abandoned: The All-American Ruins Podcast
Season 1 - Bonus Episode
All-American Ruins @ North Carolina Museum of History
written by Blake Pfeil

BLAKE: Welcome to *abandoned: The All-American Ruins Podcast.* My name is Blake.

(MUSIC: ethereal, fun)

Per usual, I have just a quick note before we get started. This is a bonus episode - so if you haven't listened to our show yet, I'd suggest you hit that pause button and go back to the beginning, to the prologue, to season 1, to anemoia, so you can get a sense of what we're doing here.

In today's bonus episode, I'm giving you an instant replay, of sorts, from my recent program at North Carolina Museum of History. I was invited to share my work for a virtual presentation at the museum, and it was a dang blast. To be sure: this is merely the audio from that event, but you're also able to watch the entire thing on my YouTube page, searchable as All-American Ruins. I linked it in the show notes, as well as the presentation deck that goes along with it.

But, if you're driving or riding the subway or waiting for a GrubHub delivery at home, this might be the perfect way to learn all about this project. That's next on *abandoned: The All-American Ruins Podcast.*

(MUSIC: fade out)

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BLAKE: Here's Stacey from North Carolina Museum of History.

STACEY: Hey, welcome to this edition of *History and Highballs: All-American Ruins*. My name is Stacey, and I handle adult education here at the museum. So whenever you sign up to join us for one of these History and Highballs programs, you and I get to virtually spend the evening together, listening to some incredible stories about places and people and what makes our state so special. If you enjoy tonight's program, we invite you to head over to the museum's website at **ncmuseumofhistory.org**, where you can learn more about our upcoming programs, exhibits, and digital resources.

This is also where you can find more information about joining our wonderful North Carolina Museum of History Associates. Our associates and foundation provide crucial funding and support to the museum, which in addition to many other things, helps make programming like tonight's program possible. We would also like to thank those of you

who donated funds towards this evening's program. We continue to do our best to keep our programs free to attend. But there are costs associated with keeping our series going, and we just continue to be so appreciative of your generous support of the museum.

A few quick housekeeping notes, excuse me, for this evening. We ask that you please keep your mics muted throughout the entirety of the program, and to please type any questions that you have for our guest speaker into the chat function located at the bottom center of your screen. At the end of the program, our adult programs intern Hannah will ask our speaker as many of your questions as time allows.

So it's my honor to introduce and welcome this evening's speaker, Blake Pfeil. Blake is an award-winning musician, writer, audio maker, and performance artist. He is one of the co-founders of New York City based folk fusion band, Macabre Americana, and hosts *The Pfeil File* on Radio Kingston in the Hudson Valley of New York. In his day job, he steps into the role of Operations and Programs Manager at nonprofit storytelling organization TMI Project. Pfeil holds an MA in Arts Entrepreneurship from Purchase College and a BFA in Musical Theater from Emerson College. He is also an alumnus of the Audio Podcast Fellowship at Stony Brook University.

So Blake, the floor is yours. I'm going to turn it over to you. Welcome.

BLAKE: Hey, thanks so much, Stacey, and Hannah, thank you so much for helping out this evening. Really appreciate it. So nice to not see everybody, to be here with all of you this evening. As Stacey mentioned, my name is Blake, and I'm the creator of All-American Ruins, which is the project I'm actually here to talk to you about today.

I did want to take a quick second to, again, thank Stacey, Hannah, and the entire staff at the North Carolina Museum of History for inviting me to come and join them for History + Highballs. It's a very cool situation that y'all have going on here and, it's a little bit relevant to my life, actually, because a good family member of ours, Bill, was the head of the history department at UNC Asheville for years, so this feels like a semi-homecoming in a lot of ways!

So I'm gonna get started here. I will just note that we had our little tech rehearsal earlier, and some of the video links that I had prepared weren't working. There's one in particular that we will have to link out to. later on in the presentation, but I just wanted to

let y'all know, um, that, you know, we're over three years into this whole pandemic Zoom thing, and I still feel like we can't get certain things right, and it, it cracks me up.
So! Let's get going, but before we dive in, I wanted to check in with you folks. How many of you have heard this word? (ANEMOIA). The word is anemoia, nostalgia for a time and place one has never known. want you all to remember that word for the rest of the hour because it's going to become very important on our adventures together.

So, that being said: what is All-American Ruins? Well, best way to put it, All-American Ruins is a multimedia travelog where I recount my expeditions exploring abandoned spaces across the United States (and around the world) and reimagine those experiences through fantastical multimodal storytelling. A simple little concept!

Along the way, All-American Ruins also investigates the underbelly of America a bit by asking all kinds of critical questions about the country through the lens of these glorious forgotten spaces.

One of the cool things about this project is that it's gotten a lot of exposure and been featured some very neat places - included, oh yes, at the NC Museum of History. Hello!

You may be asking, "So -- what does that mean, exactly, multimedia travelog, fantastical multimodal storytelling?" That is a great question, thanks for asking. There are several ways to experience the magic of All-American Ruins, and the best part is that all of the modalities are interrelated: for example, you could start with the original blog post about the Nevele Grande Resort, which is an abandoned ski resort in the Shawungunk Mountains of NY, then put on some headphones and listen to the immersive podcast version of that original story, then turn on your TV and watch the HUDSY adaptation of that original blog post - but I ask you to take it even further and come experience the magic of this project which, by the way, saved my life (we'll get to that in a minute), in-person or online at events like this - or, the best part, go out and use your own imagination. Because I'm not just going and exploring abandoned spaces; I'm intentionally, actively accessing my imagination for mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness in these vacant and decaying grownup playgrounds. And more.

Before we continue, I have to acknowledge my media partners, WKNY / Radio Kingston where I produce the podcast and HUDSY, the content platform and production company behind the TV series.

Right. But who are you, and why should we listen to you? Well. Hi. My name is Blake. You got that. At my core, I'm an artist, through and through. I make lots of different kinds of things. I'm a writer, an audiomaker, a filmmaker, a musician, a songwriter, a

photographer-- or, to lump it all together, a multidisciplinary storyteller. I use that root/prefix “multi” a lot. I also have a piece of paper that says the words “Master of Arts” on it and another piece of paper that says “Bachelor of Fine Arts” on it, though that degree I accidentally left in South Korea after a year-long stint at a children’s theater company. I also just recently graduated from SUNY Stony Brook’s Audio Podcast Fellowship, another integral organization who has helped me bring this project to life.

But who am I *really?* Who are any of us, really? Well, I like to say that we don’t have stories, we are stories. All of us are an ongoing story being told and waiting to be told. Each of us has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and many beginnings, middles, and ends in between. So to get us started, I’d like to tell you a bit of my story. Since we’re exploring the power of imagination today, I’m taking you back to the 1990s, when these gray booty shorts you see on this lil guy right here were acceptable. Even though it may be weird, I want you to close your eyes, and I want you to see what comes up for you in your imagination as I share this story.

As a kid, I was fascinated with an abandoned dairy farm down the hill from my home in Colorado. There was this feeling that I’d been there before. Of course, that wasn’t possible because the farm, part of the former Modern Woodmen of America Tuberculosis Sanatorium that opened in 1909, was closed by 1980. I was born in ‘87. That funny feeling was more than a weird familiarity; it also gave me a sense of security and serenity. In the attached house, still full of dishes, furniture, and clothes, I ran my fingers along the walls, and it all felt recognizable.

Open your eyes. That’s the dairy farm behind me, before it burned down.

And here it is after a major portion of it burned down. You can learn more about the history of the dairy farm in both the article I wrote for Colorado Magazine and a special bonus episode of *abandoned: The All-American Ruins Podcast* that I produced exclusively as part of my partnership with History Colorado. I’m going to play you a small part of that bonus episode now-- And, apologies in advance, but the host version of me is going to ask you to close your eyes again.

[PLAY EPISODE]

You can hear the rest of that episode and read the article at HistoryColorado.org, and again, I’ll share these links before we leave today.

As a kid, every time I snuck into this historical beauty, I found myself engaging in made-up conversations with imaginary characters who might've once lived there. With my imaginary friends, I found kinship and meaning. It was healing. Emotionally, mentally, spiritually -

Though I don't think this young kid in gray booty shorts was actually aware of what those healing feelings were.

I just knew I loved being there. The more I frequented visits to the abandoned dairy farm, the more it transformed into my private sanctuary.

Fast-forward to May 2020 I woke up from a dream that I was back inside the dairy farm, and the same funny feeling, anemoia, bubbled in my gut. It was the first time in months that I felt a sense of safety. COVID-19 had been raging for three-ish months, and my germaphobic, isolationist anxiety had taken control of my life. I lay there, thinking about the abandoned dairy farm, and I wondered if there were any abandoned buildings near my home in the Hudson Valley. I Googled "abandoned spaces near me," and found they're everywhere. I began to venture out to the ruins of America, places that look like they've been raptured, and All-American Ruins was born.

I know this may sound dramatic, but it's true: this project saved my life. I think many people can relate to the isolation and anxiety that came with, at least for me, the pandemic. I found true sanctuary in going to explore these kinds of spaces. Using my imagination as a grownup helped keep me sane and grounded, by finding these safe places to escape to and connect with my creativity and wanderlust-- and meditation, which helped me feel connected to something bigger. I use the word sanctuary very intentionally.

Furthermore, this project saved my life in a second way. I also know that the past three years have been fraught with political, social, and cultural unrest. I'm not here to take sides today; I'm simply here to say that, in addition to these spaces becoming spiritual sanctuaries, they also became places to reflect on America, observe a different side of the story about America that, growing up, I was taught in public school. The project began around the same time we started to see movements stirring and exploding, both on the heels of Black Lives Matter and in the midst of the ramp-up of the Women's March, the fight for gun control, LGBTQIA+ rights, the tumble-down of the economy, the environment. Again, not here to take sides. All I'm saying is that I've reevaluated a lot of what I feel about America because I have spent so much time wandering its ruins. And I

might suggest that we, as a collective, can learn a lot about a different side of American history through the lens of these abandoned spaces.

How's all that for an intro? Phew. So, yes. We'll be splitting today's talk up into two parts. Part I, The Science of Imagination as Healer, and part II, An Alternative Roadmap of America. Over the course of the presentation, I want you to keep asking yourself two questions:

"Can the human imagination serve as a space of healing and serenity as much as it serves as a space of creativity and wonderment?"

"What can we learn about American history, culture, and politics from the ruins of America?"

Here we go: Part I: The Science of Imagination as Healer. Can I call on someone to read something for me? Just read that quote right there."Many contemporary psychotherapists believe imagination sets the stage for engagement in treatment, positive shifts in thoughts and feelings, and, ultimately, the discovery of novel ways to overcome life's challenges." Dr. Cathy Malchiodi, PhD.

So remember that first question I asked you to keep in mind as we navigated today's presentation? I'm going to get a little bit more specific with it. The question is: can we improve our mental and emotional wellbeing, in real-time, using the power of imagination? The short answer I believe is: yes. However, there isn't much research on the imagination healing us in real-time, at least that I've been able to find. But what I have been able to find is simple:

- Imagination can be a reparative and restorative experience that helps us discover novel ways to address life's challenges.

- People who experience long-lasting traumatic stress reactions may have challenges when it comes to imagination.

- The restoration of an individual's imaginative capacity may be a part of the healing process when it comes to traumatic stress.

These are the findings of Dr. Malchiodi via Psychology Today, discussing expressive arts therapy, which is an integrative approach to treatment for trauma, using movement,

sound, image-making, enactment, play, and other forms of implicit communication. As such, imagination is a core component of expressive arts therapy, and today, it's widely believed among mental health and wellness practitioners that our imagination provides a foundation for all kinds of trauma-related treatment, enabling patients to learn how to uncover positive shifts in thoughts and feelings and unearth simple ways to triumph over challenges in life.

I came across Dr. Malchiodi's research about two years into my work with All-American Ruins. I had been actively thinking about how my imagination in these abandoned buildings really ran wild. I thought about when I was a kid, and I was a pretty sensitive kid at that. I was aware that something was kind of "off" in the picture my family was painting, but using my imagination inside that abandoned dairy farm became a first line of defense and protection from scary or traumatic feelings and thoughts about all the bad things I had to witness my parents going through.

And then, again, as an adult, living alone in a pandemic, germaphobic, completely afraid of even being on the many hiking trails near my house in the Catskills because of the influx of people coming up from the city, the original epicenter of the pandemic here in the States. Boom, there it is: my imagination kept me safe. I was venturing out across the country, playing, literally playing pretend as a 30-something, inside abandoned buildings. And while the pandemic was as extraordinarily taxing as ever, I have to say that my experience was significantly improved because I had this outlet.
But as I was pouring through this research, I also located two potential holes. The first being that fear, the human feeling of fear, can be a deterrent to humans being able to access their imagination. So I asked myself how it was possible that I could overcome all of these very debilitating fears I had when it came to Covid and still be able to access my imagination as strongly as I had been. And I realized that the project didn't really pick up steam until after I got vaccinated, and my fear of death from this still very unknown virus substantially subsided. Furthermore, and to get a little more personal, I had spent almost a decade in sobriety, so a lot of my personal issues and character flaws, like crippling anxiety and fear, had already been finding solace and a sense of healing.

The second hole I noticed was that so much of the research surrounding imagination-based trauma recovery focused on patients with mental illnesses who had experienced past traumas and healing from those. In her article with Psychology Today, Dr. Malchiodi points out that research on brain imaging led by a team at the University of Colorado Boulder suggests that imagination can heal people with fears and anxieties,

and those who struggle with trauma. Instead of providing typical exposure therapy, participants in the study were asked to simply imagine a threat for a few moments to help them cope with overwhelming bodily sensations associated with the threat. Participants were more able to adjust to a threat by visualizing it. If these results hold true in larger studies, it may mean that imagining a traumatic event can change the way our brain perceives (imagines) it. In other words, imagined and real exposure may not be so different, and imagination could work just as well.

But what about in real-time? What about conquering real-time trauma, like the isolation and fear brought on by a pandemic, by accessing our imagination? It worked for me. This project is a testament to that. I changed, fundamentally, because of the pandemic, reclaimed my artist, got reacquainted with creativity, and reconnected to my inner-child. Now, if Dr. Malchiodi would just use this project as part of her research, we'd be in business!

I talk about my mental health a lot over the course of the All-American Ruins journey. In this episode of *abandoned: The All-American Ruins Podcast*, I dive into my own story a bit, mirrored by an imaginary character named Carl, who I met while exploring the abandoned Letchworth Village, a former psychiatric facility in Thiells, NY.

As we close part one and move into part two, the real fun part, I thought I'd leave you with this quote from Dr. Rafael Campo: "I have come to believe in the power of the imagination if not to cure, then to heal. The only way we can defy our own mortality is through acts of the imagination, by creating the stories and sculptures and paintings and poems that will outlast us, but that will always be animated by our will to have created them."

You ready to head out on our adventure? Great! We'll start with this quote from Mr. James Baldwin himself. While I'm not here to criticize America, I'm definitely here to ask a lot of questions. As I've been exploring the ruins of America, I started realizing that I was creating an alternative roadmap of the country I know and love, a blueprint of a country that didn't tell me the whole story in history class. I was told over and over that America was the greatest country in the world. Why, then, with every abandoned space I visited, did I find more holes in that grandiose statement?

Remember that second question I asked you to keep in mind? "What can we learn about American history, culture, and politics from the ruins of America?" In part two, I'm

going to guide you across seven states, through 12 locations, and we're to explore all sorts of topics. Let's go.

The first stop on our abandoned tour: New York! My home. The Empire State. I love it here. This is where the journey really started. I live in High Falls, the home of cement. That's right. Be jealous! But the county I live in, Ulster, alone, is littered in abandoned spaces. But we're going to start at the first abandoned space I visited when this all began: an abandoned air force base outside of Saratoga Springs.

In 1948 the United States Air Force greenlit the establishment of thirteen radar stations in the Northeastern United States. When the Korean War began, the Air Force received additional radar station support, and by 1952, the 656th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron was in business. Initially, the site operated as a Ground-Control Intercept and warning station, taking on the responsibility of guiding interceptor aircraft toward unidentified intruders that could potentially be picked up on the unit's radar scopes.

Now? It's a dumping ground - and when I visited, I was immediately flooded with stories my mom had shared from her childhood about the Cold War, air raids and ducking under desks, as if that was going to help. There was an old Buick that smelled like my father's Geo Metro from the early 1990s, and it was filled was trashbags and trashbags of - stuff. Remnants of human life. I was hooked!

The site closed in 1977, indefinitely, and has sat abandoned ever since. You can explore the complete site with me in the podcast episode from season one of *abandoned.*

We're going to head downstate in NY about three hours to Huguenot, NY, a hamlet in Orange County just north of Port Jervis, where we'll visit C&D Technologies.

From 1959 to 1970, this facility was owned and operated by the Empire Tube Company, a manufacturer of black and white television tubes. Hydrofluoric acid was used in the manufacturing process to remove carbon and potassium silicate from the inside of the tubes. During this period, industrial wastewater was discharged to a lagoon adjacent to the northeastern corner of the plant building.

C&D Technologies Incorporated operated at the facility manufacturing industrial lead batteries from the mid-1970s to 2006. From the mid-1970s until approximately 1982, C&D discharged non-contact cooling water into the lagoon.

The building was abandoned in 2006, with over 200 jobs being shipped off to Mexico.

When I first visited this site, I was immediately thrust into an Erin Brockovichian fantasy. The damage done to the environment for years and years, from multiple companies, really took me. This is one of two major industrial complexes in New York that I've visited over the course of my travels that are designated EPA cleanup sites. Not only does this site exist as a symbol of American capitalism gone awry and without regulation, it's also representative of how large corporations can get away with so much abuse to the environment. C&D was never held responsible for this cleanup; the taxpayer was.

Just up the road in Ellenville, NY is the abandoned, 550-acre resort the Nevele Grand Resort, part of the rich, rich history of this area of the country known as the Borscht Belt. But I'll let this video from the HUDSY series speak for itself.

[Play video clip.]

I hope you're starting to get a sense of what I mean by an alternative roadmap of America. I often find when I talk to friends about these particular places I just mentioned, they say, "Oh, yeah, I've driven by that. Never knew what it was." But if you look even a little bit closer, you start see that they paint a much different picture of American society than the one I think that we're fed in basic US history classes.

We're going to head over to Pennsylvania now, to another resort, the Penn Hills Resort in Analomink, PA. Situated in the Pocono Mountains, Penn Hills is also a massive sprawl that was billed as a couples' resort back in the day. But don't take my word for it.

Slide 37: [Play video clip.]

Something I forgot to mention is that I never do any historical research prior to an expedition to any given abandoned space. I like to enter with a blank slate, so that my imagination can create its own reality that I can then juxtapose to the facts. And the facts of Penn Hills sorta blew my mind.

Originally founded as a tavern in 1944, the resort grew over the years, hitting a boom with the explosion of tourism in the Poconos in the late 1970s through the early 1990s. By 2000s, the resort had run into disrepair, and Charles Paolillo, the owner who

inherited the resort from his parents, owed 1.1 million dollars in backtaxes, shuttering the resort suddenly in 2009. Many of the employees who worked there were never paid for their final months of work.

When I was there, I really got a sense of the early 1980s. Like this gas guide from 1982, or the disco ball in the basement club.

But when Ieft and watched that commercial, I was struck by a few things. One, that commercial wasn't meant for queer people. This was the beginning of the height of the AIDS crisis, and as a gay man, I noticed that there were no gay couples. That wasn't the culture. I also noticed there weren't any people of color in the commercial. It was a white space, though not designated as such.

However, it was this piece of graffiti that got me. I visited the site on January 2, 2021, four days before the insurrection. The Black Lives Matter movement had been going strong since early February 2020, having exploded the summer of 2020 when national tensions were at all-time high between communities of color and police.

I will remind you that I am not taking sides on anything. I'm simply stating that, contextually, at that moment during the pandemic, this whole experience really got me.

We're headed to middle America now, to the amazing Hough Bakery.

This one was interesting because the space had been repurposed a few times. Hough Bakeries was founded in 1903, initially as a family shop, and by 1952, it had evolved into a larger entity with several locations in and around the Cleveland area.

By 1992, Hough faced a host of losses, after refusing to modernize their operations. They filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in August of 1992.

As far as the repurposing goes, I couldn't quite figure it out. It looked like it had been parceled off for a pub/restaurant/club/lounge at one point: jukeboxes, two bars, a pool table, disco balls all sat in a portion at the backside of the complex.

I also believe it was a storage unit for Winkleman's, once a famed regional department store, now another defunct midwest company. They had all sorts of Winkleman's display cases.

What I loved about this space was how it represents the resilience of a community, despite clearly being ignored by and/or completely forgotten by the government. The entire neighborhood was decimated, many, many abandoned houses or squatter pads

surrounding the bakery. However, you could still see and feel the community resilience, just trying to get by.

This was also a special treat for me to visit because it was the first time I got to share my love of abandoned spaces with my boyfriend Jake. Jake is not the Teletubby in the filing cabinet.

Moving right along, we're going to fly all the way to the west coast to visit the great, green state of Oregon.

Something I think about a lot is how wasteful some of these spaces can be. The fact that there's a housing crisis - and the fact that there are so many empty buildings all across the country - is disturbing to me.

This space happened without my research. I love when that happens. It's the best kind of serendipity. This one in particular was special because it happened on a drive from Portland, where my mom lives, to Medford, where my brother lives.

What stuck out to me about the former Rock City Pizza and Amusements was the dialogue on child poverty it elicits. In its final form, the space above was remodeled into an apartment, and it was clear that at least one child, possibly more, lived there.

But what happened to them that all of this stuff was left? These are the moments when my imagination can take a dark turn. While I have no information to the whereabouts of the people who abandoned this apartment and everything inside, I know that something must've happened for them to up and discard an entire life.

I think this is one of my favorite images I've captured so far. I like it because of the "wake up" behind me. The idea of our country ascending out of its homelessness problem is important to me. Also, a total sidenote, on this particular trip, I ran into a man named Steez who was quite the character. He lived "off the grid," as he put it, in the foothills behind the space. I did one of the dumbest things I've ever done and gave him a ride back to his property.

Continuing down I-5 into southern California, we're going to take a trip back in time to 1979, when gas lines were long and Jimmy Carter warned folks about the crisis of confidence.

This space was mesmerizing to me and really brought me back to a moment in our country's history. I think about the 1979 gas lines a lot. My mom's vivid memory of them

makes me think about our current economy, the gas hikes, which ultimately sparks my mind to think about the war in Ukraine, Putin's grip on our nation, the military budget, etc. etc.

But I think what I really loved about this space was how still it felt. The desert is a healing environment, and this empty shell of a business in Cactus City, CA really centered and grounded me in a way that hadn't happened yet.

Despite the fact that it was right off the interstate, I still felt a stillness that was palpable and calming.

Apparently, this gas station is one of several buildings that were part of a failed roadside experiment, wherein one man bought up a bunch of property with the intent of turning it all into a tourist trap destination: motel, kitschy desert museum, diner. I think the other thing that really grabbed me in this space was how the desert was slowly but surely swallowing up the once-occupied business.

Alright. We're leaving the west coast behind and heading back to the east coast, closer to your neck of the woods, to Virginia, the eastern shores.

This one really blew my mind. I also happened upon it by accident, when I was driving back to New York from the Outer Banks.

These are the remains of Central Middle and High School. The property is currently owned by an artist and her two sons, but nothing has been done with it.

This art deco wonderland was partially funded by the Works Progress Administration, between 1932 and 1935.

It was abandoned in 2005 and subsequently placed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 2010. However, it's in serious disrepair, and fully accessible.

It was also the scariest place I'd visited up to that point, and not because it felt creepy or haunted, but because I fell through the floorboards of a second floor classroom, nearly plummeting all the way down into this bathroom on the first floor. Luckily, I caught myself on the support beams mid-fall and was able to hoist myself back up. Only my shoes were ruined. This space gave me pause and caused me to think about education in this country. The fact that this beautiful building was closed and all the kids who attended it moved to other schools in the general area made me sad, and it made me feel kinda

mad at the lack of access to equitable learning environments in so many places across the country.

I saved the best for last: we made it to North Carolina!

We're headed to the Outer Banks, one of the many goldmines of abandoned spaces in the country. After I got vaccinated, I took a week-long trip to NC, the first time I'd been since I was a kid when we visited my family in Asheville. This abandoned water park was one of several spaces I got to see while I was there, and again, it happened totally by accident.

Growing up, we had a waterpark in my hometown that was about the size of this one. Three slides, water balloon fight arena, go karts. It closed pretty early on, and when I went to Waterfall Park, I was immediately thrust back into my childhood and 90s culture.

I got to thinking about American Leisure and, like education, equitable access to spaces like this. Who are these kinds of spaces for? Are they truly built for everybody to enjoy?

Who are these kinds of spaces for? Are they truly built for everybody to enjoy? These are the questions I asked myself as I wandered around this place, abandoned in 2008 at the height of the housing crisis. These are the kind of anecdotes that, to me, showcase how these spaces represent an alternative history book to the one we've been given.

I also was able to use film photography here, and I captured some of my favorite photographs here.

I saved this space for our final venture, only because of its proximity to Raleigh: an abandoned house in the middle of the woods in Apex.

This was an extraordinary find. There were actually two houses on the property, and I couldn't locate a shred of information about them. You wouldn't know that they're there, despite the fact that they're sitting right on a pretty active county highway.

What got me about this one was the question that I kept asking: what family lived here? What is family? Why did they leave everything behind? Who is Susan?

And again, why are these two houses just sitting here empty while folks all over the country can't afford to pay their rent - or don't have a home at all?

With that, thank you for helping draw a new roadmap for the United States by going on this adventure across the country to the ruins of America. I hope it was invigorating and interesting.

I do want to mention that this presentation is done both virtually and in-person, so if you're from an organization who might find this interesting - or if you know somewhere who might want to book this work, feel free to have them reach out to me. I will be sending a follow-up email tomorrow, so you can definitely reach out to me there.

I'd love to keep you around! Get involved: follow me on IG or follow the blog on Medium, subscribe to the podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts, donate to HUDSY and watch the series, but most importantly, go use your imagination and let the world inspire you.

Before I take questions, I'd love to leave you with this quote from Dylan Thuras, the co-founder of Atlas Obscura: "There is no way to understate it: imagination is the totality of human existence."

STACEY: Thank all of you who joined us this evening. As Blake mentioned, tonight's program is being recorded and it, along with the video links that he mentioned earlier, will be sent out to everyone who registered for tonight's program, so you can check out all those great videos.

We hope to see you at our next adult program, History at High Noon, Hidden Beneath Their Waves. That is a hybrid program happening in person at the museum as well as here over Zoom, August 9th, 2023, starting at noon. Um, in the meantime, we hope that you all have a wonderful evening and we will see you soon, everybody.

Take care. Bye, guys.

BLAKE: If you're just tuning in for the first time, then again, welcome to *abandoned: The All-American Ruins Podcast.* The entire first season is available now, wherever you get your podcasts, and season 2 comes out this September. And speaking of September: for the first time, All-American Ruins will be doing a live show, in partnership with HUDSY and Atlas Obscura. We'll be producing a multimedia experience at Hudson House & Distillery in West Park, NY on Saturday, September 23. I would love for you to join us at this once-abandoned monastery that overlooks the gorgeous Hudson River. To learn more and purchase tickets, just go to allamericanruins.com or follow me on Instagram at @allamericanruins.

abandoned: The All-American Ruins Podcast
Season 1 - Bonus Episode
All-American Ruins @ North Carolina Museum of History
written by Blake Pfeil

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