"The Rise of the Saloon" (1983)[1]

Roy Rosenzweig

In 1829 Ichabod Washburn, the co-owner of a small Worcester machine shop who was later to become the city's leading manufacturer, sought help in building his new house, specifying, however, that there be no provision of rum for the workers. The carpenter was skeptical, since a house-raising "without the stimulus of spirits...had not before been done for many years." Most of Washburn's own workmen refused to take part in the experiment. "The work, however," Washburn later recalled, "proceeded noiselessly and successfully to its completion without rum." The local newspaper celebrated the novel achievement under the caption "Progress of the Temperance Reform." Washburn's workmen, however, had a less approving reaction: They watched and, "by their jeers, ridiculed the undertaking, and did their best to make it a failure."

While his workmen laughed, the sober and pious Washburn prospered. At his death in 1868 he presided over a million-dollar manufacturing concern that produced more than half the wire in the United States. The years that marked Washburn's rise from master of a shop with fewer than 30 craftsmen to president of a corporation with more than 700 employees also saw the triumph of his ideas about sobriety and order in the workplace. By the time of Washburn's death a series of seven factory whistles precisely dictated the daily comings and goings of his wireworkers, and detailed, written "Regulations" governed their movements within the factory gates. "There shall be no change of workmen from one department to another without special permission from the office: in which case both Time-Keepers will consult with the pay-roll Clerk regarding the keeping of the time," commanded a typical rule.

The large factories of late nineteenth century Worcester would not tolerate the casual informality——the gambling, storytelling, singing, debating, and especially drinking——that had characterized its small workshops in the earlier years of the century or its farms in the previous century. Yet while the factory workers of the 1870s faced a more structured work regimen than the artisans of the 1820s, they also generally had more free time in which to pursue some of the socializing that had been removed from their workday. The drinking that manufacturers like Washburn repressed on the job now found a new temporal and physical locus in public, commercial leisure-time institutions known as saloons. Thus, it was in response to a complex set of social forces——tightened work discipline, shorter workdays, intensified regulation of public recreation, increased working-class incomes——that the saloon emerged as a center of working-class social life. Although the saloon was a commercial enterprise, its ethnic working-class customers still decisively shaped its ritual and character. Somewhat paradoxically, they infused the saloon with a set of values that differed from those of the dominant industrial capitalist society that had given rise to the saloon in the first place.

---

[1] Roy Rosenzweig, "The Rise of the Saloon," Ch. 2 from *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 35-64.

Drink and work: the emergence of leisure time

As Washburn's house-raising experience indicates, workers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries considered drinking an inextricable, and even mandatory, aspect of work. In the shoe shops of Lynn in the 1820s, a half pint of "white eye" was an expected part of the daily wage and the workers themselves financed further heavy drinking. In Rochester workshops of the same period "drinking was universal" and "was embedded in the pattern of irregular work and easy sociability." This intermingling of work and socializing, of work and drink, marked manual as well as artisanal labor. Account books from the building of Worcester's town hall in the 1820s record payments for "labor and grog." Similarly, for the unskilled laborers——mostly Irish immigrants——who toiled from sunrise to sunset building the nation's canals and railroads, the four to six daily breaks for a "jigger" of whiskey provided the only relief from a brutal work regimen. In Worcester the contractors on the Blackstone Canal and the Boston and Worcester Railroad distributed whiskey to Irish immigrant laborers as part of their daily wage. "The rum barrel," writes Worcester Irish antiquarian Richard O'Flynn, "was always near the work——ready for distribution, by this means they kept the men hard at work all day."

The pervasiveness of workplace drinking was hardly surprising in an era when it suffused all areas of life. "Americans between 1790 and 1830," a carefully documented recent study shows, "drank more alcoholic beverages than ever before or since." Even the church was not immune. Under the pulpit of Worcester's Old South Church was a large cupboard containing, "for the accommodation of the congregation, at noon time, a home manufactured beverage from the choicest products of the orchard."

The antebellum temperance crusades, which began in the late 1820s, rapidly undermined the universality of these drinking habits, particularly among the native upper and middle classes. Between 1830 and 1850, according to one estimate, annual per capita consumption of absolute alcohol plummeted from 3.9 gallons to 1 gallon. Testifying before a Massachusetts legislative committee in 1867, Emory Washburn, a Worcester lawyer and a former governor, described the social impact of this new abstinence: "Before 1828 I do not know of any families that pretended to anything like hospitality who did not make a free use of liquor." But by 1867 Washburn noted of these same "respectable" circles that "it was as rare to see liquor offered in a man's house as it would be to see medicine offered."

The early temperance movement appealed particularly to the middle- and upper-class men and women who dined with Emory Washburn. Industrialists and others tied to "the emerging industrial society" led Worcester's temperance movement in the 1830s, according to a recent historian of that movement. And by the 1840s "there was mounting evidence of the broadening appeal of prohibition among not only manufacturers and their allies, but also all respectable and propertied elements in the community." Although some working people——particularly those attracted to revivalist religion——did join the temperance crusades, larger numbers remained attached to their traditional drinking habits and customs. In the 1830s, at least, Worcester workers showed little interest in the city's temperance movement. Of twenty-six temperance activists engaged in manufacturing, at least two-thirds were employers of labor and only one was definitely an employee——and he was a foreman at Ichabod Washburn's new wire works.

The prohibitory ordinances passed by local temperance forces were never fully effective, but new workplace bans on drinking had a more direct impact on popular customs. The Worcester Temperance Society reported in 1831 that twenty-six "mechanics shops" and six "manufactories," employing more than 200 workers in all had banned drinking during work hours and had stopped employing intemperate workmen. Beginning around 1830, then, rules against workplace and workday drinking spread at an uneven pace through innumerable trades and cities. By the late nineteenth century most employers tended to view workplace drinking as part of a bygone era. Oliver Ames, the head of Ames Plow Company, with factories in Worcester and Easton, Massachusetts, commented in 1867 that about thirty years earlier "the work would be frequently broken up by the intemperance of the men. Now we have no trouble of that kind." A New York carriage maker placed the change in his trade in the 1860s. "I can remember twenty or twenty-five years ago," he told a Senate committee in 1883, "when in our trade, even in our shop, there was a constant sending out for beer and spirits, and it was universally permitted." Now, he noted, bringing liquor into the shop "is a violation of rule which affords reason for discharge."

Rules against alcohol consumption were the firmest in the most mechanized industries. Where traditional production methods or heavy manual labor prevailed, drinking was more likely to be tolerated. As late as 1898 the superintendent of Worcester's Sewer Department accepted his workers' consumption of "copious amounts if beer" during their noon break, because "the men had a right to drink when off duty if they chose to do so." Drinking, Dr. Samuel Hartwell told the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, was heaviest among those "who perform labor physically exhaustive, and those who are exposed to extremes of heat and cold." Moreover, when labor was short, even the strictest manufacturers tolerated drinking. "We have to put up with it [intemperance] when help is scarce," one textile manufacturer admitted in 1881. Even where employers successfully repressed on-the-job drinking, they could rarely confine it entirely to weekends and holidays. Excessive Sunday drinking often meant high Monday absenteeism or "blue Mondays."

Despite the exceptions and evasions, numerous government reports demonstrate the growing repression of workplace drinking in the course of the nineteenth century. In 1881, for example, the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor questioned workers and manufacturers about intemperance in the textile mills. Only one-sixth of the workers and one-quarter of the manufacturers reported substantial drinking. Sixteen years later a U.S. Department of Labor survey of 30,000 employers found that more than three-quarters considered an employee's drinking habits in hiring decisions.

The gradual tightening of workplace discipline——as exemplified by the anti-drink regulations——was accompanied by a more favorable change for the working class: the gradual shortening of the workday. The precise connection between these two developments is difficult to specify, but they appear to have occurred in tandem. Agitation for the ten-hour day, for example, began in the mid-1820s at the same time that men like Washburn were challenging such basic forms of workplace sociability as drinking. Rochester carpenters——"unable," according to one historian, "to control their conditions of work or to mix work and leisure"—— struck in 1834 and announced: "We will be faithful to our employers during the ten hours and no longer." Although such other motives as the desire to reduce pervasive unemployment influenced movements for the shorter workday, the growing articulation of a "right to leisure" played an

important part. What workers wanted, the Knights of Labor explained, was “more of the leisure that rightfully belongs to them.” The “division and specialization of labor” and the “intensity” of work dictated by “modern methods in industry” had reduced “the social opportunities of the masses,” an American Federation of Labor pamphlet similarly argued; the only solution was “more leisure, more physical and mental repose, more and larger periods of relief, from the strain which the specialized industrial life imposes.”

As early as the 1840s the ten-hour movement had begun to have some impact, particularly in Massachusetts. In 1845, for example, workers at T. K. Earle’s Machine Shop and Foundry in Worcester won a two-hour daily reduction to ten hours. Early the following year the Worcester Workingmen’s Association invited “the employers of this village to meet us at our weekly meetings and show cause, if they have any, why *men* ought to work more than ten hours a day.” And by the early 1850s the ten-hour day was “all but universal” among Worcester’s skilled mechanics.

Progress was, of course, uneven and varied enormously by industry. Massachusetts textile workers, for example, made some gains in the 1850s, but many continued to work eleven and a half to twelve hours until the 1874 law mandated ten hours for women and children. Even then, longer hours remained quite common. In 1879 a letter writer to the *Worcester Evening Star* wondered: “Why is Packachoag Mill, South Worcester, allowed to run 13 hours a day, or is the ten hour law of any use but to fill the Statute book?” In general, however, the political and economic struggles of the working class brought shorter workdays. In 1830 eleven hours per day or more was the standard at more than half the establishments surveyed in a J.S. Census Bureau study; by 1860 the figure had dropped to less than one-third. In Massachusetts, at least, ten hours was the “normal” workday in the 1870s and 1880s with 80 percent of 2,500 firms surveyed by the Bureau of Statistics of Labor in 1883 reporting the ten-hour day.

Workers used their increased leisure time in a wide range of ways: gossiping with neighbors, lounging in pool halls, studying in night classes, visiting dance halls, mending worn clothing, organizing temperance societies, tending gardens, raising money for their churches, arguing over trade union strategy, and watching melodramas. But for many, drinking occupied an important portion of their growing, but still limited, leisure hours. Indeed, it is hardly surprising that a diversion like drinking, which had once played such a central role during work time, would also have a central place in leisure time. In a similar way, the songs that had once modulated the work rhythms of black manual laborers did not disappear with mechanization and urbanization; black music——in the form of the blues——found a new home in leisure time rather than work time. In both cases, the diverse customs and traditions that once dominated the workplace continued to shape newly emerging leisure-time institutions. The saloon and similar working-class leisure institutions thus developed in the context of tightening work discipline and decreasing work hours. But just as the saloon owed its existence to the growing temporal separation of drinking and working, of socializing and working, it was also predicated on the growing spatial separation of male sociability from the home.

From shebeen to saloon: the emergence of leisure space

Formal drink places——taverns——existed in Worcester almost from its first founding in the late seventeenth century. By the 1730s Worcester had five well-regarded taverns with four of the proprietors holding town offices. By the time of the temperance crusades of the 1820s, however, the taverns had begun to lose their social respectability: None of the seventeen tavernkeepers in 1828 held an important town office. Their status declined further with the rise of temperance sentiment among the “respectable” citizens of Worcester and the passage of various prohibitory ordinances, beginning in 1835 and remaining in effect with only temporary breaks until 1875.

These anti-drink measures had a limited impact on the drink trade. The city’s small police force, which consisted of just one watchman before 1851, could not effectively enforce the law. When Mayor Henry Chapin attempted to suppress liquor traffic in 1850, pro-drink protesters responded by bombing his office. Even the use of special police and vigorous prosecutions “did not substantially suppress the sale of liquor,” one Worcester mayor admitted. In the late 1850s, for example, with Worcester under a strict anti-drink ordinance, a socially prominent Worcesterite met an acquaintance of his from New Orleans on the street in Worcester. The New Orleans man suggested they go for a drink. The Worcesterite replied: “You cannot get anything to drink here, the places for the sale of liquor have all been closed up.” But the New Orleans man (who had been in the city only two days) corrected him: “Why, yes you can; I have been to more than twenty places here in this City.”

At least a few of these illicit drink places——the Bay State House, for example——even catered to the city’s more “respectable” citizens. But most working-class drinking went on in much less formal and elegant surroundings. As early as the 1830s the city’s pioneer Irish laboring community had established a number of popular shebeens (unlicensed and home- or kitchen-based liquor sellers) of the type so common in nineteenth century Ireland. In the 1840s and 1850s on the immigrant and working-class East Side of the city, Worcester Irish historian Vincent E. Powers notes, “temperance laws had little effect and illegal shebeens and blind-pigs continued to operate. Irish freighters and railroad crews found an eager market for the liquor they easily smuggled into the city.” Throughout Massachusetts those in contact with working-class neighborhoods observed the same close connection of drink selling and home life in the face of official prohibition statutes. A Boston Catholic priest observed that “among the poorer classes...in almost every house (and every tenement having a number of families in it) they have some liquor, and they sell it to those in the house.”

Although there is only limited descriptive evidence, it is unlikely that these kitchen barrooms were especially lavish or spacious since they shared the physical limitations of most working-class dwellings’ of this period. Even skilled workers in Worcester could not expect to house a family of five in anything larger than a five-room apartment. Unskilled laborers——often immigrants with larger families——lived in more crowded conditions. An investigator for the Bureau of Statistics of Labor in 1875 found a Worcester Irish laborer and his family of eight living in a four-room tenement, which provided only “two privies for about fifty people.” In such a setting a shebeen was likely to be little more than a table and a few chairs set up in the kitchen or bedroom of a tenement or three-decker apartment.

Massachusetts’s passage of a comprehensive liquor license law in 1875, which finally allowed the legal operation of public drink places, did not immediately remove drink selling from

its location in the kitchens and bedrooms of these working-class tenements. In the poorest sections of the city drinking continued to take place in the “amateur grog shops” and kitchen barrooms that had predominated during the prohibition era of the previous three decades. When City Marshal James Drennan raided the home of Bridget McCarthy in the Irish working-class district known as the Island, he found seven men and women sitting in the kitchen with a number of beer glasses on the table and two barrels of beer on draft in the front room. Leaving the apartment was a young woman carrying a pail of beer home to her family. On the same day Drennan also visited the house of John Mehan on nearby Ward Street and found four people sitting in the front room “with beer glasses frothing” and a table set with beer. “A man with a pail of beer was talking to Mehan outside the door [and] went off in a hurry as we entered,” Drennan reported. Some raids turned up rather elaborate equipment and provisions. In the cellar of John Mehan’s Ward Street neighbor John Daily police officers found fifty gallons of ale in two barrels, two gallons of whiskey in two jugs and three bottles, twenty-four bottles of lager beer, and smaller quantities of rum and gin. A pipe connected the barrels of ale to the kitchen faucet.

Many of these Irish kitchen saloonkeepers did not bother to take out licenses under the 1875 law, particularly since they could not afford the $200 required for a first-class license or the $100 for a second-class license (beer and light wine only), given their marginal profits. Moreover, fines imposed on the few violators actually prosecuted were usually small ($10 and costs) and often could be avoided by appeal to sympathetic judges and juries. Of 245 people prosecuted for liquor violations during the first four years of the license law only 35 faced any immediate fine or imprisonment; most cases were simply lost in the drawn-out appeal process. The nature of search and seizure laws and the location of sales in private dwellings further hindered the process of obtaining liquor law convictions. City Marshal W. Ansel Washburn complained: “It is not hard to detect the places where the article is kept and sold, even though it be in the privacy of the kitchen or bedroom. Yet, as the law now stands, an officer, in attempting to enforce the same, would become a trespasser.”

The centrality of women as both sellers and consumers of liquor in the kitchen grog shops further emphasizes their close connection to immigrant home and family life. Arrest records give ample evidence of the prominence of Irish women drink sellers in Worcester. Whenever temperance-minded Worcester mayors of the 1850s and 1860s decided to crack down on illegal liquor selling, the most immediate impact was that “half a dozen Irish women (would]...be sent to the house of correction.”

Whereas Worcester officials viewed these female liquor dealers as disreputable and criminal, the Irish community apparently looked at them quite differently. In Ireland the keeping of a shebeen was a “recognized resource of widows,” and they had a “privileged” status in the liquor trade. In Worcester Irish immigrants continued to insist on the propriety of this form of communal charity, despite the failure of American laws to recognize it. Almost invariably, a woman arrested for illegal liquor selling would plead, as did Honora Lyon, that “she was compelled to sell a little beer and whiskey in order to make a living. She was sick, destitute and unable to provide for herself and child without having recourse to liquor selling.” Even Irish temperance supporters might also affirm the communal impulses behind the shebeen. On the same day that he denounced liquor dealers, James H. Mellen, editor of the *Worcester Daily*

Times, complained of police raids on “hard working honest women and cripples,” who were entitled to “sympathy.”

The practices, as well as the proprietorship, of the kitchen grog shops indicate their close connection to the home and the everyday patterns of Irish immigrant life. Often operating outside the established legal framework, these shops casually dispensed liquor at all hours to friends and neighbors, men and women alike, for both on- and off-premise consumption. Although more formal and more public drink places existed well before the 1870s, much drinking in that decade and even later remained rooted in the more informal and less visible kitchen grog shop. The saloon, as a spatially distinct public and commercialized leisure-time institution, had not yet entirely triumphed.

Gradually, however, the tighter regulations did have some impact, and Worcester saloons began to emerge from the back rooms and kitchens and take on a more standardized and regulated form. Initially, the Board of Aldermen did not discriminate very carefully in their selection of licensees, issuing an average of 235 licenses yearly over the first four years of licensing. In 1879, however, the Board of Aldermen decided to cut back sharply and so issued only 131 licenses. Although the Board of Aldermen never articulated their motives in the license cutbacks, their targets——women, economically marginal operators, and saloons outside of downtown——reveal their goal of ending the kitchen grog shop and fostering the public working-class saloon.

Women——the group most commonly identified with the kitchen trade——were the most visible victims of the license shake-up. Forty-one women, who comprised 22 percent of all saloonkeepers in 1878, lost their licenses during the next two years. Only two women managed to hang on in the drink trade by obtaining fourth-class grocer’s licenses. R. G. Dun and Company credit ratings of Worcester saloonkeepers make clear the marginal financial status of those——both men and women——who lost their licenses after 1878. A rating of “worthless” in 1878 or 1879 invariably presaged the loss of one’s liquor license within the next year or two. The saloonkeepers themselves were well aware of this economic discrimination in the award of licenses. “One Who Knows How the Thing Works” wrote to the *Worcester Evening Star* to complain of “the injustice shown vs. small dealers in liquor.” In addition to gender and economic status, location figured importantly in the 1878-80 license cutbacks. In those two years the Board of Aldermen eliminated more than 85 percent of the saloons in areas more than a half mile from City Hall. The Irish working-class Island district lost fifteen of its existing seventeen licensed drink places.

The effect of the license cutbacks was to eliminate the least public and visible, the hardest-to-regulate, and the least capitalized drink places. In so doing, the board, in effect, endorsed the creation of a more standardized and public institution——the late nineteenth century saloon——as a leisure place clearly separated from both work and home. This spatial segregation was given legal force in 1880 with the passage of a state law prohibiting liquor licenses for premises with “any interior connection or communication with any apartments occupied as a residence or for lodging purposes.” The passage that same year of a “screen law,” which prohibited obstructions of “a view of the interior” of the saloon as well as side and back doors, further removed drinking from the private, informal world of the home-based kitchen barroom and set it in a public, recreational institution.

Naturally, the kitchen barrooms that seem to have been the predominant Irish drinking places in the 1850s and 1860s (and remained prominent in the 1870s) did not simply disappear with the decrees of the Board of Aldermen. “Certain it is,” one local paper commented in 1879 of those who lost their licenses, “that some of them will continue to sell in the defiance of the law.” The police records confirm this prediction. Almost 30 percent of those prosecuted for illegal liquor sales between May 1880 and May 1881 had been legal licensees before the 1878-80 purges. Typically, those prosecuted kitchen barroom proprietors lived in working-class neighborhoods and operated out of either their home or a small grocery store. In 1878, for example, Alice Dignan ran a saloon out of her home on 23 Nashua Street, near the Washburn and Moen North Works, where her husband, Peter, was a laborer. Although she lost her license in the 1879 shake-up, the Dignans appear to have retained their kitchen saloon for which they were prosecuted at least once in 1880 and twice in 1882. When police raided the Dignans in 1880, they found Alice serving four large glasses of beer in the kitchen and ample supplies of lager beer, ale, whiskey, and gin hidden in the bedroom and cellar.

Although unlicensed and kitchen-based liquor selling continued well into the twentieth century, public, legal, and formal saloons dominated the drink trade in Worcester by the mid-1880s. According to the R. G. Dun credit records, unlicensed dealers appear to have stayed in business for only about a year and a half on the average after they lost their licenses. In part, the demise of the kitchen sellers reflected surveillance and prosecutions by an increasingly professional police force. Between 1869 and 1878 prosecutions for liquor violations averaged about thirty-two per year, but in the next ten-year period they quadrupled. A single liquor seizure could be enough to put a marginal dealer out of business. In addition, unlicensed liquor dealers could not easily obtain credit. Finally, the kitchen barrooms simply could not compete with the better appointed and more spacious legal saloons. Working-class patrons, not just government regulators, ultimately preferred the public saloon over the kitchen grog shop.

The gradual emergence of the saloon as a leisure space clearly distinct from home thus gave workers a more comfortable and appealing place to spend their leisure time. But most working-class women did not share in this modest improvement in working-class life. For married women who did not engage in paid labor, recreation was an integral part of everyday life; in effect, they mixed work and play much in the manner of the early nineteenth century artisan. Thus, despite their home-centered responsibilities, women could have an important place in the kitchen barrooms as both proprietors and customers. However, when leisure was removed from the home or its immediate vicinity, it became predominantly a male privilege. While some women continued to patronize saloons, these public leisure spaces increasingly became male preserves. In this way, the male saloon became a mirror image of the male factory.

The liquor business: the emergence of leisure spending

The development of the saloon as a leisure institution temporally distinct from work and spatially distinct from home thus represented a contradictory series of gains and losses for Worcester workers: a decrease in control over work combined with an increase in free time; the demise of a traditional, home-centered, and sexually integrated gathering place along with the

development of a more ample and comfortable public meeting spot. The economic context for the rise of the saloon had an equally mixed character: a growth in working-class incomes coupled with the extraction of a portion of those incomes by a commercial liquor business.

Although statistics on nineteenth century working-class incomes are unreliable and controversial, most historians agree that real wages rose in the second half of the century. Clarence Long, for example, argues that both daily and annual earnings increased about 50 percent between 1860 and 1890. Discretionary expenditures for such items as amusement and alcohol probably increased with these growing——albeit still inadequate——real incomes.

Yet discretionary spending could not expand in a vacuum; it was also necessary that amusement and alcohol become purchasable commodities. In fact, both processes occurred together. In the late nineteenth century such commodities became both available and affordable to more and more working-class consumers. In comparing working-class family budgets from 1874 and 1901, historian John Modell finds more spending for virtually all nonessential items. For example, workers were more likely to rely on cash-bought and publicly consumed alcohol than on home-produced drink. In 1889 only 30 percent of the native-American families and 42 percent of the Irish-born families completing family budgets for the Bureau of Statistics of Labor listed any annual expenditures for alcoholic beverages. By 1901, however, these figures had jumped by about half.

In this context, increased public consumption of alcohol might indicate the growing prosperity of the working class rather than its pathological degeneration, as it is sometimes depicted. According to an 1889 survey by the U.S. Department of Labor, the best paid workers were 50 percent more likely to purchase "indulgences" like alcohol and tobacco than those at the bottom of the income scale. "The workers who drank the most," historian Michael Marrus writes similarly of *Belle Epoque* France, "were not the most miserable, not those who were drowning their socioeconomic sorrows, but rather those with time and money to spend." What happened, Marrus argues, "was that as working conditions began to improve, and as wages slowly went up, workers naturally turned to drink during a transitional period because they were still adjusting to a more affluent state of affairs. What was new to them was the prospect of having any pleasure at all which was not furtively snatched from the grip of necessity." Indeed, beneath the persistent middle- and upper-class complaints about the "extravagance" and "thriftlessness", of working-class drinking habits lay a recognition and resentment of this nascent "prosperity." Speaking of skilled mechanics in 1883, the secretary of the New York Board of Health admitted that "they all do what I would like to do now, and what I do a good deal of myself——they smoke a great deal; they drink considerable, more or less, and I think their families are extravagant."

Drinking and the saloon, then, offered recreational diversions well suited to growing, but still modest, working-class incomes. As a result, a liquor business developed, particularly from the middle to the late nineteenth century, to take advantage of this emerging market. In Worcester the growth of the drink trade, which was especially rapid in the 1870s and 1880s, can be charted in the careers of successful liquor dealers and saloonkeepers. In 1860s Worcester, liquor selling offered neither social respectability nor economic security. In 1863, for example, R. G. Dun and Company entered its first report on George F. Hewitt, who had started a liquor business in Worcester in 1860: He "is entirely unworthy of credit...no reliance can be placed on him in the matter of business." A few months later they cautioned creditors: "Public opinion...added to the

liquor law is great inducement to repudiate." These warnings proved prescient, as Hewitt suffered both arrest and bankruptcy in the next twelve years. But Hewitt's remarkable success in the late 1870s and early 1880s suggests "boom" conditions in the Worcester drink business in that period. By 1882 the previously bankrupt and disreputable Hewitt had been a member of the Board of Aldermen, erected a block of stores and tenements, and was estimated to be worth $50,000.

Even more dramatic was the success of John and Alexander Bowler, who entered the brewery business in Worcester in 1883. Within three years they had tripled their output and within six years their net worth had multiplied more than six times. The success of Hewitt and the Bowlers reflected the expansion of the Massachusetts liquor industry in these years. Between 1865 and 1885 the capitalization of the industry multiplied almost ten times, the number of employees three times, and the number of firms four times.

Worcester saloonkeepers shared in this prosperity. In December 1885 the *Worcester Sunday Telegram* recalled that in the late 1870s Worcester "rumsellers had just emerged from the trials of the prohibition years" and "were as poor as the men they had sent to the almshouse." But "of late years their incomes have rapidly increased, and they have indulged in fast horses, elegant apparel, a self-contented swagger, and above all, have from year to year increased their political power." This new affluence was reflected in more lavish and more businesslike saloons. "The old homely and ungrateful beer saloons of the last generation have given way to comfortable and costly premises where liquor is now dispensed to the impatient consumer," the *Sunday Telegram* commented in 1886. As the *Telegram's* language indicates, the saloon had become more of a commercial institution with drink as a commodity, the worker as a consumer, and the saloonkeeper as a businessman. Although Worcester's rum sellers were hardly considered "respectable" by the city's Yankee elite, they were becoming reasonably stable small-business men. To cite just one example of many recorded by Irish antiquarian Richard O'Flynn and the credit reporters from R. G. Dun: John McGrail was "not worth anything of any account" in 1875, but by 1884 he was doing "a good business" and was worth at least $2,000.

But one should not exaggerate saloonkeeper affluence: Very few managed any substantial accumulations of wealth. "Doing a modest living," "doing well in a small way," or "gets a living" were the most often reported comments in the credit reports. Indeed, the insufficiently capitalist mentality of the saloonkeepers seems to have frustrated the more aggressive credit investigators. They implicitly chastise the saloonkeepers for living too extravagantly, for failing to "accumulate," and for not being very "progressive." Apparently, many saloonkeepers were content to earn a modest working-class income from their businesses and had no larger aspirations.

Although saloonkeepers were not always aggressive entrepreneurs, by the late nineteenth century in Worcester (and perhaps earlier elsewhere) they presided over a clearly commercial leisure-time institution. Indeed, the very term "saloon" was a relatively new one, which suggested the spaciousness and luxury of a French salon or a large cabin on a passenger ship. The word was used as early as 1841, but it seems to have only come into common usage in Worcester after the Civil War and particularly in the 1870s. Richard O'Flynn, writing in 1880, refused to use the newer term: "I must be pardoned for the use of the word 'Rum Shop.' I cannot conscientiously give any other name no matter how magnificent the surroundings."

Despite O'Flynn's resistance, the saloon had triumphed. Its emergence was rooted in long-term changes: the separation of work and play, the segregation of recreation from home life, and the commercialization of this leisure time and space. Although the changes were broad and general, their impact was class-specific. The emergence of the saloon depended upon and reflected improvements in working-class living standards: the achievement of growing amounts of leisure time free from the constraints of the workplace, the development of alternative spaces to spend that leisure time away from crowded homes and tenements, and the possession of sufficient disposable income to purchase more than the bare necessities of life. Yet the rise of the saloon equally grew out of the subordination of the working class: its lack of freedom at the workplace, its very limited free time and disposable income, and its inferior housing conditions. Thus, as Worcester's saloons formalized and grew in the late nineteenth century, they remained decisively shaped by the circumstances——both economic and cultural——of the city's large immigrant working class.

The ethnic working-class saloon: proprietors and patrons

In April 1885 three Irish-Catholic pastors startled local liquor dealers, as well as members of their congregations, with a bold attack on the drink trade. The Reverend John J. McCoy reportedly "denounced the saloons as hells, and their owners as murderers." What made this rebuke surprising was its source in the Irish-Catholic clergy, who ministered to most of the city's saloonkeepers. Seventeen of the nineteen applicants for liquor licenses in Sacred Heart parish belonged to that church, its pastor, the Reverend Thomas Conaty, ruefully admitted. And two-thirds of all Worcester liquor license applicants were Irish, whereas only one-third of the city's population was of Irish origin, the Reverend Thomas Griffin added.

The 1880 U.S. Manuscript Census confirms these clerical estimates. Although only one-sixth of Worcester's people were born in Ireland, about half of the 1880 saloonkeepers who could be traced into the census were Irish natives, and another 10 percent were the children of Irish immigrants. Even more overrepresented in the drink trade, however, were the Germans, who made up less than 1 percent of the city's population but more than 15 percent of its saloonkeepers. A nativist rhyme popular in Worcester after the Civil War captured the ethnic flavor of its drink trade: "The Irish and the Dutch; they don't amount to much,/ For the Micks have their whiskey and the Germans guzzle the beer,/ And all we Americans wish they had never come here."

Although nativists blamed the drink trade entirely on immigrants, at least one-fifth of the saloonkeepers in 1880 were identifiable as "American." A few of the native-stock saloonkeepers kept relatively respectable restaurants, which also dispensed beer and liquor, but the others were part of a "sporting crowd," which spurned the Protestant values of their fellow "Americans." "A little flashy...likes to live well and make a show," the R. G. Dun credit investigator wrote of one. "Rather fond of horseflesh," he observed of another. In 1875 when native-born Worcester machinist A. V. Newton wrote *The Saloon Keeper's Companion* and subtitled it *Sporting Manual*, he probably had these saloonkeepers in mind.

As Worcester's other ethnic communities——French Canadian, English, and Swedish——grew in the late nineteenth century, they also developed their own drink centers. As early as the 1860s the Christopher brothers established the first French-Canadian saloon in Worcester, and there were four or five French-Canadian saloons throughout the 1870s and 1880s. Despite occasional rumblings of temperance sentiment among their clergy, French-Canadian liquor dealers generally received respect within their community. The local French newspapers, for example, proudly reported the number of French Canadians who had received liquor licenses each year. Revocation of one of these licenses could provoke community protests. In 1891, for example, the *Worcester Telegram* reported that "many of the Frenchmen are considerably annoyed because [Adrien] Girardin has been refused a license. His place is just below St. Jean Baptiste Hall, and was quite a rallying place for some of the French people when anything was going on in the hall."

The smaller community of English carpet weavers in South Worcester also appears to have supported three or four saloons. Worcester's Swedes, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, were much less indulgent of the liquor trade. Nevertheless, Swedish saloons began to develop by the late 1880s despite the vociferous opposition of Swedish fundamentalists. The Swedish newspaper *Skandinavia* reflected the more indulgent view of at least one segment of the Swedish community when it asked: "Would it perhaps not be preferable to have our young men spend their time in a Scandinavian saloon as opposed to Irish, German, and American saloons, where they now spend their time?"

Although Worcester saloons drew on ethnic communities and ethnically rooted drinking habits, they also operated in a specifically working-class context. In 1891 a temperance-minded publication complained about the after-work pattern of the city's ethnically diverse work force: "Watch the 'dinner pail' brigade as it files down, at nightfall, from the shops north of Lincoln Square and see how many men and boys drop into the saloons along the north end of Main Street." Whatever the views of its founder and its management, a location near Washburn and Moen's North Works usually proved quite lucrative for the saloonkeeper. Patrick J. Welch's business picked up considerably when he moved his saloon to that area. Washburn and Moen's South Works provided an equally eager clientele. In May 1893 John Reynolds managed to obtain a license in the vicinity of that factory. On the first day of business wireworkers——presumably representing the different ethnic groups that toiled at the South Works——flooded into Reynolds's saloon on the first floor of a Millbury Street tenement and crowded around the bar three-deep.

Drinking, of course, was not limited to the working class. But saloongoing was. Those in the middle and upper classes who did drink——and the numbers were probably considerably smaller than among the working class in the late nineteenth century—— generally drank at home, private clubs, or expensive hotels. At the exclusive Worcester Club, members apparently formed a "yellow label club" through which they purchased liquor as a group. Similarly, the *Worcester Daily Times* noted that the "rich scions of nobility" who are not seen at a public bar...have the good stuff at home."

Working-class dominance of public drinking places produced a corresponding working-class predominance among those arrested for public drunkenness. The published Worcester police statistics do not break down drunkenness arrests by occupation, but they do report all

arrests by occupation. From these figures it is possible at least to infer that unskilled laborers made up a disproportionate number of those arrested for excessive drinking. During years in which drunkenness arrests went up, arrests of laborers always increased at a much faster rate than those of other occupational groups. The same pattern appears in other criminal and drunkenness statistics. In n 1881 Bureau of Statistics of Labor study of Massachusetts "criminals," laborers were three times as likely to be excessive drinkers as clerks and only one-third as likely to be total abstainers. Similarly, of those arrested for drunkenness in Worcester during June 1880, who could be located in that year's *Worcester Directory*, almost three-quarters held unskilled or semiskilled jobs. In part, this occupational profile helps to explain the Irish dominance of those arrested for drunkenness. The Irish were particularly concentrated in jobs——especially manual, outdoor labor, and transport——that allowed and encouraged heavy drinking. Although heavy drinking and saloongoing were not necessarily equivalent, it seems likely that many of those arrested for public drunkenness were also regular saloon patrons.

Not only did the saloons draw a largely working-class clientele, they also possessed a "working-class" management. While saloonkeepers were by definition small-business people, they should not be automatically assigned to a "middle-class" category. In the late nineteenth century, at least, Worcester saloonkeepers seem to have shown strong ties to, and identification with, their working class customers. The social origins of the saloonkeepers provide one clue. Of forty-seven saloonkeepers in 1900 who were traced back ten years in the *Worcester Directory*, thirteen were already saloonkeepers and four were bartenders. But of the thirty-one not in the drink trade in 1890, more than two-thirds held blue-collar positions. Saloonkeepers in 1880 and 1918 shared these humble origins. For example, Michael Murphy, an overweight, clean-shaven, and unmarried Green Street saloonkeeper known to his patrons as "Father Murphy," began his work life as a laborer. He entered the saloon business in 1874, but left in 1882 to visit Ireland. When he returned to Worcester, he worked in a boot and shoe shop for a few years before returning to the liquor trade.

The occupational world of the saloonkeeper, then, was not particularly distinct from that of the blue-collar worker. And, according to the R. G. Dun and Company records, their economic standing was often only marginally better. Most important, many saloonkeepers demonstrated and preserved their working-class ties by living in the same neighborhood as their saloon. In 1880 half of the city's saloonkeepers lived in the same building as their saloon or next door; 90 percent lived within a half mile. In addition, those saloonkeepers who shared their dwelling with other families almost invariably lived alongside blue-collar workers and their families. The native-American saloonkeepers offered the only partial exception to this rule. However, the working-class links of the saloonkeepers began to wane very gradually with growing affluence. By 1900, for example, less than one-eighth lived at the same address or next door, but three-quarters lived within a half mile of their saloon. Whether or not the late nineteenth century Worcester saloonkeeper was a member of the working class, he was part of a working-class community.

The workingman's club

What explains the strong ties between the working class and the saloon? Most simply, it effectively met the needs of workers. "The saloon, in relation to the wage-earning classes in America," noted Walter Wyckoff, who had studied it firsthand, "is an organ of high development, adapting itself with singular perfectness to its functions in catering in a hundred ways to the social and political needs of men." Public toilets, food, warmth, clean water, meeting space, check-cashing services, newspapers——often otherwise unavailable to workers in the late nineteenth century city——could be found free of charge in the saloon. Often the saloon served as a communications center, a place where workers picked up their mail, heard the local political gossip, or learned of openings in their trade.

Different types of saloons emphasized different features and functions. The "occupational saloon," which drew on customers from a particular trade or factory, for example, promoted its free lunch and its check-cashing services. Ethnic saloons, which attracted more of an evening business, provided a center for such immigrant communal celebrations as weddings and holidays as well as a meeting place for fraternal orders and gangs. The neighborhood saloon might attract a local multiethnic working-class crowd and provide a constituency for small-time politicians. Not all saloons fit neatly into these categories. Some Worcester saloons could be simultaneously "neighborhood," "occupational," and "ethnic." For example, Michael Taylor, a former English carpet weaver, located his saloon in Cambridge Street in the midst of fellow countrymen who worked in the nearby carpet mills.

The utilitarian services of these different types of saloons only partially explain the saloon's attraction to its working-class patrons. More fundamentally, the saloon flourished because of its social and recreational appeal. Social reformers and early sociologists who entered the saloon to "ascertain the secret of its hold" upon the workingman invariably found——often to their surprise——that it was man's social nature" and his "craving for companionship," rather than a desire for strong drink, that led him to the saloon. Almost three-quarters of 540 people arrested for drunkenness in Boston around 1907 told an inquiring Columbia University graduate student that their "special reason for drinking" was "social." Only 8 percent attributed it to a "taste for drink." Without the benefit of graduate training, a seventy-year-old Irish Fall River worker similarly explained the social and recreational nature of the saloon: "In England, where I was reared, the habit was for a man, when he drew his pay every Saturday night, to go in and enjoy himself. He was not a drunkard; neither do I consider the people of Fall River drunkards....They go in and get their glass of beer as they do in the old country."

The saloonkeeper presided over and fostered this atmosphere of good-hearted, informal socializing. "As a rule," observed the author of the locally published *Saloon Keeper's Companion*, "the saloonkeeper is a jolly, easy going fellow, free with his money." Even Worcester temperance advocate Richard O'Flynn, with his hatred for the "vendors of the deadly cup," found the word "genial" the most appropriate to describe Worcester's rum sellers when he wrote profiles of them: Michael J. Leach was "a genial, generous man"; William Molloy, "a genial, warm hearted man, harmless in all save his calling"; and William H, Foley, "full of fun——always ready with a pleasant anecdote or story." Similarly, when *Light*, a Worcester society weekly, complained in 1890 of "loud and boisterous laughter, obscene pleasantries and curses," it also hinted at the cheerful sociability that prevailed in Worcester saloons.

Upper- and middle-class hostility to the saloongoer's "boisterous laughter" is hardly surprising since these men and women were probably the butts of barroom humor. The *Saloon Keeper's Companion* provided Worcester bar owners with about fifty pages of jokes and stories with which to amuse their customers. The jokes most often ridicule hypocritical temperance advocates, dishonest police and politicians, unsophisticated and easily fooled clergy and churchgoers, and stupid or pompous judges.

Singing, like joke- and storytelling, was an important part of the informal socializing that formed the core of saloon life. In other cities saloons offered more formal entertainment, but in Worcester the singing was usually informal and participatory. The Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor denounced the saloongoer's music as "the ribald song of fellow drunkards." But George Ade, a Chicago columnist who regularly frequented that city's saloons in the 1890s, discerned a more complex pattern. He thought songs about "dear old Mother" were most popular, followed by songs about "the poor girl who was tempted and who either fell or did not fall." Third most popular were songs about "the organized workingmen and their nobility of character as compared with millionaire employers."

In Worcester saloons ethnic music probably accompanied the products of Tin Pan Alley. John C. Blos called his German saloon on Mechanic Street Orchestrion Hall, and his advertisements featured a picture of that elaborate musical device. Patrick Curran, the Irish proprietor of a saloon known as the Little House Round the Corner, was "fond of story and song," and "being a very good comic singer, he attracted many of the gay spirits to his place." No doubt the patrons at the Little House Round the Corner as well as Worcester's numerous other Irish bars drew on the rich Irish-American musical heritage. In the late nineteenth century, according to historian Michael Gordon, Irish Americans favored laments about "loved ones still in Ireland" and "specific rural scenes," as well as "evocative nationalist verses like Collins's 'Defiant Still.'" All these songs, Gordon points out, "were fundamentally political because they spoke of events and sentiments inseparable from a historical context shaped by English and Anglo-Saxon rule."

The singing and storytelling of Worcester barrooms was undoubtedly punctuated by conversations about sports. The *Saloon Keeper's Companion* considered sports rules and the results of major sporting contests as essential knowledge for barkeepers. Patrick Ryan decorated his Mechanic Street saloon "with pictures of pugilists, sprinters, and clogdancers." Sometimes a popular local fighter, like Jack Gray, William H. Foley, or Robert Mahagan, might retire from the ring to become a saloonkeeper, placing his "well-worn boxing gloves" on "the shelf behind the bar" as a reminder of more glorious days. Other saloonkeepers, like Michael Kelley, gained some fame for their intimacy with sporting heroes like John L. Sullivan, whose picture adorned the walls of many, if not most, 1890s saloons.

Prizefighting was illegal in nineteenth century Massachusetts, and, indeed, the saloon often championed the shadier or, at least, less socially approved side of sports. Gambling, whether on cards, billiards, horse races, or sports matches, enlivened many Worcester saloons. In the 1870s those arrested for gambling violations also often found themselves in trouble for illegal liquor sales. Even cockfighting, ostensibly eradicated much earlier in the nineteenth century, enjoyed the patronage of Worcester saloonkeepers and their customers. In 1886, for example, Washington Square saloonkeeper Tim Delaney reportedly led Worcester "sports" to Cherry

Valley for cockfights each Sunday morning. The same secluded spot also furnished a locale for illicit prizefights.

For all its importance as a social center, the saloon was not the only recreational outlet for workers in Worcester and other industrial cities. "In this town, as in all others," one worker told the Bureau of Statistics of Labor in 1870, "there is a great difference in the habits and tastes of the working classes." Even the small group who answered a bureau questionnaire on recreation that year amply demonstrated this diversity. Their pursuits included dancing, walking, gardening, skating, ball and billiard playing, bowling, attending minstrel shows and concerts, listening to lectures, and visiting lodge and union halls and reading rooms. Yet, despite this variety of pursuits probably only the church and the home rivaled the saloon as working-class social centers. Both, however, had important limitations. Even those workers who owned homes usually lacked the space or furniture to accommodate large numbers of visitors. The homes of the unskilled and the immigrant lacked space not only for socializing but often for the needs of everyday life. Tenements in Fall River, complained a local union official in 1883, "have two bedrooms and a kitchen ...and if a friend comes in they have got to meet him there....There is no comfort at all. If a man had a little room where he could go and read his paper and be comfortable, I think he would be more likely to stay at home instead of going abroad to seek other kinds of enjoyment." A Worcester reformer reached the same conclusion some years later: "A large number of people, men and boys particularly, cannot possibly find or make this reasonable social life in the lodging house or in such a home as falls to their lot."

Lodging-house life provided a particularly strong incentive to seek, as a Cambridge printer put it in 1883, "amusement in public places, in the billiard room, and in the saloon." "In the boarding house," he explained, "there is nothing to entertain or to cheer him; seldom any pictures, or books, or female companionship of the proper kind; and in order to gratify his social faculties he frequently seeks pleasure in the forms in which it is met with in the saloon." In late nineteenth century Worcester the majority of immigrant Irishmen in their early twenties were boarders. And the city's boardinghouse district was within easy walking distance of its largest concentration of saloons.

Single workingmen and -women who lived at home rather than at a boardinghouse faced a different, but related, problem: socializing under the watchful gaze of their parents. This was particularly difficult for Worcester's second-generation Irish males, who did not marry until age thirty-one on the average. Drinking and the saloon seem to have had a central place in their "bachelor" subculture, as it did in Ireland. It is not surprising, then, that relatively young, single males were overrepresented among those arrested for drunkenness.

As a social and cultural force the church undoubtedly had a greater importance than the saloon, particularly for women and fundamentalist Protestants. Nevertheless, many noted its failure to compete effectively with the saloon for the worker's recreational time "The church doors," complained Worcester reformer U. Waldo Cutler, "are closed except an hour or two on one evening a week, when the 'social meeting' is in progress, and even if these people were to force their way in, the churches would not know how to adapt themselves to their needs." Such complaints, of course, reflect more on the native Protestant churches than on their immigrant, and usually Catholic, counterparts. One manufacturer explained to the Bureau of Statistics of Labor in 1870 that only the Catholics in his community attended services regularly: "The

Catholic Church is democratic; the Protestant Church is too aristocratic for the clothes they (the working people) are able to wear." Even the immigrant churches did not reach all their potential parishioners. Only 46 to 66 percent of New York Catholics attended church on Sundays in the 1860s. Moreover, even regular churchgoers saw the saloon as filling recreational needs that were ignored at the church. Some saloongoers, columnist Georgo Ade writes with an exaggeration born of nostalgia, found the church "about as cheerful as a mausoleum while the place on the corner reeked with the kind of unrestrained gayety which has been in partnership with original sin since the beginning of history."

For these reasons, the saloon remained the axis of the recreational world for large numbers of working-class men. One Saturday night in December 1883, several temperance advocates canvassed fifteen saloons between 6 and 10 P.M. and counted 1,832 patrons, "mostly young men." Thus, even if the city's other ninety-three legal drinking places were only half as popular as these, more than 7,500 Worcesterites would have stopped at the saloon that night——a significant percentage of the city's 30,000 males and easily a majority of s young working-class males.

The culture of the saloon

For many Worcester workers the saloon offered a variety of attractive activities from social services to informal socializing to singing and gambling. But did the late nineteenth century saloon hold any significance beyond its role as a social service and recreational center? Does the nature of the late nineteenth century saloon suggest anything about the central values and beliefs of Worcester workers? Such cultural analysis is inevitably difficult and speculative, particularly in the absence of the firsthand observations that are the stock-in-trade of the cultural anthropologist. Such problems are compounded here because of the diversity of types of saloons (ethnic, neighborhood, and occupational), the diversity of saloongoers (Irish, French Canadians, English, and Yankees; first- and second-generation immigrants; skilled and unskilled), and the changing nature of the saloon, which was undergoing a process of commercialization through which it distinguished itself from the kitchen groggeries that had preceded it. No single set of generalizations can do justice to the range of experiences, social styles, and cultural meanings embodied in the late nineteenth century saloon. Nevertheless, based on the limited available evidence, it does seem possible to argue that many Worcester saloons of the late nineteenth century reflected and reinforced a value system very much different from that which governed the dominant industrial, market, and social relations of that era.

Many observers trumpeted the saloon as "the rooster-crow of the spirit of democracy." It was, proclaimed the Reverend George L. McNutt, "the one democratic club in American life," the "great democratic social settlement." Of course, the saloon was much less open and democratic in fact than these commentators would have us believe. Most saloons at least informally barred members of the "wrong" sex, ethnic group, race, neighborhood, or occupation. Still, the commentators were partially right; the saloon was actually a "democracy" of sorts——an internal democracy where all who could safely enter received equal treatment and respect. An ethic of mutuality and reciprocity that differed from the market exchange mentality of the

dominant society prevailed within the barroom. Although collective and cooperative social relations were not the exclusive property of the immigrant working class, the saloon was one of the few late nineteenth century institutions that publicly and symbolically celebrated these alternative values.

Some understanding of the potential role of drink and the saloon in fostering this ethic of reciprocity and mutuality can be gained by looking at rural Ireland, the birthplace of many Worcester saloon patrons. "Drinking together," notes anthropologist Conrad Arensberg, "is the traditional reaffirmation of solidarity and equality among males" in Ireland. The most important drink custom for fostering such sentiments was "treating"——"a social law in Catholic Ireland enforced with all the vigour of a Coercion Act," according to one commentator. "If a man happens to be in an inn or public-house alone, and if any of his acquaintances come in, no matter how many, it is his duty to 'stand,' that is, to invite them to drink and pay for all they take....It is a deadly insult to refuse to take a drink from a man, unless an elaborate explanation and apology be given and accepted." Treating thus provided the nineteenth-century Irishman with a crucial means of declaring his solidarity and equality with his kin and neighbors.

These drink rituals were not an isolated sphere of Irish life; they were firmly embedded in a reciprocal life-style that governed at least some social relationships in the Irish countryside. Although the Irish rural economy was subject to external, exploitative, colonial rule, local social and economic relations were often based on a system of mutual rights and obligations rather than a rationalized market of monetary exchange. Helping a neighbor with a house-raising, for example, was often part of that local system of mutual obligation, which existed outside of the realm of direct cash exchange. The liberal provision of liquor at such an event offered a means of reciprocating, of symbolizing one's acceptance of the mutuality, friendliness, and communality on which it was based. A similar mentality lay behind the American work rituals of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth, such as the "chopping frolic," where it was "the practice to *treat* all who came to work." According to Robert Bales, when Irish farmers aided one another or the local gentry with harvesting, the only acceptable "payment" was the abundant provision of liquor, because "it had no utilitarian taint, but indicated good will and friendship, and because it was not in any exact sense 'payment in full' but implied a continued state of mutual obligation."

The precise connection between these reciprocal Irish drink customs and the rituals of Worcester saloons is difficult to demonstrate. Even less certain is how the prior background of other Worcester workers shaped their saloon behavior. What is striking, however, is the degree to which reciprocal modes——similar to those found in rural Ireland——seem to have operated within the new context of the ethnic working-class saloon. The most persuasive evidence of these modes is found in what the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor called "the prevailing custom of treating." Observers as diverse as Upton Sinclair, Jack London, Thorstein Veblen, and the Anti-Saloon League cited the centrality of treating in the saloon of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Here in noisy carousal," commented an 1871 observer, "the 'treat' goes round, the poor vanity of the free-hearted meets its reward, the mean man is scorned."

These treating rituals embodied a resistance of sorts to the transformation of social relationships into "commodities"——a means of preserving reciprocal modes of social interaction within a capitalist world. Jack London, for example, explained his realization of the non-economic mutuality behind treating: "I had achieved a concept. Money no longer counted. It

was comradeship that counted." This ethic was probably strongest in the least commercialized saloons and drink places. Patronage of the shebeen, for example, rested on larger notions of communal obligation for the well-being of widows. Similarly, when Worcester City Marshal Drennan caught John Mehan illegally serving liquor on a Sunday in 1880, Mehan simply explained that "he was treating some friends and a greenhorn (girl) named Leonard." Bridget McCarthy offered precisely the same explanation for the illegal liquor trade going on in her house. In a sense, these may not have been alibis: The system of treating was based on an ethic of mutuality that was simply not reducible to the sort of market exchange that the police sought as proof of illegal liquor sales.

Of course, this was only partially true. The saloon was an increasingly commercial institution and alcohol was a commodity to be bought and sold. Veblen even explained treating as a working-class variant of "conspicuous consumption." Temperance reformers complained that saloonkeepers manipulated "hospitality" and the "social instinct" to their own economic advantage. In an editorial calling "treating" the "curse of this age in the U.S." a Worcester Catholic temperance newspaper described what it saw as the saloonkeeper's manipulation: "If two men not previously acquainted...come into his bar-room together...he introduces them and sets the ball rolling. Two or three rounds of drink are not enough for him. He is getting the money. So he produces the dice box and proposes 'to shake' for the drinks. He never lets up as long as his customers can stand on their feet and there is any money in sight."

Although few saloonkeepers so baldly "traded" on the "social instinct," saloongoers did increasingly enact their reciprocal treating rituals within the commercialized confines of the saloon. Despite the contradiction, the prevalence and persistence of the custom points to a continuing predilection for reciprocal forms of social interaction. Itself a product of a commercializing society, the saloon became a refuge for values implicitly hostile to such a society.

As "a norm of equality and solidarity," treating rituals implied resistance to individualism as well as acquisitiveness. Indeed, the whole saloongoing experience affirmed communal over individualistic and privatistic values. After 1800, historian W. J, Rorabaugh notes, "drinking in groups...became a symbol of egalitarianism. All men were equal before the bottle." Inebriation further encouraged the breaking down of social barriers. For some, to be sure, saloongoing was a solitary experience, but for most it was a group activity. It was a way of carousing with friends, neighbors, and fellow workers whom one could not (or should not) bring into the home. And because such socializing took place outside the home, it was more of a public occasion, and therefore open to a much wider group than the kinfolk that one might normally bring into the home. More than just the size of the gathering, the nature of the event——the drinking, singing, talking, card playing, billiard shooting——brought workers together for a collective public sharing of their recreation. As such, the saloon rejected the developing individualistic, privatistic, and family-centered values of the dominant society.

The saloon clashed with the values of industrial America not just in its communality and mutuality but also in the unwillingness of some patrons to endorse fully the work ethic of that society. Critics of drinking frequently lumped together the very rich and the very poor as unproductive classes "most exposed to the temptation of intemperate drinking." Employers, beginning in Ichabod Washburn's day, depicted drinking as a major threat to steady work habits.

Thus, the Washburn and Moen Wire Manufacturing Company petitioned against saloons in the vicinity of their North Works because “the opportunities for slipping into a dram shop either on the way to work or from work, make it so much easier for the men to squander their wages which means a lessening of their efficiency for us.”

Not only did drinking and the squandering of wages lead to a loss of work efficiency; it also made it difficult for workers to move ahead in socially approved ways. Temperance advocates repeatedly pointed out that the money spent on drink might instead go toward “a modest working class home.” The Worcester Five Cents Savings Bank, “the poor man’s bank,” claimed a one-third increase in local deposits during one no-license year. “It cannot be emphasized too strongly,” Stephan Thernstrom writes in his study of nineteenth-century social mobility, “that the real estate holdings and savings accounts of Newburyport laborers depended on underconsumption....A recreational luxury like drinking, for example, was out of the question.” Moreover, it was the sober and thrifty worker who might win the approval of his employer or learn new skills and advance occupationally. It was perhaps no accident that unskilled workers predominated among those arrested for drunkenness. Drinking and saloongoing could represent a rejection——albeit not an articulated rejection——of, the dominant social mobility ideology of nineteenth-century America.

The rejection of the success ideal was far from total. Ironically, saloonkeeping was the most accessible means of upward social mobility for immigrants. More than three-quarters of Worcester’s Irish immigrants who had become small proprietors by 1900 were engaged in some aspect of the liquor trade. Still, even these exemplars of immigrant success were not always models of acquisitive individualism, as the R. G. Dun and Company reports demonstrate. Arguably, then, the saloon culture partook of a larger suspicion of materialism and ambition that was common among many immigrant groups, particularly the Irish. As Timothy J. Meagher points out in his study of the Worcester Irish, even Catholic clergy like the Reverend John J. McCoy and the Reverend Thomas Conaty, “who enthusiastically celebrated American opportunity before assemblies of Catholic young men, frequently blasted ‘wild ambition’ and praised resignation to low status in their Sunday pulpits.” Material success was often depicted as a threat to the maintenance of more important ethnic, religious, and spiritual values.

Not only did the saloongoers implicitly question and sometimes explicitly reject the goals and values of industrial society, such as homeownership, thrift, social mobility, and punctuality; they also often found themselves in direct legal conflict with the police authorities. Most commonly, this happened through public drunkenness, by far the most common late nineteenth century “crime”——an offense that accounted for approximately 60 percent of all arrests in Worcester in these years. Moreover, patrons sometimes joined with saloonkeepers in such illegal pursuits as gambling, prizefighting, and cockfighting. Nineteenth century saloon patrons thus found themselves part of a culture that operated outside of, if not against, the formal legal system.

Finally, and in a rather complex way, saloon culture increasingly clashed with the dominant culture because it segregated leisure by gender in a society in which family-centered recreation was becoming the middle-class norm. Women temperance advocates, argues a recent historian, sought “to curb the self-assertive, boisterous masculinity of the saloon, to support and protect the family, and to return the husband——the immigrant workingman in particular——to

the home." "The purpose of prohibition," agrees another historian, "was to protect the values sheltered by the American nuclear family."

This analysis should not imply that working-class women did not drink. As suggested previously, women were present in——and often ran——the kitchen dives that predominated earlier in the nineteenth century. Even after the emergence of the saloon as a spatially distinct and usually male institution, many immigrant working-class women continued to drink. One grim indicator of this pattern comes from the statistics on alcohol-related deaths. Among the Irish, at least, male and female rates in the late nineteenth century are remarkably close. Most commonly, female drinking seems to have taken place at home. A study of Boston's South End in the 1890s notes that although "women...are forbidden by police regulation to patronize the bar-rooms," the "liquor habit...is practically universal among both men and women."

Some women——German and English immigrants, for example——did drink in saloons, but these few exceptions emphasize the character of the saloon as "essentially a male refuge" pervaded by an "aura of freewheeling masculinity." As a historian of Denver saloons observes, "the obsession with virility, with potency, with body building, with sports that characterized turn-of-the-century America permeated the saloon." In this context, hard drinking was an expression of both "hospitality and manliness." Significantly, even where women entered the saloon, they seem to have been excluded from "treating," which according to one commentator served as a "ritual of masculine renewal."

In its maleness and gender segregation, the saloon both challenged and affirmed the dominant culture. On the one hand, the saloon was a male institution in an era when the middle-class ideal was increasingly that of family-centered leisure. On the other hand, both the saloon and the bourgeois family mandated subservient roles for women. Thus, whereas saloongoers apparently departed from some of the basic values of industrial America, they nevertheless shared some of its deepest patriarchal assumptions.

In general, however, the saloon stood outside the dominant cultural values of the late nineteenth century, even if neither the saloon nor its patrons mounted an organized or disciplined challenge to those values. In Raymond Williams's terms, the culture of the saloon was "alternative," that of "someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone with it," rather than "oppositional," that of "someone who finds a different way to live and wants to change society in its light." Thus, Worcester saloongoers may have shared the "conservative and defensive culture" that John Bodnar finds among Slavic-American industrial workers. Such a culture, Bodnar argues, was a synthesis of earlier peasant values with the exigencies of survival in urban, industrial, capitalist America. Among the dimensions of this culture were limited occupational mobility, traditional family ties, retention of ethnic culture, antimaterialism, and collectivism. Unlike British workers, who responded to industrialization with class combativity, Bodnar's Slavic workers——and Worcester saloongoers——adopted a conservative, defensive posture as the best means of coping with the new economic order.

The nineteenth-century ethnic working-class saloon, then, was a form of both accommodation and resistance to the capitalist order that workers faced. Unlike a trade union or a socialist party, the saloon did not openly confront or challenge the dominant society, though neither did it embrace the values and practices of that society. Instead, it offered a space in which immigrants could preserve an alternative, reciprocal value system. This was only partially an act

of historical preservation, for the saloon was a new institution and, as such, was a creative response by immigrants to the trials of late nineteenth century urban life. The creation of such new, urban working-class styles, note two urban anthropologists, “is a living continuation, an active development and constant reworking of...traditions.” Workers, they conclude, not only “survive and build the industrial economy, the cities, and transportation networks, but they also create distinctive cultures.” The nineteenth-century saloon was one of the central institutions of that distinctive culture.