he opening—or openings—of the new amusement park in Southern California did not go well. On July 13, a Wednesday, the day of a private thirtieth anniversary party for Walt and Lil, Mrs. Disney herself was discovered sweeping the deck of the riverboat Mark Twain as the first guests arrived for a twilight shake-down cruise. On Thursday and Friday, during gala pre-opening tributes to Disney film music at the Hollywood Bowl, workmen back in Anaheim, some twenty-three miles away, struggled to finish paving the streets that would soon lead to Fantasyland, Adventureland, Frontierland, and Tomorrowland; last-minute strikes had compelled the builders to haul in asphalt all the way from San Diego.

The invitation-only press preview and dedication, broadcast over a coast-to-coast TV hookup on July 17, was a disaster from start to finish. At dawn, with carpenters and plumbers still working against the clock, traffic on the freeway was backed up for seven miles, and gridlock prevailed on the secondary roads surrounding the former orange grove along Harbor Boulevard. Studio publicists had issued twenty thousand tickets to reporters, local dignitaries, Disney employees, corporate investors, and Hollywood stars—including Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds, Lana Turner, Danny Thomas (from the new television elite), and Frank Sinatra. But by mid-morning more than thirty thousand people were already packed inside the earthen
berm that was supposed to seal off Disney’s domain from the cares of the outside world. Some of the extra invitees flashed counterfeit passes. Others had simply climbed the fence, slipping into the park in behind-the-scenes spots where dense vegetation formed the background for a boat ride through a make-believe Amazon Jungle.2

Afterward, they called it “Black Sunday.” Anything that could go wrong did. The food ran out. A gas leak temporarily shut down Fantasyland, site of many of the twenty-two new Disney-designed rides the crowd had come to inspect. It was terribly hot, too. Main Street USA melted and ladies’ high heels stuck fast in the fresh asphalt. The nervous proprietor (who had spent the night in the park) accidentally locked himself in his apartment above the turn-of-the-century firehouse near the front gate. As the moment approached for the boss to welcome a vast, stay-at-home audience to his California kingdom through the magic of television, Walt Disney was nowhere to be found. And, somehow, ABC’s twenty-four live cameras managed to cover all the glitches: the women walking out of their high-heeled pumps; “Davy Crockett,” current star of Disney’s weekly television series, drenched by a hyperactive sprinkler system as he thrashed about on horseback in Frontierland’s western scenery; the regal Irene Dunne showering announcer Art Linkletter with glass and soda water while attempting to christen the Mark Twain on televised cue.3

Bob Cummings and Ronald Reagan shared the network hosting duties—and a whole range of maddening “technical difficulties”—with Linkletter. Three of TV’s most popular and experienced hosts, they handled the glitches with the improvisational aplomb that made live television so engaging to watch. The viewer became an insider who shared the announcer’s discomfort when audio and video transmissions winked on and off at will, or when the voice-over described Cinderella’s coach at the head of a passing parade while the picture on the small screen showed Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. At one point Linkletter strolled blithely through the portcullis of Sleeping Beauty’s Castle and emerged from the other side, seconds later, without his microphone. Walt Disney accidentally appeared on camera ahead of schedule, chatting with the crew and wondering aloud how the show was going.

The Dateline Disneyland special had “captured some fun and fantasy, the elements . . . that are supposed to make the place tick,” wrote the TV reviewer for the New York Times. But despite flashes of honest spontaneity, the tightly scripted ninety-minute program, like the whole Disneyland project, seemed to have serious flaws. It was entirely too Hollywood, according to the Times: slick, commercial, star-studded, glitzy. And too reverential, too much like the dedication of a national shrine. Bob Cummings, for instance, had repeatedly assured viewers that cultural history was being made out in Orange County before their very eyes: “I think that everyone here will one day be as proud to have been at this opening as the people who were there at the dedication of the Eiffel Tower!”

Park officials had no time to brood over iffy reviews. Monday morning and the real opening, for the general public, were less than

![Walt Disney faces the TV cameras outside Fantasyland. During the live broadcast on opening day, glitches were the rule.](image)
twelve hours off. A senior from Long Beach State College had stationed himself near the ticket window at 2 A.M. on Sunday, just as the last of the TV crews were leaving and the police began to report abnormal traffic volumes building along the periphery of Anaheim. By 8 A.M., two hours before the posted start of business, eight thousand merrymakers had already cued up behind the weary college kid and the hundred-acre parking lot was almost full. At 10 A.M. Walt Disney appeared and personally greeted the first two children in line. Although the little ones got all the media attention, however, the clear majority of those who followed Disney inside were grown-ups, determined to experience for themselves what they had seen on television the day before. They swarmed over the park, eating everything in sight, dropping garbage everywhere, nearly swamping the Mark Twain in their eagerness to board. But they came, they had a wonderful time, and in defiance of strong negative criticism from TV and travel writers, influential columnists, and itinerant intellectuals, they kept coming in enormous numbers, more than a million of them in the first seven weeks alone, exceeding all estimates and giving backers reason to believe their risky, $17 million investment might someday pay off.

Indeed, even before the previews began, speculation about costs and profits all but overshadowed discussion of the park’s entertainment value. And while the press did not fail to wax eloquent about chronic traffic tie-ups around Disneyland, most of the first-year complaints came down to dollars and cents. How could pleasure and the bottom-line ethos of corporate America possibly mix? “Walt’s dream is nightmare,” wrote one particularly disillusioned member of the fourth estate. “To me [the park] felt like a giant cash register, clicking and clanging, as creatures of Disney magic came tumbling down from their lofty places in my daydreams.” Other writers on assignment in the park agreed. To them, Disneyland was just another tourist trap—a bigger, pricier version of the Santa Claus villages and the seedy Storylands cast up by the postwar boom and the blandishments of the automobile industry. It was commercial, a roadside money machine, cynically exploiting the innocent dreams of childhood. On his second visit to the complex, a wire service reporter cornered Disney and asked him about his profit margin. Walt was furious. “We have to charge what we do because this Park cost a lot to build and maintain,” he barked. “I have no government subsidy.”

Middlebrows continued to carp about the potential profitability of Disneyland, as if capitalism and consumerism were unfamiliar concepts or as if Disney’s park, by virtue of its use of characters that all Americans knew and loved from his cartoon features and TV shows, ought to have been in the public domain—free or almost so, like an evening of television, a national park, or a national shrine. With few exceptions, highbrow critics of the 1950s despised Disneyland for similar reasons. Writing for the Nation, the novelist Julian Hadevy took exception to an enterprise that charged admission to visit ersatz places masquerading as the Wild West or the Amazon Basin. At Disneyland, he argued, “the whole world . . . has been reduced to a sickening blend of cheap commercial formulas packaged to sell.” In other words, the sin of commercialism was compounded by the fact
that Disney’s Amazon was not the real thing. Halevy deplored the empty lives of those who actually seemed to admire the small-screen illusion of “a papier-mâché crocodile” sinking beneath the Afro-Indo-Latin American waters of Adventureland. It was “a grim indictment of the way of life for which this feeble sham represented escape and adventure.” Alluding to the same specimens of Amazonian fauna, poet John Ciardi dubbed Disneyland “Foamrubbersville.”

Disneyland had its champions, too. The science fiction writer Ray Bradbury went to Disneyland in the company of the distinguished actor Charles Laughton (who later introduced Elvis Presley to America on Ed Sullivan’s Sunday night TV show). They both loved the place, as much for the fact that the robot crocodiles were made out of plastic as for any other reason. Compared with the genuine article—dangerous and often invisible to the tourists—the toothy Disney version was new and improved: tireless, predictable, and benign, the very ideal of croco-tude on a sparkling clean Amazon in Anaheim, California, adjacent to the freeway. Disney’s land as a whole was a lot like that plastic crocodile. It was utopian, perfected—or perfectible.

What is most important about the Laughton/Bradbury excursion to Disneyland, however, is the ripping good time the pair had “duck[ing] when pistols were fired dead-on at charging hippopotamuses, and bask[ing] face up in the rain as we sailed under Schweitzer Falls.” The Jungle Cruise was a visceral, sensual experience, like stepping, somehow, into the Technicolor confines of The African Queen and becoming a member of the cast, bound for some exotic coast in the company of Bogart and Hepburn.

In fact, the ride had been loosely based on the adventure described in that popular 1951 film and on its picturesque river craft. But, in the end, the matinee voyage and the Disneyland cruise were very different propositions. The movie, like all movies, was absolutely perfect: the actors, the director, and the editors reshot and tinkered until they got everything right. When The African Queen played in the neighborhood theater, filmgoers saw a finished work of art up there on the big screen—a moving picture, complete, remote, unreal, and detached from themselves despite the implicit intimacy of the darkened room. What Disney’s so-called Imagineers added to the film by transferring it in three dimensions to Anaheim was the missing quotient of “reality”: running water, gunshots, grinning crocodiles that swam and snapped their jaws to expose pointy plastic teeth. If there were no mosquitoes, no “Montezuma’s Revenge,” no accidental distractions from the narrative unfolding along the river, there was an abundance of convincing atmosphere to smell and to feel, dripping down one’s neck. The once-passive viewer now became an actor, a real-life participant “face up in the rain” as a rackety little boat plowed under Schweitzer Falls. It was better than the movies. More like watching TV, while making a snack and talking on the phone at the same time. But the Jungle Cruise was a lot more fun than that.

During the 1950s, Walt Disney often said that movies were beginning to bore him, because when they were done, they were done. Because it was real, Disneyland could never be completed. It was perfectible—and that was the challenge. That was the real fun. The intellectuals who hated Disneyland never reckoned with all that fun. Nor, it would seem, did they share in the genuine pleasure of being only slightly terrified by a plastic (not papier-mâché) crocodile on a nice, clean Amazon less than three feet deep. Whatever else it aspired to be, Disneyland was an amusement park, a place for good times, for the willing suspension of disbelief. It was not a zoo or a scientific expedition gone awry: it was a place where plastic crocodiles were better than live ones since half the fun came from noticing that the beasts were almost real, like fake mink coats, wood-grained plastic TV cabinets, or the plastic film that stuck to the front of the set and made the black-and-white picture look colored. The tension between perfection and reality, between the real and the more or less real, was the primary source of the visitor’s delight. The critics, undelighted, saw only plastic and profits in a society hopelessly corrupted by TV, suburbia, tail fins, and too few distinctions of caste and class. “Ours is not so much an age of vulgarity as of vulgarization,” wrote a bilious Louis Kronenberger on the decline of American culture in the 1950s: “Everything [is] tampered with or touched up, or adulterated and watered down, in an effort to make it palatable, an effort to make it pay.”

The public liked Disneyland anyway. On New Year’s Eve, 1957,
Disneyland, 1955

Despite many variations in detail, however, the meaning of the tale never varied. There were two crucial lessons to be learned from the “Daddy’s Day” narrative: the importance of family entertainment and the baleful condition of the old, Coney Island-style amusement park. “I would take them to the merry-go-round,” Walt Disney remembered, “and sit on a bench eating peanuts while they rode. And sitting there, alone, I felt that there should be something built, some kind of a family park where parents and children could have fun together.” There was a crying need for something new, he thought, “but I didn’t know what it was.”

The urge to build a new kind of family entertainment complex brought the two divergent sides of Disney’s personality together for the first time. The Walt Disney of the big, looping signature was the

TV was a family affair in the early 1950s. Like Disneyland, Howdy Doody was a merchandising triumph.

attendance reached the 10 million mark. Statistics further indicated that a hefty 40 percent of the guests had come from outside California, most of them by car. If the interstate highway system and the habit of driving long distances to work and playgrounds were major factors in its success, the outing in the family car was also a key element in the creation story Disney always used to explain how he came to build America’s first theme park. In a series of 1956-57 Saturday Evening Post articles published under the name of his eldest daughter, it all began with “Daddy’s Day,” those spare afternoons when a busy father found time to take his two little girls to the zoo or the merry-go-round in Griffith Park. Other anecdotes found the trio bound for some kiddieland or a Ma-and-Pa amusement park on La Cienega Boulevard. The car of the 1950s was a family car. The freeway and the automobile were basic to the success of Disney’s plan for Disneyland.
youngest of the Hollywood moguls, a busy studio head. But he was a family man, too: a typical Los Angeles commuter, a suburbanite with a comfy, unpretentious new house in Holmby Hills. What was not typical was the backyard, where Disney had a ride-on steam train and his daughters played in a cunning replica of the dwarfs’ cottage from *Snow White*, complete with picket fence and gingerbread gables, built by the studio shop as a present for Diane and her sister, Sharon. Here, in his own backyard, in the expanding leisure hours that had suddenly become a factor in the life of the nuclear family, the interests of the businessman and the father began to converge. Compared with the average, seedy kiddieland, the Disney garden suggested that he could probably do a vastly superior job of promoting weekend togetherness.\(^{11}\)

While Disney’s interest in family activities began in the 1940s and anticipated the concept by a decade or more, the name for shared parenting and the lifestyle it promoted, or “togetherness,” was coined by *McCall’s* in the 1954 Easter issue and became the rallying cry of a moral crusade endorsed by anxious editors, clergymen, and advertisers.\(^{12}\) Togetherness legitimated the new, postwar suburban family—affluent, isolated, reared on a bland diet of TV and TV dinners—by stressing the compensatory benefits of a greater paternal role in the household. Togetherness made fathers into full domestic partners with their wives and provided a healthy male influence in the formation of young psyches. Togetherness meant, in effect, that Daddy occasionally changed diapers, helped with the shopping and the vacuuming, and took charge of the kids on Saturday or Sunday afternoons. And whatever its erotic burden of ornamental chrome, the gigantic American automobile of the 1950s was as large as it was because it was a *family car*, perfect for outings with Daddy at the wheel, Mommy right beside him, and the children squealing with anticipation in the spacious backseat. We’re going to Disneyland!

The car offered freedom, “freedom to come and go as we please in this big country of ours,” as a Ford ad of the 50s put it. It also liberated the family from the conformity of the suburb, from rows of almost identical houses, rigid social rituals, unspoken rules of conduct for the weekend barbecue, and written rules governing the proper trimming of lawns.\(^{13}\) The car allowed the family to escape the pressures of modern times: out there, on the freeway, it was still possible to play the part of the pioneer, headed bravely off into that unknown America of the presuburban past, in search of adventure and self-exploration. The automobile let the family outrun its fears of recession, of a sudden end to the prosperity of big cars and weekend fun—or its countervailing fears of prosperity and the soulless materialism of which American were so often accused by their intellectual betters.

Early visitors to Disneyland seem not to have noticed any correlation between driving to the park and what they did when they got there. But, mainly, they went for another long ride: on the old-fashioned steam railroad, circling the grounds; on the Model-T-era fire
trucks and the horse-drawn trolleys along Main Street; on the Mark Twain, coursing through Frontierland; on the Jungle Cruise though Adventureland; on Tomorrowland’s rocket to the moon; on the pretty carousel in the middle of Fantasyland. Eschewing conventional shows and walk-through attractions, Disneyland was premised on vehicles, many of them designed to conjure up a faraway, long-ago world of adventure and restless freedom. In 1971 the design historian Reyner Banham became the first to posit that what happened inside Disneyland bore a direct relationship to what was going on outside the gates. Disney’s park stood in a suburb of Los Angeles and in that particular environment, Banham concluded, “Disneyland offers illicit pleasures of mobility. Ensconced in a sea of giant parking-lots in a city devoted to the automobile, it provides transportation that does not exist outside—steam trains, monorails, people-movers . . . not to mention pure transport fantasies such as simulated space-trips and submarine rides.”

For Walt Disney and his fellow commuters, Disneyland’s rides made a daily chore into a treat by isolating and emphasizing the pleasurable aspects of driving. What was a metaphoric escape on the freeway, for instance, became a real or almost real escape aboard the E. P. Ripley, the first steam locomotive put into service on the Santa Fe and Disneyland Railroad that circled the park. In a society in which the ticket to adulthood was the driver’s license, the Disneyland transportation system permitted regression to childhood through the simple expedient of inviting grown-ups to be passengers, free to daydream and gaze at the scenery. And the destinations were no longer the office, the shopping center, or some sleazy little amusement park. Disney’s boats and trains went instead to the places of the heart, to a happy past, to memories and dreams of a perfect childhood.

Mrs. Disney believed that Disneyland sprang directly from her husband’s lifelong obsession with the Santa Fe Railroad. The main line ran through his boyhood hometown, Marceline, Missouri, on its way to Kansas City and distant California. As a youngster, Walt Disney had worked as a news- and candy-butcher on the train; he later claimed that he’d invented Mickey Mouse in a westbound Pullman car out of Chicago, somewhere between Toluca, Illinois, and La Junta, Colorado. When financial worries brought him to the brink of nervous breakdown in 1931, he boarded the Santa Fe for a therapeutic trip. In the late 1940s the doctors suggested more time away from the office. A hobby, perhaps. So Walt Disney built a one-eighth-scale railroad on the canyon side of his own backyard at 355 Carolwood Avenue in Holmby Hills, between Bel Air and Beverly Hills. The project grew out of his work. One of the most engaging characters in Dumbo, a full-length Disney animated feature released in 1941, was “Casey, Jr.,” a determined little engine. While Dumbo was still on the drawing boards, animator Ward Kimball bought a full-size 1881 min-
Walt Disney was America's best-known hobbyist. The Carolwood-Pacific Railroad, in his new suburban backyard, was a key prototype for Disneyland.

Disney eventually recouped part of the cost of the work done on that first engine by selling duplicate sets of the scale drawings to eager hobbyists. Kimball and Johnston were avid railfans who collected railroad memorabilia in addition to building models and restoring old trains. This widespread interest in a vanishing industry in the 1940s and 50s was an aspect of a broader concern with "Americana," or not-impossibly-old antiques and commercially made collectibles for every pocketbook. These new antiques gave mobile Americans a sense of rootedness; hobbies and crafts also attached leisure activity firmly to the den or the basement workshop of the family home. With his own daughters approaching the stage of roving adolescence, Disney frequently tried to justify his own train set on the grounds that it would keep the girls and their friends close to home. But the distaff side of the family proved indifferent to his hobby and the Carolwood-Pacific line instead served to keep Walt Disney at home.

He invested time and money lavishly in the railroad, relocating power lines and organizing parties geared exclusively to riding the rails. With his own hands he built the little freight cars (one ride-on passenger per car) and a caboose (fitted out with miniature bunks and newspapers printed to scale) in a trackside workshop that was a precise replica of the barn on his father's forty-eight-acre farm back in the Linn County, Missouri, of his boyhood. The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan maintains that the planned and planted garden—or backyard—is, by its very essence, a statement about the dominance of the human personality over nature. The garden imposes order on chaotic natural growth; in that one place, the householder tames and subdues the primal forces of growth, death, and regeneration, the forces of time itself. The suburbanite understands the war against crabgrass in these terms. With twenty-six hundred feet of railroad track circling his backyard, Walt Disney was likewise able to control his environment, and to travel back into a rural childhood perfected by memory. He could make his cartoons come to hissing, chugging, three-dimensional life. Bedeviled by the vagaries of business at the office, here at home Disney was at last firmly in control. Perched atop the cab of a one-eighth-scale steam engine modeled after the Southern Pacific's old Number 173, Walt Disney was master of all that he surveyed, the engineer of his own destiny, firmly in charge of his future and of his own miniaturized and idealized past.

Ollie Johnston saw a direct connection between the Carolwood-
Pacific and the genesis of the park in Anaheim. "The next thing you know, Walt was thinking about putting a railroad around here, at the Studio," he argued. First, Disney talked about buying some used engines that had come on the market. "Then he got to thinking there wasn't enough room here and before long there was a Disneyland."

But the Chicago Railroad Fair of 1948 was the crucial event that linked the model train to a new kind of themed amusement park in Walt Disney's own mind. The trip to Chicago was part of Disney's prescribed regimen of relaxation. Told to get away from the studio completely, he decided to go to Chicago with Ward Kimball to see what was being billed as a once-in-a-lifetime display of rolling stock and memorabilia in Burnham Park. And when the two train buffs boarded a passenger coach to start their adventure, they discovered that the president of the Santa Fe had left an open invitation to join the engineer in the cab. "I had never, ever seen [Walt] look so happy," Kimball said.17

The Railroad Fair was sponsored by thirty-eight major American carriers, including the Santa Fe. Ostensibly it honored the centenary of the first steam locomotive to enter Chicago, the nation's greatest rail center. A replica of that first station was built on the fairgrounds. Mrs. Casey Jones, widow of the legendary engineer, rode in the opening day parade. But the Railroad Fair was not an idle exercise in nostalgia. Despite the plethora of railroad relics, the fair was held to drum up business and investment capital for modern-day lines hard hit by competition from cars and planes and burdened with an inventory of equipment all but worn out by hard use during World War II. "Few railroads could sell stock today," the trade journal Railway Age admitted as the $2 million extravaganza geared up for the summer on the site of the 1933-34 Century of Progress Exposition. Indeed, the fair took on something of the futuristic flavor of its predecessor, with displays of rolling stock of the 1950s and 60s, including various sleek, domed passenger cars and the Chesapeake and Ohio's mysterious "X" train, designed to compete with the airlines at speeds approaching 150 miles per hour.18

But for every train of tomorrow showcased in Chicago in 1948, there were dozens from yesterday. A retrospective mood prevailed by careful design. Statisticians had calculated the number of active railroad model makers at 100,000; most of them were steeped in the arcana of railroad lore, as were the many thousands more who collected "railroadiana," took pictures of rare and unusual sights at trackside, and went on trips under steam power. The total annual investment of these hobbyists was more than $10 million, and organizers of the Chicago Fair were eager to tap their interest, enthusiasm, and goodwill. Besides, as one optimistic rail executive put it, there really were 144 million train buffs in the United States—everybody who had ever dreamed of adventure when a whistle pierced the silence of the night or thought of heading out to L.A. for a fresh start aboard the Santa Fe California Limited.19

The fairgrounds were full of old engines. It was the manner in
which they were presented, however, that would prove germinal for Disneyland. First, the area was dominated by a working narrow-gauge railroad that separated the exposition from the rest of Burnham Park, as the peripheral rail line at Disneyland would later divide the amusement park from the outside world. Chicago's six-car Deadwood Central was also an important means of moving from one exhibit to another in an environment that made no allowance for the automobile. Second, many of the exhibits re-created in atmospheric detail some exotic vacation spot best reached by train. Leisure, or travel for pleasure and recreation: this was the niche the American railroad was attempting to carve out for itself in Chicago through displays that included a real working dude ranch, transported to the site piece by piece; a mechanical recreation of Yellowstone's Old Faithful that erupted every fifteen minutes (the original went off once an hour) for the convenience of sightseers with other attractions to visit; and scenic slices of the French Quarter, an Indian Village, and a sandy beach on Florida's Gulf Coast. “Villages” like these were not new to big expositions. Since the nineteenth century, communities of Philippine tribesmen, native Americans, and other picturesque peoples had been a regular feature of world’s fairs, along with reproductions of historic buildings. Chicagoans were quick to compare the scenic bits at the 1948 fair with the popular Belgian Village built for the Century of Progress Exposition fifteen years earlier. In fact, the Railroad Fair occupied the portion of the old exposition layout once devoted to the Alpine Village, the Hawaiian Village, the Spanish Village, a Mayan temple, and a replica of Fort Dearborn. What was different about the Railroad Fair was the coherence and concentration of the experience—the sensation of having dropped in on most of the nation’s beauty spots in a single day via a magical train.

Reality rarely intruded. Even dining was apt to be part of the illusion of being in Yellowstone or the Southwest. Thus it was possible to have lunch served by a cowhand from the business end of a chuckwagon and dinner in the dining car of a Rock Island streamliner fitted out as a Mexican hacienda staffed by grandees in appropriate costume. “By dramatizing, . . . by making every exhibit a novelty in entertainment as well as education,” the New York Times remarked, “the railroads have graphically driven home a realization of how much they mean to our national economy.”

Although their success in conveying economic data remains arguable, the railroads did make the American scene come alive to the senses. All that was missing was a narrative that tied the stops on the Deadwood Central together: the beach, the Old West, the Vieux Carré, and the transportation technology of the future.

Walt Disney himself became part of the story line supplied by a four-times-a-day play—Wheels A-Rolling—enacted by moving locomotives. Spectators sat in a grandstand facing a pair of tracks framed by huge concrete wings, and watched as engines puffed into view and actors stepped down to mime famous tableaux from railroad history, including the passage of Lincoln’s funeral train. Dressed as a passenger, in a tall hat and frock coat, Disney played in “a Harvey House scene” depicting a dinner stop at one of Fred Harvey’s turn-
of-the-century hotels on the Santa Fe route. Designed to encourage rail tourism by providing intriguing destinations for passengers, Harvey Houses used pseudo-southwestern architecture, menus, and gift shops to create an all-encompassing atmosphere of authenticity, like that of the Railroad Fair. Replicas offered predictable quality, safety, and every civilized amenity; dining became an unscripted play, with the tourist-tenderfoot in the starring role. Walt Disney’s inclusion in the cast of eight hundred as an actor and sometime engineer was one of the high points of his life. And all the way home, he talked to Kimball about building an amusement park. “Disneyland was already forming in his mind. Of course, he thought [it] should have an almost full-sized steam train that . . . he could have fun operating himself on days when the park was closed.”

As it was finally built, six years later, Disneyland owed a great deal to the Chicago Railroad Fair. The Santa Fe and Disneyland Railroad that defined the boundaries of the park. The separate “lands,” each with a historic or geographic theme and costumed attendants. Even the kinds of places and concepts singled out for special treatment by the fair’s planners—the Wild West, the technological future of railroading, tropical Florida, the age of steam—bore more than a passing resemblance to the constituent parts of Disneyland, from Main Street USA to Tomorrowland. Only Fantasyland was not taken from the prototype. And finally, although Disney did include a Tomorrowland that corresponded to the finale of the Chicago railroad pageant, when trains of the future finally glided into view, the real emphasis in both venues fell on the past—on a culture of railroading that the automobile had all but eradicated. Disneyland would preserve places out of time, bypassed forever by the interstates. Disneyland would have bustling towns, each one with a depot, but no suburbs, no carports. And there were only two ways to reach those pretty little cities: on foot, or aboard an obsolete, doomed-to-destruction railroad train. In that sense, Disneyland was a tacit protest against modern America, on the wrong side of the tracks, to which Walt Disney consigned the cars and the parking lots. Disneyland was old-fashioned and urban. It was everything that L.A. was not.

What L.A. was, according to Disney’s own testimony in the late 1940s, was dull, a place sorely in need of a tourist attraction for the star-struck: “People come to Hollywood and find there’s nothing to see” But what tour-bus stops did exist also influenced the character of Disneyland. There was Olvera Street, a permanent version of a world’s fair “village” constructed in the old historic heart of Los Angeles in 1929 as a Mission-period pedestrian mall, lined with more than seventy shops and cantinas. From the 1920s through the Depression era, the Spanish Colonial style of Olvera Street adorned local buildings that dramatized tourist fantasies associated with the good life in California. Union Station, the amusement piers near Naples and Santa Monica, and movie palaces like the famous Carthay Circle (where Snow White premiered): all were lustily Spanish in flavor and denied humdrum reality by translating life as it was lived in California into fabulous, make-believe settings. The pleasures of shopping and dining were particularly susceptible to this architectural masquerade. The 1934 Farmers’ Market, one of Walt Disney’s favorite weekend haunts, was a let’s-pretend midwestern farmscape beneath a windmill. Crossroads of the World on Sunset Boulevard, completed...
in 1936, invited shoppers to browse through stores housed in a half-timbered Shakespearian village, a lighthouse, and a ship, in addition to the usual early California presidio.

In its upscale manifestations, the architecture of illusion often parted car and driver. The buildings of the past stood for pre-automotive behavior associated with the luxury, ease, and sensuality of premodern times. To shop at Crossroads of the World was to buy the joy of free, unhurried time, the bliss of walking through unfamiliar townscape, pausing to savor the sensual delights of touch, sight, and smell—or precisely what Disneyland would offer the masses in 1955. But the downscale version of such fantasy architecture—drive-in restaurants shaped like giant shoes or derby hats—could be seen on almost any Los Angeles street corner during the years when Disney was beginning to dream of an alternative to conventional amusement park and city alike. Aldous Huxley, who would soon write the first draft of the script for Disney's 1951 *Alice in Wonderland*, described a typical Los Angeles suburb as a succession of implausible villas in which “Gloucester followed Andalusia and gave place to Touraine and Oaxaca, Dusseldorf and Massachusetts.”

History had no dominion over such a world. Time was contingent and malleable. Without a past firmly situated in relationship to the future, there were no beginnings or endings. No death. Storybook architecture rewrote the story of the human condition in California, the Golden State of perpetual youth. Although some commentators have attributed the imaginative vernacular of Los Angeles to sheer, sun-drenched hedonism, most critics see a connection between make-believe architecture and the movie industry. “Motion pictures have undoubtedly confused architectural tastes,” wrote the California architect Richard Neutra in 1941. “They may be blamed for . . . half-timber English peasant cottages, . . . Arabian minarets, and Georgian mansions on 50 x 120 foot lots with ‘Mexican Ranchos’ adjoining them on sites of the same size.” Neutra’s target was the suburbs of Los Angeles but he could just as well have been describing Walt Disney’s plans for a little park adjacent to his own backlot property in Burbank.

Public interest in the backlots of the major studios was intense throughout the 1930s and 40s. Where did the moving pictures come from? Was this the place? The Disney studio was besieged with requests for tours. But Walt Disney thought that watching animators bent over drawing boards would bore the tourists silly. They wanted a taste of Hollywood razzle-dazzle and magic, not tedious work. They wanted to be a part of the faraway times and places that came to life on the screen. They wanted to be part of the illusion. So when Walt Disney built a new studio in Burbank in 1939-40, he began to think of ways to make the standard Hollywood studio tour more engaging. The first detailed plans for Disneyland coincide, in fact, with the move to Burbank and mandate that a “magical little park” of eight acres be set aside for guests. By 1948, and a detailed in-house memo about the projected park, the concept of theming was already in place, along with a train, a stern-wheeler, a railroad station, a false-fronted Western street, a carnival section with the “typical Midway stuff,” and an
old-fashioned townscape that sounded a lot like Anaheim's future Main Street USA.

"The Main Village, which includes a Railroad Station, is built around a village green. . . . It will be a place for people to sit and rest." And there was more: a quaint commercial district with a bookshop and a toyshop and a "restaurant for birthday parties." Linked to the rough-and-tumble attractions of the Western and carnival zones by a variety of trolleys and surreys, Main Village was meant for leisurely strolling and sitting in the shade. It was Olvera Street with an Americana veneer, the pedestrian shopping mall with a touch of fantasy, a whole streetful of backlot, Los Angeles eccentricities of architecture, a model railroad layout enlarged to usable scale. But none of it impressed the Burbank City Council. Ignoring the emphasis on the family, council members quailed at the thought of "the carny atmosphere in Burbank." The acreage was swallowed up by the Ventura Freeway and Disney went back to tinkering with his trains and models.29

His pastimes and his plans for the park had become increasingly difficult to separate, in any case. One of the most significant ingredients in the evolving Disneyland of the early 1950s was a plan for a walk-through museum of automata—moving, miniature scenes from his own films and American history—built by Walt Disney himself. A longtime collector of mechanical toys, Disney had already decided to make them in 1951, when he ran into the illustrator Harper Goff in a model train shop in London and told him he wanted to create a touring exhibit called Walt Disney's America, to teach youngsters about history. Renamed Disneylandia, the project consisted of twenty-four peep-show scenes of salient moments in the American past enlivened by little figures that could actually talk and move. Goff and one of the studio artists were to paint the scenes in great detail, à la Norman Rockwell. Then Disney would go home and build them to scale in his workshop, with some help from company mechanics. "I'm going to do something creative myself," he told an associate, "I want you to draw scenes of life in an old Western town. . . . I'll carve the figures and make the scenes in miniature. When we get enough of them made, we'll send them out as a traveling exhibit."30 In the end, Disneylandia was abandoned: the tiny size of the figures made them
It was hard to operate and, at a quarter a head, it would be hard to recover costs. But the idea was folded into the master plan for an amusement park. Disneyland eventually spawned the slithering plastic crocodiles of Adventureland and the flying sprites of Fantasyland.

In The Lonely Crowd, a study of the changing American character published in 1950, David Riesman and his collaborators took up the subject of hobbies. The intensity with which the average, middle-class American pursued after-hours woodcarving or outdoor cooking or model making initially puzzled the sociologists because such private interests seemed at odds with the "outer-directed" personality demanded by the times. The "outer-directed" corporate man took his social cues from those around him and remained "a lonely member of the crowd because he never really comes close to . . . himself," the book concluded. But the use of leisure for craftsmanlike activities by nine-to-five conformists seemed anomalous, an expression of autonomy and individual competence that ran counter to the workday norm. In such moments of basement tinkering, the Riesman team suggested, the hobbyist "can often rediscover both his childhood and his inner-directed residues by serious craftsmanship." To make a model—in the case of Disneyland, to recreate the Marceline, Missouri, of a turn-of-the-century boyhood—was to return to those happy, bygone times as a competent adult. To make a model was to construct or reconstruct one's own biography. To make a model of an ideal past was to reject an imperfect present.

In Disneyland, the present—suburban reality, 1955-style—was abandoned in the parking lot, along with the family car. Although ticket buyers would ultimately face a choice between Fantasyland, Frontierland, Adventureland, and Tomorrowland, they were first forced to negotiate a common entranceway defined by the architectural and technological symbolism of an American past that coincided with Walt Disney's own. Here, too, his hobbies displaced the realities of the workplace on a scale that demanded the same "inner-directed" ethos of others. Everybody walked under the railroad tracks and past the station where the old steam locomotive chuffed to a halt. Everybody walked down Main Street USA, under its gingerbread cornices, past windows bearing the names of Disney's father and his friends inscribed in gilded letters. It was a working model of Marceline, Missouri, calibrated to the scale of his backyard locomotive.

When measured drawings of that little train were being enlarged to adapt it to Disneyland, the designers determined that a six-foot doorway was just right for a passenger car. As the little freight stations and villages on a railroad layout beneath a Christmas tree are proportional to the engine they accompany, so everything in Disneyland was calibrated from the basic module of the door in the passenger car. "It's not apparent to a casual glance that this street is only a scale model," Disney stated, pointing at the Italianate storefronts that stretched away toward Sleeping Beauty's Castle. "We had every brick and shingle and gas lamp made 7/8 of true size." Actually, it was more
complicated. Like the clever set decorators they were, Disney's "Imagineers" built Main Street in forced perspective, with the upper stories much smaller than the lower ones, giving the impression of diminution by distance while keeping the overall height of the cornice lines suburban, unthreatening, and low. The ground floor, in each case, is seven-eighths the size of a "real" turn-of-the-century commercial structure; the second story is five-eighths scale (also used for the various trains and boats); but the top story is only one-half as large as its generic prototypes.

Along with Levittown and places like it, the dimensions of Main Street USA answered Lewis Mumford's call for a postwar "return to the human scale" that made neighborliness and intimacy possible. Main Street was the city's opposite, the antonym of the corporate skyscraper. Its size domesticated, its atmosphere comfy and benign, Main Street evoked the mood of Disney's own small-town movies of the period and the front-porch television tradition that began with *Father Knows Best* in 1954. On Main Street, the grown-up suddenly became a kid again—a Bud or a Betty from TV's fictional Springfield, USA. Main Street's scale captured what most adults experienced when they returned to their hometowns and noticed how small, how toylike the cherished places of childhood had become. Built from the blueprint of memory, Main Street was capable of shrinking the past, stripping away the nasty facts of yesterday—the hardships, the grime, the business failures of Walt's own father—and exalting instead the positive values that recollection had burnished to a golden luster. Main Street was a plaything, a dream at naptime, a TV sitcom better than reality had ever been.

Disney's make-believe Main Street shared much common ground with 1950s suburbia: the sense of uniformity, order, community, and safety, a sort of smiling "I Like Ike" friendliness conveyed by each perky awning. But as a model community, Main Street also stood in obvious contrast to the American city from which the suburbanite had fled. People-sized, organized around the meanderings of pedestrians, it revealed its deepest meaning by its opposition to Los Angeles and to the creeping steel-and-concrete urbanism outside the park. Perhaps, then, Main Street was the real national Fantasyland, since Los Angeles and its environs in 1955 constituted the future that had already come to pass for small-town America. Or perhaps, secure from bulldozers and the ravages of urbanization, it was a compensatory monument to Marceline, Anaheim, and all the other vanished Main Streets of the postwar era. Southern Californians, according to one trenchant social commentator struggling to make sense of Disneyland's popularity, habitually "imagine ivy-covered, leaf-strewn squares, and villages clustered around white frame New England churches, and, lacking them in reality, create them in plastic towns to which they go to find themselves." The architect Charles Moore has called Main Street the town square of Los Angeles, an environment of polity otherwise missing from the 1950s city of freeways and housing tracts: "In an unchartable sea of suburbia, Disney has created a place, indeed a whole public world, full of sequential occurrences
... and big and little drama. ... [E]verything is as immaculate as in the musical-comedy villages that Hollywood has provided for our viewing pleasure for the last three generations."

Because Main Street USA was built by filmmakers, not by architects, its appearance was calibrated to achieving a desired emotional effect. Form followed function—or script—unashamedly, as it often does in commercial, roadside architecture. "What is Main Street?" asked the Manhattan developer Mel Kaufman after a pilgrimage to Disneyland. "It is an ordinary shopping center where they sell souvenirs, film, ... ice cream, have a movie house—all functioning as would any ordinary shopping center. Except for one thing. It's a stage set of Main Street circa 1900." It was no ordinary shopping center, to be sure, but Main Street USA was a working commercial district that looked backward to Los Angeles's Olvera Street and forward to Victor Gruen's Southdale, the first fully enclosed suburban mall, which opened in Minneapolis in 1956. Indeed, Main Street was a mall in its own right, since the disposition of the interior space permitted free movement from one shop to another along the entire length of a block. So, by virtue of the controlling position of Main Street in the layout of the park, shopping became a key motif in the iconographic structure of Disneyland. On the one hand, the psychology of the place made for low sales resistance. "Unlike in society's modern cities," a Disney planner boasted, "they drop their defenses [here]. . . . Actually, what we're selling is reassurance." On the other hand, while the ambience created enormous profits, it also exalted the central act of street-corner capitalism—the buying and selling of consumer goods, which went on at a frantic pace behind the lovely facades of what amounted to antique shops in reverse: old-fashioned stores stocked with the latest in Mickey Mouse Club memorabilia. Period decor legitimated consumption by equating the business of Main Street USA with the historical fiber of the nation. Main Street celebrated the pleasures of exuberant postwar consumerism.

A Colonial Williamsburg or a Greenfield Village adapted to the social climate of the 1950s, Main Street USA affirmed that the good life—utopia—was American and middle class: neat, tidy, entrepreneurial. The rest of Disneyland, to which that thoroughfare led,
Up above the shops on Main Street, the windows were adorned with the names of Disney friends and associates, in a kind of architectural autobiography. Elias Disney was Walt's father.

represented a world view grounded in the values of Main Street. Frontierland set forth the story of how the West was made safe for homesteaders—and future suburbanites with ranch houses. Adventureland appropriated the Third World and untamed nature to serve as the new frontiers (and boutiques) of the present, while a high-tech Tomorrowland, full of corporate logos and intent on the conquest of space, was the profitable frontier of the future. As for Fantasyland, its flirtations with the dark and irrational realm of fairytales only served to affirm the ideological clarity with which the progress of the American adventure, from cowboy to astronaut, was described elsewhere in nuances of architecture, cuisine, and gift-shop souvenirs. But Main Street USA remained the allegorical touchstone for this “Disneyized” history of Cold War America. “It is what America was,” writes the cultural geographer Richard Francaviglia, “and provides the bedrock security for what is to be.” And so a powerful dramatization of history and destiny, a story geared to the 1950s, arose directly from Walt Disney’s own childhood memories. In an act of almost stupefying self-assurance, he made himself—his life, his hobbies, his movies, his TV show—the objective correlative for a whole culture, past, present, and future. In the words of a promotional brochure for the park, “Disneyland reflects Walt’s personal experiences, his dreams, his ambitions and special interests which are universal interests.”

If not universal, these interests were well known to most Americans through the medium of film. Main Street USA pushed to the foreground the scenic backgrounds of Lady and the Tramp (released when Disneyland opened in July 1955). Fantasyland brought back Tinker Bell, Snow White, Pinocchio, and Alice, stars of animated features based on children’s classics. Adventureland alluded to Disney’s recent True-Life Adventure series of nature documentaries. Tomorrowland, the least developed of the quadrants in 1955, was based on the 1954 film 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, a live-action sci-fi thriller loaded with special effects. Hence the characters and themes of Disneyland—or most of them—were familiar to adults who had grown up with Disney cartoons and were now, as parents, taking their own kids to see the latest from the same studio. Everybody knew Disneyana, if not from those movies, then from the products related to them: the books, watches, lamps, toys, clothing, and novelty items—even a line of canned foods marketed under the Donald Duck label. In a pluralistic society, where experiences of church, school, ethnicity, and the like were not apt to be universally shared, Disney motifs constituted a common culture, a kind of civil religion of happy endings, worry-free consumption, technological optimism, and nostalgia for the good old days.

In sheer size, Disneylands’s sets invited comparison with those created for the inflated “spectaculars” through which Hollywood in the 1950s hoped to recoup profits lost to television. There was one important difference: Disneyland was a set for a movie that would be made
only in the mind of the visitor. Turned loose on an ersatz set, the visitor became a temporary Hollywood insider, privy to the secrets of the giant screen. But the intimacy of the backlot also made it the perfect setting for TV and its small-screen revelations of what went on behind the scenes. Walt Disney’s first television show, a 1950 “special” broadcast on Christmas afternoon by NBC, made a vast family audience familiar with the doings in his studio during the making of Alice in Wonderland. One Hour in Disneyland also gave viewers a look at the Disney family: Diane and Sharon, then high schoolers, appeared with their father. The formula proved so successful that Disney offered another insider’s peek at moviemaking in 1951.38

Television was the family entertainment medium of choice in the isolated, gadget-happy ranch houses of suburbia, and the commercial benefits of luring those families back to the movie houses with free previews of forthcoming films were enormous. “That telecast should be worth $1 million at the boxoffice to Alice in Wonderland,” wrote one TV columnist after the first Christmas program aired. But despite its appeal to the swelling postwar middle class, old-line Hollywood moguls and highbrows alike considered television an enterprise of dubious artistic and intellectual merit. The first major producer to join forces with the networks, Disney incurred the wrath of other studio heads bent on ignoring the competition or fighting a losing battle against “the idiot box.” His espousal of TV—his intuitive grasp of the potential for profit—gave Disney’s critics another reason to consign him to the ranks of the philistines. His sheepish defenders, on the other hand, put forth the curious argument that Disney “demonstrated . . . his inherent contempt for the medium” by using television to create a market for his films—and for Disneyland.39

In the early 1950s the Disneyland concept was in trouble. Within the company, Walt Disney had found little support for what many believed to be an excursion into honky-tonk. The planning process continued only because he paid for the work out of his own pocket. And when he approached would-be backers with his idea for a form of participatory entertainment at the furthest remove from television, the business community was inclined to believe rumors that Disney
was not quite himself. TV was his last hope. Walt Disney Productions would crank out the weekly series the networks had been angling for in return for heavy cash investments and loan guarantees to see the park through to completion. A written prospectus and a portfolio of Disney site drawings were prepared in a single, frantic weekend, and in late September of 1953 Walt's brother, Roy, went to New York to strike a deal. On April 2, 1954, it was formally announced that ABC—the struggling "third" network—had landed Walt Disney and that Disney, as part of the package, was going to build some sort of "film production center" patterned after the picturesque villages in his movies. The TV show and the center were both called Disneyland.40

Disneyland, the weekly series, premiered in October of 1954. It played on Wednesday nights at 7:30, the children's hour, and within three months it had reached the top ten. Disneyland became a family institution: homework was deferred; sales of TV dinners soared. In Walt Disney's own mind and in its televised format, the popular program was not easily distinguishable from the project now under construction in Anaheim. "I saw that if I was ever going to have my park," he admitted, "here . . . was a way to tell millions of people about it—with TV."41 And so, every week, the program format introduced the audience to the principal themes of the park. One Wednesday, the topic would be Fantasyland, with the content made up of clips from animated films. Adventureland evenings recorded footage shot for the nature documentaries. But the Tomorrowland segment was perhaps the most revealing in terms of Disney's intentions.

Under the heading of Tomorrowland, the studio prepared a behind-the-scenes preview of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, with an emphasis on special effects technology and robotics. The program won an Emmy, but it was also dubbed "the first 60-minute commercial in the history of TV" and "the longest trailer ever made."42 Nor did critics fail to notice that three additional Wednesdays were given over to progress reports from the site urging members of the audience to plan future vacation trips to Southern California, much as other telecasts had sent viewers to the drive-in to see a new Disney movie with which they were already familiar before the credits ever rolled. Nonetheless, while Disneyland served blatantly commercial ends, the show was also crucial to the creation of the mood or underlying scenario of its geographic counterpart out in Anaheim. Through the medium of Disneyland, the American family became part of the process of building the park and acquired an emotional stake in its success. It was Walt's own Williamsburg, his American Versailles, but it was part of the Wednesday-night home lives of countless viewers, too. And by rehearsing the proposed features of the park, the TV show eliminated all grounds for apprehension: Disneyland—the theme park—was just as safe, wholesome and predictable as the living room setting in which the family gathered every week to watch Walt talk about it. Add a little sunshine and a few hot dogs and going to Disneyland would be just like watching that other Disneyland on TV.

Bob Chandler, a television reporter for Variety, admired the way in which the show relentlessly plugged the park and the park, in turn, gave permanent form to the transient aspects of Disney's entertainment empire. But the systematic integration of the two arms of the business went further than that. Disneyland's Tomorrowland and Frontierland, Chandler observed, were "tele-creations," or concepts generated for the home screen without much precedent in the existing Disney film archive.43 In fact, most of the brand-new material produced for the show, including a popular series on space exploration, fell into one of these two categories. Both were important TV motifs of the 1950s.

The Tomorrowland shows always drew high ratings. After a segment called Man in Space aired on March 5, 1955, President Eisenhower called from the White House to offer his thanks and congratulations in person. The futuristic hardware explained by rocket scientists (like Wernher von Braun) and animated by the Disney artists was not dissimilar in appearance, however, to the products of American industry on display during frequent commercial breaks: a Ford Fairlane with options and a push-button kitchen range heralded a future of magical ease as surely as any lunar vehicle did. Television suburbanized a future that remained (until Sputnik suggested otherwise) a strictly American phenomenon, a technological wonderland available for purchase with no money down and twenty-four months to pay. The Autopia in Disney's park was a reminder of
that consumerist vision of the world to come. Funds ran out before the Tomorrowland precinct was fully realized, but Walt insisted that this one attraction—a replica of the new freeway system that linked America’s past with a suburban future—be completed in time for the opening ceremonies. The shiny new cars zooming past the camera would make for great TV, he thought.

Frontierland embodied both the national past and the most popular recurring theme of the Disneyland program, thanks to the Davy Crockett mania of the 1954–55 season. Like Tomorrowland, Frontierland resonated to powerful themes in the suburban imagination. The ranch house, the knotty-pine den, the outdoor barbecue, the search for an acre of crabgrass beyond the boundaries of urban civilization: these facts of American life in 1950s help to explain why the Western genre accounted for more than a quarter of the movies produced in Hollywood and why the cowboy film of the period was so often domestic in flavor, with the tragic hero—Alan Ladd’s Shane (1953), John Wayne as Ethan in The Searchers (1956)—longing for the stability of home and hearth. Because the footage was cheap and available, television developed a voracious appetite for old Westerns in its early years but soon demanded more, made to order for the medium. Disney’s Davy Crockett episodes—the first one-hour, prime-time Westerns on network television—garnered the highest ratings of the decade (and produced a bonanza of product spin-offs) by validating suburban mobility in the person of the restless frontiersman who waxes nostalgic about home and family as he dies in the wilds of Texas. Those who might have wondered, in a year of recession and economic jitters, about the wisdom of acquiring the push-button appurtenances of Tomorrowland found imaginative comfort in Frontierland’s simple, log-cabin past. Armchair frontiersmen uneasy about the nation’s postwar transformation into a military-industrial superpower could find solace in the vision of an earlier day, commemorated in their own Early American curtains and wagon-wheel coffee tables. The eye of the camera let the living room viewer travel freely in time and space, backward to the Alamo, forward to the moon. Television was a magical picture window on the world beyond one’s own front lawn, and Disneyland was conceived in its perceptual image.

The spatial sensibility of Disneyland comes from television, too—specifically from what media scholars call its “managed gaze.” Just as the various segments of the televised Disneyland were discrete, self-contained entities, so the “viewer” touring the park could not see Frontierland from Tomorrowland, or vice versa. Disney’s theme park planners always used the older, cinematic analogy to describe the way in which the tourist was to be gently nudged from scene to scene (by a “wienie” or attractive object at the end of a vista) in a narrative sequence of edited takes. But in the movies that experience was continuous and unbroken; in Disneyland it was discontinuous and episodic, like watching TV in the privacy of one’s own home—each ride a four- or five-minute segment, slotted in among snacks, trips to the rest room, and “commercials” in the form of the souvenir empo-
riums. "Disneyland . . . is a kind of TV set," writes the historian William Irwin Thompson, "for one flips from mediaeval castles to submarines and rockets as easily as one can move, in . . . Los Angeles, from the plaza of the Mexican Olvera Street . . . to the modern Civic Center."46 If Main Street USA was a bore, Tomorrowland was just a magical step away. If history or fantasy cloyed, the food and the merchandise were very real. And the family car was in the parking lot, pointed toward the freeway, and ready to roll.