping in only one direction, as shown in Image 1.4); though another widespread design was a gabled roof [Image 1.5]. For ventilation, openings along the top of the outhouse provided air flow for the user. A ventilation tube or openings cut near the back base of the structure provided ventilation for the waste [Image 1.5 and 1.6]. If possible, both were screened. The seat inside the structure could either be a standalone seat or a bench with one or more holes cut into the seat. If the structure contained multiple holes, often these holes were different sizes, the smaller for use by children and larger for adults. Usually composed of wood, the seats and floors also could be made of concrete for cleaning and durability.

While this description is the most prevalent on the landscape, other designs existed. Rather than a humble shed structure, wealthy landowner's privies tended to be larger in size and more elaborate in architecture, though in rare cases such buildings were constructed extravagantly [for two examples of more affluent privy designs, see Images 1.7 and 1.8]. On the other end of the spectrum, however, a majority of privies across the

South were little more than walled structures to provide some modicum of privacy for their users at the turn of the twentieth century [Image 1.9]. By and large, privies ranged from decently built shed structures to rickety buildings patched together out of scrap wood, metal, and cloth. Before the public health campaigns, both shed and gabled roofed privies existed, though many of the poorer constructions lacked any roofing at all. Ventilation often was incidental rather than purposeful in many of the designs. Screens were nonexistent, and doors sometimes were too. Privies were often one of the last structures families built or maintained. Of other structures built for bodily concern—such as those reflecting the need of water, food, and shelter—a well-built structure for elimination often was the least important to many families. While concern grew for the housing structure of these buildings, most important to the sanitarians was the receptacle for the waste, which many of these structures also lacked.

A larger concern to sanitarians was that many southern families had no privy structure whatsoever. As the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission documented in their early surveys of the South, less than half of southern families even had any structure resembling a privy. Urban or affluent populations were more likely to use a privy than the current popular conception as poor and rural. Urban and suburban dwellers had a need for privacy while relieving themselves and wealthy landowners tended to desire the respectability of using a structure for the function.

For instance, in 1937, Guion Griffis Johnson's history of the antebellum South described the health and sanitation of the period and compared it to its present 1930s circumstances:

On the frontier there was little time for observing even the simple rules of sanitation. The settler had to make haste to girdle trees so that he might plant a crop; to fit logs together

for his cabin so that he might have a habitation. He was satisfied to take an occasional swim in the near-by river or creek. Many a farmer boasted even in the ante-bellum period that he had never bathed in his life. The frontiersman took his ease in the woods just as many a tenant farmer in the South does today. Privies were luxuries of a settled life.<sup>19</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, the lack of an outhouse or other waste disposal system was not as socially stigmatized as it became in the 1930s and 1940s. In the mid-nineteenth century, accounts of the University of North Carolina had no sewerage system, and “slops were thrown from the [dormitory] windows freely.”<sup>20</sup> Using the woods or the back of the barn (particularly if one was collecting the waste for fertilizer) were common practices for southerners who lacked the wood for building privy structures or even the desire to construct one. As oral interviews and written remembrances recount, even without a privy, relieving oneself was handled within the domestic structures and surroundings. Many rural dwellers did not need a structure to provide privacy for such actions and as such utilized the natural surroundings instead, such as the woods, nearby bushes or the backside of other outbuildings. Homes, both with or without outhouses, usually had chamber pots for inclement weather and nighttime emergencies.

For instance, Keith Sims, born in 1930 in Caldwell County, North Carolina, recalled that in his childhood, his family had no outhouse, and did fine with what domestic materials and spaces they had:

The back porch was...an emergency relief station. As I got older and started hearing about outhouses, I thought they were talking about the back porch. Everyone I knew had a back porch with a chamber [pot] for a back up. We were really up in class: we each one had our own private place. We called it going out in the woods or behind the barn. We had about forty acres of woods and you could claim which directions you wanted to go for your domain. You usually had two or three domains, one for an emergency, one not so urgent and one called a walking trail.<sup>21</sup>

Sims’ recollection suggests that people had their own systems in place for the disposal of human waste. These systems made sense to them and were not random.

Often these systems of disposal put the waste to use—in agricultural fields or family gardens. The public health campaigns however, sought to raise awareness of the dangers of human excrement and aid construction of new and sanitized privies which would separate humans from their waste. Their illustrations of insanitary privy buildings often portrayed the structures as haphazardly constructed, with little thought for the builder's own wellbeing [as can be seen in Image 1.9]. These illustrations bespoke the campaigners' own beliefs and understandings, while pointedly stigmatizing as illogical, filthy and immoral, those southerners who lacked formal privy structures or had one deemed insanitary.

The feature of the existing privies in the South that advocates decried the most was not the outward architecture of the building; rather, it was these privies' method of containing waste. In pursuing this goal, campaigners focused on ways in which sanitary methods of containing the material could be installed in homes across the South. Their main targets were people without privies and those who had privies that the health officials termed “sunshine privies” or “open-back privies.” (Note that this is the type of privy depicted in Image 1.9). Rockefeller's campaign hoped to sanitize the entire southern region; however, their early efforts focused mostly on the regions in the South with lowland regions with sandy or loamy soils, which had higher concentrations of hookworm.

Surveys carried out at the time indicated that open-back privies were the most prevalent privy on the landscape. These structures consisted of some sort of housing, and often lacked any receptacle to catch and hold the waste. Sometimes built on the sides of bodies of water or cliffs, these open-back privies used the current or the height to distance



people from their waste [Image 1.10].<sup>‡</sup> For open-back privies not located near cliffs or water, sometimes a shallow pit was dug under the seat, while the back of the structure was open, likely as a way to aid fertilizer harvesting [Image 1.12]. Other privy buildings lacked even this shallow pit, as the structure was meant only as a way to gain privacy. Urban and suburban settings, particularly demanded privacy; hence, privies were more common there, and were usually of an open-back in design [Image 1.13]. In all forms, these open-back privies troubled sanitarians as the open-back design allowed the waste to be washed away in rainstorms or accessed by flies and animals, which could pollute the nearby water and soil with diseases like hookworm and typhoid.

To counteract these privies, health advocates developed new designs. Some were extravagant by the day's standards. Chemical toilets and septic tanks-like designs emerged as possible solutions. Those, however, were costly alternatives for southerners who lacked much economic means. One solution suggested was a pail, bucket or drawer privy that would catch the waste. In some locations, people did use pail privies before the health campaigns reached their districts. Often this design was used as a way of saving the human waste for use as fertilizer, to make it easier to move the waste to a specific location, or to sell it to a scavenger service. Pit privies, however, emerged most forcefully onto the largely rural landscapes of the American South.

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<sup>‡</sup> It is worth noting that many sewerage systems at the time also employed this tactic (and occasionally they still do today in the event of a large storm). Dumping sewerage waste into nearby rivers, bays or the ocean in order to disperse the waste in the water was a common method for disposal. At the time, a simple explanatory refrain for this action was “the solution to pollution is dilution” [Richard N. L. Andrews, *Managing the Environment, Managing Ourselves: A History of American Environmental Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 117]. Even organized scavenger services dumped barrels of privy waste out in rivers, lakes, and seas [for example, see picture from Key West, 1929: Image 1. 11].

The second and third chapters outline the development of these privy designs as public health advocates waged their campaigns across the region and the response these designs received from the general populace. Amidst all these changes with the privy's receptacle and the growing number of privies within the South—people found a place for these buildings within their domestic spaces and living patterns.

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### PRIVIES AS PART OF THE HOME SPACE

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Rather than a solitary outbuilding, the privy became part of the array of outdoor buildings and structures near the main house. Smokehouses, chicken pens, barns, and other such function-specific buildings littered the landscape in addition to the main dwelling. This was particularly true in rural districts, but even in cities or mill towns, water wells, clotheslines, garbage heaps and other structures mingled with outhouses within dwellers' outdoor domestic spaces [Image 1.14 – 1.17]. In both rural and urban areas, outhouses served an important role within these buildings as an often-used domestic space. Often the building's presence and positioning on the domestic landscape also reflected its use-patterns.

Usually the outhouse was located in the rear of the house. There it could be near the main house for convenience's sake, yet often it was also not too close because of both the stench and sanitary concerns [Images 1.16 and 1.17]. Arthur Saarinen recalled the outhouse at the house his grandparents lived in located around 20 miles east of Gainesville, Florida:

The outhouse was west of the house and outside the dining room window was the garden. Grandmother had a garden. I can remember seeing Vic hurry through the garden to the outhouse. A picture in my mind of that, you know. I was so amused at him. I was fascinated by the fact that you had to take a magazine or something with you, although they usually had a Sears Roebuck catalog out there.<sup>22</sup>

Roger Childress of Dobson, North Carolina recalled his outhouse “was about 300 feet from the house between the feed barn and the corn shed.”<sup>23</sup> Brenda Tunnell from Watauga County, North Carolina recollected that her family’s outhouse “was good way from the house, out the kitchen door and across the stepping rocks that ran the whole side of the house and up a little hill. Just an old, gray weathered, wooden building, nothing fancy.”<sup>24</sup> In an interview with a Florida squatter for the Federal Writers’ Project, the woman described her family’s housing conditions as:

We do want a comfortable home but this one fair. This was a[n] old broken down barn when we came here but we fixed it up. This is our sitting room and bed room too I guess. Right back of you is the kitchen and the little boys sleep in there. There is a bench in the yard with a pump and tin pitcher and basin, and back of that is the outhouse.<sup>25</sup>

Sometimes privies were connected to the woodshed, washhouse or another building close to the farm house, such as a chicken or pigpen [Image 1.18]. Family gardens and agricultural plots usually neighbored privies. This location provided easy access during work and for harvesting fertilizer for the crops. [Image 1.19]. Privies also marked a place within the home landscape for other types of waste disposal. Dumped food scraps accumulated near or in the structure and refuse [Image 1.15], such as bottles, pots, and other items, were often discarded into the pit.

While outhouses were not always connected physically to other structures, these buildings were connected in daily use patterns. Yet, public health campaigns not only tried to separate the building from other buildings, but they tried to separate the privy from its other domestic functions. Rockefeller’s men advocated covering the pit and digging a new hole to place the house on top of rather than emptying the contents and using them for fertilizer, for instance. As the campaigns expanded, the outhouse stood out in New Deal photographs as a solitary figure on the landscape, with the government-

built structures self-standing and usually far removed from other outdoor domestic structures. While the campaigners' attempted to interrupt domestic patterns for disposing and even using the waste, many southerners reconfigured their behaviors to fit the new structure. One example is that people disregarded health warnings and continued to use their waste as fertilizer for crops, by undertaking a process called honeydipping to remove the waste and place it on their agricultural plots.

In the efforts to sanitize privies, sanitarians often argued that privies could help create more moral and modern behavior from the users. The idea that modern life demanded separating people from their waste was a principal assumption in the campaigns. As such, health advocates worked to separate the privy building from other domestic activities. Today modernity and outhouses are conceptually antithetical; however, especially in the early campaigns, sanitary privies were seen as a means to bring the mindset of modern sanitation to the South.

Early public health advocates, particularly, looked down with condescension on southern living habits. In many writings, these doctors and officers railed against southerners who preferred using the woods to relieve themselves rather than the privies the campaign constructed for their families. In the mid- to late- 1910s, local sanitary inspectors often surveyed homes that had new privies constructed, taking note of whether the new privies were used or if there were, as one doctor called it, “promiscuous defecation[s].”<sup>26</sup> In medical journals, doctors mocked southerners for using the woods. Some even designed privies that lacked housing or seats, suggesting that these rural folks would be more inclined to use a sanitary privy if it resembled the “bent sampling”<sup>27</sup> or

“squatter’s boards”<sup>28</sup> they were use to using for their toilet. These doctors also wrote incessantly about the need for instilling a “privy sense”<sup>29</sup> in these southerners.

One form letter sent to residents of the Eureka Community of North Carolina, the health officer, Mary H. Livermore, reminded residents the outhouse was part of the home; thus it should be clean, “comfortable and inviting.”<sup>30</sup> This hygienic and welcoming vision for the privy went against southern assumptions about using the toilet—that it was, in some ways, an unpleasant but necessary part of life. One person whom I contacted, who wanted to remain off of the record, even recalled disliking their family’s outhouse and continued using the woods for they felt the outhouse, with its walls that trapped the wasps, spiders, and incessant odor, was a dirtier structure than the woods. Other families as well refused to use the privy and if one was constructed, used it for other more pressing purposes—like grain storage. In many ways the sanitary concerns of public health advocates were divorced from those of daily users. While sanitary advocates pointed to the dangers in groundwater and soil contamination, daily users dealt with a small building that contained both a pungent stench and stinging insects often several times in the course of the day. Even as this outbuilding’s usage varied from person to person, many wove this structure into their outdoor domestic spaces.

By and large, southerners did adopt these structures into their domestic spaces and reinterpreted the ‘sanitized’ aspects of the designs in terms of their needs and values. Privies assimilated into the physical space and daily use-patterns of outdoor domestic activities. Clotheslines attached to the outdoor structure; night soil was harvested for fertilizer from the pit or pail; children played games or pranks in and around the structure [Image 1.20]; men stored clothes, tools and even grains within the walls; and provided all

residents with a space for privacy, at least for several moments. As sanitarians intended, the privy became for many, the place within the domestic sphere for residents to relieve themselves; but in larger sense, the privy marked a place within the yard for other waste materials as well—since food and other refuse often was discarded in and around the privy’s spot in the yard.

In many ways, outhouse occupies a peculiar place as a funny but profane, nostalgic but diseased, and ‘necessary’ but ridiculed structure in American domestic, cultural and political landscapes; thus, it presents me with a complicated but rich, common but commonly-overlooked subject for my thesis. Over the next three chapters, I hope to place these privies within the historical context of the campaigns to renovate or build sanitary privies across the South from 1902-1942. The second chapter will detail the efforts of the Rockefeller Sanitation Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease, and their relatively unsuccessful attempt to effect any material change in the landscape until their final year. Building upon this late campaign model, the third chapter will explore the efforts of the mid-1910s and 1920s, led by increasingly expanding state health board of North Carolina, though with help and funding from Rockefeller’s International Health Board. The fourth chapter will explore the capstone to these efforts, the New Deal—as well as the growing presence of privies in the popular photography and satire of the era.

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#### PERSONAL INTEREST AND ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION

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My own interest in outhouse came about, as interests often do, through an intersection of academic interests and life experiences. As an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin, my primary interests were in environmental history, medical

history and political philosophy. Before beginning my graduate studies at University of North Carolina, I wrote a paper about the Rockefeller's hookworm eradication campaign, and was fascinated by the effort to build sanitary outhouses throughout the southern states to combat the disease. During my first semester in graduate school, I read Michael Ann Williams' work, *Homeplace: The Social Use and Meaning of the Folk Dwelling in Southwestern North Carolina*. Williams' book explores social usages of different housing types in southwestern North Carolina using oral history interviews to illuminate how traditional domestic use-patterns were translated into new structures while new use-patterns also developed in older structures. In the book, Williams focuses mostly on the main dwelling, but also discusses outbuildings—some in more depth, like the kitchen, others in passing, like the springhouse. However, the outhouse was curiously absent from her discussions and nowhere to be found in the pictures. Did these residents have outhouses? And if so, why were they not in the book? Both questions, I will return to shortly.

Compounding this interest in sanitary infrastructure was a study abroad trip I took to Kenya during my studies as an undergraduate. While there, I, perhaps strangely, took particular interest in the sanitation infrastructure of both urban and rural areas, as I lived in both Nairobi and 'frontier' town called Marigat. In both places, the small and large differences between toilet facilities there and back in the United States provoked me to consider the social and political causes that led to these differences. Given that bathrooms are places which I frequented numerous times over my stay and the infrastructure here in the United States varies much less than that of Kenya, I found my curiosity provoked by even slight differences in design, amenities, and use-patterns.

Both of my host families boiled water for me (though not for themselves) because in both places mediocre designs and problems with graft rendered the municipal water services unreliable. My family in Nairobi had an indoor toilet, though it was a seweried toilet bowl with no seat, which was flushed only when needed and often by pouring water into the bowl, since municipal water would turn off inexplicably from time to time. In Marigat, we had a very large, concrete outhouse that on one side had only blocks on which to squat over a hole; on the other side was an enclosed area in which one could shower with a bucket of water from a nearby water spigot or sometimes the stream. Both families' facilities were very clean, but neither conformed to American conceptions of bathroom comfort.

Even as I write this little bit about my host families' toilet facilities, I feel a slight tinge of worry, as if revealing this information opens my families to judgments about their social standing, hygiene and even civility. Yet, in Nairobi, I found that the seat on the toilet was not as needed as it had once seemed in America; and in Marigat, I discovered that squatting over a privy hole was enjoyable in a way that I lack words to describe. It just was.

Perhaps this worried feeling is the reason that folklorists and many others in the humanities hesitate when it comes to tackling the issue of outhouses. Hygiene is a touchy subject; discussions about hygiene raise anxiety about decency, morality and the nature of civilization. In writing this thesis, I had trouble myself in wording ideas, and quoting the campaigners in a way that would not read as an indictment against southerners. The insinuation that someone is unclean can be damning and toilets are a visible and familiar symbol for suggesting such bodily dirtiness. These connotations perhaps explain one of



the reasons that outhouses led the charge for sanitation in the campaigns, both materially and rhetorically. Similarly, these implications helped privies emerge a well-loaded and resonant device for the satire critiquing the New Deal. As a loaded structure, perhaps too this explains the hesitation to mention let alone discuss this structure in more depth, creating a narrative of omission in regards to academic discussion of privies throughout much of the humanities (with a notable exception to historical archeology).

Williams' *Homeplace* and John Vlach's *Back of the Big House* are two works in folklore that focus on southern domestic spaces.<sup>31</sup> Both explore the intimate home spaces and landscapes of their research informants and subjects. Williams, however, never mentions or even provides a picture with a privy while debunking larger, derogatory assumptions about southern, mountain homes. Vlach uses Historical American Building Survey maps, which do show the location of privies in the plantation landscape, but notably ignores the structure in the "Outbuildings" section in the book which explores the usages of many other domestic outbuildings. Within the discipline of folklore, I did not find research on the South that significantly referenced privies.

For other regions of the country, I found a little more acknowledgement of the structure. *Everyday Architecture of the Mid-Atlantic* briefly refers to privies and mentions sanitation campaigns impacted the structure in the Mid-Atlantic region of the east coast.<sup>32</sup> *The Pennsylvania German Family Farm* by Amos Long Jr. has a chapter on the outdoor privy.<sup>33</sup> And the only folklore paper I found that addressed the structure specifically was the article, "Functions of the Newfoundland Outhouse," by Gerald Thomas.<sup>34</sup> While none are extensive explorations of the structure, though Thomas

definitely does more than most, I began to wonder if there is also a regional difference in acknowledging the privy.

In many ways, my tinge of worry about connotations for my African families, translates well to similar pejorative concerns for studying the structure within the American South. In their general dispositions, both the South and the tropics were often conceived of as lacking the northern industriousness that marked the western world. Just as French philosopher, Montesquieu once claimed that tropical regions possessed an intrinsic latitudinal laziness,<sup>35§</sup> the South gained a reputation for having a similar disposition—one that would be explained in the twentieth century by the prevalence of hookworm disease due in part to the region's insanitary privies.

While little has been published in vernacular architecture studies about outhouses, vernacular architecture and folklore both tackle structures laden with regionalized stereotypes, as well as subjects once deemed too common or unfit for academic study. The study of vernacular architecture has opened up common housing topics like shotgun houses and kitchens, and research in these areas is expanding the historical and cultural record, bit by bit. So why is the outhouse on the periphery of such investigations?

Within an increasing focus on food production not only in vernacular architecture studies but across a wide array of other disciplines, outhouses also fit into these new academic trends. Certainly the sensual taste of food, its preparation and production is more interesting—and appealing—than structures of their elimination on the surface;

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§ "The heat of the climate may be so excessive as to deprive the body of all vigor and strength. Then the faintness is communicated to the mind; there is no curiosity, no enterprise, no generosity of sentiment; the inclinations are all passive; indolence constitutes the utmost happiness; scarcely any punishment is so severe as mental employment; and slavery is more supportable than the force and vigor of mind necessary for human conduct." ( 224)

however, increasingly, scholars in environmental engineering, policy and architectural design are turning their attention to both the impact of industrial farming practices and how people dispose of unwanted materials—which includes rethinking ways in which we dispose of our own human waste. While privies and bathrooms generally represent an often unmentionable biological fact of life, vernacular architecture and folklore offer unique perspectives on the built environment, and should not exclude themselves from these discussions.

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## VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

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Overall, my thesis aims to contribute to the academic study of vernacular architecture. The study of vernacular architecture broadly focuses on the type of architecture studied, as well as the approach taken in studying the architecture.<sup>36</sup> Concerning architectural types, vernacular architecture's focus is to explore—at its most basic definition—"what most people build and what they use,"<sup>37</sup> rather than prominent buildings and high architecture. Usually, as well, there is a geographic focus to the research. Though at the beginning of the twentieth century, outhouses were only located at roughly half of southern homes, the function the privy serves is universally shared by all people. With the burgeoning campaigns, privies spread more widely across the southern states, making them common in the built environment of the South, and increasingly more prevalent in representations of the southern landscape.

In approach, vernacular architecture research asks questions about the structure that are intended to crack open the built environment, to expose new meanings, new questions, and thus provide a more democratic understanding of the material landscape.<sup>38</sup> For my thesis, some pertinent vernacular questions for exploring outhouses are: Who

built the structure? What functions did it serve? Was the building typical for the residents' class, neighborhood? How was the outbuilding adapted or changed over time? By exploring the material changes and adaptations of home environments during the health campaigns of 1902-1942, my thesis will answer or at least address many of these vernacular questions.

My research on the outhouse intends to focus on the political pressure exerted for the construction of these privies. Some recent research has explored the larger impacts of political decisions and policies upon the built environment. For instance, *Building Suburbia* by Dolores Hayden delved into the history of the various social movements, industries, inventive architects, and government policies that helped produced the patchwork of suburban developments in this country.<sup>39</sup> Such large narratives, however, often give credits only to larger trends, bigger names, and vast geographical regions. My thesis tends toward the more personal, everyday nature of the structure, and the tangible impacts these campaigns had on small towns and rural communities. While intending to cover the whole southern region, Chapter III particularly focuses on the state of North Carolina, as a regional example of the campaigns. Hayden's work is powerful and informative in examining major causes of patterns found in the built environment, which provides readers with a broad sweep of residential development patterns. My thesis trends more towards the emphasizing the politics of everyday domestic architecture, emphasizing a closer and more personal look at one aspect of domestic infrastructure.

Although John Vlach's book never delves into the role of privies within the plantation landscape, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* is useful conceptually in developing my arguments about how power dynamic are etched

into the domestic landscape as well as subverted. In the work, Vlach sketches out ways in which plantation owners structure the landscape to signify overwhelming power over his slaves. However, Vlach pieces together from historical documents, ways in which these slaves also expressed and staked out a claimed for themselves within the landscape, even as they lacked basic human rights.

Though his study is confined to borders of the plantation, my work is broader than his tightly focused account. Since I am exploring a building's place within many domestic landscapes, rather than a specific type of landscape, power relations are not as easily defined; but, similar parallels can be drawn as well. For instance, Vlach defines the landscape carved out by black slaves as a "reactive expression"<sup>40</sup> to the efforts of the plantation owners to express their power architecturally. What sort of reaction did southerners have to these privies, and was it evident within the landscape? Similarly, in *Vernacular Architecture*, Henry Glassie contends that "the landscape is shaped by willful action,"<sup>41</sup> not just the action of the powerful, as the story often goes, but a willful action by everyone, not just those with more power. Examinations by people like Hayden point the finger of achievement and blame solely at those with the most power, but the landscape is a web of activity, construction and reconstruction. As Vlach's and Glassie's contentions stress, even amongst the least powerful, wills can be expressed and power can be gained.

The study of material culture and particularly vernacular architecture offers a pertinent lens for examining the outhouse. While exploring the designers and advocates for the structure, the study of vernacular architecture provides an avenue into exploring how this common structure was woven into the social fabric of the domestic sphere and

everyday life. Other works, such as William Heath's *The Patina of Place* illustrates the reinterpretation of structured space in the mill town architecture of New Bedford, Massachusetts.<sup>42</sup> Similar to sanitary privies, whose architecture was believed to engender moral and civic behavior, workers in New Bedford subverted the intended use of their buildings by living cramped in one room in order to rent out others in their house for example. Similarly, southerners by and large adopted sanitary privies into their lives, incorporating the structures into their domestic usage and spaces.

In contrast to some of these works, with my background in history, my approach to the outhouse will be much more historical in nature than Vlach's or Glassie's. My goal is to place privies within the historical context and progression of the campaigns working to construct this outbuilding, while presenting the impact, embrace, and ramifications these campaigns had on domestic landscapes throughout the South, as well as their popular representation.

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## MEDICAL HISTORY

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As an undergraduate history and history of science major, my thesis owes a great deal of debt to the work of medical historians. Since Charles Rosenberg's *The Cholera Years*, new scholarship has forwarded the discussion of medical and public health history; thus, bringing a clearer view on how scientific discoveries, other intellectual ideas, government policies, and cultural trends intermeshed as people were affected by and worked to combat epidemic and other diseases.<sup>43</sup> Besides Rosenberg's *The Cholera Years* and his informative, introductory essay "Framing Disease: Illness, Society and History," John Ettling's book, *The Germ of Laziness* provided me with extensive historical look the effects of Rockefeller's Sanitary Commission on the South's public

health infrastructure.<sup>44</sup> Not only providing an extensive history of the work done by the Commission, but Ettling's work contextualized the campaign historically in the region. William Link's *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* and Alan I. Marcus's "'The South's Native Foreigners: Hookworm as a Factor in Southern Distinctiveness'" proved helpful in these regards as well.<sup>45</sup>

However, thus far, the historical approach at examining these sanitation campaigns usually details the transformative aspects of the work bureaucratically, but what about their impact in regards to the built environment? Or, was there a conservative reaction to these progressive efforts as well?

Structurally, Ettling's work only touches upon the effects of these campaigns on the landscape. My work aims to explore the impact these and later campaigns had on the built environment. Through the lens of vernacular architecture, and more broadly material culture, my thesis will explore of the historical changes in the landscape that took place during these efforts to sanitize the landscape. While Ettling's work is engaging and extensive, my thesis will hopefully provide readers with a more textured approach to examining the material changes occurring during this time period. Henry Glassie criticizes history scholars for focusing heavily on rupture and not continuity, arguing that "a better history would speak of an engagement of wills, of the interaction among traditions, each fraught with value, all driving toward their several versions of the future."<sup>46</sup> Through focusing on outhouses, one can see how these structures multiplied and changed due to the aggressive campaigning of public health progressives, yet one can also see how these buildings emerged, not from thin air, but from vernacular architecture in the region and in many cases were built by families engaged in some way by the effort.

Scholarship in medical history regularly points to the tension between safeguarding one's individual liberty and the government's obligation to provide a safe environment. This tension rests at the heart of many public health debates. At its root, freedom consists of two simple, but frequently contradicting concepts—the freedom to do something and the freedom from something. In the context of public health, this tension plays out specifically when a person's actions threaten the general health of the community. But who decides that is it important to protect an entire community from their own actions? Moreover, how best can governments ameliorate and fulfill their obligations?

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#### HISTORICAL ARCHEOLOGY

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As the lone proactive investigator of privies within the humanities, historical archeology provides great insights into the built environment. In James Deetz's work, *In Small Things Forgotten*, he reminds us that the majority of history is not written, but lived, and material objects provide a window into that history.<sup>47</sup> By looking at the everyday instead of the extraordinary, new questions will arise, new narratives will unfold, and new perspectives will come into fuller view. As such, historical archaeology offers insights into privy vault architecture, contents, hygienic practices, locational practices, and other information concerning the building.

*View From the Outhouse: What We Can Learn from the Excavation of Privies* includes several essays on privies from all over the country during different time periods. Two essays in the work focused on southern privies—"Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Privy Architecture and the Perception of Sanitation" by M. Jay Stottman, which is about Louisville, Kentucky privies, and "The Parity of Privies: Summary Research on Privies in



North Carolina” by Linda F. Carnes-McNaughton and Terry M. Harper.<sup>48</sup> In the collection’s introduction, Katherine Wheeler states that she and the other authors “feel that privies are important features embodying ideas about cleanliness, health, beauty, and privacy, as well as providing data on diet, socioeconomic status, division between households, construction methods and maintenance behavior.”<sup>49</sup> These collections do provide a great deal of information about architecture and use-patterns. My thesis though questions some of their assumptions, particularly about how the architecture “embodi[es] ideas about cleanliness [and] health”<sup>50</sup> and how the examination of only pit privy contents informs researchers on concepts of waste and use-patterns by people who used other types of privies (or did not use a privy at all).

More explicitly, within the book, M. Jay Stottman presents a case study of Louisville privies. Using city ordinances and studying the architecture of the privy vaults in different parts of the city, Stottman argues that one gains fuller understandings of people’s conception of sanitation. My thesis in some ways critiques this view of privies—showing the architecture of the privies, particularly the vaults, often had more to do with medical experts’ conceptions of sanitary than the users of the structure. My thesis aims to show that though there was structural change in the receptacle for waste, some of the old uses of privies, night soil harvesting, for instance, continued; as did some previous preferences, such as using the woods rather than a structure, thus, turning privies into domestic storage space rather than a toilet room.

In “The Parity of Privies: Summary Research on Privies in North Carolina,” historical archaeologists, Carnes-McNaughton and Harper explore the various privies noted in statewide surveys. They present readers with both the physical contents and

cultural interpretations of the privy pits, as well as a cursory overview of statewide sanitation efforts. Yet the article fails to address the complications both open-back privies and pail privies present to their research strategy. Such as, what does a lack of a privy mean for the archeological account of people's understandings of sanitation and health?

While the information presented in the historical archeological survey is important for my research and further research on privies, neither of these essays dwells upon the political context of these campaigns and impact of the politicization on the domestic environment. In both essays, the authors tend to lean heavily upon the recommended city ordinances and state boards of health to define privy types and trends, but these are just the tip of the iceberg in designs, use-patterns and widespread understandings of health and sanitation. In contrast, my thesis will attempt to illustrate the politics and power dynamics involved of waste disposal infrastructure.

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## PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIES

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Throughout my thesis, I intend to use pictures of outhouses—including medical journal models, early campaign's photographic record from the Rockefeller Archives, and the more politicized and professional photography of the Farm Security Administration-Historical Section (as well as a few other governmental photographs from the late 1940s). In the fourth chapter, I explore the impact these campaigns had on visually establishing privies as a notable figure in the southern landscape—using photographic examples from the FSA-Historical Section. The book, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* by Cara A. Finnegan and the essay “Begrudging Aesthetics for a New South: The Farm Security Administration Photographic Project and

Southern Modernization, 1935 to 1943” by Stuart Kidd guided me through the FSA photograph’s historical, political, and rhetorical contexts.<sup>51</sup>

Throughout the thesis, however, I have chosen to present many photographs of the Rockefeller-led as well as New Deal era campaigns. By using these images, though, I understand that I am presenting a political image in it of itself, geared to convey a certain narrative, of progress, of poverty, etc.

In *Back of the Big House* Vlach’s uses pictures of the structures to better communicate to the readers the built environment he portrayed. Though my photographs are more politically charged than his Historic American Building Survey (HABS) photographs—as many of the pictures that I use were taken in the context of the campaigns—these photographs do not only convey these political narratives. Relatively few oral histories that mention the campaigns of the New Deal exist as do very few firsthand accounts recalling the campaigns of the early twentieth century. Thus, taken within the context of both the era and purpose of each photograph, these pictures do provide in fact us with a window into the efforts. My use of the photographs is not meant be presented objectively, as part of a running commentary, the way Vlach uses the images in his work. approach. Rather, I wish to provide a visual glimpse into what these changes meant to homes and dwellers within the South as well as illustrate for readers the various campaigns’ sanitary understandings and campaign rhetoric.

## II. HOOKWORM AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT: DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR SANITATION IN THE SOUTH

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### INTRODUCTION

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Though today envisioned simply as “that dear old country landmark,”<sup>1</sup> a century ago the outhouse was at the epicenter of public health campaigns in the American South. In 1902, Dr. Charles Wardell Stiles discovered an endemic of hookworm disease in the southern United States. Hookworm spread through contaminated fecal matter—hence the growing concern about privies—and caused anemia in its victims. Before Stiles’ discovery, the disease was known in different parts of the South by various names, including “ground itch,” “dew poison,” and “cotton mill anemia.”<sup>2</sup> Following his report, newspapers worldwide hailed hookworm as “the germ” responsible for what Stiles’ termed the “proverbial laziness of the poorer classes of the white population” in the South.<sup>3</sup> Though trumpeted as a disease afflicting white southerners, black southerners also contracted the disease, although they often suffered less severe symptoms from the parasite than the white population.<sup>4</sup> Seven years later, John D. Rockefeller announced his one million dollar donation to combat hookworm disease in a five year campaign across the South. Southern newspapers and politicians, however, initially recoiled from the idea; yet, in the field, the campaign quickly gained supporters.

Rockefeller's approach to eradicating the hookworm endemic was three-pronged: 1) education about disease and its causes 2) treatment for its sufferers and 3) promotion of a hygienic lifestyle—with a particularly strong focus on building sanitary privies. Surveys indicated approximately half of the southern population lacked any outhouse, let alone what progressive doctors considered a sanitary one (though, these surveys tended to focus on rural communities, rather than larger towns and cities).<sup>5</sup> In towns and cities, residents tended to use “open back” privies, which merely offered privacy to the user without a receptacle for the waste. In the rural countryside—where scores of landowning farmers and tenant farmers had no privy at all—many people simply using the woods or back of the barn for privacy. Besides the urban/rural divide, the survey Stiles conducted also exposed another division: roughly 80% of black residents compared to 35% of the white population lacked any privy facilities.<sup>6</sup>

Hookworm, however, fit neatly into larger stereotypes about white southerners. Health reformers pointed to hookworm's symptoms—lethargic behavior and pallid complexions—to explain age-old caricatures of southern dispositions. Additionally, the disease's ability to thrive in the South was due in part to the climatic conditions and soil composition—as hookworm needed tropical or subtropical climates and sandy or loamy soils to survive. Reformers, however, preferred to point solely to the South's hygienic failings and their poor living conditions as the culprit for hookworm's endemic status. While waste disposal methods contributed to the endemic, these reformers used hookworm to create a simple, self-perpetuating explanation for hookworm's presence and the southern character. In short, hookworm infection caused laziness, which led to poverty, which encouraged insanitary living conditions, which allowed hookworm to

multiply and prosper. Only through modern medicine and sanitation, reformers argued, could this circle be broken [Image 2.1]. These campaigns opened the domestic landscapes of the South to criticism as well as governance; and more pointedly, employed the privy as an indicator of poverty, morality, and civility. Thus, sanitary privies became a political vehicle by which public health advocates hoped to bring modernity and morality to the backwards South.

Both biological and social forces create disease. How diseases are understood, treated, and prevented are products of the social, intellectual, architectural, political and historical forces of the moment.<sup>7</sup> In the early years, hookworm provided outsiders with a medical explanation for reason for the southern condition and character. It also provided progressive reformers with an opening to push modern medicine—in the form of bureaucratic and sanitation infrastructure—into the South. Hookworm became a scientific indictment of southern living conditions. As such, privies increasingly became a political object of the campaigns.

This chapter explores how changes in domestic architecture reflected shifting conceptions of medicine as well as the politics of diseases. Also it illustrates how hookworm disease became the window of opportunity for progressive health reformers to institute bureaucratic and domestic infrastructural changes in the South. Privies came to embody both southern faults as well as southern progress. Structural changes in the outhouse reflected the existing vernacular architecture, as well as the new sanitary ideology. This ideology sought to separate humans structurally from their waste.

## THE EARLY YEARS AND STRATEGIES OF THE COMMISSION

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An angry flurry of editorial, popular, and governmental opposition erupted at the formation of the Rockefeller's Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease in the Southern States in 1909. Already incensed with the publicity garnered by associating hookworm disease and southern laziness seven years earlier, local papers in North Carolina referred to hookworm as "the hookworm theory," "the fad," and "the conception of ingenious minds for the injury of the South."<sup>8</sup> *Macon Telegraph* in Georgia asked, "Where was this hookworm or lazy disease, when it took five Yankee soldiers to whip one Southerner?"<sup>9</sup> And *The Raleigh News and Observer* retorted,

Many of us in the South are getting tired of being exploited by advertisements that exaggerate conditions. They are most harmful. Let us not canonize Standard Oil Rockefeller by putting laurels on his head because he seeks to buy the appreciation of the people whom he has been robbing for a quarter century.<sup>10</sup>

Northern newspapers responded by laughing off the South's negative response to the Rockefeller's plan. A *New York Times* article at the time, dismissed the southern reaction as just "the thing no northerner can understand; the incorrigible Southiness of the South."<sup>11</sup> Compared to northern standards, the South lagged far behind in education, health, and other progressive infrastructures deemed necessary for modern life and civilized behavior. Yet, to the North's astonishment, southern politicians and publications appeared indifferent these infrastructural values and their failure to meet them. Rockefeller's work depended, however, on support from political forces within the South. Ignoring the public fray, the Commission immediately began enticing southern newspapers, local politicians, state governments, and, of course, the general populace to rally behind its cause.<sup>12</sup>

Overall, the Sanitary Commission's goals were immediate as well as enduring: in the short-term, the Commission worked to inform southerners of the disease and treat the infected population; and in the long-term, they wanted to modify the bureaucratic infrastructure and material landscape in the South to prevent the spread of hookworm and other insanitary diseases. Privies could bring more modern living conditions and behavior to the American South. While this idea permeated public health advocacy for decades previous, Rockefeller was the first to put money behind the effort in this region of the country.\*

Though they initially condemned Rockefeller's idea, most newspapers and state governments united behind Rockefeller's campaign shortly after the effort began. One major reason was the decision to funnel money and operational suggestions through the municipalities and State Boards of Health while allowing states to claim credit for the campaign's successes.<sup>13</sup> While successful almost immediately in drawing interested crowds, doctors, and local officials, the campaign struggled to really produce material changes into the region.

The Commission had little internal infrastructure upon which to build their campaign. Southern boards of health were little more than skeletal structures that funneled money to areas after epidemics or natural disasters ravaged parts of the state.<sup>14</sup> Municipal sanitary infrastructure was almost nonexistent. In order to spread the word about hookworm disease, the Commission embraced the idea of using traveling

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\*Florida, however, proved exceptional, in that they initiated their own hookworm campaign before Rockefeller's philanthropic adventure; however, like the Sanitary Commission, much of their early effort was on diagnoses and treatment rather than privy-building. Like much of the rest of the South, Florida's board of health focused on privies after the initial hookworm treatment campaigns. (Ettling, 122-124; various *Florida Health Notes* from the 1914-15.)



dispensaries (along with other itinerant but exciting events) to build interest in public health in rural communities. These events swept into town for several days and treated local residents to exhibits, films, and lectures about the parasite and ways to prevent it as well as providing medicine for hookworm sufferers.<sup>15</sup> With little sanitary infrastructure existing in either urban or rural areas, sanitary privies became the advocated method for sanitizing both landscapes.

Permeating these campaigns and medical literature at the time were linkages between morality, civilized behavior and a hygienic home. Late nineteenth century health journals in the South drew similar connections; however, the traveling dispensaries were the first widespread effort to employ this language in order to intrigue the general southern populace into learning more about hookworm disease and its causes. The Commission's traveling dispensaries, historian John Ettling argues, had a feel that closely resembled "an old Southern tent revival."<sup>16</sup> Rather than just rhetorically employing religious language for sanitation, these revival-like dispensaries "carried the campaign to the people of the South as never before but also translated its message into a language and a ritual that they could readily appreciate."<sup>17</sup>

Dispensaries usually swept into towns for several days, drawing people from miles around to take-in the full day medical spectacle. Before the dispensaries arrival, the sanitary inspector and assistants plastered the town in posters advertising the free, incoming dispensary. At one dispensary in Mills' Springs, North Carolina, the dispensary's microscopist set up a table lined with specimens for testing and bottles containing worms previously recovered from patients following treatment. In the morning, the head doctor preached to locals about the effects of the disease, particularly

how it stunted mental and physical growth in children. Women sobbed, samples were tested, and people who tested positive were called up to receive treatment. Then the doctor explained how hookworm and other diseases were spread through insanitary conditions, which was followed by a rendition of “Onward Christian Soldiers” and other church songs. More lectures, treatments and demonstrations ensued. After a break for a picnic lunch, the similar activities continued until nearly five in the evening [Image 2.2 – 2.5 are of these types of dispensaries].<sup>18</sup>

In these events, as well as later campaigns, health officers often cited Deuteronomy XXIII 12 and 13<sup>†</sup> to situate the sanitary disposal of human waste in biblical language.<sup>19</sup> Microscopes, charts, demonstrations, films, pamphlets and exhibits showed the dangers of hookworm and extolled the virtues of sanitation, explaining how families could construct their own sanitary privies at their homes in order to protect their family. Overall the traveling dispensaries accounted for over a million examinations and treated nearly a half million southerners across the region, accounting for approximately 69 percent of the hookworm sufferers treated by the Commission [Image 2.6].<sup>20</sup>

Though the dispensaries were the favored tactic, the Commission worked to communicate information about hookworm and their sanitary ideology to the masses in other ways. Regarding privies, many schools in Mississippi sent literature home with students for their parents describing proper construction methods.<sup>21</sup> In Virginia, the Norfolk and Western railways invited a spokesman, Allen Freeman, aboard the *Better Farming Special* with other spokesmen from the State Agricultural Department in a series

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<sup>†</sup> 23:12 Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad:  
23:13 And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, *when thou wilt ease thyself abroad*, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and *cover that which cometh from thee*:

of whistle-stop tours across the state, allowing Freeman to display both a hookworm exhibit and model of a sanitary privy [Image 2.2].<sup>22</sup> Dr. Oscar Dowling, head of Louisiana State Board of Health, transformed two donated railroad cars into traveling exhibits and all train companies in the state agreed to transport these cars around the state free-of-charge. Dubbed “the bug car,” the “microbe special,” and the “Gospel of Health on Wheels,” these trains displayed their health information—using exhibits, models and motion picture films—about hookworm and proper privy construction as well as other information concerning health and hygiene.<sup>23</sup> North Carolina detailed construction designs and important hygienic features of sanitary privies in their *Bulletin N.C. Board of Health*; and like other states, health officers gave lectures and distributed free literature detailing proper outhouse building methods at the traveling dispensaries.<sup>24</sup>

Lacking bureaucratic infrastructure through which to funnel their materials, the Commission used dynamic events to wow and inform the populace. Compared with past efforts, this public health campaign was unprecedented in its size and outreach in the region. As such, these linkages between unsanitary privies and civic and moral failings were more widely disseminated than the earlier attempts in health journals from the late nineteenth century.

The Commission wanted to help the South by providing modern structures, which could serve as examples of morality and civility. Bureaucratic structures disseminated medical guidance and information while physical structures, such as privies, helped separate southerners from their waste. Current understandings of hookworm rested largely on understandings of the southern character, and southerners’ apparent aversion to national standards of cleanliness. For instance, when a New York physician was asked in

1905 if he expected hookworm to make inroads in the state, he answered that New York's population was safe unless it "goes barefoot and forgets to take baths for three years or so."<sup>25</sup> By building and using privies (which campaigners referred to as instilling a "privy sense"),<sup>26</sup> the campaign believed southerners could make their way out of the woods and their primitive ways.

One example of this mindset was the measurement system used for the surveys taken during the effort. The Commission devised a rubric for determining a district's sanitary levels by inspecting the type(s) of outhouse(s) found at the residence or in the community at large. Stiles developed this measurement system for the Commission,<sup>27</sup> though variations were sometimes used:

Class		Index No.
A	Water carriage of Marine Hospital Barrel (L.R.S.)	100
B	Watertight and rigidly flyproof privy	75
C	Watertight, closed in the back, not rigidly flyproof	50
D	Closed in back, surface privy	25
E	Ordinary open in back surface privy	10
F	No Privy at All	0

Using this system, local officers inspected the privies and determined what class each privy fit into according to the breakdown. From there, the index score was tabulated for the whole town. Through this formula, the Commission could track the impact of their work in each town. Notice that the open-back privy was considered more sanitary than no privy at all. It is hard to imagine, however, that burying one's waste in the woods could be less sanitary than using the same location again and again without any method for disposal.

In short, reformers saw outhouses as a structure by which modernity could be inserted into the daily lives of the general populace in the South. While an insanitary

privy could be modified, a family with no privy meant more explanatory work for the campaigners. Excrement was a foul part of nature that modernization and sanitation could eventually eliminate from daily life. As Dr. Benjamin Washburn told a woman's club in Wilson, North Carolina several years later during in a lecture on sanitation, "'Man's progress is largely measured by his increasing control over natural conditions and natural forces,' and the result is that we find the more primitive a people are[,] the more they are influenced by natural conditions.'" <sup>28</sup> Thus, privies, even in the worst of conditions, provided sanitarians with a modicum of hope for control and eventual improvement.

While only one part of the Commission's efforts, for many public health officials, the Commission crystallized outhouses as a vehicle by which to bring both modernity and moral salvation. Medical journals and doctors both expressed excitement at the transformative powers sanitary privies could have ridding the South of biological, moral, and civic ills. For the general public, the connection between disease, poverty, and outhouses began to emerge more coherently due to the political might of the Commission's work. The Sanitary Commission, however, had difficulty in their decision on what type of sanitary privy they should advocate.

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#### SANITARY SUGGESTIONS FOR PRIVY ARCHITECTURE

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In 1910, Charles Wardell Stiles, the man who discovered hookworm in the South, suggested three varying models with pails, buckets or drawers replace the open-back privy architecture [Image 2.7]. <sup>29</sup> To force compliance and insure sanitary standards with the waste, Stiles recommended both laws and infrastructure. In rural districts, Stiles argued for enacting mandatory privy laws that monitored soil pollution, forcing rural

residents to own a privy and burn, boil, ferment, or bury no less than 300 feet away and downhill from the water supply their night soil (with a special note not to use it as fertilizer unless it was treated boiled or fermented in a septic tank, a highly unrealistic suggestion). Urban districts, Stiles suggested, should extract a \$3 to \$5 annual tax to pay for night soil collection and furnish the waste receptacle as well as disinfectant for the outhouse.<sup>30</sup>

With the help of other engineers at the U.S. Public Health and Marine Hospital Service, Stiles developed another design, the L.R.S. privy, which was much more self-reliant. This L.R.S. Privy consisted of two water-tight connected barrels beneath floor level and a zinc-lined box above the barrels. This model resembled a modern day septic tank that was connected to an outbuilding rather than indoor plumbing [Image 2.8].<sup>31</sup> Stiles trumpeted it as a true model of sanitation, hence its place at the top of his sanitation chart. However, both models proved difficult for the Commission to implement. The pail privy required enforcement of regulations and the management of a municipal scavenger service, while the L.R.S. model was extremely expensive to install; thus, the type of privy to advocate triggered many internal debates within the Commission.<sup>32</sup>

Despite its high price, however, L.R.S. model did make its way into the campaigns. Many of the dispensaries used the L.R.S. model or some variation of it as their exhibit model. In Kentucky, for instance, the L.R.S. served as the inspiration of the state's "Kentucky Privy"<sup>33</sup> [Image 2.9]. Some communities embraced Stiles' model for one-step sanitation. For example, the one thousand-resident community of Haynesville, Louisiana enacted an ordinance mandating all privies within the town boundary must be an L.R.S. model.<sup>34</sup> To the disgust of Stiles, however, others in the Commission began

arguing for pit privies towards the end of the Commission's five-year run, which were cheaper than the L.R.S. and required less regular servicing than a bucket system. The turn towards pit privies began after several years, when the Commission began rethinking their approach.

Dispensaries had succeeded at creating social inroads among both southern polite society and the general public. A Mississippi women's club, for instance, demanded as their club's one membership requirement, that the women construct a sanitary privy for their house.<sup>35</sup> Rural southerners of all stripes also turned out to see the traveling dispensaries. The Commission's accounts from the dispensaries often emphasized its positive impact on changing the landscape. For instance, in Kentucky, one sanitary inspector noted a conversation with an old farmer who told him, "Doctor, after I heard your lecture Wednesday night I went home and rolled and tumbled all night; could not sleep for thinking how unclean I have lived and am living now." In response, the inspector sent him home with instructions for building a sanitary privy.<sup>36</sup>

Despite highlighted success stories, itinerant dispensaries lacked the political muscle to complete their intended privy construction. The Commission's surveys indicated that much of their material successes were fleeting and the Commission's top men expressed frustration with the limited results. Wickliffe Rose, the administrative secretary for the Commission, wrote complaints about the lack of progress, while John Ferrell, the state director for North Carolina, privately observed, "Our work in installing sanitary privies has not, on the whole, been so satisfactory as in the treatment of infection."<sup>37</sup> Across the South, the Commission found that the methods of campaigning failed to inspire a real transformation of the landscape.

In North Carolina, like the rest of the South, the dispensaries had little influence on the actual construction of sanitary privies.<sup>38</sup> Instead of lasting and informative forces within the community, many politicians and residents found it easy to make promises in the heat of the moment, yet most lacked motivation, funding, and even the knowledge to follow through with their pledge. As such, these itinerant functions clashed with the notion of building lasting sanitary structures in the community. The Commission struggled with the issue of insanitary privies, and in its first three years lacked a successful strategy for pursuing these changes. In order to secure the gains made from treatments during the first several years of the same, the Commission needed to create models which were cheap and easy for southerners to build and local officers to explain.

Stiles conceded no ground on his push for the complete sanitation of privies. However, the cost associated with his L.R.S. privies—which ranged from \$20 to \$50 dollars—drew other health advocates’ ire.<sup>39</sup> The North Carolina Board of Health’s publication, *The Health Bulletin*, took direct aim at the health cost these sanitary models were causing their residents, stating:

Our present methods of caring for human excrement range all the way from elegant porcelain fixtures in tiled bathrooms to bent-over saplings or no privies at all, even at school houses... Various types of so-called sanitary privies have been advocated from time to time. Most of them present sanitation gone mad and common sense conspicuous by its absence. Theoretically they will all accomplish the one end sought. We must admit, nevertheless, that most of them have been flat failures. Why? Primarily because none of them were ever built.<sup>40</sup>

The author, Warren H. Booker, included two diagrams in the article—one of a rural pit privy and the other of an urban pail privy (with organized scavenger system)—and argued for a measured and sequential approach to privy sanitation [Image 2.10 and Image 2.11]. Booker also advocated for simply modifying old open back privies instead of building new models, suggesting:



All that is necessary is to make the back of the privy fly-tight by weatherboarding it, put in a floor or fill up under the privy with earth until a heavy galvanized iron can at least fourteen inches high and fourteen inches in diameter can be placed close up under the seat, and then fasten the seat top by means of hinges so that it may be raised like a lid and the can s removed and replaced from the front. Such alterations usually cost from about fifty cents to two or three dollars per privy.<sup>41</sup>

Booker's suggestions were part of a new direction for the campaign and in general, public health work in the South. While the dispensaries were exciting, four years of campaigning had not impressed real material change onto the domestic environment. The Commission could not point to a single community in which the eradication of hookworm was complete.<sup>42</sup> However, Booker's suggestions proposed that sanitary advocates use the material landscape already at their disposal to cut down on costs. This idea to remodel rather than totally replace old privy structures, might also have sounded less demeaning to residents whom the campaign hoped to engage.

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#### BEGINNING THE PIT PRIVY CAMPAIGNS

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At the end of 1913 and the early 1914, the Commission responded to these internal battles and hurdles by beginning a transition towards a disciplined focus on sanitation at the county level. The Commission started pressuring the state boards of health to hire full-time county officials for this protracted work. During the final year of the Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease, the Commission also initiated a campaign to install sanitary privies in twelve communities—three in Louisiana, six in North Carolina, two in South Carolina, and one in Virginia—as a test model for continuing the work. In these communities about half of the residents owned or used insanitary privies, while the other half had none at all. By the end of effort, 88% had what the Commission considered sanitary privies.<sup>43</sup>

For these communities, the effort to sanitize them hinged not on building L.R.S. model privies but on either upgrading existing structures or building new privies that employed pits as their method for holding waste. Rather than using the standardized can approach Booker recommended, the Commission chose to construct mostly pit privies during this campaign.

Using this model, the field directors for the Commission pressed residents to renovate existing structures or build new ones similar in general appearance to those already in the local architectural vernacular. The main difference from the current standard, of course, would be the receptacle for the waste. To renovate an older privy, a pit would be dug and lined with wood, and a seat (hopefully with seat covers) would be placed over the hole. Then the old structure would be moved on top of the pit. Dirt would be piled up around the base, to keep animals and flies from having access to the waste. Sometimes a screened (to prevent flies) ventilator pipe or hole was installed to help vent the odor.

In North Carolina, John Ferrell, the Commission's representative for the state, argued for the pursuit of privies which were not ideal, but that at least fulfilled these minimum suggestions: 1) a hole dug in ground 2) a substantial box in the bottom be turned upside down over the hole in the ground and dirt banked around the lower edge of the box 3) the hole in the box be covered when not in use 4) the box be moved from time to time and be filled with dirt. Ferrell also argued that privies should be located a decent distance from the spring or well, and geographically below either water source so as to make the possibility of pollution negligible depending on the soil composition.<sup>44</sup> The old privy structure simply provided a shelter for these new privy bases the Commission built.

For residents who lacked an old housing structure, the method would be the same. Housing for the new privy was of little concern to the local officials. As Ferrell remarked, “this privy may be built out in the bushes or it may be within expensively constructed walls.”<sup>45</sup> Thus many homes, particularly those belonging to poorer families, were left without housing for their new sanitary privy. In general, the housing was of little concern to the Commission so long as the receptacle was sanitary. In a critical review of the project which Stiles undertook in order to highlight the failings of this approach, he noted that residents in the Philadelphus and Hallsboro communities in eastern North Carolina called these “umbrella privies.”<sup>46</sup> He claimed this term referred to the fact that these “privies are exposed to public gaze, sun, rain, wind,” and cited this response as an indication that no one used these types of privies [Images 2.14, Image 2.16, and Image 2.18].<sup>47</sup>

During these campaigns, sanitary officers each were assigned a specific community where each set up a local office [Image 2.21]. Once there, inspectors conducted sanitary surveys to document, among other conditions, the state of each family’s privy and tested residents for hookworm disease. From there, local inspectors worked with the community to treat hookworm as well as convert each home’s old privy into a sanitary model or build a new structure entirely. In the Red Oak community of North Carolina, the lone local official, Dr. M. E. Champion, worked for well over a half year alone surveying homes, building privies, analyzing specimens collected, and conducting office work. Six months into the work, Dr. Champion had conducted 425 examinations in this 1100 person community. This was an overwhelming positive reaction, as it accounted for over 90% of the residents he contacted. In these

communities, landowners with tenant houses, the tenant families, health officers and microscopists all contributed to the construction of sanitary privies. Upon completion, maps often were drawn up that documented the sanitary condition and hookworm infection rate of the town before and after the work [Image 2.22].<sup>48</sup>

Despite the implications of mass sanitation, great variances in sanitary scores, architectural structures and even receptacles used remained in the townships. During Stiles' highly-critical review of the work in his visits to the Philadelphus, Cape Fear, and Hallsboro communities of North Carolina, he noted great variety in types of privies in these communities. He documented the presence of pit privies with a house, pit privies without house ("umbrella" privies), surface privies, and "receptacle" privies, which included can, box, and L.R.S. privies.<sup>49</sup> Stiles makes note of brick, cement, and wood base structures, screened and unscreened vents, and varying types of privies in differing stages of sanitation.<sup>50</sup> In the Cape Fear Township, for instance, a black family's open-back privy was simply closed, raising the sanitary score to a 25 from a 10. Stiles also recorded other methods for sanitation that owners used. One privy built by a white landowning family of six in Cape Fear, Stiles noted, had a concrete base and the husband used kerosene to eliminate the fly and mosquitoes larvae breeding in the pit.<sup>51</sup>

During the work, local officials took pictures of the efforts in progress within the community. From spending time looking at the pictures and their captions, one gets a better sense of the work occurring in the community. Additionally, one gets a better sense of the continuing variation in architecture in each community, as well as the relationship these privies had within the home [examine Image 2.12 – Image 2.22].

Using localized and sustained pressure, the Sanitary Commission provided a new model of health infrastructure at the municipal level for effecting local changes.

However, Stiles lodged many complaints about the architecture and management of the efforts. Among Stiles' complaints was the inadaptability of pit privies to adapt to all terrains. In Hallsboro, for instance, Stiles wrote that the community was "practically, ... a large lake on which there is some floating earth; people living on this ground bore or dig wells into the lake for their water supply, and the Commission [now] has provided them with other holes (pit privies) for their excrement."<sup>52</sup> Stiles pointed to local residents who knew that this receptacle architecture was a danger to the community, and as such, had built pail privies before the campaign. One was a black tenant, whom Stiles claimed had "a highly developed 'privy sense'" and used a box privy.<sup>53</sup> When Stiles asked why he chose the box privy, he noted that the man replied "that the level of the water of his well would rise several feet very suddenly following a rain, and that if he used a pit privy he would drink his fecal material. He preferred a box privy so he could carry his fecal material to a distance."<sup>54</sup>

Besides recurring complaints about pit privies' structural faults, Stiles argued that southerners could not be trusted to make the sanitary decisions in using pit privies required. At one point in his report, Stiles railed:

I have never seen one of them moved when it was full. I have heard of one that was moved when it was full. Until it can be shown that a family that has not privy sense enough to clean a privy at intervals with a little work, requiring only one person to perform it, is willing to move the pit privy when it is full (this moving requiring the labor of two of three people), the argument that a pit privy can be moved to a new hole does not seem so convincing as might first appear.<sup>55</sup>

The Commission itself acknowledged that these pit privies were far from perfect. However, in their final annual report, the Sanitary Commission pressed its case for their new practical strategy for sanitation,

Although it is certain that the pit privy greatly decreases the danger from human excrement when this privy is placed in sandy or clay soils and at considerable distance from the water supplies, yet like other types of privies which do not destroy or remove the dangerous bacterial life in the excreta, it is doubtless a source of danger in certain soil formations—particularly in swampy areas where drinking water is obtained from shallow wells, and in limestone regions. The State health officers, in suggesting the pit privy for farmhouses, do not urge it as an ideal privy in any sense; they are careful to explain that they accept it only on the recognized principle of public health work that complete progress is not to be looked for at a single step. Privies are of as many types as there are carpenters to build them and householders to care for them; and sanitary values are relative at best. Because they realize that this is the case, and because they see that the pit privy at its best can become an effect means of decreasing soil-pollution, practical field workers not infrequently suggest its installation. Probably the pit privy represents the highest type of sanitation that some localities will be able to develop for years to come. Here as in other phases of intensive community health work, 100 per cent. efficiency is the ideal toward which all are anxious to strive but in the present stage of human progress we shall probably have to expect somewhat less than that if we are to make any measurable advance.<sup>56</sup>

With a general unease towards human contact with human waste, the Commission never firmly pressed to establish rural laws governing night soil or town and city scavenger services. In the mid-1910s, however, some larger towns in the state pursued standardizing pail privies and scavenger services. Usually though, these services were in conjunction with a developing sewage system through wealthier (and whiter) parts of town.

Decades earlier, reformers had proposed building earth closets for urban areas, similar to those advocated in the first *Biennial Reports* in North Carolina. By the 1910s, however, northern cities illustrated that sewerage was the rising infrastructural solution for cities rather than box privies and earth closets. For rural regions, municipal scavenger services were as unpractical then as municipal trash pickup is today for areas outside of condensed population. Enforcing laws monitoring night soil were also difficult.

Consequently, once pit privies emerged as the most practical model for community sanitation within the public health movement, municipal services for excreta removal stayed on the periphery of their efforts.

Despite early stumbling blocks, the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease did produce material yields by the end of the five year campaign. Yet these results were far from either coherent or comprehensive. Townships and residences of L.R.S. privies emerged, and several towns began instituting municipal scavenger services. Even amongst the pit privy campaigns, privy architectural types, receptacle containers and sanitary levels varied widely within the community. Outside of these communities still lay swathes of unreached communities full of homes with either open-back or nonexistent privies. While the Commission called attention to the structure of the outhouse, and influenced the designs of some, great variety still existed even amongst the structures deemed sanitary by these health workers.

## CONCLUSION

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In the Commission's first three years, the strategic use of dispensaries succeeded in many other ways even as they struggled to effect material changes in the domestic landscape. To begin with, these dispensaries provided the first cursory education many southerners received about hookworm disease or sanitary privy construction. More broadly, Rockefeller's Sanitary Commission expanded the idea of what the government's role in the citizen's lives could be. Rather than the remedial and weak departments of the past, Rockefeller's Commission offered a model for prevention that allowed the southern states more access into its citizen's private lives and buildings while providing southerners with more protection from disease. One 1914 report out of Granville County

(NC) explained this growing political ideology as the “health to the individual is inherited, but to the nation acquired.”<sup>57</sup> This tension, inherent in all public health policies, between private rights and public good, tilted evermore towards the right of the government to protect what it considered the public good in the South.

Though the campaign struggled at first with effecting material changes on the landscape, in the end, their decision to pursue pit privies illustrated that the Commission favored practicality over its ideological goal. Larger understandings of medicine, biology, modernity and even policy-making, influenced the designs of the privies. Outhouses became the first concerted step in governmental efforts to separate people from their waste, even as many private scavenger services and individuals continued to market and use night-soil for agricultural fertilizer. With increased rural electrification in the following decades, indoor plumbing and septic tanks represented larger manifestations of this trend towards separation.

The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease’s efforts had a significant impact on the South’s public health infrastructure, and set in motion strategies for continuing these changes. Its successes within the material landscape paled in comparison to its expansion of bureaucratic infrastructure and in general, interest in the public health. Yet, the localized sanitation campaigns in twelve southern communities proved to be the architectural and strategic model for future sanitation campaigns. In part this strategy came not by radically transforming the landscape, but by adding onto the regional vernacular privy forms—with pits, ventilators, screens, and self-closing doors—rather than models like the previously advocated dry earth closet or even the much more complicated to construct, L.R.S. privy.



The Commission and its supporters successfully utilized hookworm disease as a window of opportunity to begin a progressive campaign for reform in the South. The progressive reforms pressed by the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission as well as those by many other progressive interests challenged the sense of local autonomy most communities in the South were accustomed. Embodied in these campaigns and their vision for a sanitized southern landscape were these reformers understandings of good governance, modern medicine and general notions of cleanliness. Underlying these efforts, historian William Link argued, were also “paternalistic attitudes on the part of the reformers...[since] [t]hey believed that the solution to widespread ill health would come from outside the rural South, from professional, modern medicine. They viewed the object of reform—the culture and society of the rural South—condescendingly, and their efforts to change local conditions often ran squarely against long-standing traditions of rural independence and autonomy.”<sup>58</sup>

Throughout the Commission’s five years, many campaigners expressed disdain for southerners and southern patterns of living, which many saw as immoral, uncivilized and backwards. While trying to provide southerners with better home facilities, these reformers often analyzed and belittled the supposed beneficiaries of the work. Stiles, for instance, inspected the households for what he called, “promiscuous defecations.”<sup>59</sup> He as well as other advocates also bemoaned southerners’ lack of a “privy sense.”<sup>60</sup> And the architecture of the privies that they advocated reflected their belief that southerners lacked any ability to order their own lives or take responsibility for their own waste.

Even after five years of campaigns many rural southerners still preferred to use the woods or back of barns rather than privies—for financial, preferential, and

agricultural reasons. Following the discovery of the hookworm endemic, Stiles toured the South giving lectures about hookworm and sanitation. He recalled that at the time, “there was a great popular prejudice in rural districts against privies. The point of view was that not only were they unpleasant places but that nature's way of disposing of excreta was to expose it to the rays of the sun or to hide it in the brush.”<sup>61</sup> However derisively Stiles conveys southern conceptions of sanitation, Stiles’ comment also reveals how these health advocates’ understandings of disease were shaped by the way in which they viewed the natural environment.

While many southerners were content to use the bushes or use their waste later as fertilizer for their crops and gardens, sanitarians believed that in modernization lay the ability to shake humanity free from the shackles of a life led in ‘nature.’ To these reformers, the unsanitary handling of human waste presented a major hurdle to human progress. The outhouse became a way to bring modernity to the South through sanitation. Thus the outhouse became a political object for these campaigns—both symbolically and materially—emphasizing the intrinsic good of systemized control over the natural environment

In M. Jay Stottman’s historical archeology study of privy architecture in Louisville, he focuses heavily on the context of city ordinances, as if it would just a matter of time until these Louisvillians conformed to these sanitary ordinances and hygienic logic.<sup>62</sup> As my chapter demonstrates, though, the closed pit receptacle for privy architecture illustrated politically predominant ideas rather than the region’s popular conceptions of sanitation at the turn of the twentieth century. Even as support for the campaigns grew among the general population, the Sanitary Commission and subsequent

campaigns still lacked the power to totally transform the South into their vision of a sanitized landscape. Which in turn begs the question: In what ways did southerners exert their will upon the architecture of this increasingly politicized domestic structure?

### III. THE PRIVY CAMPAIGNS: THE POLITICS OF SANITATION IN THE SOUTHERN LANDSCAPE

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#### INTRODUCTION

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Though the Sanitary Commission accomplished little materially in the South, they did erect a model for creating widespread change in the landscape. These mounting efforts increasingly politicized southern domestic landscapes more and more. In applying the term politics to the campaigns, I intend to emphasize the specifically governmental aspects of politics as well as a broader notion founded on societal power—which defines politics as the “use of intrigue or strategy in obtaining any position of power or control.”<sup>1</sup> At the forefront of the sanitation campaigns waged throughout the region, privies became a vehicle for pressuring southerners to adhere to dominant values of sanitation, and for making the case that good governance required a more active political hand.

In just five years, the Sanitary Commission had laid the groundwork for establishing a more active government. Rather than the remedial public health efforts of the past in the region, the traveling dispensaries and community sanitation models illustrated that government could provide more preventive care for its citizens. After its dissolution, state governments, with the help of a new Rockefeller philanthropic organization, the International Health Board (IHB), began localized work in reshaping domestic environments across the South. In North Carolina, like other southern states,

the embrace of this model was accompanied by rapid expansion of the state's health bureaucracy. With more funds, the state board of health assigned local officers to counties across the state, charging them with enlisting the local political hierarchies, community organizations and the public at large in creating a more sanitary landscape.

This chapter explores the overtly political nature of the campaigns, as they became more strategic, more widespread, and more effective. While tactics, policies, privy models and success rates varied throughout the region, similar campaigns happened across the South. For focus, this chapter will concentrate on the state of North Carolina.

The model for localized campaigns set forth by the Sanitary Commission proved productive across the state. Over just a few years, sporadic local ordinances gave way to a comprehensive statewide statute. With the backing of local influential people, community organizations, and parts of the general populace, local health campaigns generated sanitary privies statewide. As a testament to their successes, many places that lacked a single pit privy before were architecturally dominated by that design at local campaign's conclusion. And though other sanitary designs were used, pit privies presented the easiest way for mass community sanitation, particularly in rural areas.

As campaigners saw more success, their efforts became more extensive. Sanitary advocates and doctors used hookworm to explain southern laziness and to call for political reforms at the turn of the twentieth century. As new understandings of diseases and their vectors developed, more parts of the home appeared vulnerable to infection. The presence of malarial mosquitoes and typhoid-carrying flies called for southerners to install screens on windows, ditch their yards, and close their wells. Pellagra led to investigations of southerners' diets and gardens. Surveys and research scrutinized the

constituent parts of many southern houses, and used their examination to illustrate the South's failure to meet the new standards of disease-prevention. In turn, campaigners pressed for more campaigns. By deconstructing the home in this manner, health advocates also translated these domestic health concerns into moral, civic, and economic terms.

The health advocates vision for sanitation impacted the landscape in many ways. Yet, just because we know the narratives of the powerful does not mean they are only ones who shape the landscape. John Vlach poignantly argued this point in his work, *Back of the Big House*. Vlach illustrated that even in a plantation landscape where there is a wide gap in power—between white ownership and black slavery—black slaves still expressed themselves creatively, even claiming ownership over parts of the land. The hierarchical and domineering landscape pointed to the power concentrated at the main house. However, slaves created another world within that place—one that was practically invisible to outsiders.

Compared to power visible in a plantation, the narrative of power inherent in the construction of many outhouses is relatively unseen. Today in jokes, depictions and memories, the privy appears as a benign yet quintessential structure in the narratives of both a backwards and a bygone countryside. In the 1910s and 1920s, by contrast, the campaigns couched the privy in the rhetoric of bringing modernity to the South. Health advocates examined the structures and pointed to moral progress as southerners became more interested or pressured to join in their cause.

Recent historical work has placed these reformers and their efforts into narratives about progress in the field of public health. As we start to examine the efforts, however,

it is important to remember Henry Glassie's democratic claim that the "landscape is shaped by willful action,"<sup>2</sup> that is through the assorted wills of all individuals. While true that the Sanitary Commission and these subsequent sanitary campaigns increasingly gained political power, the power needed to effect change on southern landscape was relatively disperse. Campaigners relied on the cooperation of local bastions of influence—politicians, bankers, mill-owners, and others—to encourage these reforms. They also needed the support of the community at large to accomplish any of their goals. Though campaigners habitually undermined southerners' habits, houses, and morals, many southerners embraced these campaigns in various ways—from volunteering to build privies for their neighbors to simply designing, building and incorporating an outhouse into their domestic space. Others contested or ignored the campaigns all together. This amalgam of wills created a hodgepodge of designs in North Carolina as southerners began to stake out their own power during these sanitation campaigns.

By examining pictures and analyzing the records, various interpretations of the outhouses begin to emerge. The goals of this chapter are twofold: the first is to examine the privy-building campaigns to unveil the political nature of this domestic structure; and the second is to look at the ways in which people asserted their own power by both ignoring and incorporating these domestic structures into their lives.

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## CAMPAIGNING FOR PRIVIES

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The successes of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission had far-reaching ramifications on the public health infrastructure across the South. State funding increased exponentially with the work of the Commission. The year the Commission formed, 1909, was also the first year the North Carolina legislature provided the Board

with first full-time health officer, W.S. Rankin. With Rankin's addition, the board of health's annual budget quintupled to \$10,500 that year. By 1918, the board received \$144,000 from the state, as well as additional appropriations from the federal government. Using these funds, the Board minted nine bureaus which focused on specific parts of the state's health—hygiene, vital statistics, engineering and education, tuberculosis, medical inspection of schools, epidemiology, county health work, infant hygiene, and venereal diseases.<sup>3</sup>

At the close of the Sanitary Commission, however, the southern landscape showed little improvement on a whole in regards to privies. Various open-back designs dominated the vernacular landscape [Image 3.1 – Image 3.6]. Yet, the intensive campaigns that the Sanitary Commission waged in twelve communities proved to state governments that material changes could occur. More forcefully than during the Commission, outhouses became a political object for southern governments and for Rockefeller's new philanthropic venture, the International Health Board (IHB). Their strategy hinged on increased funding for localized campaigns that mobilized local figures and community institutions to engage the populace in home sanitation. With these efforts, the government and the IHB reached further into the lives of the citizenry in their effort to shape and monitor domestic spaces. Privies remained the most prominent and successful target for their efforts for control, though other parts of the house soon received more hygienic attention.

Stepping more definitively towards intervention, county officers in North Carolina began setting up offices in communities across the state [revisit Image 2.20 for a picture of a local office in the Hallsboro community]. Unlike the traveling dispensaries,



whose goal was distributing health information and medical treatments, these new efforts to construct sanitary buildings took more time, manpower, and coordination. State directors realized they needed their local officers to engage and pressure the public in order to construct their vision.

To do so, local officials first needed to understand their working environment and speak with those living within it. Thus, county officers focused on one community before moving to the next within their district. While in the community, sanitary officers paid visits to people's homes, requested stool samples, surveyed their home environments, offered treatment, set up appointments to help construct sanitary privies, and tabulated the data.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, they developed partnerships with local organizations and engaged the local populace in their work. These undertakings included: forming coalitions with civic groups—both white and black—to promote home sanitation;<sup>5</sup> exacting deals with local banks so they would not loan to people without proper sanitation;<sup>6</sup> mailing form letters to community residents;<sup>7</sup> pressing communities to create local ordinances or citizen agreements demanding sanitary privies (and sometimes scavenger systems);<sup>8</sup> giving lectures at local community centers and schools;<sup>9</sup> displaying magic lantern slides, microscope exhibits and film screenings;<sup>10</sup> quantifying the threat of disease for residents using morbidity and mortality statistics [Image 3.7 and Image 3.8];<sup>11</sup> holding community barbeques where sanitation was discussed;<sup>12</sup> seeking donations from the local, economic elite for materials needed in privy construction;<sup>13</sup> giving war savings stamps to the school districts showing the greatest improvement in sanitation of its homes;<sup>14</sup> sponsoring essay writing contest on home sanitation at local schools;<sup>15</sup> enlisting the help of black ministers,

schoolmasters, and other community leaders to help better health and hygienic conditions in the black community;<sup>16</sup> offering incentives such as gold watches or tool sets for the resident that built the most outhouses for their neighbors;<sup>17</sup> employing local workers, like carpenters, for privy construction [Image 3.9];<sup>18</sup> and, helping residents build new or remodel old privies to hygienic standards themselves [Image 3.10].<sup>19</sup>

Benjamin Washburn was the local health organizer for many counties across North Carolina. During his efforts in Wilson County, North Carolina from 1916-17, he detailed some of his daily activities to meet these sanitation goals in letters sent to the International Health Board. As an idea of the daily routines of the campaigners, as it related to privy construction, here are parts of one letter:

Our plan for having these [sanitary privies] put in is to make a house to house canvass and find out whether the family wished to do the sanitary work themselves or to have us provide a carpenter and trench digger at .25 or .10 cents per hour. If the family wishes to build or remodel the old privy we get them to set a date when we will come and show them how to best do the work. At the time of this canvass we also survey the privy and determine the amount of planks, nails, etc. it will take to model the privy and get the owner to have these by the time the carpenter reaches the home. After making a schedule of this kind we hope to secure a carpenter and be able to give him continuous work for several weeks until he gets the village and community cleaned up. In fact, it may develop that we can give him continuous employment for the duration of the campaign. I am following this plan because I realize that it will not mean much simply to have got the village authorities to pass a sanitary privy ordinance. If we leave the community before the privies are actually built I doubt if they would ever be built—they certainly would not all be built...

We have also built small sized models of the various sanitary privy types and have them in sand boxes in the office. Many country people are coming in to see these and get specifications. I am making the proposition to examine and give treatment for hookworm disease to any family living outside a regular community, if the family will first put in a sanitary privy. I think we will have many privies built outside the regular communities on this proposition...

In speaking of the privies, I forgot to tell you that I am having a number of privy tops made at the sash and blind factory. These are nicely made of good lumber, 14 by 16 inches and consist of a thick board with the curved hole similar to a regular toilet seat. Over this is a hinged flap to make the cost—.30 cents—and can be placed on top of a box to make a privy vault or can be nailed over the old hole after the privy has been walled up behind and made sanitary in other ways. Many people prefer to buy these to having a carpenter come and put a hinged flap over the seat in the old closet.<sup>20</sup>

Like the Sanitary Commission's concluding community effort discussed in the previous chapter, these sustained and localized campaigns provided more pressure on local communities to sanitize their privies. In turn, these tactics proved helpful in translating some form their vision for a sanitized landscape into the actual southern landscape [Image 3.10 – Image 3.13]. The Pitt County health officer noted, for instance, that in the Chicod Township, which is about 10 miles southeast of Greenville, North Carolina, he saw a great deal of success because of the interest and cooperation of both the general population as well as more powerful members the community. In the 1918 yearly report for the county detailing the campaign's progress, he remarked:

[T]hese [local] people have co-operated very well and an active campaign among the colored people of the county for the general sanitation has now started. The director has had the owner of the property to promise lumber and nails to build several sanitary toilets on farms, where they never have had any kind of toilets. This lumber has been sawed and delivered and some of these have already been built. The type of toilets have (sic) varied from the log toilet, chinked with dirt up to the grooved and tongue lumber. These people are now taking an active part in all health activities and I think a great deal of good will be accomplished.<sup>21</sup>

With increased state and federal support, as well as the IHB's aid, these new state-led campaigns marched from community to community, producing sanitary change over much wider swathes of land than the work of the Sanitary Commission. For instance, these before-and-after maps of the Seaboard Community in Northampton County, North Carolina illustrate the profound impact these efforts had on the landscape [Image 3.14 and Image 3.15].

These efforts owed a great debt to the work of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission, not only for the tactics which these campaigns used as models, but more largely on the interest the Commission spurred towards expanding government's role mediating public health. Similar to the Sanitary Commission, as well, these campaigns worked off of the established systems of power in southern communities—they worked

to convince landowners to provide supplies for tenant privies, persuaded mill owners to construct sanitary privies for their workers, and encouraged local, white politicians to improve the conditions of black districts within their communities, in part for their own neighborhood's safety.

Though officers occasionally noted landowners who still lacked a privy even as their tenants built for themselves sanitary models,<sup>22</sup> on the whole, privies or other forms of toilets (such as sewerage connections or indoor plumbing) often reflected the owner's political and economic power within the community. Rather than tackle these issues at the root of economic disparities, like the Sanitary Commission, these campaigns concerned themselves with their end-goal of simply improving sanitization en masse.

The sanitation work also adopted and intensified the Commission's architectural trends. By and large, these campaigns built new, sanitary pit privies or remodeled older, open-back structures with fly-proofed, sanitary pits, ventilators, and lids on seats. This design was the preferred architecture for privies across the rural regions of the state. For larger towns, local officers worked with town officials to advocate a pail privy system with an organized scavenger service. Often too, these pail privies were remodeled from older open-back privies, retrofitted with self-contained model, which would be emptied on a regular schedule set by the municipal scavenger service [Image 3.16 – Image 3.18]. With approximately 85% of the state's population residing in rural areas in 1918,<sup>23</sup> though, the presence of pail privies paled in comparison to the thousands of pit privies installed across the state's countryside.

While not completely abandoning other designs, the campaigns in North Carolina placed pit privies at the top of their agenda and pushed these privies into domestic landscapes across the state. As a report out of Pitt County in 1918 declared:

The Pit type of closet has been the type which we have advocated and which we have erected in the rural districts. These have been constructed from various materials from the log house up to the brick...We have toilets that have practically cost nothing up to the expensive types, but they are all the pit type. [For example: Image 3.19 and Image 3.20]<sup>24</sup>

Many other counties reported similar results. Tabulations for the spring of 1920 in Davidson County, North Carolina showed that over 1800 pit privies were installed across all but one of the seventeen townships in the 579 square miles of the county. Towns in the county ranged in size from 1906 to 57 residents. Larger towns, like Lexington and Thomasville, with populations of 1906 and 1835, respectively, also had sewer systems onto which the campaigns residents tried to connect residents. And in Lexington, the campaign also installed 128 septic tanks. Yet the bulk of the work in these larger towns was still in pit privy construction.<sup>25</sup>

Before the work began, 2800 Davidson County homes had open-back privies, 6 had pit privies, 953 had another type of privy (most likely pail privies), while 3034 had no privy whatsoever. Of those using other waste disposal structures, 24 people had septic tanks and 701 had sewer connections. During the last survey, however, 1832 homes had pit privies, while the open-back privy numbers dwindled to 1294. Though 2751 residents remained without any privy, whatsoever, the final tally for septic tank users was 152 and sewer user numbers rose to 780. While pit privies did not wholly overtake other privy architecture, the impact of the campaigns was drastic. Of the 1832 pit privies, only 283 new pit privies were built, the rest (save the 6 built previous to this campaign) were fashioned from the architecture of open-back privies that already resided in the

landscape. Though the newly pitted privies closely resembled the older open-backs from afar, a new architectural community took root in Davidson County. With approximately a quarter of Davidson County's 7219 residences possessing pit privies as of April 1920, the campaign produced a tangible change in the domestic environments of many Davidson County residents.<sup>26</sup> As this architectural form was pressed into these communities, reformers also hoped to be providing non-participatory residents with a model for future construction.

As the example illustrates, the strategic turn towards advocating pit privies by the Sanitary Commission in 1913-14, proved fruitful for the subsequent efforts in the mid-1910s and the 1920s. Across the state of North Carolina, local health officials instituted similar approaches to privy sanitation, though tailored by degrees to reflect each district's terrain, population and responsiveness of both the community leaders as well as ordinary residents. Before 1914, pit receptacles for privies were rare in the South; however, within a decade, pit privies became a common architectural design for these outbuildings on the southern landscape. The rapid emergence of this architectural adoption into the landscape arose from the aggressive campaigns waged by the growing health state bureaucracy, with the aid of IHB. However, local campaigns effectiveness also depended a great deal on the receptiveness of the communities in which the campaigns took place.

Between 1909 and 1914, the Sanitary Commission used traveling dispensaries to inform the general populace about hookworm disease. These dispensaries wowed crowds, preached the gospel of health and sanitation, and treated hookworm sufferers. These tactics, though, proved ineffective in realizing their vision of a sanitized South. With their final effort to institute material change in communities, the Sanitary

Commission developed a model off of which later campaigns could build. The budding health bureaucracy at North Carolina's state level, in partnership with Rockefeller's new philanthropic venture, the International Health Board (IHB), used many of the Sanitary Commission's methods to effect change in localized areas across the whole state. While not as focused or comprehensive as the Sanitary Commission's model, health officers forged campaigns in counties across the state, adding new, mostly pit privies into the regional architectural vernacular style statewide.\*

These campaigns were inherently political, as they tried to persuade residents to conform their private outhouses to the sanitary advocates' understandings of progress and disease. Strategically, local officials utilized people with power in the communities—local banks, landowners, and politicians—to exert pressure on residents to sanitize their privies. On a more personal level, these local officers tried to engage people in the work with events that ranged from lantern slides of domestic diseases and pamphlet of statistics of local morbidity and mortality rates to local barbeques and gold watches for the residents who built the most privies free-of-charge for his neighborhood. More successful than Sanitary Commission in effecting change, (though obviously indebted to their work) these campaigns began to realize some form of their vision upon the domestic landscapes of the South.

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\* It is worth noting, however, that the ensuing campaigns stopped building the so-called "umbrella privies" relatively quickly. In the photographs I have found some in 1915. In a 1927 article, I found one doctor advocating for this type of construction, or something similar. (W. R Culbertson, "The Sanitary Privy," *Southern Medical Journal* 20/8 (August 1927), 657.) Other than that, I found little other documentation of the campaigns continuing to advocate this type of privy design.

## DECONSTRUCTING THE SOUTHERN HOME

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Rhetorically, both the Sanitary Commission and these later campaigns espoused a similar worldview—on notions modernity, progress, and sanitation as well as an often mean-spirited paternalism towards southerners. That paternalism, historian William Link argues, arose from their deep-seated belief that the solution to the South’s problems “would come from outside the South, from professional, modern medicine.”<sup>27</sup> Sanitary advocates saw their vision for the South clearly, and saw their work as aiding southern residents in reaching a civic maturity and more moral life. In 1910, the North Carolina State Board of Health ran a cartoon depicting a child, saddled with the ball and chain of hookworm disease, struggling to ascend a structure representing “Progress-Prosperity, Health-Happiness, [and] Useful Citizenship,” which rested on a foundation of “modern sanitation” [see Image 2.1 from Chapter II].<sup>28</sup>

Another example of this vision comes from the town of Wilson, seven years later, where under the direction of Benjamin Washburn, the town framed their sanitation efforts using the same civic rhetoric one would expect for the concurrent World War I. Asking residents for their help, the local newspaper informed their readers that

The Town of Wilson proposes to open a vigorous campaign next week against its allied enemies—flies, mosquitoes, [and] sickness. Every citizen of the town is expected to enlist in ruthless warfare on its common foe. We propose to destroy their breastworks, and cart them off. We propose to fill up their trenches and plant flowers on them. Won’t you show your colors for a cleaner, healthier Wilson?<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, Lenoir County’s Dr. Mitchener organized “triple drive” to teach area residents about hookworm, typhoid and bad teeth prevention, stating

Be sure to learn the date and the nearest school house to you. Come out to get rid of your burdens. Every one that is treated is helping to lick the Germans. A part of patriotism at home is “Keeping Fit to Serve.”<sup>30</sup>



Like the Sanitary Commission, these later campaigners often pointed to moral justification for sanitary privies, like the biblical passage in Deuteronomy.<sup>31</sup> These early progressive reformers clearly saw their work as moving the South towards more moral and civic behavior.

Their goals for sanitation were similar as well, but the Sanitary Commission began with less methodical tactics and less infrastructure off of which to work. While doctors at traveling dispensaries and other venues did point to open wells and screened windows as part of a better home environment, privies stood out sharply in their efforts to sanitize the home in these earlier efforts. Overall, though, the Sanitary Commission set in motion the circular cause and consequence for understanding how hookworm, the home, and economic conditions of the South created and correlated with one another. With poverty conceived of as an individual failing, usually due to indolence,<sup>32</sup> hookworm provided the perfect explanation for the causes of the southern charter—in short, hookworm caused southern laziness which caused poor home conditions and poverty, and these conditions allowed for hookworm disease to flourish.

Later campaigns built upon these correlating conceptions, and tried to convey to the public the socioeconomic impact sanitation could have for their family, particularly with an installation of a sanitary privy. For instance, one memorandum on making a pamphlet called “From the Life of a Little Boy” called for the abutting plates to show contrasting images: one portrayed rundown privies with poverty and disease, while the other equated sanitary privies with prosperity. Those suggestions were:

Plate 22: Picture of a well-screened, well built, fly-proof and watertight privy.

Plate 23: Picture of the “bushes” and the poor, neglected privy with pigs and chickens having access to it.

Plate 24: Picture of a family, clean, neatly dressed though poor, a plain house.

Plate 25: Picture of a family sickly looking, clad in rags, dilapidated house in background, all surroundings speaking of poverty.

Plate 26: Picture of a new though plain little house, everything orderly, good privy in the background, picture giving prominence to house itself.

Plate 27: Dilapidated, run-down, neglected house, dirty surroundings, neglected privy in background.<sup>33</sup>

The message was clear—a cleaner house meant a family could pull itself into a higher socioeconomic class. As the campaigns burgeoned over the mid-to-late 1910s, campaigners turned their focus, not just on the sanitation of privies, but to methodically creating a sanitary living environment. Screened windows and porches, closed wells, and well-drained yards were some of the changes public health officials hope to enact in domestic landscapes. As germ theory and scientific research provided new insights into the carriers and cures for other disease, such as malaria and typhoid, these ailments became preventable, as hookworm had several years earlier.

Thus, sanitary advocates re-imagined features of the home that would keep each disease's vector, the mosquito and the fly, respectively, out of the house and yard with porch and window screens, closed wells, yard drainage and well-made privies. Concerned with pellagra, officials entered into home gardens and family diets, as they researched and offered dietary remedies for this disease. Meanwhile, efforts to curtail hookworm and other diseases relating to soil pollution continued as well. These diseases also were not lone contagions, but rather conspiring threats that comingled in insanitary home environments. Just within the privies, for instance, sanitary designs needed to protect against soil and water pollution with a sanitary waste receptacle, as well as include screens and self-closing lids to prevent flies and mosquitoes from breeding and spreading disease.

As these sanitation efforts expanded their focus to include the whole domestic landscape during these post-Sanitary Commission campaigns, officers on the ground entered the counties, expounded on the insanitary natural and manmade conditions [Image 3.21]. An example of an officer's reading of a domestic environment is this 1918 description of Pitt County, North Carolina:

[The houses are] poorly constructed without proper ventilation and light. They are often located close to swamps and there is usually much standing water about the houses and yards. The yards are usually very dirty and poorly kept, flat with no drainage. The toilets if they have any is (sic) of the open-back type and usually located in the yard where the rains wash the fecal matter into the yard and eventually into the well. The wells are unprotected and the surface water drains into them and they become contaminated by fecal matter and filth from the yards. This is about the description of the average abode of the tenants in this county.<sup>34</sup>

Local officers then worked to provide these localities with architectural remedies for better community health—such as screened windows and porches, ditched yards, closed wells, and better privies [Image 3.22 and Image 3.23]. These efforts hinged on the goal of safeguarding people's basic elements of survival—shelter, water, and food (including the latter two's elimination) from the threats of hookworm, typhoid, malaria, diarrheal diseases, and other ailments. Like the Sanitary Commission, these later campaigners achieved this goal through management and control of the natural environment—though now on a larger and wider scale.

Although protecting people from disease is a noble goal, by rendering most southern homes grossly insanitary, sanitary campaigns undermined people with relatively little political power already. Implicit in targeting such an intimate, personal, and necessary structure as the home is conveying the idea that these southerners lacked the basic aptitude to care for themselves. Advocates did this by analyzing all constituent parts of the house, and then pointed to how each element did not conform to the parameters of modern sanitation. The imagery used by the campaigns portrayed southerners as

antimodern, disorderly and unclean while their sanitized vision illustrated a visible hygienic order and insinuated an elevated class status. It also provided more political power for the campaigners, whose work made the case that these people could not care for themselves. Like the Sanitary Commission, these campaigns were interested in modernizing the South through domestic architecture. Where privies once dominated the interest during the Sanitary Commission, in these campaigns privies became one major component towards meeting this larger goal.

Another way that health officers deconstructed houses was by using increasingly intricate home surveys that measured sanitation. This growing trend began with the Sanitary Commission, as early surveys of privy-type and ownership expanded to the more personalized and descriptive data collected by Sanitary Commission of privies built in twelve communities across the South in 1914. By 1916-17, the Wilson County Public Health used “Home Report Cards” as did other localities for measuring the sanitary conditions of their districts homes [Image 3.24].<sup>35</sup>

By 1922, the State Board of Agriculture in North Carolina commissioned a study of farmers in the state, because of the increase in tenancy statewide and in region as a whole. Included in the survey were depictions of the houses and waste disposal methods of 1000 residences from the three regions of the state—the mountains, piedmont, and coastal plain. Dozens of inquiries filled the report. Queries ranged from the percentage of families who throw out their garbage or dishwater in the yard, to the percentage of homes whose wells were within 20 yards of privy or barn. Others asked if the house had newspapered, plastered, or other walls or screened or broken windows. This survey utilized other indicators besides the home in trying to quantify the social and economic

conditions of farmers; but, parts of the survey owed a great deal of debt to the analytical methodology of the health campaigns.<sup>36</sup>

By deconstructing southerners' homes to illustrate poverty, sanitary advocates helped create a framework for quantitatively and qualitatively measuring southern poverty. Privies figured rather heavily in this survey's measurements, as five survey questions dealt specifically with the structure.<sup>37</sup> This tactic helped the campaigns muster more political capital in order to further sanitize the southern landscape; however, again, it also politically undermined southerners, as it positioned both residents and their homes well below the nation's newly-designated sanitary norms and out of touch with their values. These surveys quantitatively furthered the idea that the southern home was in need of a sanitary renovation. Rooted in the idea of controlling natural conditions, sanitary advocates could point, piece by piece, to problematic items of domestic architecture. Advocates argued that the parts of southern houses lacked order and, that by enacting their vision for betterment, the human condition there could progress as well.

The surveys were a backhanded way to criticize southern homes, yet these reformers did not shy from explicitly disparaging the southerners their work aimed to help. Critiques varied from mild and oblique to scathing and blunt, but inherent to each was the sentiment that many southerners lacked the ability to care for themselves. During the intensive campaign in Wilson County, Washburn used personal visits to inquire about "the prevalence of chronic constipation and to find if this condition bore any relationship to the sanitary conveniences of the home [i.e. privies]."<sup>38</sup> Washburn argued that the results were conclusive and presented his findings before the North Carolina Medical Society in May 1917. At another conference, L.L. Lumsden bluntly

stated that it did not “seem too much to expect of human intelligence to anticipate that eventually our people generally will become ‘yard-broke’ and discontinue the now common practice of depositing their excreta in a dangerous and disgusting manner on and in the ground within a few feet of their kitchen doors and their sources of water-supply.”<sup>39</sup> Lenoir County’s (NC) district officer, J.S. Mitchener, tersely offered, “We put as our task to carry out[;] the aim in this unit [is] to teach that flies and open privies make us filth eaters and grave diggers.”<sup>40</sup> Additionally, others singled out black residents in their complaints, with one doctor blaming their sanitary conditions on his assumption that they were both “ignorant and superstitious.”<sup>41</sup>

With their derogatory attitude towards southerners, their homes, and their lifestyles, public health campaigners, in many ways, disempowered southerners by establishing them as people who lacked values which they ought to have—namely those relating to their understandings of modern sanitation. These values, though, were shaped by newly explained medical theories and discoveries. During these campaigns, the southern domestic landscape became a political entity, measurably filled with buildings and people who could not live by the newly set standards. Using this paternalistic framework, health advocates continued to flex their growing political muscle as they pushed their understandings of progress upon the landscape.

This emerging framework of poverty coupled with the late successes of the Commission made its case that governmental intervention was needed to remedy the South’s symbiotic medical and social ills. Earlier understandings of poverty tended to place responsibility for one’s lot in life on the individual’s behavior. The Sanitary Commission and later progressive efforts pushed an abridged framework—lobbying the

idea that if southerners and their governments eliminated disease from their homes, their position in life would thusly improve. While obviously concerned with alleviating poverty, the Sanitary Commission and later sanitation campaigns did not focus on tackling larger causes of poverty in the South—particularly the large disparity of economic power in the region.

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### REGULATING AND INTERPRETING THE outhouse

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In all their work on cleaning the house, the privy represented the largest threat in the minds of the health advocates and remained their sanitary goal number one [Image 3.25]. One consequence of using localized campaigns was that they produced a patchwork of different policies, statutes and ordinances across the state. Besides those variations, the levels of enforcement fluctuated from region to region and local campaigners varied too in their advocacy towards certain aspects of sanitation. These variations were materially evident on the landscape. As Dr. Fred C. Caldwell of the International Health Board noted during his travels through North Carolina that “the variations in type of privies indicated either that there had been several campaigns, or, that in this state several types of privies were recommended.”<sup>42</sup>

In 1919, the state took steps to make privy ordinances more uniform. In February, a law went into effect in North Carolina to enforce the sanitation of privies—defined as any disposal system except approved sewer connections and septic tanks—that were located within 300 yards of another residence. This law entitled, “An Act to Prevent the Spread of Disease from Insanitary Privies,” made outhouses the only building in the domestic sphere to be regulated by the state.<sup>43</sup> As late as 1940, this law continued

to provide the only statewide legal authority the North Carolina State Board of Health had for regulating private housing.<sup>44</sup>

This legislation furthered the efforts to standardize and sanitize this domestic structure. Dedicated solely to explaining this bill, the July 1919 *Health Bulletin* pronounced,

When reduced from legal terms to plain English, the law simply means that the open back surface privy will no longer meet the requirements and demands of modern civilization; and it must be remodeled and converted into a sanitary type that the State Board of Health approves.<sup>45</sup>

The law required not only proper privy construction, but also levied a tax on inspected privies. In order to enforce the structural and financial requirements, a placard declaring the outhouse “Insanitary; unlawful to use” or a license tag permitting its use had to be fastened to the structure. With the license came instructions for the proper maintenance of the privy and a fee of forty cents.<sup>46</sup> In order to renovate an existing unacceptable outhouse or construct a new sanitary privy, *The Health Bulletin* provided a list of different types of privies, including their pros and cons, which were acceptable under the new law. The “improved privies” included: the Earth Pit; the Box and Can; Tank Construction Employing the L.R.S. (Lumsden, Rucker and Stiles) Principle; Chemical Privies; and, the Double Compartment Concrete Vault.<sup>47</sup> Though this law did not standardize a particular type of privy, it did mark the beginning of statewide legal standards for the structures in the state and around the country.<sup>48</sup>

The new regulations strove to control many aspects of the outhouse. These included: the privy’s location—“Get it as near the residence as is consistent with esthetic and sanitary principles”; specific dimensions for new privies; ventilation, as supplied by “a metal or wooden pipe with a minimum cross-sectional dimension of 3” for one hole,



4” for 2 holes and, one additional ventilator...for each additional hole or two holes;” seat covers that self-closed; and surface drainage requirements that raised the ground under the privy by at least 6 inches.<sup>49</sup>

As the Board of Health became more organized and well-funded, sanitary outhouse designs became more specific and intricate. Efforts to educate the populace and sanitize the cities and countryside by ridding both of the unsanitary outhouses enabled the spread of these newly regulated models throughout the state.

Some advocates called victory and place themselves at the center of the triumph. One doctor remarked on the material ramifications of the law in the *Southern Medical Journal*, boasting:

Some time ago a member on the State Board of Health was on a train coming into North Carolina from an adjoining state and was occupying a seat immediately behind an apparently wealthy and cultured woman and her daughter. The board member was attracted by an exclamation on the part of the older woman when she called out to her daughter, “Oh we are in North Carolina now.”

“How do you know, mother?” responded the daughter.

“Don’t you see the pretty little houses? You do not see them so nearly everywhere except in North Carolina.” [...]

Now these pretty little houses did not just grow there like the golden rod by the roadside; but they are the result of a law requiring the construction of an approved type of sanitary privy at every residence in North Carolina within three hundred yards of any other residence. The plan has been carefully thought through and systematically and rigidly enforced.<sup>50</sup>

Rather than systematically and radically changing the landscape, the privy law provided a new pressure point for exacting changes in the domestic landscape. The material result of these reforms varied community to community, household to household instead of blanketing the state with regulation models. For instance, several months after to law was enacted, on December 18, 1919, Dr. Fred C. Caldwell traveled to Kingston, North Carolina, where noted,

The privies were interesting for at least three reasons. The ventilators were made of any sort of pipe that could come within reach of a negro hand and were often fantastic. In a few instances the inspector had evidently placed faith in promises for we saw licensed privies without seat covers. It seemed quite evident that a privy building campaign had stopped for some cause inasmuch as we saw pits under open backs filling up with cans and trash as well as fecal material and some untouched open backs in the same block with well built privies having lace curtained windows.<sup>51</sup>

The condition of the privies changed little within the month, as another visitor looking to see the work of the Public Health Administration in the state, Dr. John H. Hamilton noted on January 24, 1920 that,

We first went out to the negro section of the town and inspected number of privies. Most of these had been repaired under the provisions of the new state privy law. Some of these privies were little short of ridiculous. One of these carefully flyproofed privies had for a ventilator a 1 ¼ inch gas pipe. A considerable number of them had a “licence (sic) pending” sign tacked on them when it seemed that it would be impossible to so repair them as to make them sanitary. Such are probably the necessities under the provisions of the law which makes it necessary to collect sufficient fees to enforce the law...<sup>52</sup>

The law did lay the groundwork for aiding the campaigners physically alter these structures, but not with all-encompassing and systematic force for which campaigners hoped and claimed. Yet, the law illustrated the growing reach of the government into the domestic spaces of their citizens, especially in small towns and cities. Additionally, the law added to the growing pressure being exerted on southerners to redesign and clean their outhouses. As pit privies made their way into communities, in the 1910s, the presence of these new architectural types supplied a little social pressure on people who still used open-back privies. Like the surveys that deemed southerners below the scientific and social norms, the law added the additional burden of living below the legal limit of sanitation as well.

Overall, the campaigns of the mid-1910s and 1920s undoubtedly brought about degrees of change on the built environment of the South, though sanitation was still spotty. Larger communities often proved more fruitful for the efforts, as there were more organizations for health officials to work with, and more chance that one would be

interested than in small communities. Everywhere, though, variations of dissent, ambivalence, and enthusiasm were vocally expressed as well as quietly manifested on the landscape.

Some southerners outwardly contested privy building. Primitive Baptists, in particular, expressed aversions to the campaigns. Benjamin Washburn noted that in Rock Ridge, North Carolina he encountered some residents there who were “such strong believers in predestination and fatalism that they think it a sin to in any way attempt to ‘change the course of nature’ as they term it.”<sup>53</sup> Other residents resented the politicking of the health officer. For instance, a Fourth of July banner flown by the health officer in Salisbury, North Carolina read,

The economic loss to Rowan County during the month of June from typhoid fever was \$19,000. 22 cases, 6 deaths. Co-operate with your County Health Department and prevent this wastage of lives and money. IT CAN BE DONE.<sup>54</sup>

A contemptuous editorial from a Rowan County weekly paper responded to the banner with the skepticism for both its message and messenger, and responded as such:

Our recently imported so-called-health officer seem (sic) to assert that Rowan county lost during June, \$19,000 owing to the prevalence of typhoid fever. We doubt this, we doubt whether he knows typhoid from malaria and we think his office should be abolished as useless and a public nuisance. There will be sickness and death as long as the world stands. Railroad accidents are preventable but they continue just the same.<sup>55</sup>

Especially in small communities, the lack of enthusiasm such as this muddled the attempts of the local health officer in making progress in the landscape. In 1920, almost a year after the privy law passed, Davidson County’s health officers noted hundreds of new privies in the larger towns of the county. In the smaller communities, however, the numbers varied from over half of the homes in the Emmons township, to zero in the Reedy Creek community.<sup>56</sup>

Ambivalence towards using privies or paying for sanitary repairs also pervaded many southerners' feelings about the campaigns. Compared with other concerns, privies were not of the foremost importance in their most people's lives. During a resurvey of the state for hookworm in 1923, Mr. H. L. Blooser frustratingly commented on the local interest in sanitation he found on Knott's Island,

There is a definite interest in Hookworm prevention and a fairly accurate knowledge as to the means necessary to prevent the spread of this disease. This interest does not seem to have a great deal of practical application, however, as they take no very definite steps to improve the actual conditions. To illustrate, a man will, when questioned, be very emphatic in his declaration that every means possible should be taken to prevent the spread of hookworm, but when his attention is called to his own building as being a possible source of infection, loses interest or says it is good enough for him and "reckons none of his family has hookworm." As to soil pollution considered aside from the hookworm spread and as a matter of general sanitation, I find absolutely no interest at all. This is all the more striking in view of the fact that I saw only one pump while there, open wells being almost the only source of drinking water.<sup>57</sup>

E. L. Robbins, a surveyor for the health campaign in Wilson County noted similar sentiments expressed at some of the 233 households he visited in the township of Spring Hill, recalling,

I found just 233 different opinions in 233 persons...Some of the people very readily cooperate with the health work, and I have no trouble in getting them to build sanitary privies; and some say: "it is all right, and it is a good thing I reckon, but I have lived so long without these new fangled things, and I reckon I will not bother with it now. I may sometime."<sup>58</sup>

While Caldwell noted the varying acceptance of sanitary understandings in a black Kingston neighborhood, which ranged from "untouched open backs in the same block with well built privies having lace curtained windows,"<sup>59</sup> it was equally as likely was that for many residents, it illustrated a variety of financial situations in addition to life priorities. Pit privies were not cheap for many residents—lumber prices in Northampton County for instance drove costs to \$12.00 for a brand new privy, and \$4.00 for a remodeled open-back.<sup>60</sup> Those who did try to conform did so with the materials they could scrap together—such as external ventilators in the same Kingston neighborhood,

which were constructed from old gasoline pipes and caught the eye of both Drs. Caldwell and Hamilton.

But not all citizens disliked or were ambivalent about the privy building campaigns. Many people embraced the campaigner's message of sanitation, for a variety of reasons. Local officers affiliated themselves with betterment groups and allied themselves with causes many southerners appreciated, such as better baby contests. Some found themselves drawn to the civic nature of the sanitation message after being visited by a local officer. Others residents saw the campaign as a way to gain more political power themselves. In Elm City in eastern North Carolina, for example, the local newspaper ran a letter in 1917 from a local resident, J. J. Thorne. Thorne praised the goals sanitation movement and the ease of renovating one's home to fit its model,

Dear Sir:—Please give me space in your paper for a few words on the sanitary closet movement of our district demonstrated by Mr. T. P. Sharp of Elm City. In one day I tore down my old privy, dug a pit shoulder deep, rebuilt a new privy and completed the job by four o'clock p.m. Mr. Sharp helped me about four hours. In most all cases the old privy can be used, by a little labor to make the put fly tight. I was one of the number that needed to be taught, and learned the good derived from sanitation, it does seem good to me to have the sanitary closet for my family and am writing hurriedly to get back to my work to complete today a closet for myself and brother, and I wish to say to any who don't think there is any good in sanitation, just get out on the job and in a few hours you can have a sanitary closet and will not miss the time. You will be well paid for your trouble which will at once prove to you a source of real pleasure, as soon as you consider that you owe it to yourself, your family, your neighbor and [y]our district. Can't we all co-operate and work to improve and retain our health, which is a better blessing to us than Rockefeller's millions, some of which he has donated for this good and wise purpose.

Yours truly, J. J. Thorne.<sup>61</sup>

This excitement manifested itself materially as well. New adaptations on the seat and pit privy designs sprung up in towns across the state. Local residents used the guidance of the sanitary reformers to innovate and create their own designs within their home privies [Image 3.26]. Some communities experimented with creating separate urinals for boys, particularly in school privies [Image 3.27]. Another campaigner noted a

“peculiar type of pit privy built at a colored home near Elm City,”<sup>62</sup> which appears to be a rather tall and slender privy building with a ramp leading to a covered hole on the floor of the building [Image 3.28]. And while the laws worked to establish sanitary order to the design, many different types of sanitation were approved in the statute. While the hovering privies of Swain County slowly disappeared [Image 1.10], many personalized vernacular buildings remained on the landscape after they were converted into regulation pit, pail, or even L.R.S. privies.

Looking back on the impacts these campaigns had on the privies in the South, one thing is evident—politics and power generally, play a forceful role in shaping the landscape. Houses often are material representations of one’s power in society. In many ways, privies are as well. Before the Sanitary Commission, wealthy landowners had the majority of sanitary privies. But as indoor plumbing became more available, indoor plumbing began to distinguish people with power from those without. Many mill towns, for instance, provided indoor plumbing for the mill supervisors and foreman while the homes of workers had outdoor privies.<sup>63</sup> The waste infrastructure, to which one had access, also often communicated one’s political, economic and social power.

These socioeconomic and political power dynamics were materially evident in racial terms as well. The beginning of the Sanitary Commission, over 80% of black southerners lacked any sort of privy as did 35% of white southerners.<sup>64</sup> Though Rockefeller’s men worked to sanitize both white and black homes, the amount of municipal infrastructure divvied to blacks continued to be significantly less than white southerners. Towns like Kingston, had “apartial (sic) sewer system and many of the ‘open backs,’”<sup>65</sup> the latter of which were concentrated in black neighborhoods. In

Wilson, black workers were the privy scavengers and sewerage workers, yet city sewers did not extended into their neighborhoods. Hamilton detailed his observations of this job in the city, remarking:

In Wilson, [we] went over to plant where the cans from the sanitary privies of the can type are cleaned. The cans are hauled in on flat topped wagons. The cans are covered with tight fitting lids. The odor is now however confined to the cans. As the cans are removed from the wagons they are placed right side up in a hopper. Water running into the can assisted by a swab propelled by an aged negro dislodges the material in the can and cleans it to a certain extent. The contents of the can flows (sic) into the city sewer system. As the cans are cleaned a small quantity of creosote disinfectant is placed in each. Washing the cans is not a particularly clean or sweetodored job. The old Nigger who has the job has had a long tenure of office principally because he has the title of foreman of the plant.<sup>66</sup> [Image 3.29]

Even outside of city services, jobs relating to human waste usually went to those with the least power to choose their occupation. Usually, these unpleasant occupations were some of the only places where black men could carve out an economic niche for themselves. Such as in the Broadbay Township near Winston Salem, where there was no organized scavenger system. Instead, “the people who owned their homes depended on a colored man to move the night soil when it was convenient for him to do so...One or more attempts have been made for it to be incorporated but the objection to this is usually very strong.”<sup>67</sup>

While black southerners worked in the sanitation field, local governments often denied municipal services to black districts. Historian John Dittmer detailed the neighborhood conditions of black Augusta, Georgia:

Most of black Augusta shared the fate of nearly all urban poor: streets were unpaved, water and sewage lines unavailable, drainage bad and lighting poor. This was a breeding ground for disease. Local officials used residential segregation to deprive blacks of essential city services, while red light districts, saloons, and gambling dens were located in black areas away from the white middle class. Black Augustans could neither compel nor convince city officials to respond to their needs. Ironically, these same public servants often cited squalid living conditions as evidence of black depravity.<sup>68</sup>

In some towns, however, black residents organized politically around the sanitation movement. As mentioned previously, sanitary officers partnered with black betterment organizations in local areas. In northeastern North Carolina, for instance, the Colored Farmers' Agricultural Society of Northampton County unanimously passed a resolution promising to work towards four goals: 1) have a sanitary toilet; 2) screen windows against flies and mosquitoes; 3) look carefully at providing clean drinking water; and, 4) register the births of children appropriately.<sup>69</sup> Also in that county was the Seaboard Township where the Soil Pollution unit employed "a colored preacher who did some excellent work among the negroes" of the county.<sup>70</sup> Many prominent black residents saw the positive implications for joining these efforts, and worked to organize their communities behind the effort.

In Chapel Hill, North Carolina, the infrastructural conditions also heavily favored white residents. As noted in historian John K. Chapman's dissertation, *Black Freedom and the University of North Carolina, 1793-1960*, privies were banned from the white districts of town in favor of a sewage system in 1913.<sup>71</sup> By contrast, many black neighborhoods were not sewered until after World War II.<sup>72</sup> However, sanitary reforms for black districts began in the mid-1920s through organized pressure from the black community, building off of the rhetoric and support of the sanitation campaigns in town.<sup>73</sup>

In the town, the University of North Carolina owned most of the municipal services including water and electric, while the local government ran the sewer system. Infrastructural discrimination was evident under both managements. University water, for instance ran through the black districts untreated, and was piped back to only the



white neighborhoods. Without water, the town argued, extending sewerage lines to black districts was useless. In 1923, a local white group concerned with black health hired a black nurse, named Mrs. Compton to help sanitize the neighborhoods. When she arrived, “the Negro section had no lights or sewerage, and waste was taken away from houses by wagon.”<sup>74</sup> The Health Department of the Community Club’s decision to hire Nurse Compton came mostly from their concern about their black house-help living in unsanitary conditions; nonetheless, the black community also rallied behind sanitation reform as a challenge to the town’s control of the waste infrastructure.<sup>75</sup>

Upon arriving in Chapel Hill, Mrs. Compton went door-to-door in hundreds of black homes. One of her drives was a “clean-up campaign” focused on both the outside and inside of black houses.<sup>76</sup> Outhouses were a target. In her plan, she organized groups to sell outhouse clean-up tickets, which cost five cents apiece. With the small funds, she could purchase and distribute lime and other sanitary necessities for privies. Hoping this would become a community fixture, Mrs. Compton and other black leaders sought to organize local support and challenge the town and university for more civic benefits enjoyed until then by only the white population.<sup>77</sup>

With pressure from black representatives to extend the lines, the town finally began to sewer some of the black neighborhoods. In 1926, “sewers were finally ordered on Church, Lindsay, McDade, and Cotten Streets, the sewers connecting with the west outfall which had passed through that section all the time.”<sup>78</sup> Nearly two more decades passed, however, before the all of urban black Chapel Hill received this infrastructure.<sup>79</sup>

Overall, southerners expressed their displeasure, ambivalence, acquiescence, and excitement for these campaigns in many ways. Materially, southerners still expressed

their personal articulations on the structure, be it with gas pipes, window lace, or an uncommon modified design, as they began or continued weaving these buildings into their daily routines. Even the design of the pit privy came both from the existing regional vernacular and a popular interest or acceptance in converting to a closed, pit receptacle design. Whereas the campaigns' rhetoric minimized southerners' ability to build their own domestic structures and manage their own lives and its campaign model utilized rather than challenge the political hierarchy of the town, these campaigns ironically and quietly provided many southerners with a voice in the political establishment, which many never before possessed.

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## CONCLUSION

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Building upon the infrastructure, methodology and rhetoric of the Sanitary Commission, these subsequent campaigns situated themselves in a county or district and moved township to township forging partnerships, intriguing locals, and building privies. These efforts pushed a new architectural design into many communities. In some towns, municipal scavenger services were instituted and standardized pail receptacles were constructed to fit into old privy structures. But given the large rural population, pit privies emerged quickly on the southern landscape. Entering town by town, these receptacle designs rapidly entered the state's (as well as the region's) architectural vernacular. While their closed pits were new, the walled architecture surrounding the receptacle often was made from older privies and varied widely in design. From cloth to wood, neatly assembled to patched, these privies had one foot in the old designs, and one in the new. Onto the older structure as well, builders added ventilators on the outside or

cut and screened holes into the building. New seats also were sawn and got closeable flaps.

Moreover, these campaigns furthered the rhetoric situating southerners as residing in a diseased, antimodern environment. Without questioning or challenging the existing power structures of the South, sanitary advocates analyzed the house to point to both character flaws and disease-infested architecture. Increasingly surveys defined the southern home as being far behind those of the nation through a parsing of its constituent parts, which in turn were trumpeted by the health campaigners as a cause for action. These tactics helped the campaigns mount pressure on both the government to act and on people to face the scientific consensus that their homes quantitatively lacked proper sanitation.

Landscapes are inherently political, in the sense that the power to implement one's will is necessary for the creation of structures and exertion of behavior within a particular space. The southern landscape became more visibly political as campaigners scientifically contextualized the landscape into larger narratives of southern character, in order to increase their own cause's power. Within the domestic sphere other changes occurred as well. For urban and suburban areas, the 1919 privy law applied pressure to have outhouses that followed state guidelines, which affected private residences and worker housing alike. For example, the toilet conditions in many mill towns were poor. Often the whole neighborhood had only one open-back "johnny-house...out in the field."<sup>80</sup> While not necessarily a panacea for mill sanitation, the law pressed for better sanitation within the towns and provided a degree of recourse for those who lived in the

worker housing. Many mill owners responded by building more standardized pit privies for each residence.

On the whole, these sanitation campaigns were campaigns with the increasing power to see some version their wills impressed upon the landscape. Without overtly challenging the socioeconomic power structure of the South, the campaigns generated a profound change in the domestic privy structure. Pit privies quickly became the common architectural type throughout the region. Pail privies as well emerged in urban and suburban areas in the state. The open-back privies, which dominated privy architecture previously, faded more and more into obsolescence. Many people, who used only chamber pots and the woods before, now had a new structure for waste to incorporate their domestic space and use-patterns. With these changes, sanitary advocates called victory on many fronts. However, the growing trend of these structures within the South did not mean the campaigners themselves were solely responsible for these changes, nor did they determined the structure's design, its domestic functions, or its more explicit political uses. Southerners across the board embraced, acquiesced and rejected the structure in explicit and implicit ways; thus, exerting their own wills upon not only the building's design, but its role within their lives.

These sanitation campaigns stayed close to the political hierarchies of each locality; yet some citizens, who lacked political clout before, found that these campaigns were not just as a way to better health, but as a way to demand more political representation and services from a socioeconomic and political system from which they were previously on the periphery. Black residents in particular rallied around the sanitary movement as a tool to organize for more rights for their community; yet white residents

as well found reasons to join the effort or use the laws as recourse to demand better housing conditions from their employees. Others openly protested the intervention by outside forces outright or contested the grounds by which they made their case for reforms.

While these citizens outwardly used these structures to advance their own interests, less vocally, many other southerners incorporated these structures into their lives in various ways. Some found means of employment within the campaigns as local officers, surveyors, carpenters, and waste collectors. Others attached clotheslines to the structure, used the structure to dump garbage and other wastes, and in general spent solitary time inside its walls on a daily basis. Building sizes and materials varied as many older structures were converted to fit into these new sanitary guidelines. Ventilators varied, as did the designs of the seats and doors. Some still preferred to use the woods rather than the privy—and found other uses, like storage for their new building.

These campaigns also illustrate the power imbedded in the landscape. While Vlach's work suggests a drastic power dynamic within the plantation landscape that was secured by the political establishment, my thesis shows the political power involved in something as simple but everyday as toilets. North Carolina became the first state to pass a statewide privy law, a large step towards the systemized control these progressive campaigns sought over this structure and human waste. The common narrative of these progressive campaigns is that these were part of the steps towards a sanitary order, which was led by a few power men. Yet, within their own spheres of influence and domestic spaces, pastors and tenant farmers, millworkers and nurses, children and teachers reacted

to these campaigns in a variety of ways that shaped the landscape, created local articulations in privy structures, and interpreted these new buildings to fit into their own order of living during these efforts.

#### IV. "THE NEW DEAL GOES TO THE PRIVY": STANDARDIZING, SATIRIZING AND SPOTLIGHTING THE OUTHOUSE

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##### INTRODUCTION

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In 1929, in the context of increasing industrialization and urbanization, a vaudevillian comic named Charles "Chic" Sale penned a short booklet based off of his nightly act as a rural character actor entitled *The Specialist*. The act was a monologue by a rural carpenter turned privy-building expert, named Lem Putt. In the booklet, Putt, faced with increasing industrialization, decides that specializing in constructing one particular building was the best for his future business prospects. The opening lines laid out his train of thought:

You've heerd a lot of prating and prattlin' about this bein' the age of specialization. I'm a carpenter by trade. At one time I could of built a house, barn, church or chicken coop. But I seen the need of a specialist in my line, so I studied her I got her; she's mine. Gentlemen, you are face to face with the champion privy builder of Sangamon County.<sup>1</sup>

While Sale's act played off the bathroom humor often associated with structures relating to bodily waste, more significantly Lem Putt and his occupation represented an ironic humor associated with a noble, but naïve way of agrarian life. By trying to tap into larger social trends, the rural Putt humorously decided to apply these modern advances to the privy, a structure that perhaps unbeknownst to Putt is quickly becoming obsolete with technological developments and growing infrastructure.

The book sold over a million copies, and presented readers with a charming but softly satirical work that gently poked fun at both the rural and modern worlds. American culture scholar Ray B. Browne asserted that by drawing on “the memories, prejudices, biases and pleasure of his former country life, ...[Sale] used the outdoor privy to express his profound attitudes and philosophy about the virtues of country life and to demonstrate the movement in America during the ‘20s and ‘30s away from the country to the city.”<sup>2</sup> Using the outhouse as a premodern representative of rural life, Sale questioned notions of progress and their contemporary social trends, such as urbanization and standardization, by industrializing and modernizing this antimodern structure. Sale’s book also fed into a widely held feeling of discomfort with modernity, based on the idea that in leading a modernized life, something nobler was also being lost.

Later that same year, the stock market crashed, sending the country into the Great Depression. During the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the socioeconomic conditions that led to the nation’s economic turmoil were examined and debated publicly. In fact, the Roosevelt administration itself explicitly placed the issue upon the national stage. Images of poverty, both urban and rural, emerged in the national consciousness. The American South was a dominant area of focus for New Deal policies, explicitly laid out with the publication of the *Report on the Economic Conditions of the South* with which Roosevelt declared the South to be “the Nation’s No. 1 economic problem.”<sup>3</sup> Through relief work and infrastructural improvements, Roosevelt’s administration attempted to remedy the South’s socioeconomic problems.

Chic Sale’s comic representations and the New Deal’s focus on poverty brought rural outhouses and rural poverty to the fore in the national consciousness. Though



independently emergent, these two ideas quickly intertwined as the New Deal agencies built upon the previously state-run public health campaigns. With this move, various federal agencies constructed, surveyed, photographed, and publicized this outbuilding. Critics of Roosevelt fired back, attempting to use the outhouse as a satirical critique of Roosevelt's useless programs and wasteful spending. While largely forgotten today, New Deal agencies together constructed over three million privies on the rural landscapes of the country during the 1930s and 1940s, most of which were in the American South. These large numbers significantly impacted domestic landscapes nationwide, adding new structures into the lives of many dwellers. Additionally, the surveys and photographs used to build political support for such policies ironically utilized both the presence and absence of outhouses as justification for increasing the role of the government in citizens' lives. Simultaneously, these documents placed the dwellers' structures and standards of living into an increasingly critical public gaze.

Our current conception of outhouses emerged out of a political and historical moment. On the federal level, the New Deal built upon the progressive public health infrastructure that had developed in the previous two decades in the South. Federal agencies, policies, and funding solidified the increasingly standardized architecture of the outhouse. At the same time, urbanization and technological development had relegated privies to the outer rings of politically-connected society—to the rural countryside, company towns, and poor, black districts of cities and suburbs. Roosevelt's governing policies and tactics thrust outhouses into the national spotlight. Critics however portrayed privies, like Chic Sale, as increasingly bygone structures. With progressively darker satire, critics used privies to ridicule federal policies and regions of the country—

especially the South. As a visual icon, the outhouse emerged as a symbol both of backwardness and progress, poverty and betterment, humor and tragedy, ironic dichotomies that even the Roosevelt administration played off of in advancing their political goals and policies.

### THE ROOSEVELT PRIVY

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“This was the beginning of the “millennium” for the men who had spent years in promoting construction of sanitary privies through education, exhortation, persuasion, and enforcement of sanitary laws.”<sup>4</sup> —E. S. Tisdale and. C. H. Atkins, Sanitary Engineer and Assistant Sanitary Engineer, U.S. Public Health Service

Chic Sale wrote about ‘specializing’ and standardizing privy building in jest; yet, the reality of it was not far removed. Through the 1910s-20s, public health campaigns in the South worked to develop more rigid specifications for the outhouses in the states. Suggested designs varied in structure from state to state, and even municipality to municipality. Individual owners, tenants, and carpenters added their own flourishes. Cost deterred some residents from erecting certain models. Even with legal statutes for sanitary guidelines, enforcement was not always effective.

Yet, these state campaigns were successful in effecting degrees of sanitary change onto the material landscape. Sanitary surveys indicated that many more southerner families had privies by the 1930s than they did in 1909, when Rockefeller began his hookworm eradication campaign. The New Deal offered the next opportunity for implementing this sanitary agenda on the southern landscape. Building off of the successful strategies of the earlier health campaigns, New Deal programs funded efforts at the state level. Unlike the earlier campaigns, a major objective of the New Deal programs was employment, while sanitary infrastructure was deemed a worthy means to this end.

December 1933 marked the start of the Civil Works Administration (CWA); one of the many relief programs begun in the first year of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency. Established to reduce unemployment, the U.S. Public Health Service saw this new government program as an opening to improve rural sanitation at the federal level. Using the state health boards that grew during the last few decades of campaigns, the CWA was able to fund smaller sanitation projects, such as privy construction.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, other New Deal agencies, like the Public Works Administration (PWA) funded larger infrastructural changes, such as swamp drainage for malarial concerns and municipal water and sewer system installations.<sup>6</sup> Compared with the Rockefeller and state-led efforts, these relief funds from the federal government provided a more impressive and systematic method for building infrastructure across the country. On this point, the North Carolina Board of Health's *Health Bulletin*, excitedly remarked, "Call it a New Deal or say that North Carolina is turning over a new leaf in public health, or call it what you will, but at any rate public health work in the State is making the greatest strides it has done for many a year."<sup>7</sup>

For North Carolina, state privy construction efforts gained federal momentum at the dawn of 1934, when the CWA began to bankroll some of the state's campaign. To supplement this funding, the State Board of Health provided sanitary engineers to supervise the work. The labor for construction generally came from local relief and reemployment registration. Federal funding funnelled through the CWA, furnished those wages. Homeowners or the community paid for the materials and incidental costs.<sup>8</sup>

Federal funding for projects on private property, like privy construction, needed to support the public good. Thus, the state board of health had to sanitize whole

communities rather than just individual households. This imperative required bureaucratic infrastructure, so the Board of Health decided to divide the state into five districts. These districts were partitioned further with subdivisions, which consisted of five to ten counties per subdivision. Under the supervision of the district, a sanitation campaign would begin in one community, and then once that campaign was underway, prospective local supervisors would come to that community to train for their own district's campaign.<sup>9</sup>

The CWA privy building campaigns, as well as subsequent New Deal efforts, focused even more heavily than previous outhouse campaigns on constructing pit privies. Additionally, with the federal funding, work became more organized, and the advocated privies became more similar. In part this was due to the fact that by the 1930s, pit privies from the past two decades had aged poorly, exhibiting structural problems. Wooden seats, floors, risers and pit linings all rotted quickly from use and proved difficult to clean. In an effort to standardize the form and detail proper building techniques, the U.S. Public Health Service developed five new pit privy prototypes. These designs, all quite similar, were published in a pamphlet called "The Sanitary Privy" in 1933.<sup>10</sup> The pamphlet also acknowledged other designs of privies at the end, however pointed the pit privy as the best model for sanitation, stating:

There are other types of privies, such as the box-can, septic (or L.R.S.) privy, the chemical toilet, the concrete or masonry vault, the chemical commode, and the incinerator privy. They will be given only limited consideration here, however, since the earth-pit privy is not only in more general use than any of these, but fulfills the requirements of sanitation in practically all instances, and is cheaper to install and maintain than any other type of sanitary privy.<sup>11</sup>

State health departments concurred with this assessment and adopted these pit designs or created similar models for the campaigns in their states. Of the U.S. Public

Health Service's models, the design which used concrete slabs and risers became the most popular one to emulate [Image 4.1]. Soon thereafter, numerous states made the concrete building materials mandatory. By 1939, approximately 90% of the privies built through the Community Sanitation Program were these based on this model.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most significant differences between the older privy campaigns and those in the New Deal was that New Deal workers did not modify existing structures to make them sanitary—they just installed new outhouses. As McIntosh and Kendrick noted in 1940, “The trend now is to furnish constructed privies, the building being done at some central location near where supplies are obtained. The concrete floors and risers of these privies as well as the wooden superstructures are constructed in conformity to the standard specifications of the State.”<sup>13</sup>

By July 1934, 39,256 of these new-model pit privies went up in North Carolina. The average labor cost was \$16.29 per privy, and the average material cost was \$14.59—the former was paid through CWA funds, the latter by the family or community. North Carolina's Board of Health's *The Health Bulletin* gleefully pointed out that in just seven months the state's efforts consumed 15.5 million board feet of lumber, 39 carloads of cement, as well as a substantial amount of hardware such as nails, hinges, wire screening, and metal roofing. Thus these construction projects provided not only community sanitation, but added a financial stimulus for businesses in the state.<sup>14</sup> The state used relief rolls to find workers who were from a variety of former occupations, and then trained them to install the privies. Afterwards, the regional directors sent new workers from one district to the next to build privies at private homes at the materials' cost while the CWA covered labor.<sup>15</sup>

While some impoverished urban and suburban regions still used privies, New Deal relief programs also focused on building sewage treatment facilities and connecting homes to the sewer lines in these areas. In 1928, 124 sewage plants existed in North Carolina; ten years later, the number rose 42% to 176.<sup>16</sup> Having a treatment plant did not necessarily translate into full connection for all the residents. For towns with sewers in the western third of the state, an average of 76% of home connected while for the eastern two-thirds, 62% were connected.<sup>17</sup> But these numbers steadily increased, however. With the added push of federal funding, privies continued to recede from cities.

Meanwhile, the federal funding and policies of the New Deal vastly expanded the sheer quantity of privies on the rural landscape. Before the relief work began, state officials estimated that only 14% of rural dwellers lived with sanitary toilet facilities in their homes and 33% with no toilet facilities whatsoever (both a marked improvement from the 1909 reports, where 50% lacked any toilet and sanitary numbers were negligible). By June 30, 1936, just two and half years into the campaign, the number of sanitary toilets rose to 20%.<sup>18</sup> By July 1, 1939, CWA, ERA (Emergency Relief Administration), and WPA (Works Progress Administration) efforts amassed a total of 174,236 new privies just within the state of North Carolina [Image 4.2, and Image 4.3].<sup>19</sup>

Across the South, the CWA, FERA, WPA and FSA (Farm Security Administration) began building privies for rural dwellers. While the statistics told one side of the story, the on-the-ground working conditions as well as individual family's incorporation of these buildings into domestic landscape varied town to town and household to household. One woman, Grace Ensign, who worked as a home extension

agent in and around Plant City, Florida with strawberry and tobacco growers recalled her work for the WPA as such:

Hookworm infection was our main problem. No toilets built outside the homes. Well, why should the man? The man would just look at us aghast: "I haven't any lumber! You think I'm going to build that thing outside when I can't do this, or I can't do that? Well, I'm not going to do it."

And they wouldn't, really. Then WPA set it up. You've got to think of Franklin Roosevelt or the men who worked with him and under him—he didn't have any more idea what a hookworm was than anything. But those men up in Washington through WPA said, "You get a gang of men who are trained to build outside toilets."

They had regular specifications and pictures from Washington, and they went to farm after farm that we recommended and built those outhouses with a cesspool laid up properly, and all the drainage. We'd go back to check.

In Plant City area, I have laughed over again about it, and up in Live Oak area was one of the greatest resistance from those tobacco growers. They weren't going to build anything. The women and children had used the bushes all these years; they could go on, they didn't care.

We'd talk about the children's health—the hookworm comes up between the toes, gets in the bloodstream, and here it is all through them. They have this hacking cough.

"Well, that wasn't a bad cough. Didn't bother them. Let him have the hacking cough."

But it was a sign of how the blood was.

Well, we'd go back to check. Oh, there was that good-looking outhouse. They didn't want us to go out. We would say, "We want to see how you're using it."

The man'd say, "Oh well, it's fine. It's good. You don't have to go out."

So then we would go. We often had to get the farm supervisor with us for fear the man would do something. There his good grain and his valuable stuff was all stacked up in the little house to keep dry; they didn't use it.<sup>20</sup>

Other privy recipients responded to the new structure with more interest in these changes in the domestic sphere. Dr. James L. Pointer, a Tennessean who grew up on a farm in Heiskell (Knox County) during the New Deal, recalled the impact of these policies on his local community:

It's quite interesting, that in this area here you didn't have any inside plumbing, toilets or anything for, until, in the late '30s. Then TVA came in and brought power to the valley and so, forth then they started changing. And even a lot of that, they did not have privies per say like we know them now, until about in the 1930s. Then, through efforts of TVA, they started a program, a government program, that helped subsidize the WPA program, where that they went around and according to the family they built the size of the outside privies to accommodate the family...

[If you didn't have the traditional privy] well, in those cases, you had areas out most of the houses that are close to the woods, you just went to the woods... That's right [that was very common].

The thing about the program to develop privies is for sanitation, primarily, and then, they would come in and bring in the floor for the privy. It was concrete and they could move that in... And people would dig a hole, and then people from WPA, or one of the agencies would bring a privy in and set it down and then you would build the structure on top of it. They'd usually have two holers, so to speak, and that was, that was a big improvement...Yes [we got a WPA privy].<sup>21</sup>

Norman Julian, a native of West Virginia, remembered his personal experience with the New Deal privy and how its presence affected the landscape in which he dwelled as a child and the patterns of use in daily life for him:

Scores of "the little shacks out back" were built in my old neighborhood of North View in Clarksburg. They were widespread in that city and in most others throughout West Virginia. In our community, they lined the back alleys in nearly perfect parallelism...

Our "Roosevelt" was made of heavy, one-inch-thick oak boards, though before the blight, chestnut was the wood of choice. The prototypical outhouse was set on a concrete floor pad with a square in the middle, and on it was a set of pre-poured concrete box. On it, in turn was deposited the seat and lid, sometimes called the throne. The seat was often made of poplar or close-grained pine which doesn't splinter as much as oak. Occasional sanding or carving with a pocket-knife took care of any errant "pinchers..."

The boards were soaked in creosote, a preservative since outlawed because, it is said, in concentrations it will cause cancer. The heavy lumber and creosote combination, though, allowed those buildings to prevail.

Some say the scent of creosote on a sweltering summer day scared off the wasps but regular users will tell you that in warm weather, wasps were always a menace as were other insects, both of the flying and creeping kind. Other scents emanated, too, especially on hot August days when the breeze pulled through the large cracks in the privy walls and wafted through the neighborhood. Then you know you were in "Roosevelt Country."<sup>22</sup>

Once the privies would reach their fill, Julian recalled that someone would have to undertake "the ritual of emptying...called 'honeydipping.'"<sup>23</sup> Julian recalled jokingly that male suitors would sometimes be asked to undertake the responsibility. Regardless of who removed the night soil, Julian recollected,

...bucketfuls were assigned to the garden as fertilizer. Dad honeydipped in the spring at the same time he was spading his garden by hand. The nightsoil went in the leading edge trenches as the garden space expanded. Perhaps exposure to the astringent and antiseptic qualities of the air and sun cut down on any pathogens.

Honeydipping, though, if practiced today on the scale it was three generations ago, would be a national scandal. We've learned a lot science then. In 1958, about ten years after our Roosevelt Outhouse was retired from its original purpose, I sat in a biology class taught by A. Paul Davisson at Fairmont State as the good professor warned about the health dangers of honeydipping. All I can say is my dad raised great gardens and my family was healthier than most.<sup>24</sup>



As these three voices attest, the privies changed the landscapes of residents. For some, the privy structures were more valuable as a place to store grain than to relieve oneself. Others welcomed the change and the new addition in their yard. In many ways, the political policies and financial investments of the New Deal affected the way many southerners handled their waste within their home. Additionally, the privy added to the home space. Julian recalled that these outhouses “did provide a place of solace for solitary thought and contemplation now and then, especially in coal towns... [where] standard company house[s] consisted of four rooms and often was home to a family numbering in the double digits.”<sup>25</sup>

To varying degrees and in various ways, New Deal outhouses made their way into the daily lives of the citizenry—into the domestic spaces of many homes, as well as becoming a source of employment for many families. The “nearly perfect parallelism”<sup>26</sup> of the standardized privies, stood out to Julian and changed the look and feel of his childhood world. However, his accounts of carving the seat, and gathering the night soil, its standardized structure was transformed by him and his family into patterns that fit their lives as the privy became part of their own domestic space.

The breadth of the privy building campaign was vast and wide. From December 1933 to June 1942, a total of 2,911,323 sanitary privies went up in 38 states and Puerto Rico through the collaborative efforts of the CWA, FERA, WPA, state health departments, and the U.S. Public Health Service. Overall, \$110,000,000 was spent and 15,000 men were employed through these efforts. In addition to the nearly three million outhouses added to the American landscape, Farm Security Administration undertook a similar project and built 98,000 privies for farmer workers across all 48 states of the

country at that time. While a nationwide effort, the leading recipients of the privies were all southern states—West Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Mississippi.<sup>27</sup>

The federal government financed the construction of over three million privies across the United States. The South received the brunt of their attention. From Florida to Tennessee, Missouri to West Virginia, the workers erected privies across the southern landscape [Image 4.4]. Their influence on rural dwellers to conform to more urban standards of living found resonance. While many rural residents appreciated both the employment and building provided by the campaigns, on a national level, the Roosevelt administration needed to make a broader case that these infrastructural investments were sound and their subjects worthwhile. Thus, the New Deal needed to present outhouses as both a representation of poverty, and also one of progress, when the structure was deemed sanitary. Using the surveys and photographs, New Deal agencies worked to construct a narrative that reflected both the poverty of rural areas as well as the government's incremental steps to bettering their lives. The outhouse became a political image in this respect.

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#### THE OUTHOUSE AS PROGRESS AND POVERTY

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As both a structure and symbol of progress, the New Deal privy emerged quickly and abundantly on the landscape. Aside from its material existence, its presence and message was captured by photographs documenting the relief efforts. Images appearing in the popular media as well as in governmental publications used the outhouse as one symbol of the many improvements these policies achieved. In government documents reporting on the progress of these campaigns, photographs from various agencies illustrated the progress of these efforts. Best known amongst the photographic

documents though were those made by the Farm Security Administration (FSA). In many states, the FSA erected privies for rural farmers in concert with other domestic changes—like screens for windows and porches, better wells, etc.—that also had their roots in earlier sanitation efforts. Their agency photographers captured both the impoverished conditions and government-led improvements occurring across the country, with a spotlight on the South. In many ways, these photographs helped make the case for the government’s policies to both provide relief and build infrastructure.

Supplemented by sanitary surveys that explicitly defined acceptable and unacceptable living conditions, these photographs vividly illustrated the surveys’ findings and the improvements made through these government relief efforts. These government surveys, which were similar to ones used in the 1920s, set, publicized, and illustrated minimum standards for housing conditions, and how many homes fell below these standards. But the FSA photographers and the agency itself not only “had a vested interest in representing the South as needing remedial programs ... [but also, needed to show that] its people [were] worthy of public assistance... [Thus, the photographs] contained both sociology and sensibility and, in equal measure, condemned and celebrated the South’s premodernity.”<sup>28</sup> Within these efforts, the outhouse loomed large on the domestic stage.

Earlier health campaigns did not widely circulate their photographs in popular media. For Roosevelt’s presidency, the Depression offered a window of opportunity to expose the nation to the conditions of rural America—with the South figuring prominently into its programs, publicity and outreach. Through surveys, publications, and photography, New Deal agencies politicized southern housing conditions, with the

presence of privies a chief indicator of both the current state of the South as well as the government's role in helping improve the lot of the dwellers.

Even for the early public health campaigners, home sanitation was a way to pull people out of poverty. Poverty often was considered to be both a condition of individual laziness as well as a product of the social and natural environment. As hookworm disease became the lazy disease, sanitarians pointed to the natural and built environments of the South as being in need of modern sanitation, which would help eliminate both hookworm and personal laziness. Public health advocates, with the financial aid of John D. Rockefeller, seized the opportunity to push for housing modernizations that drew sharper distinctions between human life and natural conditions with privies, sewers, closed wells, as well as porch and window screens. Driving these campaigns as well was the idea that more modern housing inspired civic-mindedness and morality from dwellers.

In the early days of the hookworm campaigns, very basic surveys of housing conditions were used to demonstrate the desperate need for reform. By the 1920s, surveys were more sophisticated and widely conducted for bureaucratic purposes. As the New Deal progressed, sanitary surveys increasingly became a more publicized political tool for quantifying conditions and gaining support for public policies. Using the house as an indicator of both the wealth and health of a family and region, sanitary surveys tabulated the poverty and low-standard of living in the American South. Were the windows screened? Was the house painted? Was water piped into the house? Was there indoor plumbing? If not, did they at least have a privy? If so, what type was it? Through

these types of evaluative questions and their conglomerate interpretation, housing conditions bespoke socioeconomic conditions.

The New Deal also offered a slight shift to the paradigm of poverty. Still a product of individual will and environmental conditions, the Great Depression gave the nation a chance to reconsider ways in which the social and economic environment contributed to poverty.<sup>29</sup> Disclosing the prevalence of illness in the South, the *Report on the Economic Conditions of the South* undermined the notion that by its nature, the South was ripe for poverty, stating:

The low-income belt of the South is a belt of sickness, misery, and unnecessary death. Its large proportion of low-income citizens are (sic) more subject to disease than the people of any similar area. The climate cannot be blamed—the South is as healthful as any section for those who have the necessary care, diet and freedom from occupational disease.<sup>30</sup>

Pointing to poorly constructed houses of milling and mining towns of the urban South and the below-standard living conditions of the tenant farmers and sharecroppers, the New Deal contextualized the housing conditions into a critique of existing socioeconomic realities. Privies again symbolized poverty, though through a slightly different paradigm than the Rockefeller-led efforts of the 1910s. By the 1930s, the availability of sewers, septic tanks and running water made indoor plumbing tenable for more American families. No longer did just the architectural type and upkeep of the privy indicate poverty, but the presence of the structure itself signaled it. By and large, those who had more wealth adopted indoor plumbing by whatever means they could. Surveys indicated that outdoor plumbing mainly existed in poor and often black urban districts, smaller towns (particularly those with company-owned worker housing) and rural areas. In short, privies meant poverty; thus, the lack of privies or their haggard conditions illustrated the breadth of extreme poverty in the nation.

Federal programs, however, also acknowledged that for rural districts, privies were the most practical way of sanitizing the countryside. Indoor plumbing—made possible either from centralized sewers or decentralized septic tanks—was not feasible for the largely rural population of the South with its lack of electric, water, and sewerage infrastructure. While the bureaucratic infrastructure built by the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission laid the groundwork for the New Deal efforts, New Deal documents rarely acknowledged the strides made in rural sanitation in the last two or three decades. When the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission's work began approximately half of the entire southern population lacked any sort of privy. Almost three decades later in 1938, New Dealers found that several years into their own campaigns one fifth of rural southerners still lacked a privy of any kind.<sup>31</sup> However, the latter statistic was relayed publically as a symbol of poverty and not as an improvement borne of past campaigns.

Housing, more publicly than ever, became a barometer for the social conditions of districts in cities and regions in the country. While popularly focused on the rural character of privies, urban outhouses still filled black neighborhoods in the South and other regions of the country. Urban infrastructure had yet to reach them. Even in urban areas, however, the South stood out as a region behind the times. In 1938, the *Report on the Economic Conditions of the South* noted that in the South, the percentage of urban dwellers that continued to use outdoor toilets was nearly double that of the nation (26% in the South, 13.1% nationally several years into the New Deal).<sup>32</sup> Though these exceptions existed, at the time of Sale's book, outhouses were receding from urban areas. As sewerage, powered in part by New Deal efforts, continued through municipalities, outhouses increasingly became rural structures.

More inclusively and publically than ever before, the New Deal reports made the case that the nation as a whole, and particularly the South, was woefully behind in infrastructure. The New Deal publications while treading upon the same argumentation, however, were more tempered than the earlier progressive campaigns. Rather than the damning ruminations of slothfulness and depravity of southerners, the *Report of the Economic Conditions of the South* was more sympathetic to the general populace of the South, while critically arguing,

The effects of bad housing can be measured directly in the general welfare. It lessens industrial efficiency, encourages inferior citizenship, lowers the standard of family life, and deprives people of reasonable comfort. There are also direct relationships between poor housing and poor health and between poor housing and crime.<sup>33</sup>

Surveys of housing conditions and the increased publicity of their findings enhanced housing as an indicator of wealth. Unlike the past several decades of progressive reforms in the South, the New Deal offered a new addition to the correlation of poverty and housing. Earlier progressives pointed to the natural and built environment as a powerful cause for the southern character. Seizing the Great Depression as an opportunity to reframe the argument, Roosevelt and his administration pointed to the socioeconomic environment as a cause for southern poverty and housing problems. The government's duty, the Roosevelt administration argued, was to represent the whole population, and these statistics proved that the government was failing a majority of the people, particularly in the South. Photographs, particularly those of the Farm Security Administration, also presented this argument to the nation.

Under the direction of Roy Stryker, FSA photographers sought to illustrate the human aspect of these statistics. By capturing both the derelict as well as government-improved conditions of various structures of daily life, FSA attempted to contrast these

dwellers' humanity with their unaided surroundings while also showing the basic improvements the government was providing its people. Images of people drawing water from poorly constructed wells, contrasted with pictures of the community surrounding the newly-installed FSA well [Image 4.5 and Image 4.6; for added effect, Image 4.5 was taken through the newly screen door]. Other images of changing domestic conditions showed shuttered homes being measured for screens [Image 4.7]. Privies were more prominent and appeared in dozens of FSA pictures.

Many of the FSA photographs focused on housing conditions as the indicator of poverty and improvement. Part of the power of focusing on the southerners' homes was that these were structures that could produce widespread empathy given the intimateness and shared experience of dwelling, regardless of architectural design. Thus, housing allowed FSA photographers to capture the common humanity the photographed and viewer both shared. By showing existing conditions and improvements being made to everyday structures of life, the FSA conveyed a narrative of daily life slowly improving through government aid. Thus, domestic structures became vivid political objects, with privies emerging as one of the most visible parts of the house. In composing these photographs, the FSA used these structures to argue an ideological case for the expansive government agenda during the New Deal.

By looking through some of the FSA images of privies, both narratives—that of poverty and of improvements—emerged through privies. Some pictures documenting conditions used the lack of everyday domestic structures to call attention to the socioeconomic conditions of the residents. I selected two images to serve as example of this type of representation [Image 4.8 and Image 4.9]. Image 4.8 illustrates children



sitting inside the makeshift housing, while the caption illustrates that these structures are for a large group of workers, in the middle of swamp, with no modern conveniences whatsoever, not even a privy. Image 4.9 is a stunning image of a windowless, tin-roofed, log home with a child sitting in the doorway. The caption indicates that this is home of black sharecroppers, though the home lacks even crude provisions for basic needs, with not even a nearby water source or privy. Poignantly, “they treat us better here than where we did live”<sup>34</sup> is the noted remark from one of the dwellers.

Some FSA pictures notably focused on the degeneration of plantation architecture—the “crumbling columns, collapsed verandas, and sagging balconies, sometimes shot in close-up”<sup>35</sup> in order to highlight the “faded grandeur”<sup>36</sup> of the old architectural and economic order of the South. However, many other images captured the crumbling, weathered, and makeshift structures of the vast impoverished population. Among these images, many showed landscapes and homes with weathered privies that barely remained together, often constructed out of found materials and designed unsanitarily. These images used these structures to depict the extensiveness and growing depth of poverty in South. Portraying many of the privies in a stark light, the images also articulated that this was the South’s larger architectural condition as well. These pictures also pressed for governmental action to aid people who lacked a way to provide basic sanitation for themselves. To get a better idea of images from all over the South of these crumbling privies, I have included a range of images from the bayous of Louisiana to the mountains of West Virginia [Image 4.10 – Image 4.23].

In a piece for the Federal Writers’ Project, Paul Diggs’ describes his meeting with John and Susan Wright of Lakeland, Florida, noting that the Wrights had a “crude way of

living.”<sup>37</sup> The house lacked a radio, electricity, or any other modern conveniences. With special mention to the privy, Diggs notes that the Wright’s “outhouse is a shackly built place with a burlap sack hanging in front.”<sup>38\*</sup> Many of these pictures depict similar notions of crudeness, of life and its structures hanging on by a thread. Many of the privies and other structures lean at such an angle, that the viewer is asked to ponder if the next moment is the one they collapse [particularly, Image 4.10, Image 4.11, Image 4.13, Image 4.15, and Image 4.20]. Others are obviously pieced together from scraps of materials, which the viewer assumes was all the builders could afford to muster. Slats of sheet metal pieced together, for instance, serve as the walls for some of the privies [Image 4.12 and Image 4.15]; while, in Image 4.18, the builders chose to forgo using wood for the door, choosing, like the Wrights in Lakeland, to simply use a burlap sack instead. While sometimes photographed amongst rickety farm houses—like hog pens, chicken houses, and storage sheds [Image 4.11, Image 4.13, and Image 4.16]—most of the images of privies were as solitary figures—part noble, but clearly in line with the dissecting nature of the surveys, which placed it far from the rest of the home.

Most of the FSA images, by and large, are of rural privies. While urban privies became rarer during the New Deal, in southern cities and towns, privies still accounted for just over a quarter of the residents’ toilet facilities in 1938. Particularly striking, then, is the fact that urban privies are difficult to find in the FSA pictures. This trend comes

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\* Ironically, one picture I found in the Rockefeller collection was of the local, health officer’s privy in Smiths Chapel Community, North Carolina likely from 1915-16. In the picture, a man is showing off the new pit type sanitary privy in the rear of the office of the Community Health Officer, Dr. W.P. Covington, by pulling back the burlap sack which was used as the door (Figure 1437, Folder 1272, Box 54, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York). Thus, just twenty years previous, the privy and cloth door illustrated progress rather than poverty.

from the earlier goals of the FSA photography—to document loans made by the Resettlement Administration as well as the lives sharecropping families in the South and migrations of midwestern and western families. Later, though, the work shifted to the documentation of both rural and urban conditions in the buildup to World War II, and throughout the work, urban images are found. The only southern image I could locate of urban privies, however, was a striking image by Walker Evans of steelworker housing in Birmingham, Alabama, with the parallel lines of houses and privies marching towards the steel mill, the dwellers' employment and industrial center [Image 4.23]. These privies—close in design to the New Deal privies—most likely reflect increased monitoring of sanitary conditions in worker housing and state health boards offered designs similar to the New Deal design.

Besides company neighborhoods, black districts usually were the most common area for urban privies. Discriminatory municipal policies often left such districts partially or completely unsewered. In 1939, for instance, Stetson Kennedy, who was working for Federal Writers' Project, noted that in Jacksonville, Florida, “the negro shacks are dilapidated and unpainted; very few have plumbing, but are equipped with pump and sink on the back porch, and an outhouse.”<sup>39</sup> Washington D.C., however, is the only city for which I found any documentation of urban privies in black districts within the FSA photographic collection. Spanning from 1935 to 1942, various photographers captured the conditions of black districts within the nation's capital—sometimes describing exactly how close these homes were to the capitol itself. Clotheslines, water pumps, privies, and burn barrels all squeezed into these cramped and puddled backyard spaces [two example from these are Image 4.21 and Image 4.22]. While the ostensive lack of

images depicting privies within urban settings in the FSA photographs could be unintended and come from many causes, the act of this omission illustrates both the increasingly common narrative that privies marked the landscape as rural.

Though not noted in the captioning, from our perspective it is worth noting the overall variance of the structures as well as the regional inflections of some of the privy architecture. Some are located along the agricultural plots, while others are far from other structures, out in a field or off in the middle of the woods or swamp. One privy from West Virginia [Image 4.14] makes use of the hilly topography for disposal. From Louisiana, the privy's ramp and elevated stature reflects the swampy terrain [Image 4.17]. Particularly interesting is the privy from Greensboro, North Carolina, which has a poster plastered on the side of the privy that the camera captured. However, its architecture, notably the ventilator, hints at the impact of the earlier sanitation campaigns in the state [Image 4.19]. These images along with documentation from the previous chapter are a testament to the architectural variations evident on the landscapes of the South in the 1930s and early 1940s. While state health campaigns tapered architectural designs locally, the campaigns were neither comprehensive nor completely transformative in structure, since they often modified existing vernacular structures and regulatory enforcement was often patchy.

The New Deal, however, inserted a near uniform design onto the rural landscape of the South and nation. Viewed in comparison to the previous photographs, these FSA privies from all over the South illustrate the standardization of privy architecture [Image 4.24 – Image 4.32]. While the direction was set decades previous, the New Deal agencies that undertook privy building—the CWA, ERA, WPA, and FSA—materialized

millions of these structures in the nation's landscape. Image 4.24 and Image 4.25 illustrate the mass quantity of production in these privy or outhouse plants, as captions from various locations refer to them. Image 4.26 is a WPA promotional poster advocating that "a home is not complete without a sanitary unit."<sup>40</sup> Pictured in the background of the poster are two houses with outhouses as both home's solitary outbuilding, most likely to highlight its importance.

While the *Report on the Economic Conditions of the South* lamented the existence of privies in cities, the FSA considered privies satisfactory methods for waste disposal for rural areas. Image 4.28, for instance, illustrates prefabricated homes built by the FSA. The picture shows that privies were the sole outbuilding for these homes built for white farmers whose land the Army confiscated for war maneuvers.

Image 4.29's caption declared "Onward march the crusaders of rural sanitary conditions;"<sup>41</sup> and march on they did. From Alabama to Virginia, Missouri to the Carolinas, new, nearly identical privies protruded from the threadbare domestic landscape of the rural South. Chalmers S. Murray, from the Federal Writers' Project, noted the marked incursion of these privies within the domestic landscape of one residence in Edisto Island, South Carolina, describing the yard and outbuildings as such:

Two chinaberry trees, now covered with myriads of shriveled globules, stand in the front yard. The stable, situated a few yards from the dwelling is a queer looking structure, built of odd pieces of boards nailed against poles. It is always on the verge of collapse, and has been propped up every now and then with new poles. The chicken house, a small replica of the stable, equate near the path that leads to Martha's front door. The sanitary privy, built by WPA labor, is the neatest building on the premises.<sup>42</sup>

From the new homes of homesteaders to the fields of black tenant farmers, the New Deal privies proceeded by the millions across the South. Most poignantly capturing the FSA's narrative of improvement is the picture of a Missourian woman, exiting her

screened back door with a brand-new privy the only building in sight [Image 4.32].

While the FSA produced well over a hundred thousand images from all over the nation, privies played a small but significant role in conveying the political narratives that supported the Roosevelt administration's policies and efforts. Materially, these little improvements won the political support of many poor, rural southerners. Visually, these images used privies to make a political case—that the government's spending policies made small, but necessary differences in the lives of people who desperately needed them. Just as outhouses were part of the political arsenal used by the Roosevelt Administration, privies became a political object as well for the critics on all ideological sides and the opposition political party.

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#### THE OUTHOUSE AND POLITICAL SATIRE

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Before the New Deal even began, Chic Sale's *The Specialist* catapulted outhouses in the national imagination on the eve of the Great Depression. One response was that countless postcards popped up in mailboxes and tourist shops throughout the country during the 1930s and beyond, humorously mocking different region's rurality as well as the general notion of a rural life.<sup>43</sup> *The Specialist* elevated privies in their national stature and resolutely placed privies in the rural landscape. *The Specialist*, however, was not just a ho-hum paeon to what used to be right in the world. Rather, Sale employed the outhouse as a vehicle for satire to critique current societal trends, like urbanization, industrialization and modernization. With the policies of the New Deal, this new, publicly-embraced structure became a well-loaded vehicle for more overtly political satire.

Privies served a progressive political agenda during the first three decades of the twentieth century. As signaled by the work of Chic Sale, however, outhouses widely began to signify a bucolic conservatism as well as a bygone lifestyle. *The Specialist* managed both since Chic Sale's representation softly poked fun but also emanated the conservative values of agrarian life.

As part of this conservative outlook, *The Specialist* also tended to offer subtle or perhaps unintended critiques of the progressive public health efforts.<sup>†</sup> Within its historical context—an era in which these public health campaigns were concurrent—*The Specialist* can read as a tongue-in-cheek critique of the tactics and goals of the sanitary advocates. Sale's privy builder, Lem Putt, offered readers a methodical approach for improving the construction of the privy, by focusing on making life easier for the dwellers rather than the adhering to detached standard of scientific betterment. For instance, Putt argues against putting one of his client's privies along a crooked path where “the soil there ain't adapted to absorbin' moisture [because] during the rainy season she's likely to be slippery.”<sup>44</sup> Instead he contends that the privy should be in a straight line with the house and next to the woodpile because women are “too bashful to go direct out [to the privy] so she'll go to the wood-pile, pick up the wood... [and probably] make as many as ten trips to the wood-pile before she goes in, regardless. On a good day you'll have your wood box filled by noon, and right there is a savin' of

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<sup>†</sup> In fact, there is only one direct reference to privy regulations, which is when Putt critiques someone else's privy claiming that “from all outside appearance it was a regulation job, but not being experienced along this line, they didn't anchor her.” (27)

time.”<sup>45‡</sup> Sale even intuitively advocated for the lean-to privy architecture which became the New Deal design for outhouses, stating “they ain’t stylish, but they’re practical,”<sup>46</sup> since these types had two less corners for wasps to build nests and allowed for higher doorway clearance.

In the end, Chic Sale’s message had a moral quality as well, since Sale used the privy to humorously express his beliefs in the values of the agrarian life. This moral lesson fills the last page of the book, where there is an image of Lem Putt in a car with his family admiring his recently constructed privy (of course, right next to the woodpile) as the sun sets. Under the image reads the words “The Cup Overfloweth”<sup>47</sup> [Image 4.33]. While the public health campaigns attached a moral language to privies in order to condemn the conditions of rural countryside, Sale uses the same structure to uphold rural values. As the New Deal offered the culmination of the earlier progressive efforts, the popularity of Sale’s work presented opponents of Roosevelt’s policies with an apt and versatile vehicle for criticism.

Criticism, which was often vocal and sometimes vicious, greeted many New Deal programs. In part, this was because of the unprecedented size, and the perceived communistic or socialistic tendencies of these governmental efforts. Many of these critiques were satirical in nature as humor provided a release from the pressures caused by the Depression. Banks, taxes, New Deal programs and fiscal policies as well as both Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt were common targets. From simple puns, such as “the New Steal” or “the Screw Deal,”<sup>48</sup> to longer poems, stories, jokes and printed pamphlets,

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‡ When I mentioned this joke at a conference, several people from the audience roared back that the location was no joke, outhouses were often located near woodpiles.



many people found ways to poke fun at ideologies, policies, and everyday realities of the era.<sup>§</sup> In this way, humor provided both a release from the fiscal pressure and a way to “awaken [political] perception through laughter.”<sup>49</sup> Outhouses as well proved to be an apt vehicle for such satire. Building off of the newly garnered notoriety of the privy, progressives, conservatives, and other detractors mocked the outhouse-building efforts, holding them up as emblematic of Roosevelt’s wasteful spending (with surely an implicit emphasis on the ‘waste’). Privies during the New Deal proved to be fertile ground for both humorous relief as well as biting satire.

One of the first publications to mock New Deal policies using the outhouse was from a small town newspaper in coastal North Carolina, Elizabeth City’s *The Independent*. Its author was a progressive and New Dealer himself, W.O. Saunders, who worked on the Federal Writers’ Project. An early champion of both birth control as well as racial and ethnic equality, Saunders made a name for himself by printing contemptuous but clever headlines about the politically powerful.<sup>50</sup>

Saunders belonged to a poor farming family from rural Perquimans County. However, shortly after his birth, his father stopped farming, relocated to Hertford, and opened a butcher shop.<sup>51</sup> Having grown up in North Carolina, Saunders was familiar with the privy-building efforts of the early twentieth century, and his publications showed his tepid reception to this so-called progressive effort. Within months of the CWA beginning efforts, his paper, *The Independent* released the booklet, *Forward Pasquotank! Memorializing a (Back) Housing Program of Unique Cultural, Social and Economic*

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<sup>§</sup> See Monroe Billington, “The New Deal was a Joke: Political Humor During the Great Depression,” *The Journal of American Culture* 5/3 (1982), 15-20 for more humor from the Depression era.

*Importance* in 1934. In its introduction, the booklet's authors offers the following explanation for the tribute,

Thanks to the U.S. Public Health Service and the North Carolina State Board of Health [for] a total of 25 miles of new backhouses [that] have been built in rural North Carolina with C.W.A. funds and C.W.A. labor...So many old-fashioned, insanitary backhouses have been replaced by modern spic and span pit privies of the most approved type.<sup>52</sup>

*The Independent* reprinted the publication twice more, which included updates on how the efforts were progressing in the state. The 1935 version, *Uncle Sam Goes Specialist* and 1936 edition, *The New Deal Goes to the Privy* [Image 4.34] both utilized similar layouts and many of the same pictures and advertisements. New articles detailing the New Deal's progress in privy building were continually updated. *The New Deal Goes to the Privy* justified these reprints with the excuse that the authors "failed to appreciate the thoroness (sic) of the Roosevelt administration."<sup>53</sup>

As opposed to later conservative critiques of the New Deal, Saunders believed that privy-building was not progressive enough and was a poor investment for a soon-to-be departed way of life. Chiding the efforts in the last version of the booklet published, which was entitled, *The New Deal Goes to the Privy*, Saunders rather seriously explains the tone of his booklet:

The relief client belongs to a simplified agrarian civilization familiar in China and even in much of continental Europe, but no longer existent in America; the relief client has grown up into an age of specialization, standardization, mechanization and chemistry that heartlessly spurns his questionable capabilities...All of the foregoing emphasizes two aggravating social and economic problems that threaten any future political administration with heartaches: — (1) The paucity of common conveniences in rural America; (2) the existence of an ominous army of Unwanted Men for whom the Federal Government must somehow continue to provide. There were 6,288,648 farms in American, with a population of 30,445,350 according to the U.S. Farm Census of 1934. Only 8.4 per cent of these farm houses are provided with indoor water flushed toilets. In fact only 15.8 per cent have any piped water at all, and only 14.4 per cent have electricity. The need for a million privies on so many farms in these United States is, after all, not so much a laughing matter as a cause for the serious concern of sociologists, economists and state[s]men.

And what of the army of Unwanted Men—an army of perhaps so many as ten million men! The 30 hour work week offers no solution...[It] will not effect the status of

millions of the unemployed because modern mechanized industry in not going to spread employment to embrace the aged, the sickly, the afflicted, the lazy, the indifferent, the undisciplined, the unskilled and the irresponsible. Capitalist methods—production for profit—require the employment of first rate human material and the constant weeding out of the second rater and third rate. Nor is there place for them on farms where machinery and improved technics (sic) in agriculture are displacing common labor as ruthlessly as it is being displaced in industry. And so we have with us the Unwanted Man, the most tragic by project of our civilization, with whom social planners will have to deal.<sup>54</sup>

Surrounding this note of stern concerns about the policies, Saunders mostly uses humor mixed with real government data to question these policies. *The New Deal Goes to the Privy*, published in 1936, provides readers with an up-to-date chart indicating all the privies built nationwide using CWA, ERA, and WPA funds. Showing his familiarity with the earlier health campaigns, Saunders played off language and imagery reminiscent of the past health campaigns. For example, at the beginning of *Forward Pasquotank!*, there is an illustration depicting the privies' architectural change from the diseased, fly-infested outhouse to the clean and standard shed-roofed building of the New Deal [Image 4.35]. Meanwhile, throughout each booklet, Saunders employs the tone of the earlier health campaigns to mock the efforts, declaring the CWA workers to be “an Army of ‘Specialists’” or dubbing these new privies “citadels against death.”<sup>55</sup>

Additionally, Saunders employs the outmoded nature of the outhouse to offer a more derisive social critique than Sale's. While New Deal agencies referred to privies as ‘modern sanitation’ in their promotion efforts, Saunders exploits this characterization of outhouses as modern structures. Referring to these new privies as “the modern ’34 models,” all three publications display twelve fake advertisements promoting new, upgrading conveniences for these ‘modern’ CWA privies. From ads promoting standardized Rubber Stamp Backhouse Poetry, to radios to upgrade in your privy entertainment from old Sears and Roebuck catalog days [Image 4.36], and the “modernistic note” of Rubber Air Cushions for the seat, these ads hammered upon the

humorously oxymoronic nature of the modern outhouse, as well as the Roosevelt administration's privy-building program.<sup>56</sup>

Published from *Forward Pasquotank!* in 1934 to *The New Deal Goes to the Privy* in 1936, was a poem in the front of each pamphlet entitled "The Back House to the Front." This poem ironically retorts "to all you carping critics who have Roosevelt on the pan, I want to call attention to his latest Privy Plan..."<sup>57</sup> and continues to reminisce on the history of this domestic structure and benefits of Roosevelt's latest efforts, while subversively critiquing the government's pursuit of such antimodern policies. The poem ends as such:

...And orators with silver tongues were paid by men of wealth  
To crucify the old back house as a menace to our health  
They formed a "Privy Council" and had each state decree  
It was against the law to use that shrine of memory.  
They built new closets in the house upon real swanky plans  
And called them highfalutin names like "toilets," "rests" and "cans"  
With chains that flushed the water through and tissue by the roll  
To take the place of corncocks that we just threw down the hole.  
But we who live back in the past, who long for yesterday,  
Can now perk up with dignity and bless "C.W.A."  
For down in North Carolina where nature reigns supreme  
They're licking this depression with a "Back to Nature" scheme  
They're building miles of privies on the good old squatter's plan  
With good old fashion holes and things meant for the real HE man;  
And North Carolina's bound to be the nation's paradise,  
For folks who want real comfort will flock there just like flies.  
And as they sit and meditate, between each groan and grunt,  
They'll thank Roosevelt for bringing

THE OLD BACK HOUSE TO THE FRONT<sup>58</sup>.

Whereas in the early twentieth century, progressives pointed without irony to sanitary privies as a modernizing tool for both urban and rural landscapes, by the New Deal, this language of modernity sounded not only stale but also absurd to many people.

With the expansion of both urban infrastructure and electrical grids, indoor plumbing with municipal sewerage or septic tanks in unsewered areas became more plausible. Consequently, outhouses became an icon of a disappearing era.

While an overwhelmingly progressive man, Saunders obviously enjoyed the conservative and nostalgic humor of Chic Sale as well. At the end of *Forward Pasquotank!* is an article entitled “The Buck and Railer: Predecessor of the Hole Privy was Built for Business.” Written by a Trevor Wells, the article claims that

Old Chick Sale started this argument when he brought the old Privy back to mind but he didn’t go back so far. He just went to the “holer” days, but the “Buck and Railer” is even older than his day. In fact, they are just a step out of the old woods days.<sup>59</sup>

Built to be movable all over the farm, the article argues, “you didn’t bother much about readin’ the catalogues and lookin’ over the harness sections, you tended to business... [since these designs] didn’t have no easy seats all carved round and invitin’ laziness.”<sup>60</sup> Later in the article, he discusses the ways in which you could tell how people were healthy or lazy using the old buck and railer, while Lem Putt’s “new fangled privies [are]...too darn comfortable and has sowed the seed of laziness.”<sup>61</sup> Coincidental or not, this humorous linkage between laziness and privies continued to build on the idea that privies’ designs effected behavior changes in its users.

Where Chic Sale relinquished privies’ historical and political context, Saunders jumped right into the political and historical fray with his satire. Saunders’ critique, unlike many later lampoons using the privy, came out of the South. Drawing upon his memories of the past public health campaigns and of the past architectural designs for privies—with a particularly interesting reference to the “buck and railer,” which was the old, open-back privy—Saunders crafted a satirical assault on these specific New Deal policies.

Saunders used the privy, both with its degrading humor emanating from its function and its symbolic stature as a bygone structure, as a vehicle to pose two questions concerning the soundness of Roosevelt's efforts: If privies represent the premodern agrarian life in Sale's version of rural life, how can a government justify building millions of them as part of a future plan for the country? Moreover, if capitalism and modernization wiped away these rural dwellers' livelihoods, how much can building antiquated structures for their homes actually help these people? Though Saunders' critique came from the left, his satirical outhouse booklets started a boom of similar publications, from the left and right, mocking Roosevelt's policies by using the privy as a potent symbol for antimodern and wasteful spending.

In 1935, a Wheeling, West Virginia publisher ran several editions of newspaper called *The Morning Call*, which poked fun at New Deal privy policies. Less overtly political than Saunders, *The Morning Call* poked fun at targets ranging from the government's claims on the structure's healthiness to the "experts" who built them. Humor about what color to paint the structure, corny nicknames, and how natural elements—snow, spiders, etc.—found its way inside the structure, all pointed to humorous nature of the government's project. Chic Sale was frequently referenced throughout the paper, and one article recognized the work of Saunders. Though a vast majority of the privy-building occurred in the South, the South was not the only place in the country to join in with this privy humor; nationwide, privy arose as potent symbol with which to critique Roosevelt.<sup>62</sup>

One example from outside of the South is a little pamphlet published in Minnesota in 1935 by William Royal Greer. Entitled *Gems of American Architecture*,

Greer laid out the work as if it was an outhouse catalogue, utilizing a range of monikers for the privy.<sup>\*\*</sup> In it, its fictitious publisher, the L.A. Vitorie Company, offered ‘customers’ a slew of privy choices, complete with product numbers. One could order “The Tourist” which was “the only portable jake made in this country...the cabinet is placed over any sewer manhole after removing the cover,” for \$27.39; request “The Old Reliable” which had “a solid framework similar to that of the Leaning Tower” for \$12.61; or splurge upon “The Ensemble” which was a “garage-dooley-woodshed ensemble...of pastoral design with the garage built to resemble a barn” for a modest \$312.<sup>63</sup>

While direct political language is largely absent from the bulk of the pamphlet, L.A. Vitorie Company was a cloaked representation of the New Deal agencies. Acknowledging the humor and criticism involved in these policies, the L.A. Vitorie Company writes in its introduction to the catalogue

Many people scoffed at the idea these products would relieve a situation that confronted the citizenry of this country. Despite the ridicule of his friends, Mr. Vitorie started this movement, which has done more for farmer relief and the pleasure use of spare time than any other in America. None other has been so great or universal.<sup>64</sup>

Greer’s humor lay in the idea that the next step logical for the new outhouse is its placement in the mail-order catalogues (which also, ironically, could provide its toilet paper). By using the outhouse to represent the epitome of an antiquated structure awkwardly out of place in modernity, Mr. Vitorie subtly presented readers with the ludicrous future made possible by Mr. Roosevelt’s backward policymaking.

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<sup>\*\*</sup> Including as these examples suggest, “jake” and “dooley.”

With frustration about the economy and the growing perception of a dictatorial nature in the federal government, satire provided an avenue to escape and to criticize. As a domestic structure, the outhouse symbolized a wide variety of sentiments—from diseased yet comical, poor yet comfortable, and outmoded yet nostalgically domestic. With all of these associations, the privy provided a well-loaded structure to launch such attacks. As the New Deal continued, criticism became more heated. Newton Easling from Illinois published a work in 1938 called *The Donnicker Building Boom*,<sup>††</sup> “as a way of getting back at the incumbent Democratic administration.”<sup>65</sup> Offering a more conservative and bitter tone than the other examples, Easling notes,

Some think he is crazy and others just wonder,  
Do you think they’ll stop him before we run outa lumber [used for the privies]?  
If the “New Deal” discovers a means and a ways  
Compelling us to eat all the farmers can raise,  
Our pill and paper factories will run overtime  
No more unemployment if we’re standing in line.<sup>66</sup>

By 1940, the length and breadth of the New Deal as well as Roosevelt’s decision to seek a third term incensed Republicans and other critics. The Republican challenger that year, Wendell Willkie, used the image of the privy in a direct attack on the first family in an election season pin. On the pin was an outhouse with the words, “Project #UMP-000, Sponsored by Eleanor” as a critique to the New Deal programs and personal shot at the activism of the first lady.<sup>67</sup>

Throughout the 1930s, most satirical swipes using privies aimed towards the Roosevelt administration and its policies. Besides their political relevance in the New Deal, this satire also built upon the humor inherent in excretory-related function of the

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<sup>††</sup> “Donnicker” was also a nickname for privies.



structure. For much of the 1930s, these critiques used the privy as a political equalizer—in order to level the politically powerful president and first lady by associating them with universal but often unmentioned behavior. Increasingly, though, privies made their way into the political cartoons of urban magazines and comic strips that used the South, and particularly the idea of the hillbilly, as a regional punching bag during a time of great economic strife. According to cultural historian, Anthony Harkins, the portrayal of the hillbilly character found resonance during the Depression “by crystallizing long-developing conceptions of mountaineer backwardness and social degeneracy and presenting a more sanguine vision of the durability of the American people and spirit [.] [Thus,] these images mirrored the complicated mix of emotions and attitudes of the Depression-era audiences.”<sup>68</sup>

One of the most popular satirists to utilize this hillbilly image was Paul Webb, whose cartoons appeared in the male-oriented, cosmopolitan magazine *Esquire*. Harkins argues that Webb’s cartoons represented, “a visual manifestation of a powerful new myth of southern society and culture....what historian George Tindall later labeled ‘the Benighted South,’ [which was] a society characterized by a degraded culture, oppressive economic and political institutions, staggering inequality and widespread poverty.”<sup>69</sup> Webb purposefully placed the outhouse within this visual representation of the South as a way to accentuate the backwardness, doltish, and antimodern tendencies of the southern, hillbilly character.

For the Roosevelt/Willkie election of 1940, Paul Webb’s election-month cartoon placed southern voters lining up to vote at a polling station—an outhouse strikingly similar to one pictured in Willkie’s campaign pin—with the caption, “Lem Hawkins

promised to bring his two-headed cousin along...that's three votes right there.”<sup>70</sup>

Another example is Webb's September 1941 cartoon, which shows two hillbillies placing an outhouse over a newly dug pit with the caption, “It's the one they trapped that Yankee General in durin' the war...Gran'pappy won it in a mumble-peg contest.”<sup>71</sup> In these cartoons, Webb uses the outhouse to index the most egregious stereotypes about the South and southerners. In this particular cartoon, he also conveys the idea that southerners not only were stuck in a Civil War mentality, but still stuck using Civil War-era technology.

The incorporation of outhouses into hillbilly stereotypes proved to be an interesting cultural development. Hillbilly culture corresponds to only part of the southern population, though they are sometimes equated or confused. The trend towards associating hillbillies with privies is ironic in the sense that most of the early public health efforts to build outhouses in the South targeted the lowland and coastal areas of the South rather than the mountain regions. That decision reflected the fact that hookworm inhabited mostly sandy and loamy soils, rather than the rocky terrain of the mountains. Perhaps because of the bureaucratic inattention, these mountain regions initially received less infrastructural aid than other parts of the South, leading to increased stigmatization. Or, perhaps this association just conveniently fit into the cultural interpretation of the moment. Either way, outhouses today continue to be a public symbol of the envisaged hillbilly landscape.

As the country marched from the New Deal into war, its infrastructure and new technologies continued to develop. On the national stage, outhouses increasingly became not just equalizer in humor but also as a degrader, particularly for southerners. While

Roosevelt's men abandoned much of the explicitly demeaning rhetoric about the South and southerners that marked the Rockefeller-led efforts, the opposite was true within the popular media. Humorists ranging from Chic Sale to Paul Webb established the privy as a vivid material symbol for rural and premodern behavior in the national imagination. The outhouse of Chic Sale's work—agrarian and antimodern—quickly became darker in nature. After Webb's cartoons and other similar representations emerged—like Mountain Dew's first logo from the late 1940s, which was of a hillbilly with a whiskey jug on his hip shooting at another hillbilly emerging from an outhouse. While set in the mountain South, these connotations generally carried over into the envisioned landscape of the entire American South. The outhouse, particular when found in the southern landscape, immediately indexed a slew of pejorative southern traits, such as poor, doltish, reckless, lazy, drunk, immoral and backward.

## CONCLUSION

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On the eve of the Great Depression, outhouses emerged into the national imagination. Chic Sale's vaudevillian performance that spotlighted the structure was published 1929. The same year, a Walt Disney's short film called *Haunted House* was released, which ended with Mickey Mouse trying to hide from skeletons in the outhouse, only to find the privy occupied by another ghoul.<sup>72</sup> With these and other representations emerging in the popular culture of the era, privies quickly became a public symbol in American life.

On the federal level, the New Deal placed the capstone upon the progressive public health infrastructure that developed in the previous two decades in the South. Federal agencies, policies, and funding solidified the increasingly standardized

architecture of the outhouse. At the same time, urbanization and technological development relegated privies to the outer rings of politically-connected society—to the rural countryside, company towns and the poor, black districts of cities and suburbs. To encourage a mandate to pursue this infrastructural aid, the government pushed these buildings into public political discourse using surveys and photographs. With this escalating publicity and outmoded connotations, these buildings paradoxically came to stigmatize the people for whom the government was advocating.

As a visual icon the outhouse emerged as a symbol both of backwardness and progress, poverty and betterment, humor and tragedy. These ironic dichotomies offered fertile ground to the Roosevelt administration, which played off these dualities in advancing their own political goals, as well as for critics of the New Deal. Critics employed the privy as increasingly bygone structure, albeit with increasingly darker satire—to ridicule first federal policies and then the South at large.

Over the course of several decades, window screens, closed wells, sanitary privies, and other building and technological developments became the minimum accepted living conditions by the 1930s. These New Deal campaigns strategically built upon the past several decades of efforts to effect some form of sanitary ideals upon the landscape. These ideals were borne out of those expressed in the rhetoric and promotional literature of the early campaigns. Built upon new discoveries in medicine, the driving force behind the modern sanitation movement was the pursuit of a systematized architecture that provided residence with a separation from both nature and disease. Increasingly, a mounting list of ‘modern conveniences’ was added to these national domestic standards, which often were associated with the values of the growing

middle-class. Many houses in the South, however, fell below these standards. With government reports, documents, and photographs, the house and its functional parts became a barometer for poverty which was accessible to a large majority of Americans. This mounted more pressure on the residents to make and the government to aid these changes. These values and efforts also increasingly pigeonholed the outhouse as a marker of backwardness in this region of the country.

During the nineteenth century privies belonged to a different class of people, as wealthy landowners or urban dwellers often were the only populations that used privies for their waste. By the 1930s, scientific developments had created new medical understandings which mobilized political campaigns wanting to translate these discoveries into the landscape. Out of these discoveries and policies, technological and infrastructural development emerged, paving the way for new methods of waste to overtake older its older forms for most Americans. Rural privies transitioned from wealthy to modern to backward within several decades.

In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, privies formed the beginning of architectural control and sanitary assistance for government entities. Once the architectural form for the modern sanitary order, by the 1930s and 1940s, the privy had fallen by the wayside of technological advancement. As the New Deal brought three million outhouses into the national landscape, it also brought the affected homes, communities and regions a lasting and useful structure. Yet it was a structure which quickly became a loaded political symbol. As national bathroom standards evolved rapidly in the subsequent decades, the government faced growing criticism for labeling these outhouses as modern or progressive.

In these subsequent decades, the federal government was able quickly leave the privy-building work, distance themselves rhetorically, pursue new policy directions, and establish a new face of governance. The individual home, community, or region, in which the policies were enacted, by contrast, was left with structures that increasingly symbolized many negative connotations, particularly in the South. Though much of the infrastructural improvements concerning privies performed during the New Deal had positive impacts on southerners—from employment to sanitation to a new building within their domestic space, outhouses also and ironically became a potent symbol and memorial of disparaging traits that long had stigmatized the region.

## V. CONCLUSION

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The public health campaigns spawned by the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission produced a profound change on the landscape of the American South. Spurred by the funding and coordinating of Rockefeller as well as state and federal governments, local health officials and the local residents refurbished and constructed millions of sanitary outhouses in the region in a little over three decades. Nearly half of the southern population had no outhouse at all before the campaigns in the early 1900s; by 1938, by comparison, one fifth of rural southerners had no privy building. Not only did these efforts add privies to the landscape, but these campaigns also promoted a new design into the vernacular architecture of the region. Closed pit privies had existed before the campaigns but open-back designs dominated regional designs. After the public health efforts, though, southerners quickly adopted this design as the preferred architecture. The New Deal industrialized the process, manufacturing identical shed-roofed privy houses and concrete risers to go over the pits, which were installed by local crews. Over three million of these models emerged on the national landscape, with particularly high numbers in southern states.

These architectural changes in privies, however, were not only occurring in the American South. The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission paved the way for future sanitation campaigns, at home in the American South and abroad. After the Sanitary

Commission's five year run, Rockefeller's new venture—the International Health Board—began public health work in other regions of the world—mostly in the tropics. There, outhouses were also used as a tool to bring modernity to these nonwestern countries and regions. Some of the men who worked in the campaigns in the United States also went to work abroad: for instance, Benjamin Washburn of North Carolina, who was in the forefront of the state's efforts in the mid- 1910s, moved shortly thereafter to Jamaica to help administer the sanitation campaigns there.

Many of the tactics and architectural designs in these other countries also utilized those developed in the American South. For example, in brief report of the campaigns in Puerto Rico and Jamaica, Rockefeller's International Health Board reported,

In Porto Rico (sic) thousands of latrines are being erected in sections where formerly none existed, and steady improvement is being made in the type of structure installed. In the early days of hookworm control operations on the island, the details of latrine construction were left largely to the discretion of the householders; pits varied in size, seats were made of scrap lumber or oil cases, and the superstructures were usually of palm leaves. Step by step, however, the Government has standardized each detail of construction. Increasing numbers of latrines are now being built throughout of wood, and pits and seats are of uniform size. The Government has appointed a force of inspectors for permanent duty in sanitized areas to secure the maintenance and use of latrines.

In Jamaica a similar development has taken place in latrine construction. The type now being erected is of the pit variety, made throughout of good lumber and covered with corrugated sheet iron. These latrines can be installed in Jamaica at a cost of from (sic) \$10 to \$15.<sup>1</sup>

The small picture included in the report shows a less-enclosed version of the shed-roofed model advocated in the United States, though instead of weatherboard, the privy has a wooden frame with sheet-metal sides and roofing.<sup>2</sup>

In 1922, the IHB operated in the American South, Central America, the West Indies, South America, and the Far East. In a little over a decade, Rockefeller's philanthropic boards had worked with sixty-nine different states and national governments to eradicate hookworm disease as well as other diseases, like yellow fever



and malaria.<sup>3</sup> As they did in the American South, these efforts had a profound effect on the built environment.

Since the early twentieth century, this interest in international public health campaigns has grown. The privy that my Kenyan host family had was also a product of more recent, international sanitation campaigns in East Africa. Sanitary outhouses still are a major part of many health campaigns in the developing world—and people respond in various ways to these campaigns and the structures they advocate. A recent article in the *New York Times*, focused on a popular musician from Mozambique named, Feliciano Dos Santos, who sings songs not only about usual pop subjects, but also about the need to practice proper sanitation. Songs vary from how easy a concrete slab is to clean to the importance of boiling one's water and washing one's hands. A call and response refrain in one song begins with the question, "Who still goes to the toilet out in the bush?" to which the children retort, "We use latrines!"<sup>4</sup> Though tactics have changed and many toilets subscribe to the new progressive reform paradigm of 'ecological' or 'green' rather than 'sanitary,' these efforts continue to impact the larger landscapes of these countries and the intimate domestic spaces of many people.

In many ways, privy sanitation provided a relatively inexpensive way to improve health conditions in both the South and in these developing countries. In the South and other countries, the Rockefeller-led campaigns and more recent efforts profoundly impact these regions by reducing morbidity and mortality. Yet, these types of efforts targeted regions of the country and world viewed as the 'Other' and thus are unable to help themselves. The South, like these other countries, was to the Commission and many Americans a place unto itself—it was, as the *New York Times* put it in 1909, "[that]

strange country below the Mason-Dixon Line”<sup>5</sup> One example of Rockefeller’s tendency to single out the South was that when the California State Board of Health requested funding from the Sanitary Commission to help fight hookworm out west, the Commission refused, simply on the basis that California was not in the South.<sup>6</sup> Paternalistic mindsets guided these early philanthropic ventures, which undermined different systems of knowledge and pushed their beliefs into educational curricula and the built environment of their targeted regions.

Even as these new designs and medical understandings were disseminated throughout the South, southerners by and large incorporated a variety of practices for disposing of waste into these new structures. Many households continued such practices as: using chamber pots a night, which were emptied into the privy in the morning; composting human waste and using it as fertilizer for agricultural crops; and, disposing of other wastes—such as food scraps and other material refuse—into the pit as well. In short, the pit privy was integrated quickly into many domestic chores and habits, becoming a central point for waste within the home space. The privy served other domestic purposes as well—as a place for storage, privacy, and childhood games and pranks. In various ways, people incorporated privies into their domestic environments and lives.

Health advocates often portrayed southerners as lacking coherent systems for dealing with waste. Images and written descriptions of the region’s privies portrayed them as decrepit, decayed, and often overrun with vermin or farm animals—thus lacking both care and order. Though the response to privies was far from uniform, the rapid incorporation of these privies demonstrated that southerners were not illogical in dealing

with waste. In recollections of the time period, people described systems for dealing with waste—from creating privacy—in the woods or in an out of the way location—to the disposal of the material—in streams, through burial, or in reuse, like fertilizer. With the surge of sanitary privies on the landscape, southern families incorporated more familiar understandings of waste as well as other domestic usages into these new buildings. Sanitary advocates approached the issue of waste from divergent sets of knowledge, different cultural values, and disparate economic means. Yet given the opportunity and means, many southerners embraced the new models in various ways.

The architectural change in privies was also a part of the technological, socioeconomic, and political changes occurring simultaneously in the South. During the nineteenth century privies belonged to a different class of people, as wealthy landowners or urban dwellers often were the only populations that used privies for their waste. Over the first half of the twentieth century, scientific developments led to new medical understandings. In turn, political campaigns mobilized, wanting to translate these discoveries into a more sanitarily built environment. Out of these discoveries and policies, technological and infrastructural development emerged, paving the way for new methods of waste to overtake its older forms for most Americans. Privies transitioned from wealthy and modern to poor and backward within several decades.

Privies were also part of a more expansive approach to governance as well as political inclusion in the early twentieth century. Southern governments previously did not address the health concerns of their general populace. The progressive public health campaigns subtly challenged entrenched power in the South by extending government services to those who previously received little political attention. At the same time,

these efforts relied upon powerful figures in the community to bring many of the changes, while maligning poor southerners for their insanitary condition.

The Great Depression presented an opportunity to reconsider the country's socioeconomic position, as well as the country's governing philosophy. The FSA photography questioned older narratives about poverty, which laid blame for an individual's poor condition at the feet of the impoverished, by highlighting the humanity of those at the bottom of the economic systems. Government publications also more subtly questioned narratives about disease disparities. For centuries, many intellectuals considered the subtropical southern climate to be more prone to disease than the more temperate climes of rest of the country. Both the government photographs and documents made the case that the environment was not solely responsible for the South's problems—and argued that the government should provide more municipal and rural infrastructure in order to alleviate the South's economic and medical problems. In order to argue for these changes to bring the South more in line with the rest of the country, it was important to highlight the stark differences in infrastructure, health and economic means between this region and national norms. Ironically, these images also helped further stigmatize the region as one which was intellectually and morally backward.

These infrastructural improvements Roosevelt sought took many forms—from sewers and electricity to parkways and hiking trails. Sanitary outhouses were part of these efforts. These structures once had been the architectural form for the modern sanitary order; yet by the 1930s and 1940s, the privy appeared antiquated and even dirty compared to newer toilet options. At the same, though, many southerners had no outhouse. The Roosevelt administration saw outhouses as a relatively inexpensive way to

bring these people closer to the sanitary values of the nation. Three million new outhouses materialized onto the American landscape. As the capstone to early public health efforts, this final effort made the structure the minimum requirement to meet national sanitary standards. Outhouses, though, quickly rose within the public consciousness as a potent, visual representative of a bucolic but increasingly backwards and impoverished way of life. Fueled by the attention, the outhouse became a more value-laden structure in the domestic landscape.

In *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, James Agee discussed the idea of modern conveniences and their relation to the three tenant homes in Alabama during the Great Depression. Agee noted that none of the three families had a privy. However, the Ricketts' house had remnants of both a privy and well. Agee described the former privy's presence as marked only by "another pit, and other rotten planks and a sudden violent spume of weeds."<sup>7</sup> The fact that there was once a privy was an indication that the residence once housed wealthier dwellers or that the Ricketts once had seen better days financially. For the family, however, maintaining a privy was not a priority when mere survival was such a financial challenge. A little further in the book, Agee reflected on the moral and philosophical implications of these sharecroppers' lack of privy facilities.

Before discussing the issue of privies, Agee asserted that he saw the benefits in lacking electricity and flush toilets, in part because he "despise[d] and deplore[d] the middle-class American worship of sterility and worship-fear of its own excrement."<sup>8</sup> However, he found nothing romantic about these tenants who live without privies, stating:

These families lack not only 'plumbing' but the 'privies' which are by jest suppose (sic) to be the property of any American farmer, and the mail-order catalogues which, again

with a loud tee-hee, are supposed to be this farmer's toilet paper. [Instead,] [t]hey retire to the bushes; and they clean themselves as well as they can with newspaper if they have any around the house, otherwise with corncobs, twigs or leaves. To say they are forced in this respect to live "like animals" is a little silly, for animals have the advantage of them on many counts. I will say then, that whether or not *The Bathroom Beautiful* is to be preached to all nations, it is not to their advantage in a 'civilized' world to have to use themselves as the simplest savages do.<sup>9</sup>

Within Agee's statement is a call to moral action. Agee used the tenants' lack of a privy as a symbol of a basic and universal domestic structure that their poverty has denied them. A mere thirty years previous, though, the lack of an outhouse was a cultural and architectural norm. Rather than being an intrinsic building on the southern landscape, privies themselves formed the backbone of an early, successful progressive effort to push the South into modernity—and towards similar notions of sterility and middle class values that Agee is eager to question. Agee's moral appeal emerged out of a historical and political understanding that it was necessary to have a housed structure for waste within the domestic space. Just a few decades previous, privies were not the norm, even among polite society. The early twentieth century political policies and campaigns which helped multiply privies on the landscape also propelled domestic privies into regional housing norms. These were the norms, which in the 1930s, Agee's three families failed to meet.

Following the New Deal, there were waves of interest in outhouses by state and federal governments. While the New Deal agencies worked to install three million privies across the country, subsequent government efforts sought to remove them. Beginning in 1940, federal censuses began noting the presence of indoor plumbing in housing conditions—with 35% of the population lacking such structures nationwide (comparatively in Alabama, Arkansas, and North Dakota over 70% of households lacked indoor plumbing, and 81.3% of Mississippi's population did). As those numbers dipped

nationally in forthcoming decades, the South's number did as well, though less so than the rest of the country. Excluding Alaska, the percentage of midwestern and western homes without indoor plumbing fell into the single digits by 1970. Most southern states remained in the double digits. In Kentucky and Mississippi, over one-fifth of their populace relied on outdoor toilets.<sup>10</sup> As the number of privies fell nationwide, this census calculation became part of poverty indexes.

Government photographs, such as those taken by Russell Lee for the Solid Fuels Administration for War's Medical Survey of the Bituminous Coal Industry in 1946-1947,<sup>\*</sup> also documented many privies that ranged from derelict to near-new conditions. And with Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," the nation renewed its focus upon economic hardships, educational opportunities and housing conditions of the South, particularly Appalachia. Even in the 1990s, southern states were still focused on privies. The 1990 census showed that North Carolina was 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation in lacking indoor plumbing, with 1.8% of its households lacking indoor fixtures. In response, Governor Hunt and other state officials mounted a statewide effort to eliminate privies. They appropriated funds and found volunteers to construct indoor bathrooms in existing houses. By 2000, the state had nearly 20,000 fewer houses with privies than the previous decade.<sup>11</sup>

Over the second half of the twentieth century, counter-narratives hailing the virtues of outhouses also appeared in subcultures and small towns. The back-to-the-land movement, which rose to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s, admired the 'premodern'

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<sup>\*</sup> Some images from this survey appear in this thesis (see 1.15, 1.17, and 1.20).

qualities of the outhouse. A similar ethos continues today in efforts to move towards 'green' living or living 'off-the-grid.' During ethnographic research about modern homesteading in the United States, Rebecca Kneale Gould documented one homesteader who succinctly summed up this feeling with the comment: "In the old days we used to eat in and shit out, now we shit in and eat out. I'm trying to reverse that process by growing my own food and using an outhouse."<sup>12</sup> Guides to off-the-grid living through building composting toilets and reusing "humanure" are on the increase or have been reprinted since the 1970s.<sup>13</sup> A few companies manufacture composting toilets, though municipal codes and the lagging interest of the general public have kept sales relatively low. Many progressive communities though have pushed for greater inclusion for these models along with ecologically-mindful systems, like grey-water systems for recycling water to use for gardening rather than disposing of it in sewer or septic systems. Other individuals have just installed composting toilets or these other systems without following municipal codes or getting a permit. This new progressive push again seizes the outhouse as a political tool for a way to move forward (and at the same, back to our collective roots). This time the outhouse is a vehicle to both question our progress and promote ecological living, rather than for the modern sanitation goals of the earlier progressives.

Outhouses also have serve as a symbol of rural pride. Many knick-knacks and other trinkets have a found growing market in representations of outhouses. Some yards have nicely decorated outhouses along the road as quaint decorations or symbols of rural pride. Many small towns have charity events or parades that include outhouses on floats and in races. Calendars, coffee table books and hometown story collections seem to have a magnetic draw to outhouses. Some older friends in rural North Florida filled one of



their bathrooms with various items of outhouse décor. When asked about their decorating choice, they laughed and spoke endearingly of using the old “two-holer.” From conference presentations to casual questions regarding my thesis, I have found from personal experience that privies are usually a lively point of conversation. More interestingly, they are often employed as a barometer for conveying ‘how country’ one’s childhood home, a relative’s house or any other house or experience once was. Though much more benign than a poverty index, the use of this building as a rural measuring stick strikes to the heart of its inherited cultural meaning and its political history.

At its root, one dominant southern narrative concerning privies rests upon a notion that the South was the nation’s geographical laggard. For over a century, on an individual as well as regional level, privies bespoke a region and people that fell behind national norms. Stiles and the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission pointed to regional architectural failures—mostly privies—and bureaucratic inadequacies that straggled behind those of the northern states. Once the South began to catch up, southerners found themselves trailing behind the northern states again as a region without much indoor plumbing.

Unlike the more densely populated North, the South was a rural place. Compared to other rural regions, like the West or Midwest, this rurality is translated into backwardness rather than lending it a rugged or pastoral aura. Urban magazines, like *Esquire*, pushed the idea that without these technological and infrastructural developments, the South was stuck in the past and lacked the intelligence and motivation to pull themselves and their region out of it. Paul Webb’s cartoons placed privies within the southern landscape and associated these structures with lethargic, boorish and

immoral behavior. The federal government, with a bit more nuance, argued as well that the South needed to conform to a more materially-enhanced life.

Rural living conditions and capabilities were not and are not synonymous with those possible in urban centers. Rural sewage is still inefficient materially and financially. Extending electricity's reach, for instance, took much more infrastructure per household in rural regions than in urban centers. Once electricity arrived, however, southerners could pump well water or municipal water into homes. For toilets, septic tanks became the advocated way for rural dwellers to mimic urban amenities. Far from perfect, septic tanks presented ecological problems of their own. They created nitrogen overloads in aquatic habitats, unstable soils on steep hillsides, and septic swamps in many poorly planned suburban developments.<sup>14</sup> Yet, by federal standards, septic tanks were considered more advanced than privies. The southern connotations for privies found a growing political and popular resonance throughout the first half of the twentieth century. This association continued to resonate as censuses showed that southern states made up most of the areas where indoor plumbing made the least progress and these implications were picked up and disseminated through popular culture.

As I mentioned in the introduction, privies long have been used to level politically powerful individuals. From the Roosevelts in the 1930s to the American Revolution-era English politicians, satirist have correlated powerful people and their policies to privies, to undermine those with power, and to remind viewers with the structure's universally-shared biological function that these powerful people are in fact just people. When *Hustler* magazine satirically placed Jerry Falwell in an outhouse for his first inebriated sexual encounter with his mother, the magazine not only used the outhouse as a place to

debase a powerful figure, but they also tapped into long held demeaning notions about the South. Privies in the South represented a lagging infrastructural and architectural environment as well as a deficient intellectual and moral character. The political campaigns of the first four decades of the twentieth century called attention to this flawed outbuilding and correlated it to regional characteristics and regionally distinctive faults. Outhouses continue to be used to debase powerful people, but in the case of the South, they can be used to further degrade a region long looked down upon. As a southern preacher from the mountains of Virginia, Falwell was the perfect target for the somewhat more urbane or liberal readership of *Hustler* magazine.<sup>†</sup>

In many ways, outhouses have an outsized role in the collective memories of the past. Local oral history collections, fond recollections, and material trinkets all place outhouses within bygone rural landscapes. Within the southern landscape—both imagined and lived—outhouses loom especially large. During my research, one particular example of how outhouses are innately placed into past depictions of southern landscape drew my interest. A Wikipedia entry on the cartoon lists Li'l Abner's early occupation to be a "crescent cutter" for a Little Wonder Privy Company.<sup>15</sup> Trying to find more information, I came across a book that had one passage which said that the comic strip provided daily design advice for building the family's privy.<sup>16</sup> Having little familiarity with the comic myself, I searched through as many strips as I could find with no luck in finding a single outhouse references. Finally I wrote the publisher of 27 volumes of Li'l Abner comics to ask for his help. He replied that he could not recall any

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<sup>†</sup> As a note though, Larry Flynt, *Hustler's* creator, was born in rural Kentucky.

overt references to privies himself and thought that many people just assumed there were outhouses, even though Capp had not used them in the actual strip.<sup>17</sup>

Li'l Abner notwithstanding, other drawings, satire and television shows did use outhouses to convey a hillbilly landscape. From Mountain Dew to Dukes of Hazzard outhouses found a place within the southern, and often its mountainous, landscape.<sup>18</sup> Even television shows about hillbillies brought out the outhouse references. One example is the response offered to a cultural complaint once made by the Federal Communications Commission chairman, Newton Minow, who called television "a vast wasteland."<sup>19</sup> Made by Bob Hope at a National Association of Broadcaster's caption, Hope joked, "Newton Minow's needlings have led our great industry up the path to the *Beverly Hillbillies*—an outhouse in the vast wasteland."<sup>20</sup> Outhouses became vivid indicators of a range of different values—morality, hygiene, backwardness, and a bit more benignly, rurality. Intrinsically, they also seemed to belong in the southern landscape and in many popular representations, continue to belong. For instance, a friend recently pointed out that the Cartoon Network's show *Squidbillies* prominently makes use of the outhouse as an innate indicator of "hillbilliness." This building notably is the only outbuilding for these hillbilly squids' ramshackle abode.<sup>21</sup>

Among those who have used an outhouse, or once considered one the family toilet, outhouses seem to say a lot about the type of life one once led. Somehow, though, outhouses imply more than the bygone tasks of 'when we wanted water, we had to pump it ourselves,' 'I walked eight miles to school in the snow,' and other common refrains. Unlike these descriptions of past activities, southern outhouses conjure up questions about intellectual capabilities, hygienic values, and income levels, though the vehemence

of these connotations seems to be receding, as this structure's political and historical moment drifts further into the past.

In Kingston Heath's study of worker housing in New Bedford, Massachusetts, he defined the "memory landscape" as "clear images of place [which] are framed not only by the awareness of the locale, but also by situations that resonate with personal identity."<sup>22</sup> Heath's definition is meant to cover the intimate knowledge of place that one gains through lived experiences. Yet, in many ways, this definition works to describe both the vague imagined southern landscapes of the past as well as those which are more intimate. My caveat is to stress that these memory landscapes of both the lived and imagined South are rooted in a personal and very much political identity. People remember seeing outhouses and recall their experiences in outhouses, in part because of what it says about who they are and where they are within the power schemes of society.

In *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon*, Anthony Harkins argues that the concept of the hillbilly was "consistently used by middle-class economic interests to denigrate working-class southern whites (whether from the mountains or not) and to define the benefits of advanced civilization through negative counterexample, [yet] the term and the idea have also been used to challenge the generally unquestioned acceptance and legitimacy of 'modernity' and 'progress.'"<sup>23</sup> As the most recognized feature of the hillbilly built environment, the outhouse's presence or use, conveys a variety of narratives or counter-narratives, both of which seek to stake out one's own political identity. While the concept of hillbilly in some ways is intangible, the outhouse provides a physical entity and the idea of one to convey these narratives and counternarratives.

The outhouse vacillates between these divergent narratives. Some see this outbuilding as part of an agrarian ideal to which to return or at least respectable way of life, while others locate it within an impoverished, tragic, and luckily fading environment. Sanitation campaigns as well as historical accounts of these campaigns' successes often trumpet their efforts as pulling the South towards modernity. Yet, one of their prime tools, the outhouse, ironically became synonymous with a premodern life. As a structure imbued already with many far-reaching contradictions—humorous but profane, common but ridiculed, diseased but nostalgic—it is not surprising that many narratives about this structure are also paradoxical. Yet, these connotations did not arise out of thin air. Political forces pushed for these sanitary reforms. Using historical moments in part to frame and reframe their tool, the privy, they hoped to accomplish their historically-contingent goals. Additionally, thousands of southerners participated in these efforts—from those actively engaged in the campaigns to those who quietly worked this new structure into their daily routines and spaces. Only by fleshing out these developments and acknowledging the efforts of all participants in the campaigns, can a middle ground for the historical development of this structure be reached.

Housing is both historical and political. Many architectural movements are founded in ideological understandings that use structural design to effect social behavior. The City Beautiful was a progressive movement aimed to mold moral citizens through architectural designs. More recent efforts have been less forceful in their rhetoric, but the present-day New Urbanism movement advocates urban designs that bring about racial and income-level integration through architectural planning. The distance between the

underlying ideological goal and the actual use patterns, however, varies significantly—particularly as their buildings are used and reused over time.

While these movements have garnered attention in architecture and history classes, building codes also play a forceful role in shaping the built environment. These regulations are also a historical product, built upon changing understandings of comfort and necessity, and driven by powerful ideas of what constitutes a public good and a moral life. By codifying such guidance to builders and dwellers about proper domestic structures and life, such laws also extend the government's reach in the lives and buildings of its citizenry. These codes also become valuable tools for tenants, home-buyers and dwellers for the safety net and legal recourse these regulations provide; however, codes can become tools for applying unjust pressure on low-income residents, struggling financially to meet these regulations, as well as set legal standards that demean those who cannot meet such standards.

These building codes, like North Carolina's 1919 so-called "privy law," expanded the government's reach by defining construction method which private household had to follow. Additionally, this expansion codified the contemporaneous understanding of sanitation and hygiene. As these understandings changed, to support indoor plumbing over outdoor toilets, new laws and codes made their way into the statutes. The philosophy of those in power was cemented in the push not only to work to materially remove these structures from the landscape, but also to reduce the possibility of their presence through laws. In Wake County, North Carolina, a mostly urban and suburban county, outhouses and composting toilets are neither common nor a legal option for most

residents. A county supervisor in wastewater management explained the situation in an email to the author, as such:

Building codes typically require running water in a[n] occupied building, which then requires a water carried sewage disposal system. Composting units and outhouses cannot dispose of the water, so you are caught in a catch 22.<sup>24</sup>

Political power does shape the laws. Even if those powers since have evaporated, the old, historical authority still has the ability to subtly impact the built environment. In many ways, the environmental justice movement, which focuses on race-based and class-based discrimination within the built environment, makes a similar point. In my hometown, Tallahassee, Florida, for example, historical patterns of discrimination forced black districts within a mile or two of the capitol still use privies into the 1950s. Even today, in places like Chapel Hill, North Carolina, a historically black neighborhood on the fringe of the town still lack municipal services—like water and sewage—while their surrounding wealthier and whiter neighborhoods receive such amenities. Even as historical injustices are righted in popular discourse, material remnants of discrimination can persist, and often become unreflectively self-perpetuating. While often taken for granted, the waste infrastructure of cities, towns and rural areas are still very much a product of political wills.

Henry Glassie has urged folklorists “to abandon stratified concepts of society and learn to work from the inside out, from the place where people have the power to govern their own lives to the spaces in which their powers evaporate.”<sup>25</sup> My thesis, though, argues that in order to examine how people work from the inside out, one must understand the historical and political trajectory of these domestic structures. Outhouses—perceived today as a marker of a premodern agrarian landscape—instead strategically emerged in the early twentieth century as an increasingly governable



domestic space. My thesis illustrates the ideals of this public health movement—as well as the hurdles, successes and ramifications that its exertion of power had on the structure and the larger southern landscape, as well as the personal and popular perceptions of both in the American South.

Yet, power does not begin and end with the campaigners. Millions of people wove privies into their lives; just as just as they have done with other mandated structures. For example, fire escapes were another product of public health lobbying, though mostly in urban areas.<sup>‡</sup> Yet, these structures became extensions of people's domestic spaces—as a place for residents to sleep on hot summer nights, smoke cigarettes, attach one end of their clotheslines or hold parties. Within domestic life, privies became a space to find privacy, a place to dump household refuse, a means for collecting garden fertilizer, a storage structure for agricultural items, part of children's play and prank spaces, and a structure to attach clotheslines, among other domestic uses. Whereas most government photographs and promotional items showed the privy alone in the distance, people incorporated privies in their daily lives.

Politically, many citizens used the campaigns as a way to gain political footing for their community and familial health concerns. White and black betterment organizations, doctors, and average citizens embraced the privies brought by sanitary campaigns. For some black communities, this new attention to public health provided leverage for

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<sup>‡</sup> Look at Sara E. Wermiel, *The Fireproof Building: Technology and Public Safety in the Nineteenth-century American City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) for a detailed look at the technological, political and cultural changes made in buildings to build a better urban “infrastructure of safety.”

previously denied municipal services or new domestic structures that rural tenant families rarely were provided.

My research shows the impact of power and politics on the domestic landscapes of the South, and how a simple structure such as the privy underwent significant politicization and architectural changes in approximately three decades. Even with an increasingly regulated domestic landscape, dwellers found ways to exert their will upon the structures of their domestic lives. In *Back of the Big House*, John Vlach calls the slaves' exertion of will and ownership within hostile plantation landscapes a "reactive expression."<sup>26</sup> While a useful concept for questioning known power dynamics and illustrating that each individual has the ability to shape his or her own world to a degree, this term sets up a proactive and reactive binary.

The privy and its expansion across the southern vernacular landscape, however, had many different voices in many different positions of power, shaping and reshaping the campaigns. From district health officers to relief workers, women's groups to black nurses, provincial doctors to smalltime bankers, mill owners to coal miners, newspapermen to tenant farmers, and municipal politicians to some of the most powerful men within the nation, all pushed, pulled, and shaped privies with varying degrees of effect. While, I concede that more research on the human aspects of privies is needed, my examples do illustrate how the general population embraced, ignored, and protested as well as subverted, reinterpreted, and manipulated the campaigns and the privies themselves through overtly political actions as well as adaptive use of the structures within the domestic landscape.

## I. IMAGES FOR CHAPTER I (1.1-1.20)



Image 1.1 (left): Caption reads, "The Congress or the Necessary Politicians." Summary: "Print shows two men sitting in a privy, one uses pieces of the "Resolution[s] of the [C]ongress" to clean himself, while the other intently reads "P[amphlet En]titled Taxation [No] Tir[anny]", suggesting that while one studies the literature, the other responds accordingly. On the wall behind them hangs a print of William Pitt, tarred and feathered." (Image dated around 1775) British Cartoon Print Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-1511.

Image 1.2 (Below): Caption reads, "Detroit, Michigan. Outhouse and clown at Labor Day parade with plea for buying of war bonds." Photographer, Arthur S. Siegel, (September 1942) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USW3-008473-C.

Image 1.3 (At right): Rochdale Corporation Privy. *First Biennial Report of North Carolina Board of Health* (Raleigh: News & Observer, State Printers and Binders, 1881), 142.

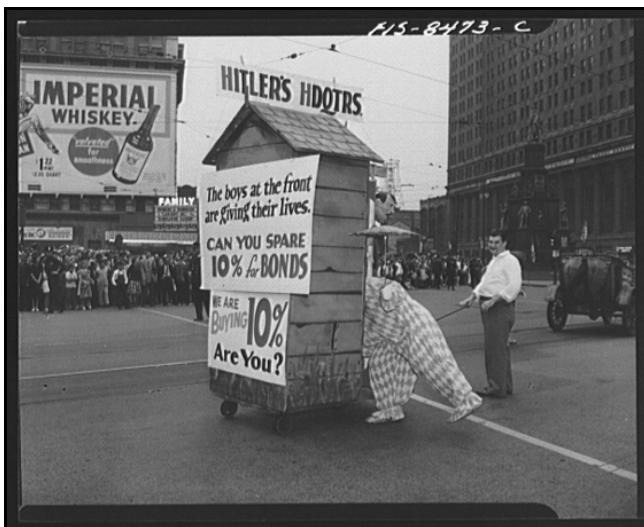




Image 1.4 (Left): Caption reads, "Privy built by FSA (Farm Security Administration). Clark farm, Coffee County, Alabama."

Photographer, John Collier, (August 1941) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-080440-D.

Image 1.5 (Lower Left): Caption reads, "Pit Privies Showing Inside and Outside Types of Ventilators." This one shows the outer ventilator. Figure P261hhh, Folder 1276, Box 54, Subseries 236J, Series 2, Record Group, 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 1.6 (Lower Right): Caption reads, "Pit Privies Showing Inside and Outside Types of Ventilators." This one shows the ventilation hole cut into the tops of the privy. Sometimes other ventilation was placed near the floor of the structure. Figure P261iii, Folder 1276, Box 54, Subseries 236J, Series 2, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

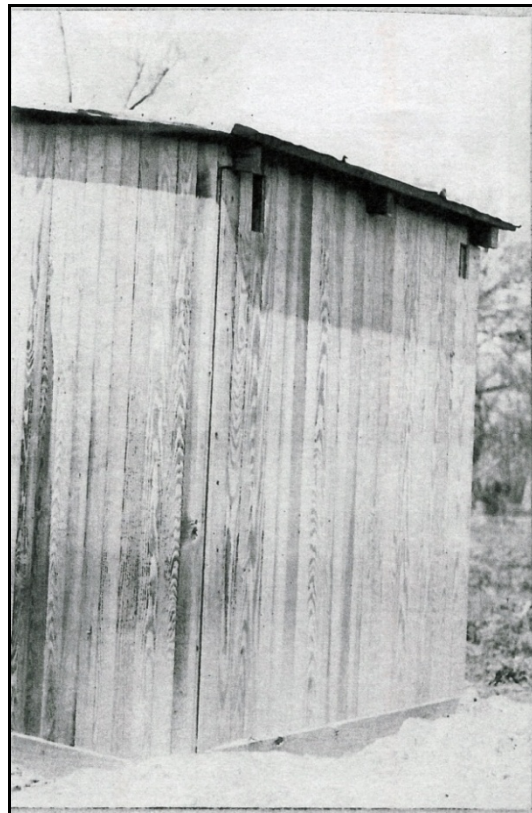
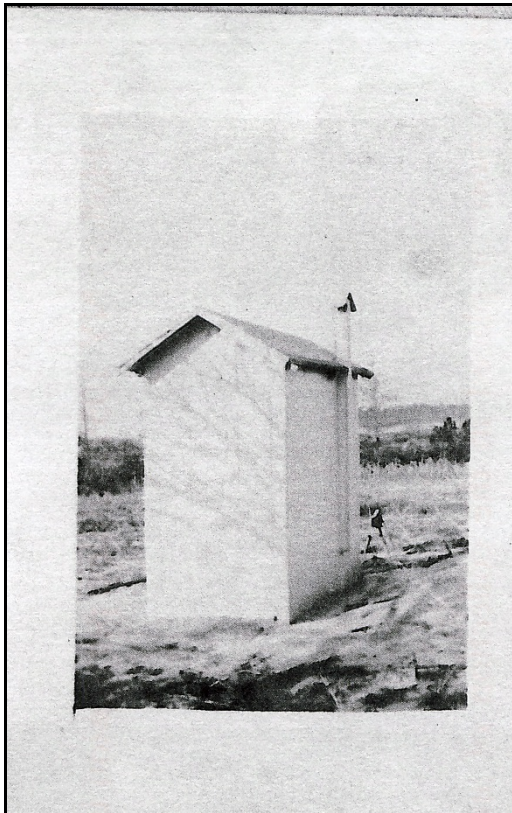






Image 1.7 (Left): Bowman's Folly, Privy, Folly Creek, Accomac vicinity, Accomack County, VA. Inside, the structure had 4 different seats. Historic American Buildings Survey Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, HABS VA,1-AC.V,1B-1.

Image 1.8 (Right): Detailed View of Privy, south (left) and east sides. One of several necessary buildings on premise. Robinson-Aiken Necessary Building, 48 Elizabeth Street, Charleston, Charleston County, SC. Historic American Buildings Survey Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, HABS SC,10-CHAR,177D-3.



FIG. 24.—An old privy, showing how soil pollution occurs.

Image 1.9 (Left): Rendering of what public health officials viewed as a stereotypical open-back privy. Charles Wardell Stiles, "Hookworm Disease (Or Ground-Itch Anemia)," *Public Health Bulletin*, No. 32. (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1910), 30.



Image 1.10 (Above): Hovering open-backs along river in Swain County (NC). Caption reads, "Privies at Proctor, N.C., showing how the stream is utilized to carry off the excretions from the closets. This view is from a bridge on the main street of the village." (Undated, likely mid 1910s) Figure 28, Folder 1270, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

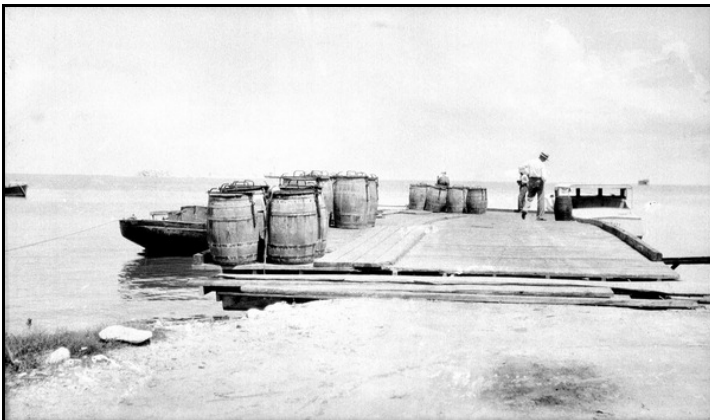


Image 1.11 (Upper Left): Caption reads, "Barrels of privy waste on docks ready for dumping at sea: Key West, Florida." (1929). Florida Photographic Collection. Courtesy of the State Archives of Florida, N033456.



Image 1.12 (Lower left): Well-maintained open-back privy design. Caption reads, "Open back privy at home of Owen Johnson." Ingold Community, North Carolina. Field Director, Dr. Collinson. (Undated, likely 1914) Figure 53, Folder 1271, Box 53, Subseries 236H Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.





Image 1.13 (Above): Caption reads, "Open back privies in Oxford not far from the cotton mill." Granville County, NC. Figure 18, Folder 1270, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 1.14 (Lower Left): Caption reads, "Clothes lines and privies. Kempton, West Virginia." Photographer, John Vachon, (May 1939) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF33-T01-001377-M2.

Image 1.15 (Lower Right): Caption reads, "Mrs. Virgil Price, wife of miner, peels a head of lettuce in garbage pile adjacent to privy." Black Mountain Corporation, 30-31 Mines, Kenvir, Harlan Co., Kentucky. Photographer, Russell Lee, (6 September 1946) Series: Photographs of the Medical Survey of the Bituminous Coal Industry Series, Department of the Interior: Solid Fuels Administration for War, Courtesy of the National Archives [Electronic Resource], L.I. 245-MS-2362L.



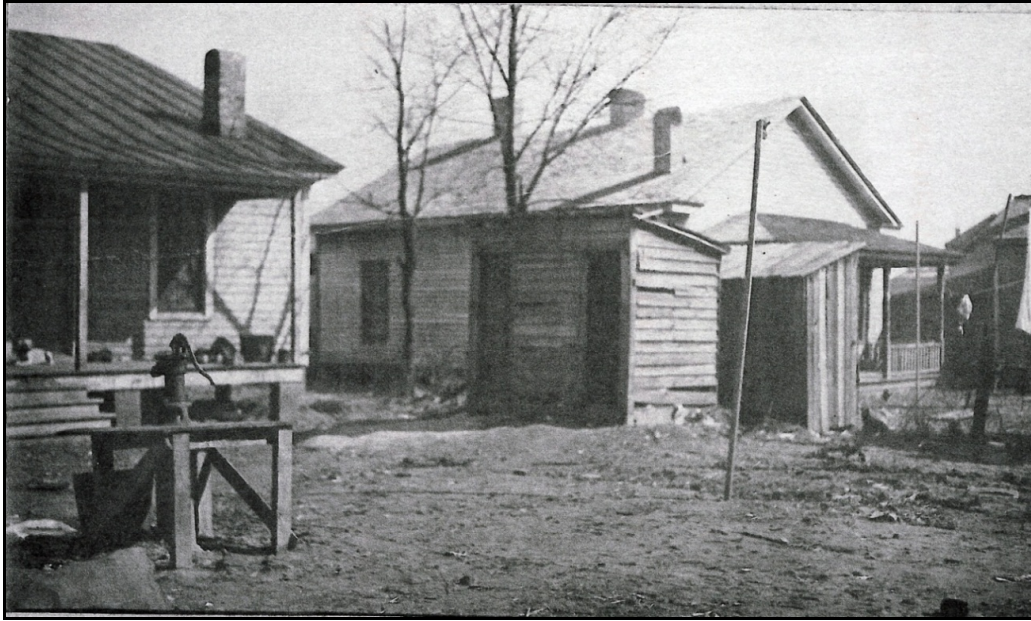


Image 1.16 (Above): Caption reads, "Near View of Yard in Suburb of Wilson [NC]." Note the relationship between the house, water pump, clothesline, privy and even the neighbor's privy. Figure P261w, Folder 1276, Box 54, Subseries 236], Series 2, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 1.17 (Below): Caption reads, "Back porch and privy of house in company housing project." Koppers Coal Division, Federal #1 Mine, Grant Town, Marion County, West Virginia. Photographer, Russell Lee, (13 June 1946) Series: Photographs of the Medical Survey of the Bituminous Coal Industry, Department of the Interior: Solid Fuels Administration for War, Courtesy of the National Archives, [Electronic Resource], L.I. 245-MS-112L.



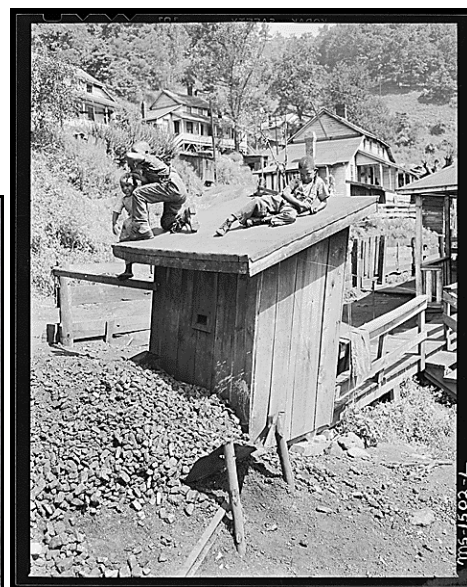




Image 1.18 (Above): Caption reads, "Hog pen and privy, Haw River." Alamance County, NC. (Undated, likely mid-1910s). Figure 33, Folder 1271, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 1.19 (Lower Left): Caption reads, "House and Privy of Prine Robinson." Newly sanitized privy among family's crops, with their house in the distance. Ingold Community, NC (Undated, likely 1914). Figure 54, Folder 1271, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 1.20 (Lower Right): Caption reads, "Miner's children play on top of the Howard family privy. There is no place for children to play in this camp other than in the filthy streets and gullies." Gilliam Coal and Coke Company, Gilliam Mine, Gilliam, McDowell County, West Virginia. Photographer, Russell Lee, (13 August 1946) Series: Photographs of the Medical Survey of the Bituminous Coal Industry: Department of the Interior, Solid Fuels Administration for War, Courtesy of the National Archives [Electronic Resource], L.I. 245-MS-1502L.



## II. IMAGES FOR CHAPTER II (2.1-2.22)

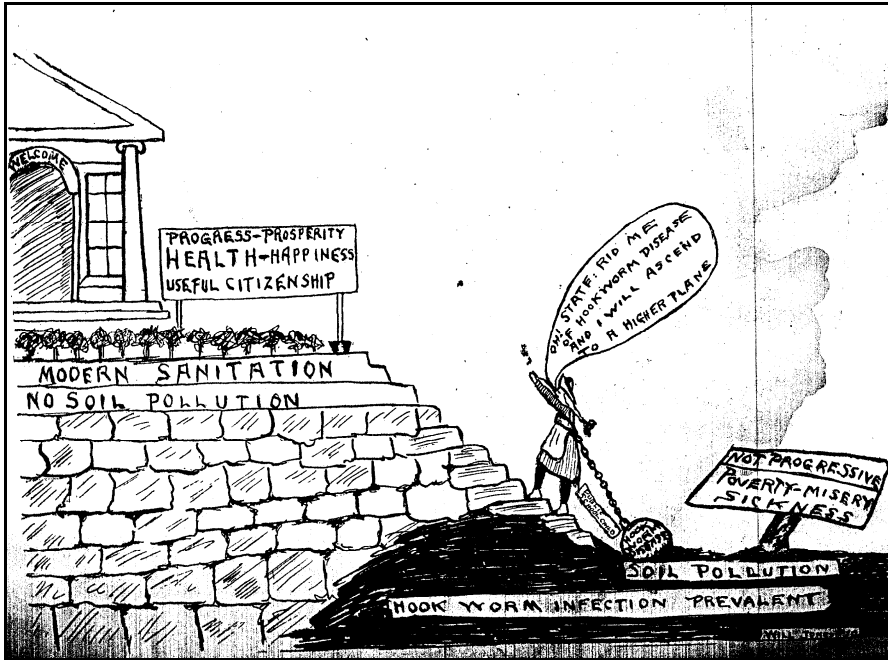


Image 2.1 (Left): Cartoon depicting schoolchild and hookworm sufferer dragged down by disease while trying to reach a higher plane of citizenry. *Bulletin of the North Carolina Board of Health*, 14/9 (December 1910), Back-page.

Image 2.2 (Right): Caption reads: "Teaching Sanitation by Farmer's Train. A mountain audience. Gate City, Scott Co. Virginia." *The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease: Third Annual Report for the Year 1912*, (Washington D.C.: Offices of the Commission: 1913), Chapter III, Figure 41.



Image 2.3 (Left): Image of a dispensary (likely in North Carolina.) Walter Hines Page, "The Hookworm and Civilization," in *The World's Work* (Doubleday, Page & Co., 1912), 516.

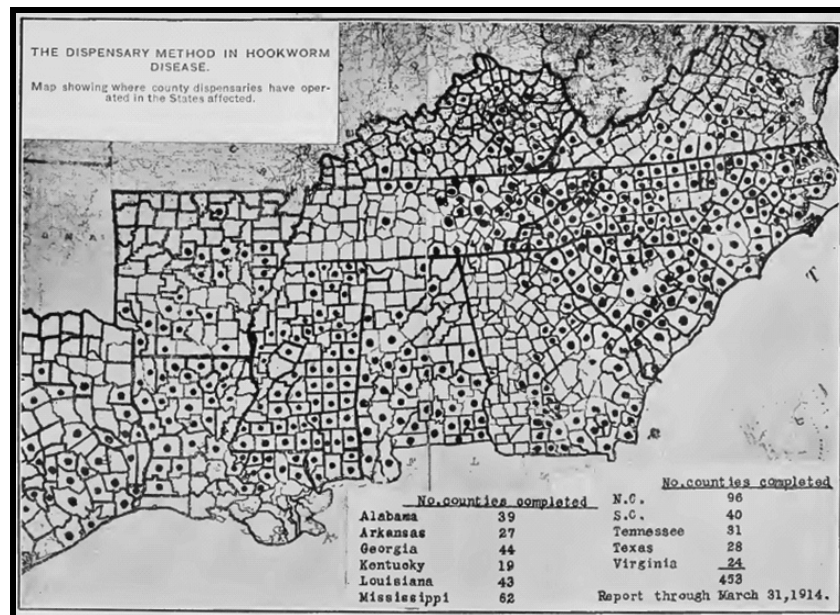
Image 2.4 (Upper Right): Caption reads, "Outdoor laboratory. Prentiss County, Miss. On left (dark mustache) a county supervisor. 118 people examined this day." *The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease: Fourth Annual Report for the Year 1913* (Washington D.C.: Offices of the Commission, January 1914), Chapter III, Figure 50.



Image 2.5 (Lower Right): Picture from an Alabaman dispensary. Note the picture of a sanitary privy just to the left of the boy. John Atkinson Ferrell, "The Rural School and Hookworm Disease" in *United States Bureau of Education, No. 20* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), Plate 7B.



Image 2.6 (Below): Dots indicate that dispensaries have operated within those counties. This map shows the dispensaries held across the South which were part of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission's Efforts as of March 31, 1914. As a note, Florida operated its own hookworm campaigns, and Kentucky and eastern Texas began working with the Commission within several years of its inception. John Atkinson Ferrell, "The Rural School and Hookworm Disease" in *United States Bureau of Education, No. 20* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), Plate 1.





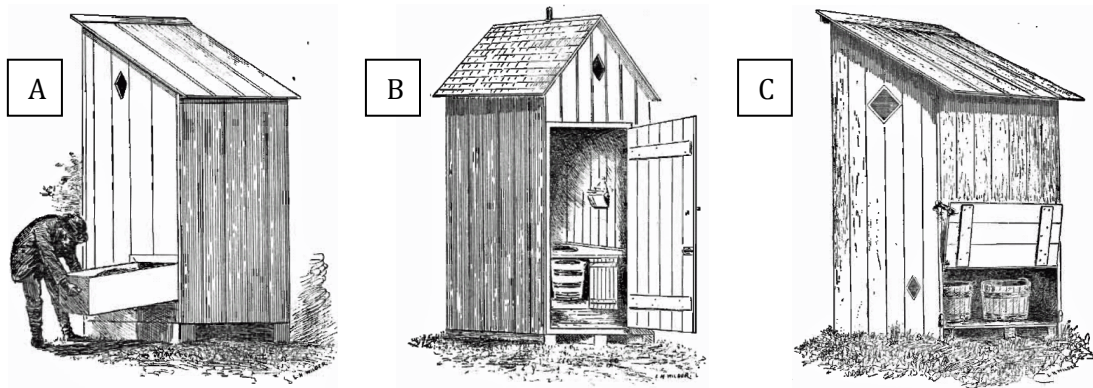


Image 2.7 (Above): The three models Stiles suggested for improving rural sanitation. Each relied on a municipal scavenger service to empty the waste at regular intervals and dispose of it in a safe location. A) Shows a privy with a drawer design and a scavenger removing the waste; B) Illustrates a pail privy, which is removed from the building with a closed back; C) Demonstrates a bucket privy with a flap in the back that can be used to remove the receptacle, but also keeps flies out. Charles Wardell Stiles, "Hookworm Disease (Or Ground-Itch Anemia)," *Public Health Bulletin* No. 32 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 35.

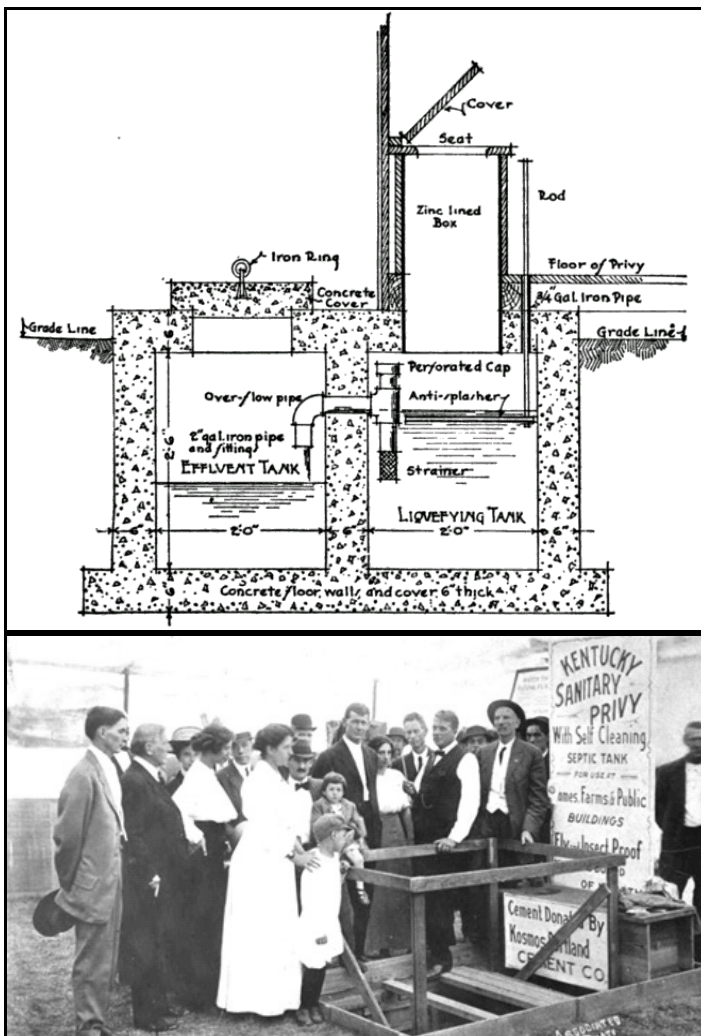


Image 2.8 (Upper Left): An adaptation of the L.R.S. privy design. Fletcher B. Dessler, "Rural Schoolhouses and Grounds," *United States Bureau of Education*. No. 12 (1914), 151.

Image 2.9 (Lower Left): Image caption: "Dr. J.N. McCormack (shirt sleeves) demonstrating the Kentucky sanitary privy. About 12,000 people saw this model in the course of construction." This display was at the state fair. The Kentucky Privy was a slightly more elaborate variation of a L.R.S. privy. *The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease: Fourth Annual Report for the Year 1913*, (Washington D.C.: Offices of the Commission: January 1914), Chapter III, Figure 61.







Image 2.12 (Above): Caption reads, "OPEN BACK PRIVY at the home of Haywood Sloan, being remodeled. Changed from 10% to 75% sanitary value." Ingold Community, North Carolina. Work conducted under Field Director, Dr. Collinson. (Undated, likely Fall/Winter 1914). Figure 49, Folder 1271, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 2.13 (Below): Caption reads, "SANITARY PRIVY, under construction, at the home of Schwartz Jordan. No privy before campaign." From the Hallsboro Community, North Carolina. Work conducted under Field Director, Dr. Covington (Undated likely, Fall/Winter 1914) Figure 43, Folder 1271, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.





Image 2.14 (Upper Left): Caption reads, "Coley Cotter (colored) and PIT PRIVY." Red Oak Community, North Carolina. Work conducted under Field Director, Dr. Champion. Figure 82, Folder 1270, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

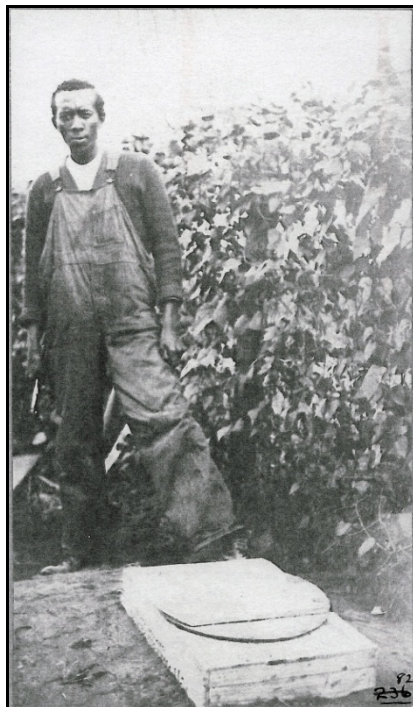


Image 2.15 (Upper Right): Stiles put this in his highly critical report of the campaigns. Caption reads, "According to Dr. Ferrell's letter of December 9<sup>th</sup>, 'the people of this community gave the most hearty cooperation in the intensive work, and take great pride in having the distinction of being the first to thoroughly protect themselves against soil pollution.['] This photograph shows one of the leading citizens of Philadelphus and the privy the men of his family use.'" (November-December 1914). Figure P259e, Folder 853, Box 35, Subseries 200H, Series 2, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collections, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 2.16 (Below): Caption reads, "Box Privy screen by old sacks at home of Bennett Finch (colored). Wife and neighbor." Mt. Pleasant Community, North Carolina. Work conducted under Field Director, Dr. Kibler. (8 December 1914). Figure 77, Folder 1270, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.



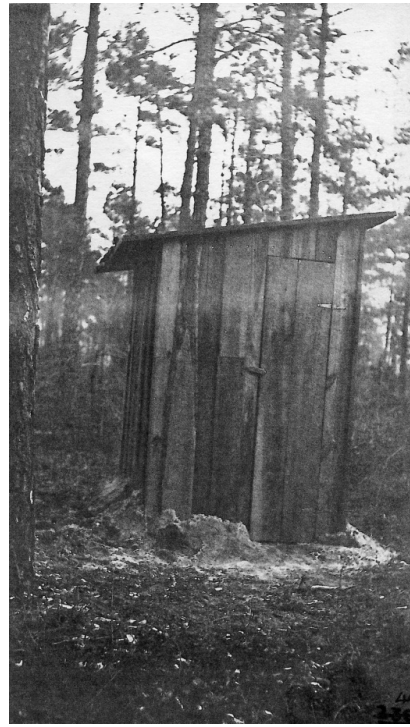
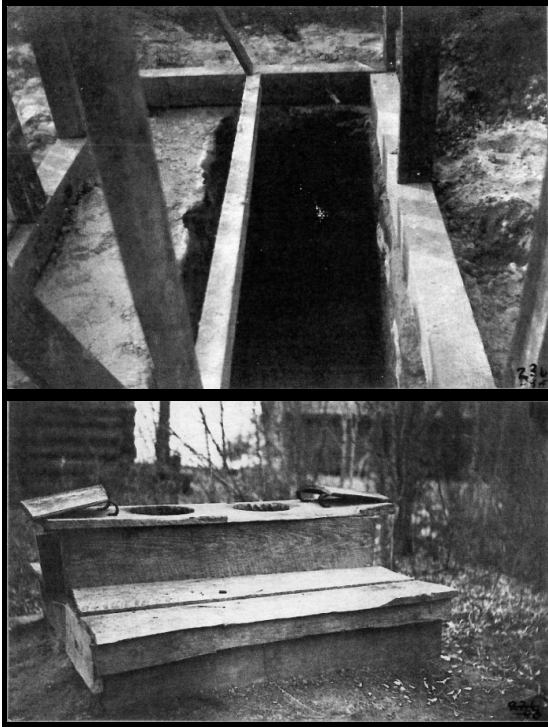


Image 2.17 (Upper Left): Caption reads, "Privy, Sanitary. Mr. J. H. Beal's deep, dark pit." Red Oak Community, North Carolina. Local field director, Dr. Champion. (August 1914). Figure 236p9o, Folder 1272, Box 54, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 2.18 (Lower Left): Caption reads, "DOUBLE-BARRELLED PRIVY [similar to a L.R.S. model] at the home of Burrill Williams (colored). Same on both sides." Red Oak Community, North Carolina. Local field director, Dr. Champion. (Undated., likely Fall/Winter 1914). Figure 90, Folder 1270, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collections, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 2.19 (Upper Right): Caption reads, "Privy at the home of Clammie Allen. Privy changed from type F to B." Ingold Community, North Carolina. Local field director, Dr. Collinson. (Undated, likely Fall/Winter 1914). Figure 49, Folder 1271, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collections, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 2.20 (Right): Caption reads, "Home and SANITARY PRIVY of Evin Smith. Privy changed from type F to B." Ingold Community, North Carolina. Local field director, Dr. Collinson. (Undated, likely Fall/Winter 1914). Figure 56, Folder 1271, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

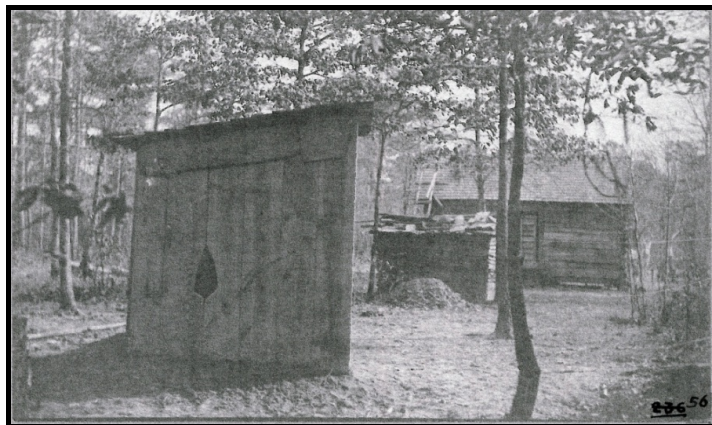
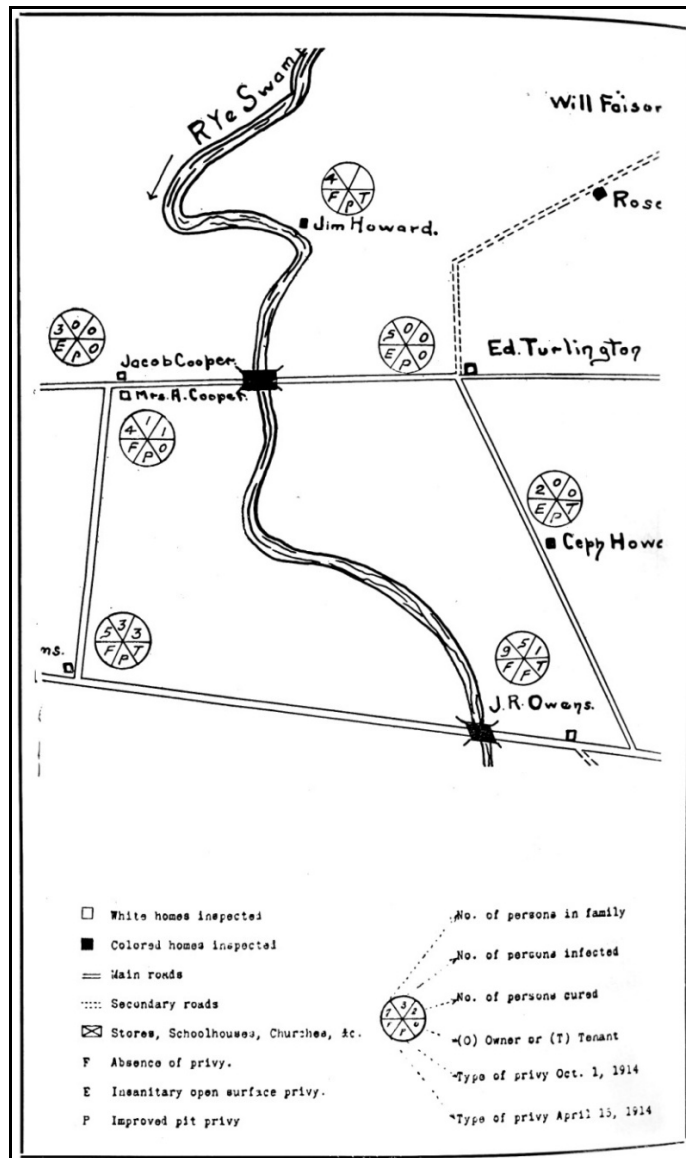






Image 2.21 (Left): Caption reads, "Office of the Field Director." The first local dispensary this community had. From the Hallsboro Community, NC. Local field director, Dr. Covington (Undated, likely Fall/Winter 1914) Figure 47, Folder 1271, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collections, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 2.22 (Right): This image is a small part of a sanitary survey/map done of the Salemburg Community in North Carolina. Each community produced slightly different maps and data, but this provides a window into the tactical methodology these campaigns adopted. Note that on this map, the houses are demarcated as either black or white (data from the Philadelphus community also notes Indian households), and the circles indicate how many people lived at each house, how many were infected with hookworm, whether they were a tenant or landowner, what type of privy they had when the campaign left and what type of privy they had when the campaign arrived (clockwise, starting at about ten to). Local field director, Dr. Collinson. *The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease: Fifth Annual Report for the Year 1914* (Washington D.C.: Offices of the Commission, January 1915), 100.



### III. IMAGES FOR CHAPTER III (3.1-3.29)

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Image 3.1 (Upper Left): Caption reads, "Privy at Bryson City, N.C." Another image from Swain County, North Carolina from the same collection remarks that "for some reason I was unable to learn, the people of Swain often built their privies high off the ground." See another image of multiple elevated privies along a river from Swain in the introduction's picture section [Image 1. 10], (Undated). Figure 27, Folder 1271, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 3.2 (Upper Right): Caption reads, "Insanitary Privy." Rosewood Community, North Carolina. Field director, Dr. Covington. (Undated). Figure 1417, Folder 1272, Box 54, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 3.3 (Below): Caption reads, "House and privy of J.D. Whichard." Grimesland Community, North Carolina. Field director, Dr. Champion. (16 December 1914). Figure 1366, Folder 1272, Box 54, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.



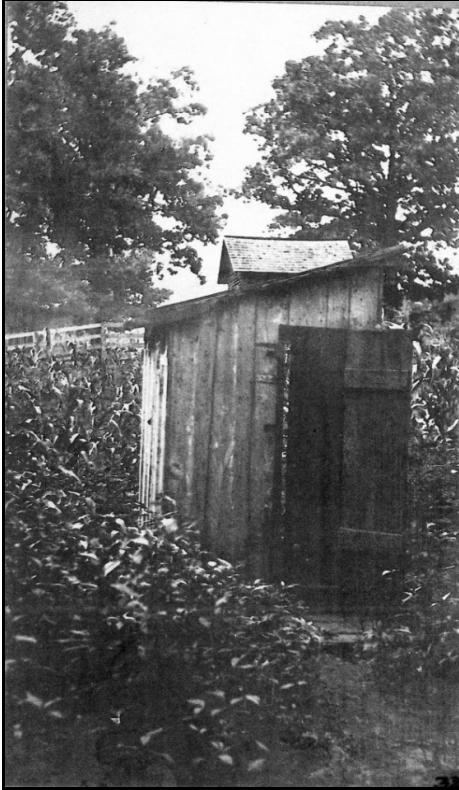


Image 3.4 (Upper Left): Caption reads, "Privy at The Carolina Cotton-Mills, near Burlington, used by four families." Alamance County, North Carolina. (Undated, likely mid-1910s). Figure 32, Folder 1271, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 3.5 (Upper right): Caption reads, "Open delapidated (sic) privy representative (sic) of hundreds still in use by tenant and small farmers of strictly rural section of Robeson County." Field Director, Miller. (29 March 1922). Figure 8814, Folder 1277, Box 54, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection. Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

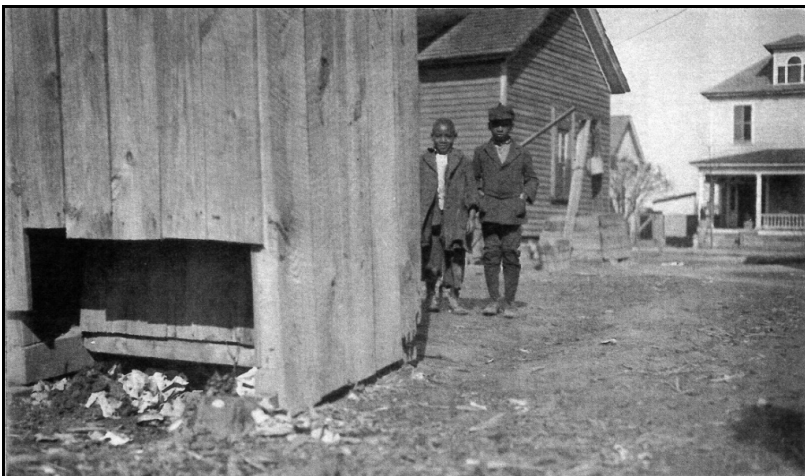
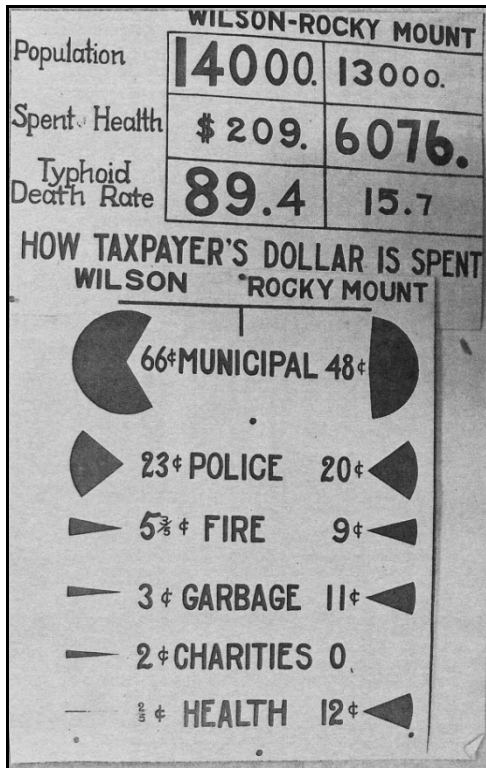


Image 3.6 (Left): Caption reads, "Types of privies found in colored residential district." Wilson, North Carolina. (Undated, likely mid-to-late 1910s). Figure P261ee, Folder 1276, Box 54, Series 2, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

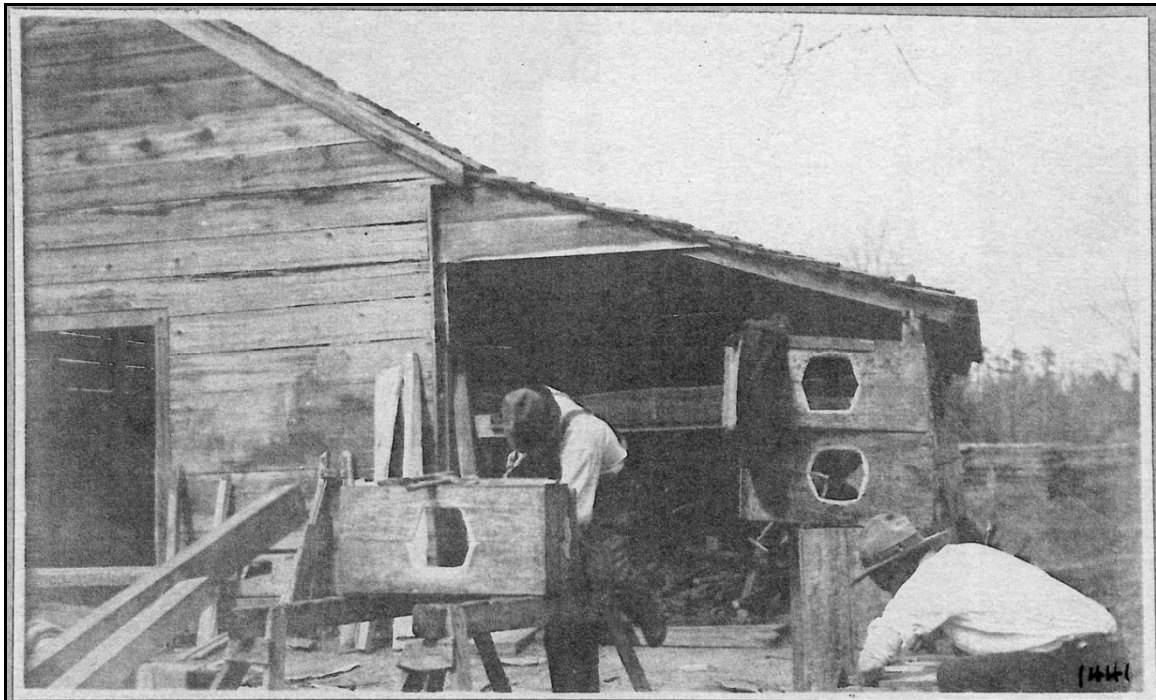


{N.C. - 12.4 deaths per 1000 people - 1914.  
Wilson - 20.5 " " " " " }

**REASON :**  
**1608 OPEN PRIVIES**  
 (only 1/3 of homes have sewers - 518)  
**1239 OPEN WELLS**  
**INADEQUATE QUARANTINE**  
 Measles killed 9 children in Jan. 1917.  
 (5 white  
4 colored)

Images 3.7 (Left) 3.8 (Above): Both are from Wilson, North Carolina and were "placards used at Citizens' Mass Meeting February 19 (likely 1917). Figures P261bb, P261aa, respectively, Folder 1276, Box 54, Series 2, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 3.9 (Below): Caption reads, "Constructing box types for tenant homes. B.F. Hollowell and Curtice." Smiths Chapel Community, North Carolina. Field director, Dr. W.P. Covington. (Undated, likely Spring 1916). Figure 1441, Folder 1272, Box 54, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.





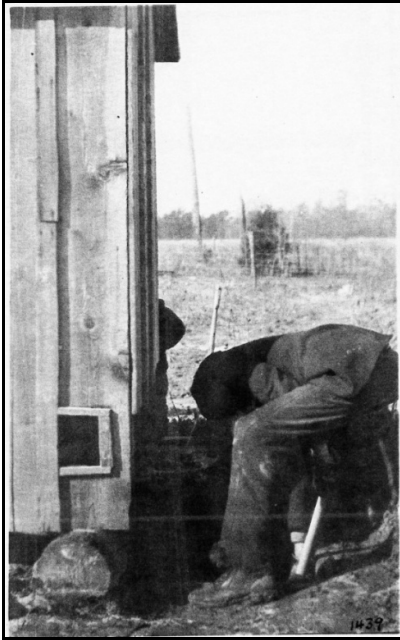


Image 3.10 (Left): Caption reads, "Home of Charlie Hood. Digging pit for remodeled privy. Note ventilating screen." Smiths Chapel Community, North Carolina. Field Director, Dr. W. P. Covington. (17 May 1916). Figure 1439, Folder 1272, Box 54, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

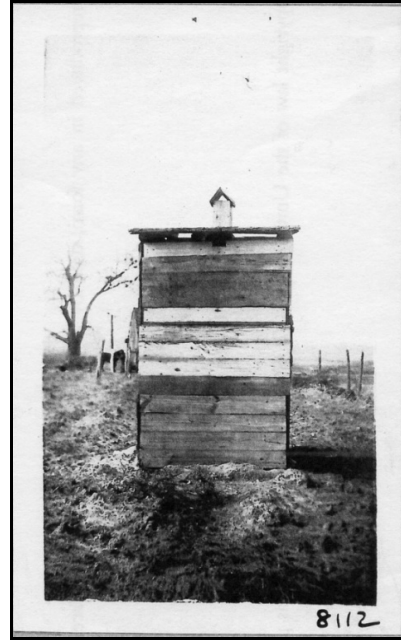
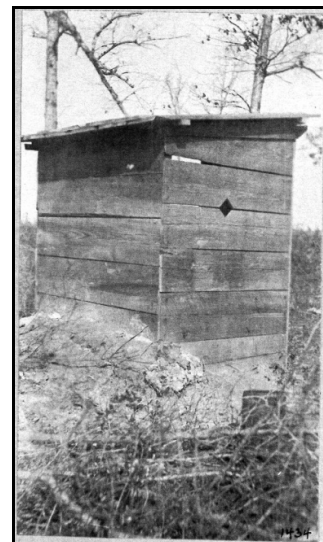
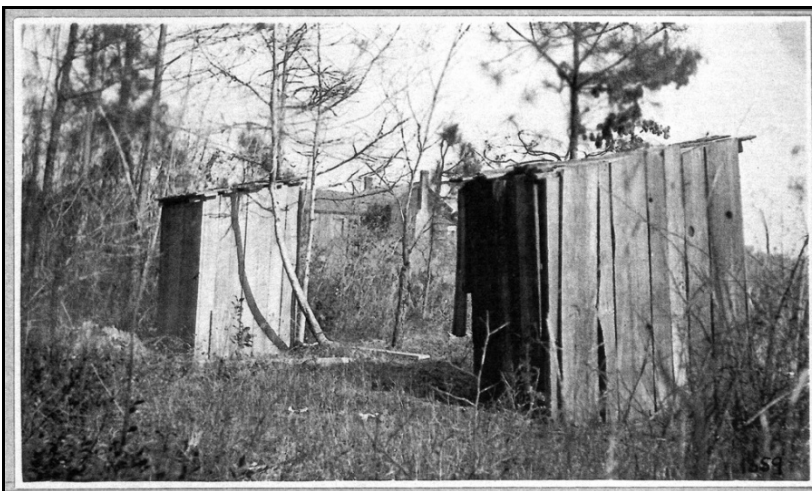
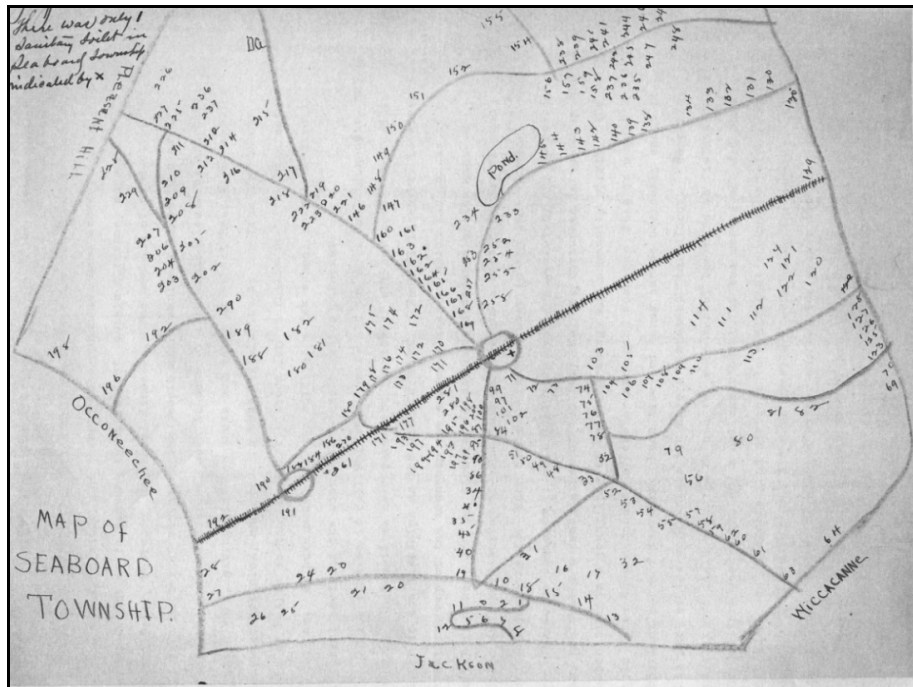


Image 3.11 (Upper Right): Caption reads, "Sanitary pit privy at farm home. A great many of the small farmers, and even tenant farmers have built privies of this type, under the direction of the County Health Department." Robeson County, North Carolina. Field Director, Dr. Miller. (29 March 1922). Figure 8112, Folder 1277, Box 54, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

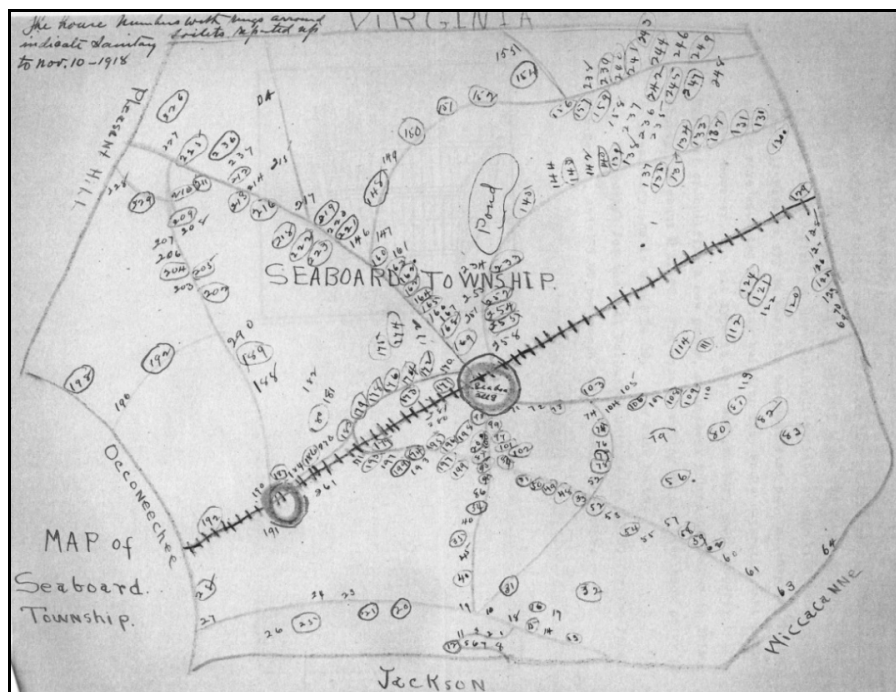
Image 3.12 (Lower Left): Caption reads, "A very noticeable improvement. Type E changed to TYPE P." Johns Station Community, North Carolina. Field Director, Dr. Steele. (Undated, likely mid-to-late 1910s). Figure 1359, Folder 1272, Box 54, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

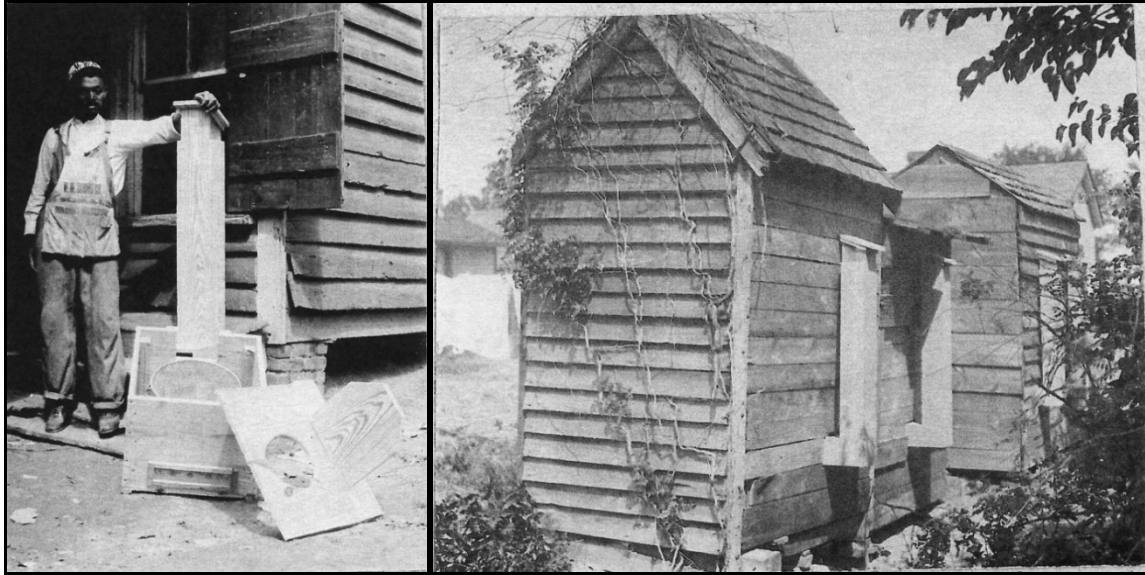
Image 3.13 (Lower Right): Caption reads, "Remodeled privy at the home of Robert Little (colored)." Falkland Community, North Carolina. Field Director, Dr. Jacocks. (26 February 1915). Figure 1434, Folder 1272, Box 54, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.





Images 3.14 (Above) and Image 3.15 (Below): Before (3.14) and after (3.15) maps of the sanitary campaign in the Seaboard Township in Northampton County, North Carolina. The first survey for before map was conducted in August 1917. Note the only sanitary privy in Seaboard is the X near the center along the railroad line. The second survey was concluded November 10, 1918. The circles around the numbers indicate that their privies were sanitized. Folder 779, Box 63, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, IHB/D Rockefeller Foundation, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.



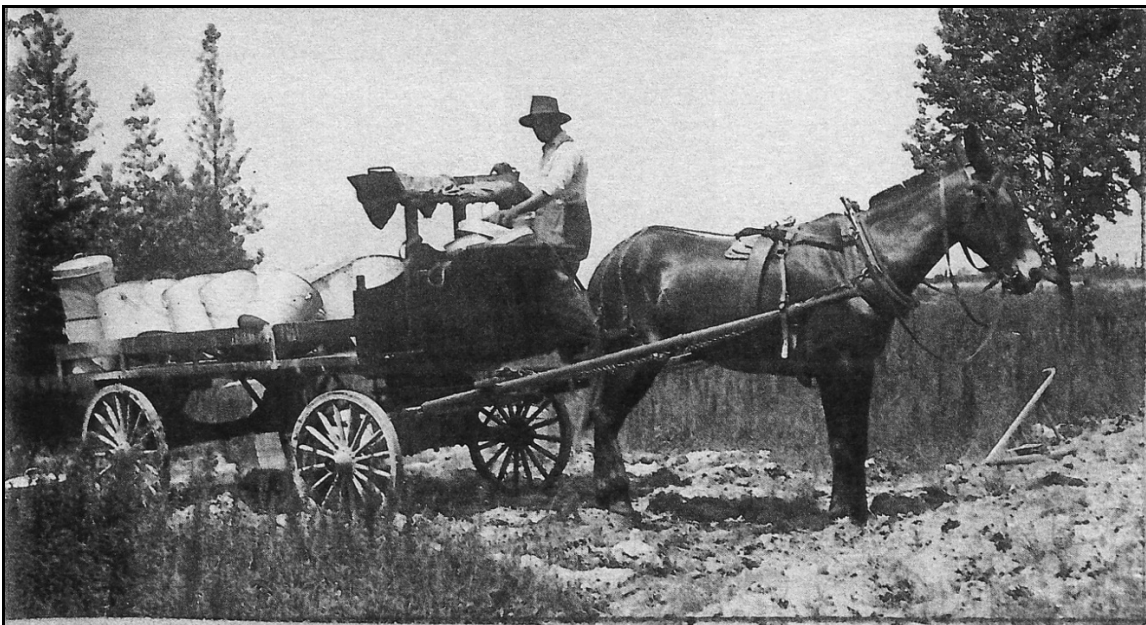


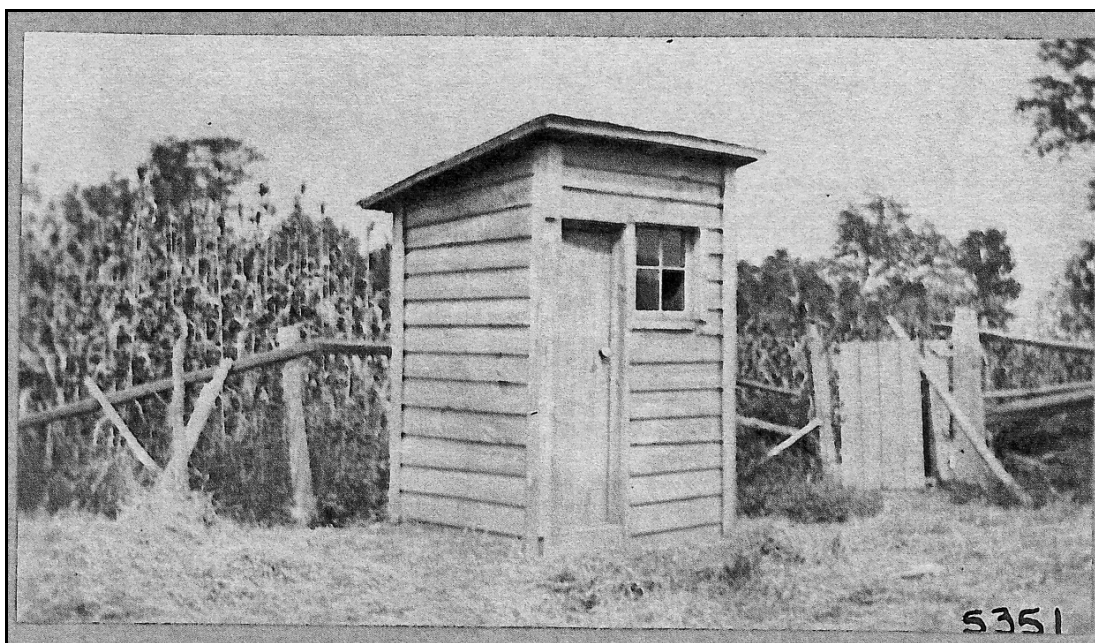
Images 3.16 (Upper Left): Caption reads, "The Sanitary Box Type of Pail Privy Required by the Sanitary Privy Ordinance Enacted in March." Wilson, North Carolina. (Undated, likely 1916-1917). Figure P261hh.

Image 3.17 (Upper Right): Caption reads, "Sanitary Boxes Installed in Old Privy Buildings." Wilson, North Carolina. (Undated likely 1916-1917). Figure P261kk.

Image 3.18 (Below): Caption reads, "Sanitary Wagon with Load of Clean Cans." Wilson, North Carolina. (Undated, likely 1916-1917). Figure P261rr.

All three photographs from Folder 1276, Box 54, Subseries 236J, Series 2, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.





Images 3.19 (Above) and Image 3.20 (Below): Caption for both reads, "Sanitary closets built in Pitt County [North Carolina]." (1919). Figures 5351, 5352 (respectively), Folder 1272, Box 54, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

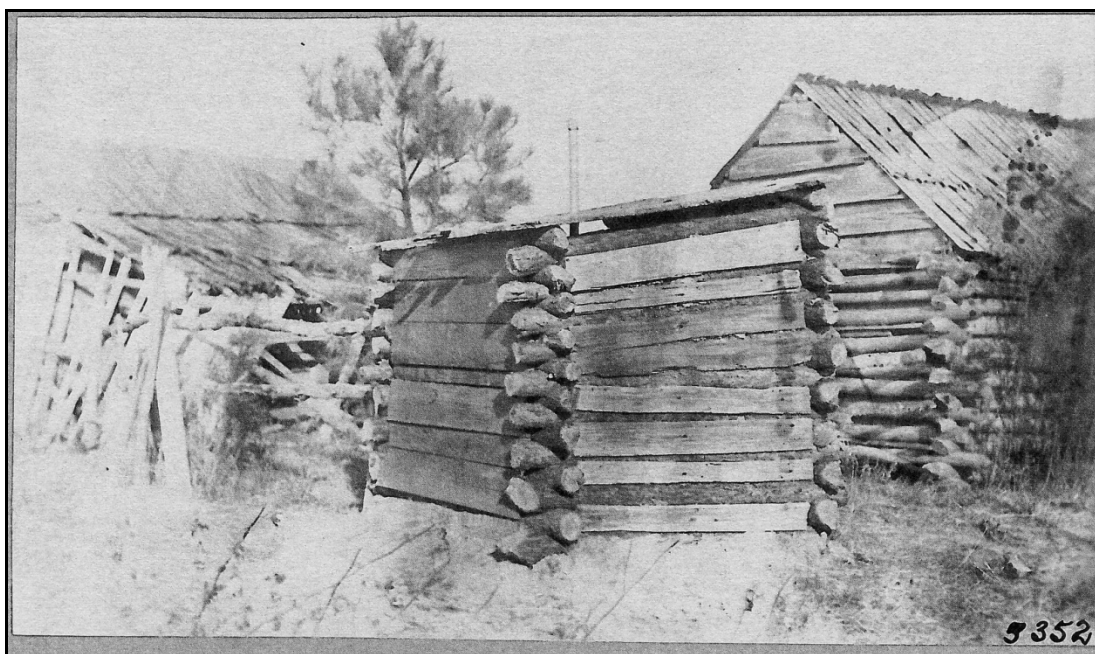






Image 3.21 (Left): Caption reads, "Shallow wells are found almost everywhere ranging in depth from 4 to 12 feet. Mosquitoes are found to breed extensively in these wells." Pamlico County, North Carolina. Field Director, Dr. Taylor. (7 February 1923). Figure 9816, Folder 1273, Box 54, Subseries 236I, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 3.22 (Right): Caption reads, "A small screened house used in educational campaign to demonstrate the effectiveness of 16-mesh wire in keeping out mosquitoes. Mosquitoes were turned loose on the screened porch, after the house had been placed in some public place and then recounted after two or three days' time. This means was found very valuable in educating the public to the value of screens." Pamlico County, North Carolina. Field Director, Dr. Taylor (7 February 1923). Figure 9817, Folder 1273, Box 54, Subseries 236I, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

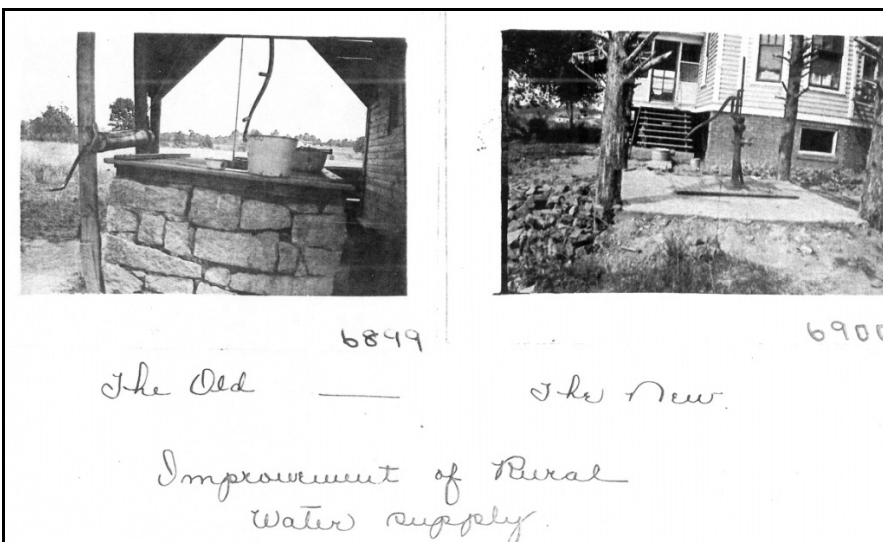
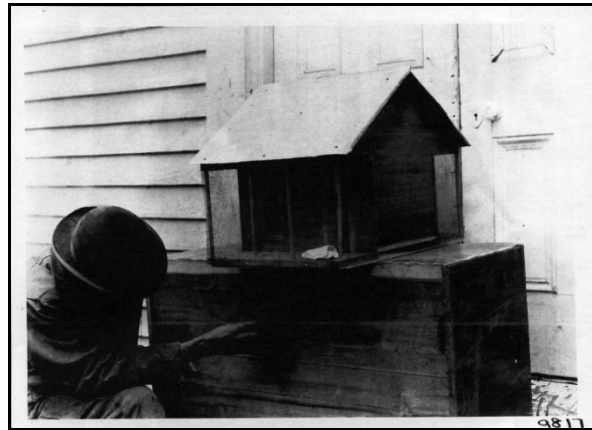


Image 3.23 (Left): Report of work of Rowan County health department. North Carolina (1920), Figures 6899-6900. Folder 783 Box 64 Subseries 236J Series 3 Record Group 5 IHB/D, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

**Wilson County Public Health Campaign**  
**1916-17**  
**HOME REPORT CARD**

Township ..... Road ..... No. of Home.....  
Owner of Home .....

I.  
Family Census and Health Report.

Name of Head of Family .....

P. O. Address ..... Race .....

Names of Members	Sex	Age	Examined for Hookworms	Treated for Hookworms	No. of Treatments Date	Results
1. ....						
2. ....						
3. ....						
4. ....						
5. ....						
6. ....						
7. ....						
8. ....						
9. ....						
10. ....						

Typhoid Fever. Which members of family (give numbers) have had typhoid fever and when?.....  
Have any deaths occurred and when?.....  
Which members of family have been vaccinated against typhoid and when?.....

Tuberculosis and its results: .....

Diarrheas (Summer Bowel Complaints): Have any deaths occurred in children from this cause and when?.....

Malaria: .....

Medical Inspection of School Children: Have the children been examined at school?.....  
Were any defects found .....

Image 3.24 (Image split in two for legibility): Home Report Card for Wilson County Health Campaign. (1916-17) Folder 39, Box 4, Record Group, 1V2A13.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

II.  
Sanitary Survey.

The Privy:	First Inspection.	Last Inspection.
Type and Description.....		
Condition (Clean or neglected) .....		
Type of soil and distance from well .....		
The Well: Open or Closed?.....		
Pump or bucket? .....	Curbed or tiled? .....	
Depth?.....	How is it protected against the entrance of surface water. ....	
Other Sanitary Conditions about the Home: Condition of yard and stables, hogpens, etc. ....		

III.  
Educational Work and Cooperation of Family.

Was the head of the family interviewed?.....  
Was a microscopic demonstration made? .....

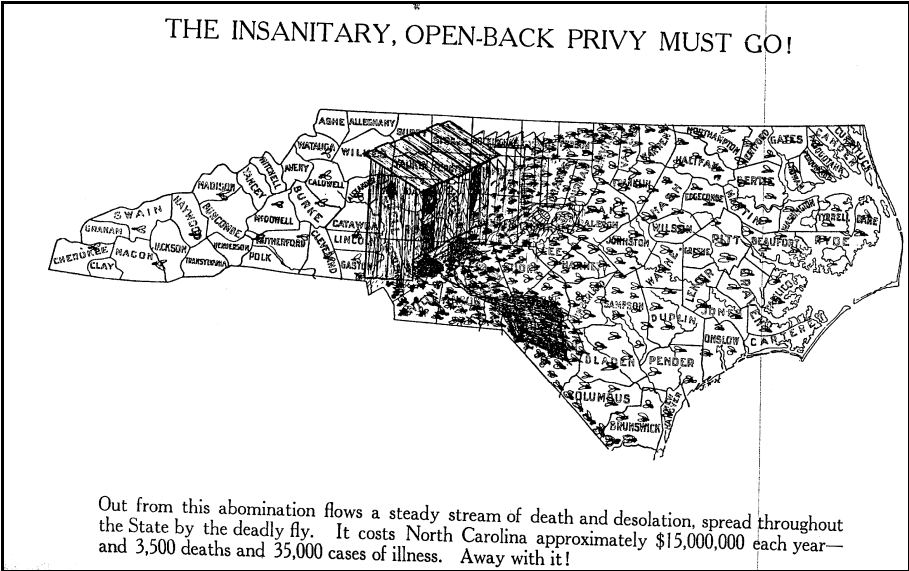
Were containers left for hookworm examination? .....

Were specimens received? .....

Did any members of the family attend any of the lectures? .....

IV.  
Results

Image 3.25 (Right): Seven months after the law The Health Bulletin ran this ad depicting flies (implicitly carrying diseases) swarming out of unsanitary privies across the state. *The Health Bulletin* 35/ 9; (September 1919), 16.



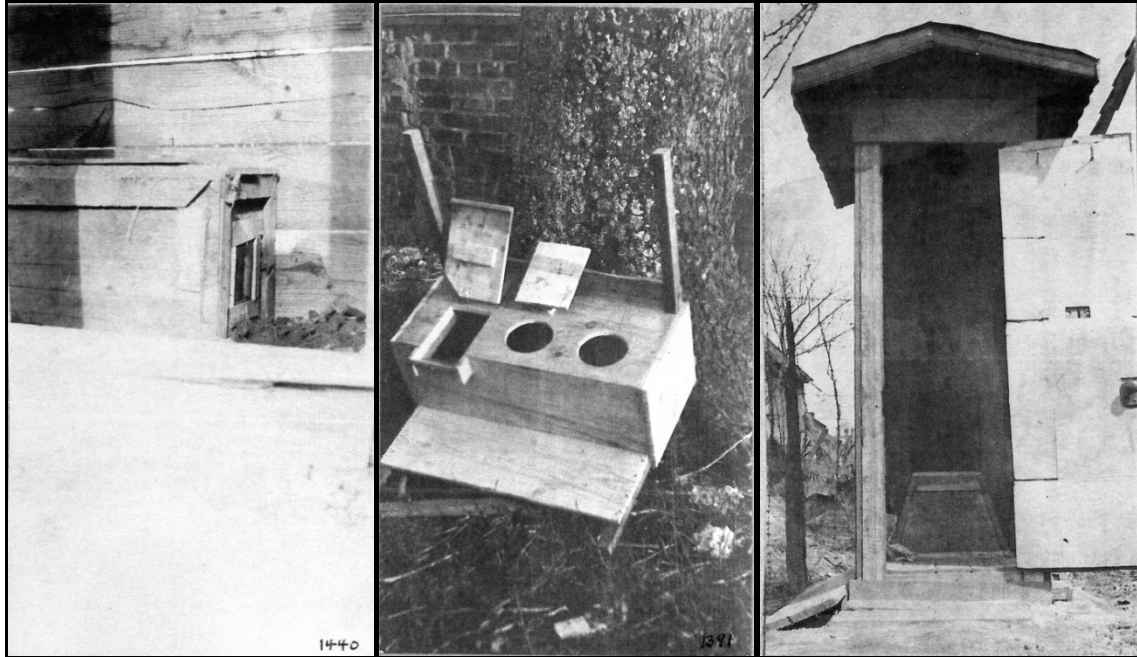


Image 3.26 (Upper Left): Caption reads, "One seat box made inside an old open back privy at the home of J. Johnson, who opposed the work at first. See screen for ventilation at end of box. Smiths Chapel Community, North Carolina. Field Director, Dr. W.P. Covington. (14 February 1915). Figure 1440, Folder 1272, Box 54, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 3.27 (Upper Center): Caption reads, "MODEL showing BOX FOR PRIVY having, in addition, a urinal, designed by Mr. Stansel, one of Dr. Steele's assistants." Sneads Grove Community, North Carolina. Field Director, Dr. Steele. (17 February 1915). Figure 1391, Folder 1272, Box 54, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

Image 3.28 (Upper Right): Caption reads, "Peculiar Type of Pit Privy Built at a Colored Home near Elm City." (Undated, likely mid-to-late 1910s). Figure P261bbb, Folder 1276, Box 54, Series 236J, Series 2, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

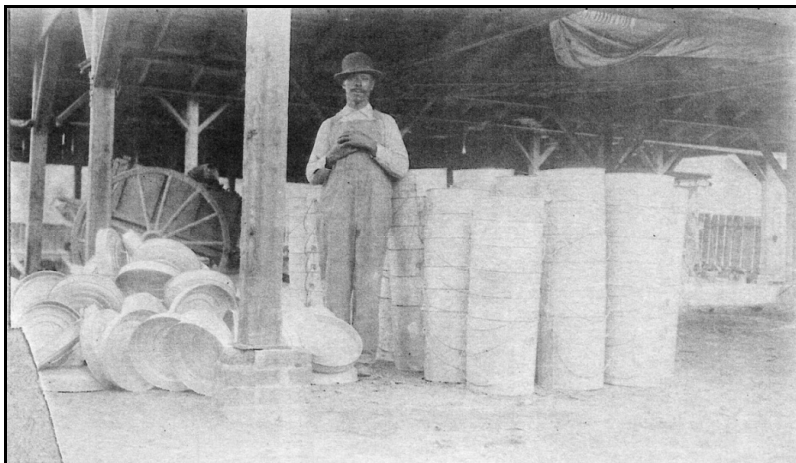


Image 3.29 (Left): Caption reads, "Cans for use with the Sanitary Boxes" of earlier images 3.16-3.18. Wilson, North Carolina. (Undated, likely 1916-1917). Figure P261qq, Folder 1276, Box 54, Subseries 236J, Series 2, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

#### IV. IMAGES FOR CHAPTER IV (4.1-4.36)

Image 4.1  
(Right): One example of United States Public Health Service standardized privy model, with concrete risers, from their 1933 manual. "The Sanitary Privy," *Public Health Reports; Supplement, No. 108.* (Washington D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1933), 28-29.

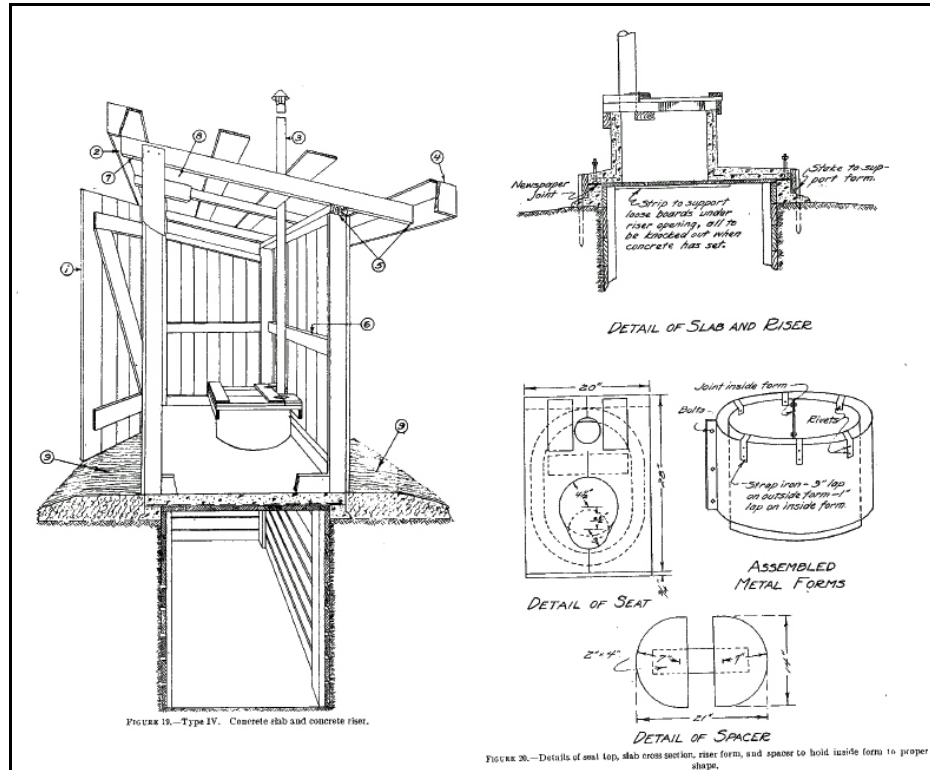


Image 4.2 (Lower Left): ERA built privy from Randolph County. Image from, *Emergency Relief in North Carolina: A Record of the Development and the Activities of the North Carolina Emergency Relief Administration 1932-1935* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1936), 178.

Image 4.3 (Lower Right): Wilkes County privy. From WPA project 5019-Community Sanitation, Wilkes County, North Carolina. (Undated) Highway Department, Photograph File, WPA Photos, Box 1, Courtesy of the North Carolina State Archives [Electronic Exhibit].



Image 4.4 (Six Figures Below)- Farm Security Administration (FSA) crew installing a privy in Southeastern Missouri. Southeast Missouri Farms Project. All Photographs by Russell Lee, (May 1938) Set of images from FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF33-011478-M3, LC-USF33-011507-M1, LC-USF33-011536-M5, LC-USF33-011505-M2, LC-USF33-011505-M5 and LC-USF33-011489-M4



Figure 1: "Loading completed privy houses on truck for delivery to site."



Figure 2: "Privy erection. Placing wood cribbing in privy well."



Figure 3: "Privy erection. Back filling and tamping the earth around sanitary base and mud sill."



Figure 4: "Privy erection. Fitting vent stack and lid on sanitary well."



Figure 5: "Fitting seat and lid on sanitary base of privy."



Figure 6: "Final operation in setting of sanitary privy at the job site."





Image 4.5 (Left): Caption reads, "Screen door at the home of tenant purchase client Robert McKiver. Showing FSA (Farm Security Administration) pump in back. Woodville, Greene County, Georgia." Photographer, Jack Delano, (June 1941) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-044566-D.



Image 4.6 (Upper Right): Caption reads, "James F. Drigger draws water from his well. Coffee County, Alabama." Photographer, John Collier, (August 1941) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-080388-E.



Image 4.7 (Left): Caption reads, "FSA (Farm Security Administration) supervisor measuring windows of Henry Mitchell's home for screens. Greene County, Georgia." Photographer, Marion Post Wolcott, (May 1939) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-051853-D.



Image 4.8 (Left): Caption reads, "Migrant packinghouse workers' camp in swamp cane clearing. Housing two families (twelve people) from Tennessee. No lights, no water, no privy. Wash water is hauled from dirty canal, drinking water is hauled from packing house. Belle Glade, Florida." Photographer, Marion Post Wolcott, (January 1939) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-051072-E.

Image 4.9 (Below): Caption reads, "Negro sharecropper house. "They treat us better here than where we did live. No privy in sight, had to get water from the spring, so far away that the man was gone twenty minute getting a bucket of water." Person County, North Carolina." Photographer, Dorothea Lange, (July 1939) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-019971-C.





Image 4.10 (Left):  
Caption reads, "Privy of  
sharecropper, New  
Madrid County,  
Missouri."  
Photographer, Russell  
Lee, (May 1938)  
FSA/OWI Collection,  
Courtesy of the Library  
of Congress, LC-USF33-  
011497-M2.

Image 4.11 (Right):  
Caption reads, "Shed and  
privy on farmstead of  
Emil Kimball, farmer.  
Morganza, Louisiana."  
Russell Lee, (October  
1938) FSA/OWI  
Collection, Courtesy of  
the Library of Congress,  
LC-USF34-031779-D.



Image 4.12 (Left):  
Caption reads, "Privy in  
Negro transient  
agricultural workers  
quarters. Homestead,  
Florida." Photographer,  
Marion Post Wolcott,  
(January 1939)  
FSA/OWI Collection,  
Courtesy of the Library  
of Congress, LC-USF34-  
050860-D.





Image 4.13 (Upper left): Caption reads, "Outhouses on farm of prospective tenant of Newport News Homesteads. Newport News, Virginia." Photographer, Arthur Rothstein, (November 1937) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-025996-D

Image 4.14 (Upper Right): Caption reads, "Privy used by Negroes living in shacks on highway between Charleston and Gauley Bridge, West Virginia." Photographer, Marion Post Wolcott, (September 1938) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF33-030252-M1

Image 4.15 (Lower Left): Caption reads, "Privy on the premises of a Negro family before they moved to a Farm Security Administration Delmo group labor homes house in southeastern Missouri." Photographer, John Vachon, (1941) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-007640-ZE.

Image 4.16 (Lower right): Caption reads, "Old henhouse and privy, New Madrid County, Missouri." Photographer, Russell Lee, (May 1938) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF33-011539-M1.





Image 4.17 (Left): Caption reads, "Privy, Olga, Louisiana" Photographer, Russell Lee, (September 1938) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF33-011818-M2.



Image 4.18 (Below): Caption reads, "Tenant farmer's privy. Irwin County, Georgia." Photographer, John Vachon (May 1938), FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF33-T01-001133-M3.

Image 4.19 (Lower Left): Caption reads, "Privy near Greensboro, North Carolina." Photographer, John Vachon, (April 1938) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-008366-C.

Image 4.20 (Lower Right): Caption from FSA Image: "Privy used by sharecroppers, Southeast Missouri Farms." Photographer, Russell Lee, (May 1938) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF33-011559-M4.





Image 4.21 (Upper Left): Caption reads, "Washington (southwest section), D.C. Negro woman in her backyard. The wooden privy and the source for drinking water are side by side." Photographer, Gordon Parks, (November 1942) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USW3-011045-C.

Image 4.22 (Upper Right): Caption reads, "Typical privy in slum section of Washington, D.C." Photographer, Carl Mydans, (September 1935) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-129931.

Image 4.23 (Below): Caption reads, "Steelmill workers' company houses and outhouses. Republic Steel Company, Birmingham, Alabama." Photographer, Walker Evans, (March 1936) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF342-T01-008013-A.





Image 4.24 (Above): Caption reads, "Privies being built by FSA (Farm Security Administration). Greene County, Georgia." Photographer, Jack Delano, (May 1941) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-044291-D.

Image 4.25 (Lower Left): Caption reads, "Privy plant. Cleaning metal forms for sanitary privy base. Southeast Missouri Farms Project." Photographer, Russell Lee, (May 1938) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF33-011470-M3.

Image 4.26 (Lower Right): A promotional poster that is advocating new sanitary privies, by "showing an outhouse in a picturesque, small town setting." Published in Chicago, IL for the WPA Federal Art Project, (1936 - 1941) WPA Poster Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZC2-1594.

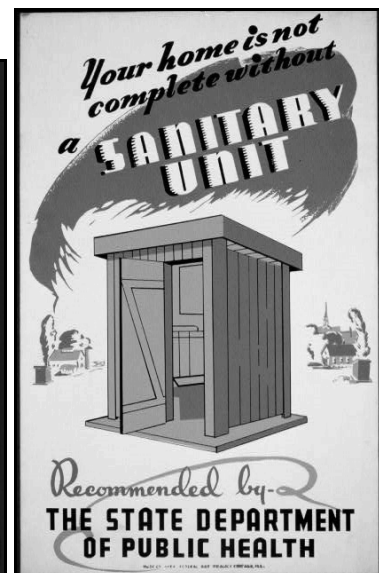




Image 4.27 (Upper Left): Caption reads, "New privy. Helms family, FSA (Farm Security Administration) clients. Coffee County, Alabama." Photographer, Marion Post Wolcott, (May 1939) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-051297-D.

Image 4.28 (Upper Right): Note: The privies are the houses' only outbuilding. Caption reads, "Group of prefabricated houses and privies that have been built by the FSA (Farm Security Administration) to take care of some of the white farmers who had to move out of the area taken over by the Army for maneuver grounds. Milford, Caroline County, Virginia." Photographer, Jack Delano, (June 1941) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-044846-D.

Image 4.29 (Below): Caption reads, "Privies. Onward march the crusaders of rural sanitary conditions. Southeast Missouri Farms Project." Photographer, Russell Lee, (May 1938) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF33-011451-M4







Image 4.30 (Upper Left): Note the New Deal privy at the side of the screened porch (at what is most likely an FSA prefabricated home). Caption reads, "Homesteaders children. Penderlea Homesteads, North Carolina." Photographer, Carl Mydans, (August 1936) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF33-T01-000712-M3.

Image 4.31 (Upper Right): Caption reads, "New privy on farm of Frederick Oliver, tenant purchase client. Summerton, South Carolina." Photographer, Marion Post Wolcott, (June 1939) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-051928-D.

Image 4.32 (Below): Caption reads, "One of the scattered labor homes with privy. New Madrid County, Missouri." Photographer, John Vachon, (November 1940) FSA/OWI Collection, Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USF34-061847-D.



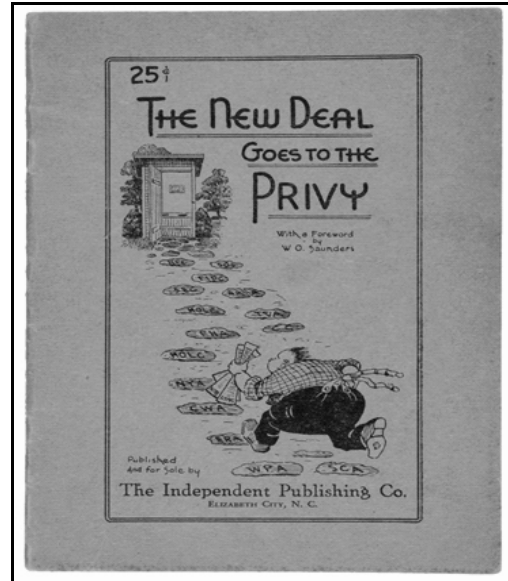


Image 4.33 (Upper Left). Moral lesson on Last page of *The Specialist*. Charles 'Chic' Sale, *The Specialist* (St. Louis: Specialist Publishing Co., 1929), Courtesy of Specialist Publishing Company.

Image 4.34 (Upper Right): Cover of *The New Deal Goes to the Privy* (1936). Note that the man is running to a New Deal-era privy on a path lined with New Deal agency initials. *The New Deal Goes to the Privy*, ed. W.O. Saunders (Elizabeth City, NC: The Independent Publishing Co., 1936).

Image 4.35 (Lower Left): Depicting the change in outhouse from the old type of outhouse to the newly standardized New Deal outhouse. *Forward Pasquotank! Memorializing a (Back) Housing Program of Unique Cultural, Social and Economic Importance*, ed. W.O. Saunders and W.K. Saunders (Elizabeth City, NC: The Elizabeth City Independent, 1934).

Image 4.36 (Lower Right): One of many advertisements mocking the 'modern' privies of the New Deal. *Forward Pasquotank! Memorializing a (Back) Housing Program of Unique Cultural, Social and Economic Importance*, ed. W.O. Saunders, and W.K. Saunders (Elizabeth City, NC: The Elizabeth City Independent, 1934).

Here we have one of the old-fashioned privies, with its box of corn cobs in the corner and flies all around, which health authorities have declared obsolete and insanitary.

The old odor changer  
Yielding place to the new

And here we have one of the new sanitary CWA-built privies which carry many modern improvements, including free-holing and no-draft ventilation.

Be Modern

Don't be content with Sears-Roebuck catalogs and Lydia E. Pinkham almanacs for your privy diversion.

Let us install a radio in your Johnny. It will encourage regularity of habit, offset personal static and mitigate the pains of interference.

Rumble Radio Co.

## CITATIONS

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### ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION (PAGES 1-37)

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- <sup>1</sup> Parody of a Campari advertisement, *Hustler* magazine (November, 1983).
- <sup>2</sup> Joseph Russomanno, *Speaking Our Minds: Conversations with the People Behind Landmark First Amendment Cases* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 170-200. Note: The satirical advertisement is reproduced in the book.
- <sup>3</sup> Justice William Rehnquist, (cited in Russomanno), 198.
- <sup>4</sup> Justice William Rehnquist, (cited in Russomanno), 198.
- <sup>5</sup> Al Capp, "Interview," *Playboy* magazine 12/12 (December 1965): 89-101.
- <sup>6</sup> Alan Marcus, "The South's Native Foreigners: Hookworm as a Factor in Southern Distinctiveness," in *Disease and Distinctiveness in the American South*, eds. Todd L. Savitt and James Harvey Young (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 79-99.
- <sup>7</sup> John Ettling, *The Germ of Laziness: Rockefeller Philanthropy and Public Health in the New South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 118-121.
- <sup>8</sup> *First Biennial Report of North Carolina Board of Health* (Raleigh: News & Observer, State Printers and Binders, 1881), 142.
- <sup>9</sup> *First Biennial Report of North Carolina Board of Health*, 128-34.
- <sup>10</sup> Benjamin E. Washburn, *A History of the North Carolina State Board of Health, 1877-1925* (Raleigh: North Carolina State Board of Health, 1966), 11.
- <sup>11</sup> John Michael Vlach, *The Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 163.
- <sup>12</sup> Cited in Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina University Press, 1937), 720.
- <sup>13</sup> George Edwin Waring, *Earth-Closets: How to Make Them and How to Use Them* (New York: The Tribune Association, 1868); Mira Engler, *Designing America's Waste Landscape* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 54; Catherine Esther Beecher, *The American Woman's Home* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 296-307.
- <sup>14</sup> Charles Wardell Stiles, "Early History, in Part Esoteric, of the Hookworm (Uncinariasis) Campaign in Our Southern United States." *The Journal of Parasitology*, 25/4 (August 1939), 294.
- <sup>15</sup> *First Biennial Report of North Carolina Board of Health*, (Raleigh; State Printers and Binders, 1881), 134.
- <sup>16</sup> "Rockefeller Gift to Kill Hookworm," *New York Times* (29 October 1909) [Electronic Archives].



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<sup>17</sup> Paul H. Buck, "The Poor Whites of the Ante-Bellum South," *The American Historical Review*, 31/1 (October 1925), 46.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald S. Barlow, *The Vanishing American Outhouse: A History of Country Plumbing* (El Cajon, CA: Windmill Publishing Co, 1989), 4; Billy Wheeler, *Outhouse Humor: A Collection of Jokes, Stories, Songs, and Poems About Outhouses and Thundermugs, Corncobs and Honey-Dippers, Wasps and Spiders, and Sears and Roebuck Catalogues* (Little Rock, AR: August House, 1988), 89-90; Norman Julian, "The Roosevelt Outhouse," *Goldenseal* 24/4 (Winter 1998), 28.

<sup>19</sup> G.G. Johnson, 717.

<sup>20</sup> Kemp P. Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina, Volume I: From Its Beginning to the Death of President Swain, 1789-1868* (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1907), 592.

<sup>21</sup> Keith Sims, "Red Cobs for Sunday" in *Hometown Memories—Outhouse Spiders and Tin Tub Bath: Tales from the Good Old Days in the Blue Ridge Mountains: A Treasury of 20th Century Memories*, ed. Bob Lasley and Sallie Holt (Hickory, N.C.: Hometown Memories Publishing Company, 2004), 27.

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<sup>3</sup> See Ettling, 35-38 for details on the publicity surrounding the discovery of the germ of laziness; Charles Wardell Stiles, *Report upon the Prevalence and Geographic Distribution of Hookworm Disease (Uncinariasis or Anchylostomiasis) in the United States* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 36.

<sup>4</sup> Ettling, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Wardell Stiles, "Hookworm Disease (Or Ground-Itch Anemia)" *Public Health Bulletin*, 32 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 34-35; *The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease: Fifth Annual Report for the Year 1914* (Washington D.C.: Offices of the Commission, January 1915), 13-14.

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<sup>7</sup> Charles E. Rosenberg, "Introduction—Framing Disease: Illness, Society and History," in *Framing Disease: Studies in Cultural History*, eds. Charles E. Rosenberg and Janet Golden (New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 1992), xiii.

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<sup>9</sup> Ettling, 130.

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<sup>12</sup> Ettling, 150

<sup>13</sup> Ettling, 141.

<sup>14</sup> Ettling, 118-121.

<sup>15</sup> For more details on the dispensaries, see Ettling, 152-177.

<sup>16</sup> Ettling, 160.

<sup>17</sup> Ettling, 164.

<sup>18</sup> Ettling, 161-62.

<sup>19</sup> Ettling, 147; M. J. Thompson, *The Training of Men for Hookworm Resurvey Work*, pp. 12-13. Folder 21, Box 3, Subseries 200, Series 2, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>20</sup> Ettling, 164.

<sup>21</sup> Deanne Stephens Nuwer, "The Importance of Wearing Shoes: Hookworm Disease in Mississippi," for the online project, *Mississippi History Now!* (Mississippi Historical Society), Electronic Resource at <http://mshistory.k12.ms.us/articles/241/hookworm-disease-in-mississippi%3A-the-importance-of-wearing-shoes>, Accessed August 2009.

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<sup>23</sup> "The Man Who Cleaned Up a Whole State," *New York Times* (24 December 1911) [Electronic Archives].

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<sup>25</sup> Alan I. Marcus, "Physicians Open a Can of Worms: American Nationality and Hookworm in the United States, 1893-1909," *American Studies* 30/2 (Fall 1989), 111.

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<sup>28</sup> "Dr Washburn talks to the ladies: Tells the Woman's club how a social survey could be applied to Wilson." (Unattributed and undated newspaper clipping) Folder 39 Box 4 Series 2, Record Group 2A 13,

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Rockefeller-Related Special Collections, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York. Note: Washburn cites "Professor Towne" as the source of his quote.

<sup>29</sup> Stiles, "Hookworm Disease (Or Ground-Itch Anemia)," 32-36.

<sup>30</sup> Stiles, "Hookworm Disease (Or Ground-Itch Anemia)," p. 32-36.

<sup>31</sup> Leonard Parker Kinnicutt, et al. *Sewage Disposal* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1919), 488-489.

<sup>32</sup> Ettling, 170-171.

<sup>33</sup> Kinnicutt, et al., 488-489.

<sup>34</sup> Ettling, 171.

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<sup>36</sup> Ettling, 163

<sup>37</sup> Ettling, 172.

<sup>38</sup> William A. Link, "'The Harvest Is Ripe, But the Laborers Are Few': The Hookworm Crusade in North Carolina, 1909-1915," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 67 (January 1990), 16.

<sup>39</sup> Booker, "The Practical Rural Privy," 264.

<sup>40</sup> Booker, "The Practical Rural Privy," 264.

<sup>41</sup> Booker, "City Privies: A Practical Design for Sanitary Privies for Urban Use," 268.

<sup>42</sup> Ettling, 176.

<sup>43</sup> *The Rockefeller Sanitary Commission for the Eradication of Hookworm Disease: Fifth Annual Report for the Year 1914*, 24.

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<sup>51</sup> Stiles, "The Statistical Basis of Dr. Ferrell's Report on the 'Sanitary Survey.'"

<sup>52</sup> Stiles, "The Statistical Basis of Dr. Ferrell's Report on the 'Sanitary Survey.'"

<sup>53</sup> Stiles, "The Statistical Basis of Dr. Ferrell's Report on the 'Sanitary Survey.'"

<sup>54</sup> Stiles, "The Statistical Basis of Dr. Ferrell's Report on the 'Sanitary Survey.'"

<sup>55</sup> Stiles, "Report upon the Community Work in Philadelphus, Cape Fear, and Hallsboro North Carolina with Special Reference to the Alleged Relative Sanitary Improvements."

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<sup>59</sup> Stiles, "The Statistical Basis of Dr. Ferrell's Report on the 'Sanitary Survey.'"

<sup>60</sup> Stiles, "The Statistical Basis of Dr. Ferrell's Report on the 'Sanitary Survey.'" (amid many others' sources as well.)

<sup>61</sup> Charles Wardell Stiles, "Early History, in Part Esoteric, of the Hookworm (Uncinariasis) Campaign in Our Southern United States," *The Journal of Parasitology* 25/4 (August 1939), 298.

<sup>62</sup> M. Jay Stottman, "Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Privy Architecture and the Perception of Sanitation," *Historical Archaeology*, 34/1 (2000), 39-58.

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<sup>2</sup> Henry H. Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 94.

<sup>3</sup> B. E. Washburn, *Report of the Bureau of County Health Work of the North Carolina State Board of Health for 1918* (1918), Folder 781, Box 64, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5 Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

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<sup>4</sup> For example: “Wilson County Public Health Campaign 1916-17 Home Report Card,” Folder 39 Box 4 Series 2, Record Group 2A 13, Rockefeller-Related Special Collections, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>5</sup> “Yearly Report of Pitt County Health Officer 1918,” (1918) Folder 781, Box 64, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.; W.S. Rankin, “Introduction,” in *Report of the Bureau of County Health Work of the North Carolina State Board of Health for 1918* (1918) Page 11, Folder 781, Box 64, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>6</sup> Rankin, “Introduction,” p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Form letters used in the 1915 campaigns, Folder 95, Box 17, Subseries 236, Series 2, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Collection, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>8</sup> B. E. Washburn, *Report of the Bureau of County Health Work of the North Carolina State Board of Health for 1918*, (1918) Page 46, Folder 781, Box 64, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York; “Agreement Between the Citizens of the Rock Ridge Community and the North Carolina State Board of Health,” in Benjamin Washburn’s scraps. Folder 39, Box 4, Record Group 1V2A13.2 RF Collections, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>9</sup> Clipping from The Morning Dispatch “...Weekly Health Talk...”[Events concerning Wilson County, and the work of Benjamin Washburn] (Dates ranging from September 1916-February 1917) Folder 39, Box 4, Series 2, Record Group 2A 13, Rockefeller-Related Special Collections, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>10</sup> Clipping from The Morning Dispatch “...Weekly Health Talk...” [Events concerning Wilson County, and the work of Benjamin Washburn].

<sup>11</sup> Photograph description of a 4<sup>th</sup> of July display in Salisbury, North Carolina reading, “The economic loss to Rowan County during the month of June from typhoid fever was \$19,000. 22 cases, 6 deaths. Co-operate with your County Health Department and prevent this wastage of lives and money. IT CAN BE DONE,” (1918) Folder 781, Box 64, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, IHB/D, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York; “Placards used at Citizens’ Mass Meeting February 19 (likely 1917). Figures P261bb, P261aa, respectively, Folder 1276, Box 54, Series 2, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collection, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>12</sup> Clipping from The Morning Dispatch “...Weekly Health Talk...” [Events concerning Wilson County, and the work of Benjamin Washburn].

<sup>13</sup> “Yearly Report of Pitt County Health Officer 1918.”

<sup>14</sup> Washburn, *Report of the Bureau of County Health Work of the North Carolina State Board of Health for 1918*, 44-45.

<sup>15</sup> Washburn, *Report of the Bureau of County Health Work of the North Carolina State Board of Health for 1918*, 44-45.

<sup>16</sup> “A General Summary of Seventeen Months of Health Work in Northampton County, NC 1917-18; Seaboard Township, Northampton County, North Carolina.” Folder 779, Box 63, Subseries 236J, Series 3,

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<sup>17</sup> P. W. Covington, "Form Letters from Goldsboro, NC," (2 letters, both dated 8 February 1915) Folder 95, Box 17, Subseries 236, Series 2, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>18</sup> Letter: B. E. Washburn to John Ferrell (24 September 1916) Wilson, NC. Folder 399, Box 26, Subseries 2 Projects 236 NC 1916, Series 1 Correspondence, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>19</sup> For one example, Letter: B. E. Washburn to John Ferrell (24 September 1916) Wilson, NC.

<sup>20</sup> Letter: B. E. Washburn to John Ferrell (24 September 1916) Wilson, NC.

<sup>21</sup> "Yearly Report of Pitt County Health Officer 1918."

<sup>22</sup> Note attached to photograph. "Privy at home of Nat Williams (colored); tenant owner has not made sanitary his own privy," (Undated, likely 1914) Red Oak Community, North Carolina. Figure 91, Folder 1270, Box 53, Subseries 236H, Series 3, Record Group 5, RF Photographic Collections, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>23</sup> B. E. Washburn, *Report of the Bureau of County Health Work of the North Carolina State Board of Health for 1918*, 46.

<sup>24</sup> "Yearly Report of Pitt County Health Officer 1918."

<sup>25</sup> Calculations based on numbers in "Extent of Privy Construction in Davidson County," (12 April 1920) Folder 782, Box 64, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, IHB/D Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>26</sup> Calculations based on numbers in "Extent of Privy Construction in Davidson County," (12 April 1920).

<sup>27</sup> William A. Link, *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 145.

<sup>28</sup> *Bulletin of the North Carolina Board of Health*, 14/9 (December 1910), Back Image.

<sup>29</sup> "Wilson to enter War Next Week," (28 March 1917) Folder 39, Box 4, Series 2, Record Group 2A 13, RF Rockefeller-Related Special Collections, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>30</sup> J. S. Mitchener, "Report of the Lenoir County Dental Campaign," (Undated, likely 1917-18) Folder 782, Box 64, Subseries 236J Series 3, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>31</sup> M. J. Thompson, *The Training of Men for Hookworm Resurvey Work*, Folder 21, Box 3, Subseries 200, Series 2, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>32</sup> Cara A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2003), 7-11.



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<sup>33</sup> “Memorandum on Photographic Plates Required for the Chart on Hookworm Disease Entitled “From the Life of a Little Boy,”” (17 November 1915) Folder 22, Box 3, Subseries 200, Series 2, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>34</sup> “Yearly Report of Pitt County Health Officer 1918.”

<sup>35</sup> Home Report Card for Wilson County Health Campaign. 1916-17. Folder 39, Box 4, Record Group, 1V2A13.2, Rockefeller Foundation Archives. Courtesy of the Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>36</sup> *Economic and Social Conditions of North Carolina Farmers: Based on a Survey of 1000 North Carolina Farmers in Three Typical Counties of the State*, ed. Carl C. Taylor, C. C. Zimmerman (Raleigh: North Carolina Tenancy Commission, 1922).

<sup>37</sup> *Economic and Social Conditions of North Carolina Farmers: Based on a Survey of 1000 North Carolina Farmers in Three Typical Counties of the State*.

<sup>38</sup> B. E. Washburn, “Chronic Constipation in Women in Homes Without Privies,” (8 May 1917) Folder 95, Box 17, Subseries 236, Series 2, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>39</sup> L. L. Lumsden, “Privy Symposium I: The Privy as a Public Health Problem,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 10/1 (1920), 46. (Read before Section of Public Health Administration, American Public Health Association, at New Orleans, 27 October 1919).

<sup>40</sup> J. S. Mitchener, “Report on the Lenoir County Unit to Bureau of County Health Work” for the N.C. State Board of Health (15 August 1917 to 31 December 1918) Folder 782, Box 64, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>41</sup> B. E. Washburn, *Report of the Bureau of County Health Work of the North Carolina State Board of Health for 1918*, 26. Folder 781, Box 64, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>42</sup> F. C. Caldwell, “Report of Impressions Gained in North Carolina,” (December 1919) Folder 95, Box 17, Subseries 236, Series 2, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>43</sup> The entire July 1919 issue of *The Health Bulletin* from the North Carolina State Board of Health was devoted to explaining the new law. “The State-Wide Privy Law Explained.” *The Health Bulletin* 34/7 (July 1919).

<sup>44</sup> *Twenty-Eighth Biennial Report of the North Carolina Board of Health. July 1, 1938- June 30, 1940* (Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton Co, 1940), 80.

<sup>45</sup> “The State-Wide Privy Law Explained,” 3.

<sup>46</sup> “The State-Wide Privy Law Explained,” 4.

<sup>47</sup> “The State-Wide Privy Law Explained,” 8-14.

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<sup>48</sup> G. M. Cooper, "The North Carolina Sanitary Privy Law," *Southern Medical Journal* 20/8 (August 1927), 656.

<sup>49</sup> "The State-Wide Privy Law Explained," 16-19.

<sup>50</sup> Cooper, "The North Carolina Sanitary Privy Law," 655.

<sup>51</sup> Caldwell, "Report of Impressions Gained in North Carolina," (December 1919).

<sup>52</sup> John H. Hamilton, "Report of Trip to North Carolina to Observe Public Health Administration," (24 January 1920). Folder 95, Box 17, Subseries 236, Series 2, Record Group 5, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>53</sup> B. E. Washburn, Personal Correspondence to Wickliffe Rose, from Wilson NC, (22 November 1916) Folder 400, Box 26, Subseries 2 Projects 236 NC 1916, Series 1 Correspondence, Record Group 5 IHB, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>54</sup> Photograph description of a 4<sup>th</sup> of July display in Salisbury, North Carolina reading, "The economic loss to Rowan County during the month of June from typhoid fever was \$19,000. 22 cases, 6 deaths. Co-operate with your County Health Department and prevent this wastage of lives and money. IT CAN BE DONE," (1918) Folder 781, Box 64, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, IHB/D, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

<sup>55</sup> Editorial from an unnamed Rowan County Weekly Paper (Undated, likely July 1918) Folder 781, Box 64, Subseries 236J, Series 3, Record Group 5, IHB/D, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York.

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