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Senior Seminar  
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In a changing world, sacrifices often need to be made in order to keep up. Sometimes these are sacrifices in the preservation of history, culture, and diversity. Fleetwood, Pennsylvania has preserved many characteristics, but is rapidly changing with the times. Roadways are being widened to accommodate heavy traffic, and landmarks are being torn down to allow newer, more commercialized buildings to be constructed. This change is defacing the unique characteristics that make Fleetwood, Fleetwood.

An example of change is a former leather tannery in the process of being torn down and redeveloped into new houses and buildings. While this isn't entirely a bad thing, the tannery had been out of business for quite a while. But it does paint a picture of what is to come. "Fleetwood Borough Council and Berks County Redevelopment Authority can now work on a redevelopment plan that could include bringing stores or light-industrial companies to the tannery site and using at least some of the land for parking"(VanderMeulen, 1). The tannery was gutted by a fire in 2005, which seems to be a trend in Fleetwood. Fire has played a large part in the destruction, and forced rebuilding of the town. In this case, rebuilding the area is a good thing, it means that the town has its future in mind, and wants to continue to better itself by allowing new businesses to come in, and create more jobs.

This trend could continue, and perhaps will, to the point that Fleetwood shows none of its original characteristics, and becomes just another borough in Pennsylvania with no originality to call its own. These trends can be seen in many other towns in the

area, with the building of Wal-Mart's, Targets, Lowes, and Home Depots. Throughout Berks County, small stores and businesses that have been etched into the character of the town are going out of business. Consumers won't go to Weavers Hardware when they can buy the same product at Home Depot at a lower cost. Towns like Fleetwood rely on small, family run stores as a place to see friends and neighbors, thus strengthening the dynamic of a small town. This small town dynamic makes Fleetwood a true community. "A community must always remain a matter of face-to-face intercourse. This is why the family and neighborhood, with all their deficiencies, have always been the chief agencies of nurture... the great community, in the sense of free and full intercommunication, is conceivable. But it could never possess all the qualities that mark a local community" (Dewey, 171).

A local community has a very strong sense of interconnectedness, which makes it a prime place for groups of people to meet and discuss personal views and ambitions that strongly reflect a Participatory Democracy. But, "the invasion and partial destruction of the life of the latter by outside uncontrolled agencies is the immediate source of the instability, disintegration and restlessness which characterize the present epoch (Dewey, 171)."

But what's so special about Fleetwood? Here is a brief overview of its past, present, and even an outlook of its possible future. Fleetwood is a small Borough in Berks County, Pennsylvania with a population of about four thousand. It is primarily surrounded by farmland and small industries. It is in close proximity to Reading, Allentown, Philadelphia, and even New York City. Because of this, Fleetwood is an ideal place to for many people to live, not just farmers, but businessmen, students, and

others as well. Because of its close location to Kutztown University, Fleetwood is an ideal place for commuting students and professors to live.

Fleetwood has many small restaurants and businesses which illustrates the general nature of the town. There are not many chain restaurants or commercialized attractions that are seen in many larger towns. This gives Fleetwood very old and unique characteristics. This is the kind of town where everyone knows each other, and it has always been this way.

Farming is very prominent in the areas surrounding Fleetwood. Such crops as corn, wheat, and soybeans have made the area around Fleetwood very valuable in the food production industry. The large amount of farming is also why there is a fairly large concentration of Mennonites and Amish. This large amount of Mennonites and Amish gives Fleetwood, and surrounding towns, interesting traits. For instance, it is not uncommon to see roadside stands in the warmer months that sell local fresh fruits and vegetables. Farmers Markets are also very popular. Here, Amish, as well as other local farmers sell fresh pies, meats, and vegetables unique to this area.

Just last year I moved to Richmond Township, a neighboring town of Fleetwood. Due to the Fleetwood Post office being the only one in the area. I am considered to live in Fleetwood, although I live outside the borough limits. In fact we share a school system with Fleetwood, which means all and all; the Borough of Fleetwood stretches out far farther than its physical boundaries. We even share a zip code. The reason my family moved to Fleetwood is because we wanted to escape the rapid growth New Jersey has seen in the recent years. Traffic had gotten worse and worse as the years went by. My town just could not handle it, roads were always crowded, the highway ramps were

always jammed, and the schools became more and more crowded. The value of real estate went up, and the concentration of houses and people became very high. We hoped that Fleetwood would be an escape from that, and so far it has been.

I have chosen this town, because I feel that it has not changed very much over the years. It seems apparent that this trend will not continue. Fleetwood, as well as many of the surrounding towns, have become a very popular escape from the over population that is New Jersey. Many people, like myself have moved here, and will continue to move here, until eventually it will become just as bad.

Fleetwood's economy is ever changing, and rapidly growing. There are many houses being built in and around Fleetwood, as well as entire developments. Because of this increase in real estate, there is an increase in restaurants and stores. This change is increasing the value of property, and the overall desire to move here. For the moment, housing can still be cheap. There are houses available for less than 10,000 dollars, but this is changing. The houses are getting bigger, and the image of Fleetwood is making it a more desirable place to live. This is largely due to the quality of education. The school taxes far surpass any other taxes paid by residents, and the quality of the school system is noticeable to people looking to move here.

With the expansion of major businesses and industries, a town like Fleetwood, which has managed to stay off the maps, will soon become a victim to commercialization and industry. This can be seen as good and bad. If more businesses move in, property value will go up, and more jobs will become available, Fleetwood's unique characteristics, which have lasted hundreds of years, would change into a bland and

generic center for chain restaurants and big box stores, resulting in evidence of Fleetwood's history to be erased

Fleetwood has an especially rich history. It was first discovered by the Dutch in 1630. The area was first owned by a Swede named Peter Minuet. The land was then given to Admiral Penn by King Charles II as a means of paying a debt to him. William Penn, Admiral Penn's son was given some of this land, which included Berks county. He made a treaty with the Native Americans who lived there at the time for ownership of the land. Many English settlers arrived around 1620. Most of them were friends of the Quakers, who lived there at the time.

On March 11, 1752, Berks County was established. It is an abbreviation of Berkshire, England, where the Penn Family owned lots of land. It wasn't until 1857, after the construction of a railroad that connected Reading to Allentown, that Fleetwood got its name. The reason is not clear, but there are some theories saying that two surveyors working on the railroad were Mr. Fleet, and Mr. Wood. Another theory says that Fleetwood Pennsylvania was named after a place in England called Fleetwood, because of its resemblance.

There have been numerous other local businesses and industries that have operated out of Fleetwood. On April 1, 1909, the Fleetwood Medal Body Company was formed. The Business started on a small scale on only 5,000 square feet of floor space. The immediately expanded to 10,000 square feet, and in 1912, upgraded to 20,000 square feet. Many auto companies and engineering companies used their products. Bowers Battery Company started in the Fleetwood Medal Body Company, until a Fire in the building forced them to move to the AP Merkel Building located on the corner of

Franklen and Locus Street. The Company was eventually bought out by the Exide Company. In 1924 the Fisher Body Company, which is a division of General Motors, bought out the Fleetwood Medal Body Company.

In 1927, Henry Kraber bought a billiard Parlor and Restaurant located on the south corner of Main and Richmond Street. He operated the Billiard Parlor until 1933, when it was converted to a taproom, which remains today and is considered a landmark in Fleetwood.

Many small businesses have opened and closed in the history of Fleetwood. Some have been open for many generations, and many have gone out of business for an array of reasons. Fleetwood is a town that has a lot of change, but yet this change is subtle.

Fleetwood shared the same kinds of trends that most towns and boroughs do. These trends include population growth, business growth, increases in real estate value, decrease in Farmland, and an increase in highways, and roadways. But as time goes by, things inevitably change. This is easily demonstrated by general trends in population growth. In 1920, the population of Fleetwood was around 1900. It took twenty years for that number to reach to 2240. And in 1948, only 8 years later, that number was practically doubled to 4410. By 2000, that number has increased to 14085.

As of the 2000 census, 98.4 percent of the population is white. This is most likely due to the strong German and English Settlers who resided here hundreds of years ago. This is evident by the number of similar last names here; this includes Weaver, Kelchner, and Zimmerman. These names show up on many signs of local businesses, including Weavers Hardware, Weaver's Bike shop, and Kelchner Cleaners. There are 5447

households in Fleetwood with the average value being 120,600 dollars. These numbers are from 2000 and the average house value has gone up since then. This average is fairly low, especially when you compare it to the house values of Clark, NJ, which is 217,500 dollars. This is another reason why so many people move out of New Jersey and into towns like Fleetwood. They can buy a much larger house in Pennsylvania for the same price as a small house in New Jersey.

Fleetwood Bank is a small chain of banks that are spread several towns wide, originating in Fleetwood. The existence of a bank like this demonstrates just how unique Fleetwood is. Those born and raised here can stay away from the Wachovia, and Bank of Americas found all around the area. One way Fleetwood Bank has integrated itself into the town is by working with the School System to allow students to open an account with Fleetwood Bank through the school. These accounts typically don't have more than a few dollars in it, its purpose is to teach students about banking. Still this is a way for the bank to secure future clients. Overall, it seems like a smart move by Fleetwood Bank to continue to strive as a bank.

Fleetwood Area School System is a highly regarded school system, and many surrounding towns go to Fleetwood Schools. There are 2,646 students and 173 teachers make up the five schools in Fleetwood, which include three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Due to the location of the schools, and the nature of the environment, not many, if any students walk to school. This is simply because of the lack of side walks and small residential communities. Because of this, most of the students are bussed. This is a daunting task due to the large area that students reside. The schools are very well kept as well. Richmond Elementary, one of the three elementary

schools in the Fleetwood Area School district, has a very small and quaint feel to it. The hallways are carpeted, all the classrooms are air-conditioned in the summer, and there are even water coolers in the hallways, as well as water fountains. The computer room just got new computers, and there are many events within the school district that bring students and families closer together. This includes a holiday event, and Family Fun Night, both designed and organized by the PTA, and includes games and activities.

As with many towns in this area, Fleetwood tends to vote primarily Republican. In both 2000 and 2004 the majority of the votes in the presidential election were for George W. Bush, in 2000. This is typical in a small rural community like Fleetwood.

Religion is a very predominant aspect of Fleetwood, as well as the surrounding towns. Fleetwood is in an area loosely known as the “Bible Belt” which means pretty much like it sounds. Fleetwood is home to a large concentration of Protestants, and Christians. This is evident by, as previously mentioned, the large population of Mennonites, and Amish in this area. This shows a great example of the importance of the idea of Protective Democracy. While the immediate definition of Protective Democracy is protection from the abuse of power, it also includes protection against “the dangers associated with empowering citizens in ways that extend beyond the formal guarantees of legal and political equality of freedom” (Terechek, Cante, 91). This roughly means that those who are not qualified to make decisions for everybody in politics shouldn’t.

Perhaps this is true to a point in Fleetwood since only about twenty four percent of the residents have a bachelors degree or higher. Also, it seems that residence in Fleetwood, as well as many towns in this region; pick a political candidate or party for the wrong reason. That reason, many times is religion. This is evident by the many



churches and places of worship found in this area, but almost entirely for Protestants and Christians. There are virtually no Temples or Mosques like you would see in many other parts of the country. Because of this, religious diversity is minimal, and does have an effect on the nature of the area. Voting on religion many times leads to voting Republican, which doesn't make sense for a small, middle class town like Fleetwood. In Pennsylvania, it is not uncommon to see anti-abortion billboards, or signs outlining the highway saying "repent to Jesus." It is because of the strong religious beliefs that Fleetwood has, which leads them to vote Republican, even when Pennsylvania, as a whole, typically votes Democrat. This is because most of Pennsylvania's population resides around cities.

The crucial point is that votes on rule applicable to all, and votes on measures which directly affect only some, have a wholly different character. Votes on matters that concern all, such as general rules of just conduct, are based on a lasting strong opinion and thus something quite different from votes on a particular measure for the benefit and also often at the expense of unknown people generally in the knowledge that such benefits will be distributed from the common purse in any case, and that all the individual can do is to guide this expenditure in the direction he prefers (Hayek, 97-98).

So, if a largely catholic region wants to implement stronger abortion laws, it will have a negative effect on those who are apposed to that view. Many times the elected representatives will use this to gain support, even if this is not their personal view. It is this reason why an elected representative must follow the feelings of the majority, without excluding the minority, because laws affect everyone.

As the years go by, and population numbers increase, Cities will most likely grow larger and larger. This will, in turn, cause towns like Fleetwood to continue to grow. Businesses will move in, restaurants will open, chain stores will open, and the people who live here will diversify. This will most likely cause real estate value to increase due to its proximity to these cities. The growth of Kutztown University will also have an effect on the nature of Fleetwood. If housing becomes scarce in downtown Kutztown, students may start finding housing elsewhere, including Fleetwood. This would probably bring in a lot of money to the town, and perhaps in time change the image of Fleetwood as perhaps a college town, without a college.

As long as the quality of the school system remains, Fleetwood will continue to be a desirable place to live. The future of the school system depends largely on the budget, and teaching staff. Right now, most of the teachers are very young, which means that it will be some time before we experience a mass retirement, like we are in many other school districts around the country. This has many benefits. While young teachers are not as experienced as older teachers, they tend to be more energetic, and more knowledgeable of current trends and technologies. Also, new teachers get paid less, which puts less of a burden on the school budget, and allows it to stay the same for longer.

In the near future, technology in the classroom will increase dramatically. Within the next five years or so, I predict that such classic teaching implements like the chalk board, and overhead projector will be obsolete. Every classroom will have PowerPoint capabilities, as well as incredibly fast internet. It will be much like what Kutztown University has now. Many older teachers will not know how to properly handle this

technology, and will not use it to its full potential. This is why having a lot of young teachers is good.

In ten to fifteen years there will be huge advancements in transportation, significantly in public transportation. With the energy crisis we are in today, it will not be long until public transportation makes large advancements. With cities getting larger and highways getting denser, public transportation will need to make revolutionary changes. I suspect there will be faster trains with more and more tracks. If there was a train station in Fleetwood that could get you to New York City in under an hour, Fleetwood would immediately become a desirable place to live for those who work in New York City. The same would be true for Philadelphia, Allentown, and Reading. Fleetwood will become connected to some of the busiest places in the world. If this happens, I suspect that Fleetwood, and its surrounding towns would change completely. Farm land would be bought out to build houses, movie theatres, fancy restaurants, classy apartment buildings, multi-million dollar mansions, and up scale hotels would be built here. This would have dramatic impacts on the economy and demographics. All of a sudden farmers will become the wealthiest people in the area because they own most of the land. People from all over will move to the surrounding towns, and perhaps Fleetwood would go from a quiet rural town, to a busy suburban metropolis. There would be impacts to the loss of farmland. Even in a more advanced world, food still needs to be produced. If the cost of land rises, the cost of food will also rise.

In thirty years, Fleetwood may become as built up as a small city. This would most likely be the case for most towns with any proximity to a big city. As far as transportation and general technology goes, it's hard to predict. I would imagine that in

thirty years, if there are trains to New York and Philadelphia, it will be so advanced that it would be unfathomable to us today. Perhaps it will use electromagnets to glide above a track like a monorail. Maybe they will create a train that costs next to nothing to operate, and uses almost no energy.

The same could be predicted about cars. Perhaps the use for fossil fuels will be so miniscule; it will no longer be an issue. Perhaps, with advancements in communication technologies, commuting for many people will not be necessary. There may not be the need for many office buildings because employees could just work at home. If this becomes a common trend, the whole persona of work could change. While physical labor will always be needed, the classic nine to five office job may not exist in the future, because employees will be able to get the same amount of work done in the comfort of home, and would not have to worry about the hassle of commuting to work.

Schools will become more advanced as well. Computers will dominate, and may take the place of paper. Schools and offices use astronomical amounts of paper, which could be stopped with advances in computers. In thirty years, commuters will be so affordable, that every student in almost every school will be required to have one.

Fleetwood is, and always has been a small, closely knit community. It is home to many small family owned stores, and companies. It is the kind of town where people who grew up here feel at home, and feel comfortable. It is evident that Fleetwood is preparing for a change due to small changes in businesses and industries. The future can change the way Fleetwood is very easily. With surrounding cities getting larger, with advancements in technology, and in increases in population, it won't be long until Fleetwood feels the effects of a changing, and growing world.

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Hayek, Fredrick. "*The Political Order of the Free People*", 1979

VanderMeulen, Rebecca. "*Renewal area includes tannery site*", Reading Eagle:

Tuesday, February 27, 2007.