

**LEVEL PLAYING FIELDS:  
THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF AMATEUR SPORT IN PENNSYLVANIA**

by

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## **Level Playing Fields: The Democratization of Amateur Sport in Pennsylvania**

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This dissertation examines how amateur sports once dominated and controlled by Pennsylvania's Leisure Class became accessible to non-elites over the course of the twentieth century. Rising standards of living and increased leisure time were pre-requisites for broader public participation. But this study argues that the democratization of amateur sport depended on the active intervention of the state and, to a lesser extent, the market, both of which broadened access to privately controlled playing fields. In hunting, state game management restored wild game populations, thus ensuring a bountiful supply of game for all Pennsylvanians, irrespective of social class. Likewise, the first municipally owned golf courses, often situated in public parks, offered the only alternative to the private courses which up to that point dominated the game and regulated participation. Finally, the market-driven demand for new sources of "football material" on college campuses opened opportunities for working-class student athletes, most of whom were recruited and subsidized by wealthy alumni.

Many of these changes were set in motion by elites acting in their own self interest. Over time, though, the democratization of amateur sports became a goal in itself. During the 1910s, the state game commission shifted its emphasis from game propagation and game law enforcement to the acquisition of public game lands, a policy focus which benefited hunters without access to private property. In golf, a second wave of municipal courses, many billed as

“people’s country clubs” and fortified by federal money, were designed to be accessible to the greatest number of people, and without the membership restrictions which obtained at many early public courses.

While the social composition of amateur sports continued to expand after World War II, the market played an increasingly more visible role in that process, as evinced by growth of semi-public golf courses and the increased prevalence of leased or privately owned hunting grounds. Elites frequently responded to the “crowding of the playing fields” by retreating or refortifying boundaries within these same sports.

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My first exposure to the power of public history came while researching the history of Homestead, Pennsylvania for a major museum exhibit in 1989. I feel grateful that I have been able to continue to mine the rich veins of Pennsylvania's past. Many of the ideas explored in this study were incubated during various public history projects. I'm grateful to the people I've met along the way and the distinctive Pennsylvania places I've had the opportunity to explore. I'd also like to thank the legion of archivists, staff librarians and civil servants who tirelessly pulled boxes, sorted through source material, and excavated long forgotten government documents, especially Frank Kurtik and Becky Abromitis, both formerly with Hillman Library's Special Collections; Denise Conklin at Penn State's Labor Archives; Patti Moran at the USGA Golf House; Joe Kosack at the Pennsylvania Game Commission; and the excellent and dedicated staff of both the State Archives and the State Library of Pennsylvania.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the year 1900 a poor boy had little chance to excel in amateur sport . . . The Whitmans and Larneds, the Egans and Traveses, were men of substance and position. In all, only six thousand persons were engaged in sport of any kind. Today, the champions come from anywhere . . .

John R. Tunis

This study began with a simple observation: the sports of the leisure classes have become the sports of the leisured masses.

Consider golf. Today, the sport's popularity is so broadly based and so widely accepted that it hardly warrants comment. By contrast, at the turn of the last century, the game was synonymous with the Leisure Class. Per Thorstein Veblen, golf was the perfect specimen of conspicuous consumption; "its reputability lies in its element of waste." The game may or may not have been a waste of time and money, but playing it required time and money to waste – a point with which H.L. Mencken, who otherwise took umbrage with Veblen's characterizations, agreed. Elites gravitated to the links precisely because they had the wherewithal to do so. For the Leisure Class, golf was as much about conferred social status as it was about sand traps and putting greens.<sup>1</sup>

In 1900, it would have been unthinkable for ordinary Americans to have even considered taking up golf, or any of the other amateur pursuits of the day, including college football and

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<sup>1</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1999); H.L. Mencken, "Professor Veblen" *Prejudices: First Series* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1919) and *Baltimore Evening Sun*, 9 November 1948.

hunting. At least in its amateur varieties, sport generally was understood to be the domain of elites. Pictures here were worth their proverbial thousand words. Consider that of a retired but still vigorous Andrew Carnegie demonstrating proper driving form at the St. Andrews course in Yonkers; or that of Theodore Roosevelt, the embodiment of the Strenuous Life, posing alongside one of his Big Game trophies; or more generally, that of long-haired young footballers from Princeton and Yale, lounging informally in their lettermen sweaters for their college annual.

These sorts of photographs can be found on the pages of history books. But if one digs deeper, one finds another set of images. In the administrative files of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, for instance, there are dozens of black-and-white photographs from the 1930s and 1940s showing hunters, outfitted in common street clothes, posing with their first white-tailed deer, invariably strapped to the hood of a car. There are also from the same period, scattered throughout faded scrapbooks now in the collections of the State Museum of Pennsylvania, newspaper clippings of hard-nosed football players such as Chuck Bednarik, the son of a Slovak steelworker, on his way to All-American status at Penn; or that of Andy Szwedko, the golfing steelworker, photographed in one frame hunched over machinery at his day job in a Pittsburgh steel plant, and in the next, swinging confidently through the final tee at the 1939 National Public Links championship.

The striking contrast between these two sets of images was my first clue that something had changed. The interviews I conducted in the late 1980s while researching the history of Homestead, Pennsylvania supplied another. Homestead occupies hallowed ground in American labor history. It was here that skilled craftsmen in 1892 battled Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick (or more specifically, armed Pinkerton detectives under their hire) for control of the industrial workplace. The Homestead Strike of 1892 represented the last gasp of the waning

“craftsmen’s empire.” My interview subjects had no direct connection to these events, but they were by-products of the legacy. Most were old enough to remember the dark days which preceded industrial unionism, and had worked long enough to enjoy the fruits of postwar prosperity and union-derived benefits. They epitomized the “blue-collar aristocrats” rediscovered by labor and social activists in the 1960s and 1970s.

The stories these men told addressed familiar themes: the danger and drudgery of factory work; the politics of organized labor; the struggle for decent wages and better working conditions; and bitterness over broken contracts and corporate short-sightedness. But when it came to discussing their lives outside the mill gate, it was not the corner saloon or the pool hall or any of the other “plebian amusements” commonly identified with the urban working class that loomed large, but golf. Most of these men had first taken up the game in the 1950s. Although they never joined a country club, thanks to company-organized leagues and local public courses, they spent as much time on the course as their “white hat” supervisors. Golf functioned as a release from the grind of factory work, and as a kind of social leavening. On the golf course, occupational and social class distinctions faded away over discussions of tricky doglegs and fast greens. Out on the fairways, they seemed to say, we are all the same.

The idea that amateur sports could function as common ground between workers and managers seemed remarkable, especially given the way in which such pastimes were assumed to be synonymous with power and privilege. But as the images and the interviews suggested, during the first half of the twentieth century, something clearly had changed. This present study stemmed from my interest in tracing not so much what happened but how. The starting points and the end points were self evident; what was less clear to me was what transpired in between. This required filling the gap between the conventional wisdom (and scholarship) regarding the

relationship between sport and social class, and what I intuited to be both the present and historical social reality. Andrew Carnegie could have hardly imagined that a sport he had taken up after he had made his millions would become the sport of millions. But that is precisely what happened. This study seeks to document how.

\* \* \*

During the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century, amusements and sport occupied a relatively small corner of the American experience, and for obvious reasons. The daily business of survival yielded very little time for it. “Leisure time,” such as it was, was participatory, informal, and often seamlessly integrated into the daily rhythms of agricultural and craft work. But as the United States transitioned from a pre-industrial to an industrial economy, leisure became a more significant, and discreet, preoccupation. One of the consequences of the new factory system was the strict separation of work time from leisure time, and the stratification of leisure based on social class. In the late nineteenth century, the distribution of the “leisure dividend” was notoriously uneven, as evinced by Veblen’s musings on America’s self-consciously constructed “Leisure Class” on the one hand and Jacob Riis’s grim portrait of “how the other half lived.” As the twentieth century wore on, a steadily rising standard of living and greater material wealth translated into higher levels of consumption, and presumably greater varieties of leisure-time activities – albeit in increasingly more “commodified” forms.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Overviews of leisure in the United States can be found in Kathryn Grover, *Hard at Play: Leisure in America, 1840-1940* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992) and *Fitness in American Culture: Images of Health, Sport and the Body, 1830-1940* (Rochester, N.Y.: Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, 1989); Witold Rybczynski, *Waiting for the Weekend* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1991) and Richard Butsch, ed., *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991). As the

Labor historians were among the first to consider the social implications of these changes, especially for workers. Historians such as E.P. Thompson and Herbert Gutman led the way; by moving beyond the shop floor, they argued, historians might uncover new perspectives on social-class identity, class formation and inter-class relations.<sup>3</sup> Beginning in the 1970s, American labor historians began a serious inquiry into how nineteenth-century workers used their leisure time. Their findings underscored the surprising degree to which leisure reflected and amplified divisions in the industrial workplace. Much as skilled artisans sought to retain craft-based work traditions, they also sought to control their own leisure. Roy Rosenzweig's path-breaking study of nineteenth-century Worcester, Massachusetts, revealed that workers clung tenaciously to participatory, pre-industrial leisure ways, from neighborhood saloons to raucous celebrations of public holidays, even as their workplace autonomy eroded. Workers also consciously resisted efforts of reformers to censor "plebian amusements" and impose middle-class behavioral norms on the conduct of public holidays such as the Fourth of July. The flood of cheap commercial amusements after the turn of the century posed another threat to these pre-industrial traditions, but workers nonetheless continued to "shape their own play."<sup>4</sup>

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subtitle to Butsch's edited volume implies, leisure has been folded into the social history of consumerism. The literature on this subject is considerable. See Susan Strasser et al., eds., *Getting and Spending: American and European Consumer Society in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 1998); Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); David Horowitz, *The Morality of Spending: Attitudes toward the Consumer Society in America, 1875-1940* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); and Lawrence Glickman, ed., *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> E.P. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966); Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Vintage, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> Case studies that focus on the nineteenth century "workers world" include Bruce Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980); Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976); Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).



Most case studies of popular leisure emphasized the degree to which workers actively and consciously “resisted” new leisure forms, whether imposed by upper-class reformers or huckstered by entrepreneurs. But according to Frances Couvares, it was the middle and upper classes – not stoic craftsmen – who ultimately won the “struggle over leisure” in rapidly industrializing American cities such as Pittsburgh. Up until the Civil War, artisans dominated both the form and content of the Iron City’s public culture. But as the wage-based factory system became entrenched after 1877, longstanding plebian traditions, from firemen’s parades to public rowing competitions, faded. Not content to merely own and control the means of production, the city’s economic elites strove to set the tone of Pittsburgh’s public life as well. Under the banner of moral reform, social elites mounted campaigns to either eradicate or censor traditional working-class diversions. In their place they imposed supervised playgrounds, public parks and multi-use libraries administered according to middle-class notions of proper behavior.<sup>5</sup>

It was during this period that Pittsburgh’s new elites first embraced amateur sports. During the 1890s, the city’s suburban East End experienced a “delightful epidemic” of golf and other field sports. Elites also competed in team sports, especially college football, partly to project their “activism and self assertion” and partly as a display of “class consciousness.” Sport hunting became an abiding passion as well. The city’s first members-only hunting clubs were established in the 1870s. Those who could afford the annual fees availed themselves of “spacious woodland preserves and well equipped lodges.” Many were no doubt genuinely attracted to the Great Outdoors, but like other club activities, hunting derived much of its appeal from the status which it conferred on those who could afford the time and money to participate.

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<sup>5</sup> Frances Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1984); Curtis Miner, “The ‘Deserted Parthenon’: Class, Culture and the Carnegie Library of Homestead,” *Pennsylvania History* 57 (April 1990): 107-135.

By creating a social life centered on amateur field sports, “the Pittsburgh social elite, which had hitherto been neither a leisure class nor a ruling class . . . [became] both.”<sup>6</sup>

The growth of commercial amusements expanded the varieties of leisure available especially to the urban working class, but it did not significantly alter this arrangement. According to Kathy Peiss, movie theaters, commercial dance halls and other forms of mass entertainment offered a transient liberation for New York “factory girls.” Within such establishments, young single women were able to exercise a degree of independence denied them by traditional working-class culture. Other historians have taken this interpretation one step further. In her study of Chicago’s workers between the world wars, for instance, Lizbeth Cohen argued that commercial entertainments created a common mass culture that in turn helped bridge ethnic divisions and seed class solidarity. The mass culture of the 1920s made possible the industrial unionism of the 1930s. But movie theaters and trolley parks did little if anything to eradicate the cultural walls that separated urban workers from elites. In some respects, the upper class after the turn of the century retreated even further into its clubby enclaves of high culture and amateur sport.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Couvares, *Remaking of Pittsburgh*, 96, 103-104, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); and David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). Liz Cohen argued this point most forcefully in her study of Chicago’s workers between the world wars. Cohen found that the rise of movies and other popular urban entertainments had by the 1920s created a shared culture among Chicago’s ethnic and religiously diverse workforce. By helping break down ethnic group loyalties, mass culture paved the way for the industrial union movement of the 1930s. But while the new forms of “cheap amusements” helped bridge divisions within social groups, they did little if anything to break down boundaries between social classes, as expressed through leisure. Social elites remained aloof from dance halls, movie theaters and amusement parks as they did from saloons and Fourth of July celebrations of the nineteenth century. Elites participated in amateur sports, for interest, with the same enthusiasm in the twentieth as they pursued during the late nineteenth. See Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

As the twentieth century wore on, the material circumstances for most Americans improved markedly, but even the fabled rise in the standard of living and hyper-consumerism after World War II had little effect on the relationship between leisure and social class. That, at least, is the conclusion one derives from contemporary studies conducted by sociologists and anthropologists. Workers were eager to acquire refrigerators, appliances and other accoutrements of middle-class life, but reluctant to abandon class and ethnic distinctions in leisure. In his ethnography of Boston's Italian Americans, Herbert Gans argued that urban ethnics remained separate even as their material prospects improved. Much like nineteenth-century craftsmen, Gans' subjects hewed to traditional leisure ways, even as they continued to acquire modern consumables. E. E. LeMasters' participant observer study of "blue-collar aristocrats" in Madison, Wisconsin reached a similar conclusion. Although well paid in relation to earlier generations of skilled workers, LeMasters's working-class stiff showed a decided preference for traditional plebian pursuits, rooted in the corner tavern. Studies focused on the other end of the social spectrum reinforced the point. Amateur sports such as golf continued to play to just one side; for C. Wright Mills' "Power Elite," for instance, golf functioned to reaffirm social bonds and class solidarity.<sup>8</sup>

As these examples suggest, most postwar sociologies stressed the persistence of discreet, class-proscribed leisure and ignored or downplayed permutations. More recent studies have not been significantly more nuanced. Labor historians who have willingly "crossed the great divide"

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<sup>8</sup> Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: Free Press, 1962). E.E. LeMasters coined the term "blue-collar aristocrats" for the title of his book. See *Blue-Collar Aristocrats: Life-Styles at a Working-Class Tavern* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975). LeMasters' findings have been reconfirmed by numerous other studies, including William Kornblum's *Blue-Collar Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). Comparable insights into upper-class life-styles can be gleaned from C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956) and E. Digby Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* (New York: Random House, 1964) and *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1958).

of postwar America to study their subjects note impressive gains in the standard of living; it was during this period that blue-collar workers joined the middle class to create, in the words of Liz Cohen, a “republic of consumers.” But the degree to which Detroit’s autoworkers or New Jersey’s blue-collar suburbanites partook of traditionally upper-class leisure forms and sport remains unknowable, primarily because the question goes unasked. In his study of New Jersey chemical factory workers, for instance, David Halle noted an unusual enthusiasm for golf; “it is a passion that absorbs much of their spare time during the season.” But Halle merely catalogs the observation and moves on.<sup>9</sup>

It may be understandable why labor histories sidestep such issues. It is less clear why historians of American sport have overlooked them as well. Overviews of sport and American society have almost instinctively emphasized stratification, beginning with the bifurcation of leisure in the late nineteenth century. In his otherwise thoughtful study of sports in urban America, for instance, Steven Riess assigns golf and college football to elites, while the saloon and prizefighting are left to the masses. Elliot Gorn and Warren Goldstein reiterate those same groupings in their historical overview of American sports. Working-class participation in sport is largely limited to distinctively urban contests such as bowling, boxing, or for the handful of athletically gifted among them, professional sports. The description is reasonably accurate for

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<sup>9</sup> Historians have recently begun to examine the impact of postwar consumerism on American workers. See Ronald Edsforth, ed., *Popular Culture and Political Change in Modern America* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1991) and *Class Conflict and Cultural Consensus: The Making of a Mass Consumer Society in Flint, Michigan* (Rutgers, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Charles McGovern, “Consumerism and Citizenship” in Strasser et al., eds., *Getting and Spending*, 37-58; Glickman, *A Living Wage*; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003); and David Halle, *America’s Working Man: Work, Home, and Politics Among Blue-Collar Property Owners* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). Since labor historians typically have been intent on establishing the persistence of social class distinctions and inequality, their tendency to overlook evidence to the contrary is unsurprising. The consequence is that studies of postwar consumerism have simply not added much nuance to our understanding of the relationship between leisure – especially participation in amateur sports – and social class.

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it begins to fray during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>10</sup>

One reason for this static interpretation is that analyses of trends in American sports rarely venture very far into the twentieth century. Riess ends his survey in 1920. Gorn and Goldstein end their account later, but focus primarily after 1920 on the rise of mass spectator sports. The dark shadow of “commercialization,” whether manifested through the business of professional sport, the corruption of intercollegiate athletics, or the impact of television on sporting contests, colors almost all post World War II surveys. Struggles for racial integration and gender equality during the postwar decades have received considerable attention, but social class as a category of analysis disappears almost entirely. The implication for sport and society, although generally unstated, is clear: while the masses watched sports, and occasionally took them up as professions, elites continued to play them, almost always as amateurs competing for the love of the game.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Steven A. Riess, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press), *Sport in Industrial America, 1850-1920* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1995); and “From Pitch to Putt: Sport and Class in Anglo-American Sport,” *Journal of Sport History* 21 (Summer 1994): 138-184. On prizefighting as working-class sport, see Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America*. Other histories which assign sports to relatively rigid social categories include Allen Guttman's *From Ritual To Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Stephen Hardy's *How Boston Played: Sport, Recreation and Community, 1865-1915* (Boston, Mass.: Northeastern University Press, 1982); Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-1870* (Urbana, Ill.: Illinois University Press, 1986); and Elliot Gorn and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993). Historians have periodically taken note of rising popular interest in such “rich men’s” sports as golf and college football, but they frequently base their arguments on rising spectator interest in professional versions of these sports. In his overview of American sports history, for instance, Benjamin Rader argues that “club sports” such as golf and tennis “went public” during the twentieth century. Unfortunately, by “going public,” he simply means that golf and tennis developed a spectator base, not a broader participant base. See Benjamin G. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990). 189-198.

<sup>11</sup> Randy Roberts and James Olson, eds., *Winning is the Only Thing: Sports in America since 1945* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Paul D. Staudohar and James Mangan, eds., *The Business of Professional Sports* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Joan M. Chandler, *Television and National Sport: The United States and Britain* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1988). On racial integration and sport, see Robert Peterson, *Only the Ball was White: A History of Legendary Black Players and All-Black Professional Teams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie*

One potential exception to this general rule was the Progressive-era public recreation movement. Sponsored by a loose alliance of reform politicians, urban planners and social workers, the movement promoted organized recreation and supervised team sports as antidotes to the perceived social disorder of American cities. Reformers initially targeted children and adolescents; the hope was to lure urban youth away from street corners and introduce them to more “healthful recreations.” In time, as Lawrence Finfer demonstrated, the project expanded to include adults and to a limited extent did succeed in spreading the gospel of physical recreation and sport. But the movement was both too short lived and too programmatically circumscribed to cross the great social divide that separated workers from elite amateur sport. Reformers tended to concentrate on basketball, calisthenics and other indoor recreations, mainly because these were perceived as better suited to urban environments. Pastimes that required more time, more space and more money – including golf, hunting and football – remained out of reach.<sup>12</sup>

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*Robinson and His Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Richard Pennington, *Breaking the Ice: The Racial Integration of Southwestern Conference Football* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1987); and Jeffrey Sammons’ chapter on professional boxing during the Civil Rights era in *Beyond the Ring: The Role of Boxing in American Society* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1988). The impact of women’s participation in sport is explored in Allen Guttmann, *Women’s Sports: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) and James A. Mangan and Roberta Park, *From “Fair Sex” to Feminism: Sport and the Socialization of Women in the Industrial and Post-Industrial Eras* (Totowa, N.J.: F. Cass, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> Lawrence Finfer provides an excellent overview of Progressive-era public recreation programs in “Leisure as Social Work in the Urban Community: The Progressive Recreation Movement, 1890-1920” (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1974). See also Andrea Tuttle Kornbluth, “Playing with Democracy: Municipal Recreation, Community Organizing, and Citizenship” in Robert B. Fairbanks and Patricia Mooney Melvin, eds., *Making Sense of the City: Local Government, Civic Culture and Community Life in Urban America* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2001). Dominick Cavallo’s *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981) and Mark Kadzielski’s “‘As a Flower Needs Sunshine’: The Origins of Organized Children’s Recreation in Philadelphia, 1886-1911,” *Journal of Sport History* 4 (Summer 1977): 169-188; analyze the movement’s most recognized public recreation program. Although the promotion of sports such as golf and football were not an explicit part of the Progressive agenda, the public recreation movement played an important albeit supporting (and often indirect) role in the subsequent democratization of those sports.

The failure of historians to address rising rates of participation in amateur sports could be excused if it were not for the fact that it was clearly more than just a permutation. In 1929, President Hoover's Research Committee on Social Trends drafted Jesse Steiner, a professor of sociology at the University of Washington, to author a study on "recent social trends in recreation and leisure." It was not the first time academicians had expressed interest in what Americans did with their free time. By Steiner's own admission, examinations of the "leisure problem" had become something of a cottage industry. What distinguished his study was the approach: "The present study is not concerned with the promotion of any recreation program . . . Its distinctive feature is its effort to assemble from all available sources the material that would throw light on the recent progress in recreation and give some indication of the present trends." Steiner faced a Herculean task. "Existing recreational records are for the most part concerned with victories and championships rather than with growth of facilities, number of participants and per capita cost." Nonetheless, Hoover's recreation expert managed to assemble an impressive body of data, from baseball park attendance figures to the aggregate value of billiard tables.<sup>13</sup>

His major finding: In just about every recreational activity, but most notably in sports once considered the province of elites, participation by ordinary Americans was on the rise. "Before the World War golf had made little headway outside of the larger cities and was played chiefly by those able to hold membership in country clubs," Steiner reported in a chapter titled "The Rising Tide of Sport." But between 1916 and 1923, the number of courses increased over 150%. Seven years later, by 1930, the number of courses nearly quadrupled. The astonishing

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<sup>13</sup> Jesse F. Steiner, *Americans at Play: Recent Trends in Recreation and Leisure-Time Activities* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1933) ix-xi.

growth of golf underscored a much broader trend. “Whereas the earlier period . . . may be characterized as a pioneer recreational era when athletics was brought within reach of the few, this second period stands out because of its emphasis upon athletics for the many. . . . For the first time in our history the crowds watching professional games are matched by the large numbers of people thronging the golf courses, tennis courts and playfields.” Americans, Steiner concluded, were becoming “a nation of players” who “insist[ed] upon the[ir] right to participate in those . . . sports which traditionally belonged only to the favored few.”<sup>14</sup>

By the time *Americans at Play* was published in late 1933, the crisis of the Great Depression had forced this theme to the top of the national agenda. President Roosevelt’s first major unemployment relief program, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), dedicated most of its resources to refurbishing the nation’s park system and improving recreational facilities therein. By the mid-1930s, other New Deal agencies, including the Civilian Works Agency (CWA) and of course the Works Progress Administration (WPA), were supplementing the work of the CCC in a major way. Drawing on the labor of idled hands, the WPA and CWA built “tens of thousands of swimming pools, and tennis courts, golf courses and playing grounds and hundred of municipal parks.” While it is impossible to arrive at a definitive figure – recreation-related projects spread across a myriad of agencies – one commentator surmised that the influx of federal money advanced the cause of public recreation by thirty years.<sup>15</sup>

Improvements to the nation’s parks and playgrounds were first and perhaps foremost to many a means to an end – namely, unemployment relief. Local politicians embraced parks projects, for instance, because they took hundreds off the dole and beautified cities and towns at

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<sup>14</sup> *Recent Social Trends in the United States, Volume 2: Report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends, With a Foreword by Herbert Hoover* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933); Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 70-76.

<sup>15</sup> *Recent Social Trends*, 912; Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985); Max Kaplan, *Leisure in America: A Social Inquiry* (New York: Wiley, 1960), 142.



the same time. But the federal investment in public recreation facilities also advanced the New Deal's political objectives, especially its ideological commitment to the Forgotten Man. By building more facilities where Americans could recreate and play, the New Deal helped redistribute the nation's historically unequal leisure dividend. Sportswriter John Tunis, who was himself a formidable amateur tennis player while at Harvard, was one of many who cheered on the "important if too little publicized" increase in public golf courses and tennis courts in city parks. "The greatest good of the greatest number was the new keynote of recreation," another observer wrote. "The sign "Keep off the Grass" grew rarer."<sup>16</sup>

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Tunis and other commentators were correct in sensing that the fortifications that once guarded amateur sport had been breached. But in their enthusiasm for the New Deal, they were inclined to give too much credit to the federal government. To be sure, the WPA and other agencies contributed substantially to the nation's public recreation infrastructure during the 1930s, but as Steiner noted, the trend toward broader participation in sport was already well underway by then. At the same time, the conventional explanation for this latest "revolution" – increased amounts of leisure, higher standards of living, and more liberal attitudes toward Sunday recreation – was not entirely satisfactory either. Time and money were clearly important prerequisites to participation in such sports; both were partly what attracted the interest of elites in the first place. But sufficient leisure time and disposable income were just two of the obstacles. More

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<sup>16</sup> John Tunis, *Democracy and Sport* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1941); Dixon Wecter, *The Age of the Great Depression 1929-1941* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), 224-225.

significant still were other barriers, both physical and social, that limited participation to a relatively narrow segment.<sup>17</sup>

One barrier was the “amateur code.” In its broadest sense, the code embodied the rules which governed participation in amateur sports. In a most basic sense, it was defined by what it was not: playing sports for money. While professional athletes were primarily motivated by the profit incentive, amateurs found their inspiration from something more intangible, and presumably nobler. Amateurs competed just as hard as professionals, but also embraced, or at least professed to embrace, other ideals that together constituted “good sportsmanship”: self-sacrifice; teamwork; fairness; honesty, and so forth. As this suggests, the amateur ideal stressed the means over the ends of athletic competition. The amateur sportsman, in the words of Allen Sack, “took great pains to distance himself from the highly trained professional. . . Investing too much time and effort in one specialized activity would be plebian.”<sup>18</sup> It went without saying that gambling – a fixture of working-class amusements – had no place in amateur sport.

The definition of “amateur” varied according to the sport. The United State Golfing Authority (USGA) defined amateurs as those who played without compensation. Golf professionals or “pros” – a term which early on applied mainly to the Scottish nationals hired by clubs as instructors – were banned from competing in tournaments alongside amateurs. Competitions “open” to professionals ranked in term of social status well below those reserved for amateurs. In hunting, “sportsmen” were those who pursued game for “the thrill of the chase” rather than out of necessity, and according to a codified set of “field manners,” most notably the ethic of fair chase. By contrast, for both market and subsistence hunters, technique and field

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<sup>17</sup> Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 61.

<sup>18</sup> Allen L. Sack and Ellen J. Staurowsky, *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997).

manners took a back seat to killing game through the most expedient and profitable means available. In football, adjudicating amateur status was significantly more difficult. In theory, college football operated according to the rules of amateurism from the beginning. To remain “eligible,” players needed to be “regularly matriculated students” and could not compete for money. But critics frequently charged that subsidized student athletes were de facto professionals and that the emphasis on winning at all costs sidelined true amateurs. Francis Wallace, one of college football’s most perceptive observers, captured the sport’s peculiar status when he described it as an amateur sport “operated for profit.”<sup>19</sup>

The problem with the amateur code is that it invariably functioned as a class code. Amateur status in most cases was a luxury; only those of sufficient wealth and leisure were in a position to approach sports in this proscribed fashion. “Purist amateurism was in some ways an upper middle class stand about sports,” Reuel Denney observed while commenting on the development of American football. “It had the effect of penalizing men who combined amateur sports with industrial work.” Among the British aristocracy, to whom American sportsmen looked for inspiration in the late nineteenth century, the code was transparently discriminatory. The “mechanics clause” adopted by the Amateur Athletic Club of England in 1866 explicitly banned “mechanics, artisans [and] labourers” from competition. British rowing clubs widely adopted the clause. In the United States, such social proscriptions were more indirect, but perhaps just as exclusionary. “In practice, the amateur ideal was more of an excuse for discrimination than a philosophical commitment to the value of play,” Gorn and Goldstein have written. “Ultimately, the gentleman’s code was little more than a tool for shoring up social

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<sup>19</sup> Francis Wallace, *The Notre Dame Story* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1949), 28.

boundaries, one technique among many for an upper class to distance itself from an increasingly restless, even militant working class.”<sup>20</sup>

A second barrier to amateur sport was the private clubs which controlled them. Membership-based organizations performed several functions, one of which was strictly social: private clubs selected who could participate in a given sport, and who could not. The private, members-only country clubs which built and administered most golf courses in the United States prior to 1920 offer the best example, but private entities also governed participation in elite sports such as hunting and football. Joining a private club or lodge was effectively a prerequisite for sport hunting, especially in the game-scarce late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In football, private colleges and universities functioned as ersatz private clubs. Again, especially at the turn of the century but well into the twentieth, even “tramp athletes” were presumed to be from the same social class as the rest of the student body. Football entered the American sporting world under the auspices of colleges and universities; the most competitive football continued to be played there, even as professional football attracted a greater share of the market by the 1950s.

Private clubs also performed a more pragmatic function: they provided the financial means through which the “playing fields” were secured and maintained. One of the features which distinguished hunting, golf and football from other sports was their relatively heavy demands on land. Golf courses typically required at least 200 acres. Sport hunting required vastly more. Even football required considerable outlays of space, especially when compared to other organized team sports such as basketball. (One reason Progressive reformers opted for

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<sup>20</sup> Reuel Denney, *The Astonished Muse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 100; Sack, *College Athletes for Hire*, 15; Gorn and Goldstein, *American Sports*, 137-138.

basketball over football is that the former consumed far less space.) Private clubs were critical for raising the necessary capital – whether through dues, initiation fees or tuition – which could be applied to purchasing and leasing such playing fields. Over time, the expense of maintaining these sports grew as the grounds on which they were played became more elaborate. During the first half of the twentieth century, golf courses were designed and maintained to increasingly higher standards, hunting grounds required more actively managed game; and football fields frequently became encased in multi-million dollar concrete stadiums.

Broadening public participation entailed dismantling those barriers and leveling the playing fields, both literally and figuratively. In hunting and golf, public access hinged on alternatives to the prevailing model of private land ownership and clubs. Publicly owned playing fields, in the form of municipal golf courses and state game lands, opened those activities to new segments of the population. Taxes and other forms of public financing took the place of annual dues or membership fees, and distributed the cost of operating such facilities across a much broader population. With football, expanding public access depended on a more complex sequence of social and institutional changes that incrementally opened the doors to higher education itself – the de-facto club which governed participation. Although the state played some role in this, market forces primarily drove the democratization of college football.

Although expanding public participation in amateur sport was, as Steiner indicated, a national story which played out across the country, largely irrespective of regions and political boundaries, this investigation focuses the story on and within Pennsylvania. One reason for doing so is that it allows for the study of state-level policies and programs which played critical roles in establishing public access to sport. Game management comes especially to mind, but state government also had a hand in promoting, for instance, publicly funded high schools that in

turn impacted the changing social composition of college football teams. Confining this study to a single state also yields a level of detail regarding the process of social change that would be lost within a national survey.

Another reason for locating this study within Pennsylvania is the character of the state itself. During much of the period under discussion, the Commonwealth was the second most populous state in the country and by most every measure, proportionately one of the most significant. Pennsylvania's economic rise started with iron, anthracite, oil and other extractive industries derived from its significant mineral deposits; by the late nineteenth century, it had extended itself into steel, bituminous coal and coke, and textiles. In 1900, the Commonwealth ranked second to New York in the total valuation of its manufacturing concerns. Pennsylvania by that time produced almost all of the nation's coke, more than half of its iron and steel, and about 15% of its textiles. Around 1920, it was estimated that about a quarter of the state's workforce were directly employed in manufacturing; the state was home to just under 13% of all manufacturing workers in the country – again, a percentage second only to New York. Its industrial wealth was astonishing and the list of its fabled corporations seemingly endless: Carnegie, and later U.S. Steel; the Pennsylvania Railroad; Westinghouse; H.J. Heinz; Bethlehem Steel; Berwind White Coal Company – at one time the nation's largest operator of bituminous coal mines – and many others.<sup>21</sup>

Heavy industry influenced both the growth and the character of its population. Between 1880 and 1910, Pennsylvania's population nearly doubled, from 4.3 million to 7.7 million. The increase was felt especially in industrial centers such as Pittsburgh; between 1870 and 1910, its

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<sup>21</sup> David R. Contosta, "Reforming the Commonwealth: 1900-1950" in Randall M. Miller and William Pencak, eds., *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State Press, 2002), 260-267.

population grew by over 600% and pushed the Iron City from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the eighth largest city in the country. But Pennsylvania's growth spurt also fueled the development of places such as Scranton-Wilkes Barre, Allentown, Johnstown and Erie. Many of these mid-sized cities had their own manufacturing niches: textiles in Reading, steel in Johnstown, railroads in Altoona. Immigrants, initially from Western and Northern Europe, and then increasingly from Eastern and Southern Europe, found their way to most of the industrial corridors. By 1920, Pennsylvania had one of the highest proportions of foreign born in the country. Of its 8.7 million residents that year, 16% were born abroad and many more were the children of immigrants. In heavily industrialized counties of southwestern Pennsylvania, including Allegheny, the percentage of foreign born climbed well over 25%.<sup>22</sup>

Immigration, industrialization and urbanization enunciated distinctions between social classes. This was especially true in Western Pennsylvania, where a type of "industrial feudalism" took hold in the region's mill towns and mining districts. At the top of the scale, in the words of Francis Couvares, was the region's newly emergent Leisure Class – not just the mill owners but the legions of managers, white-collar professionals and others who lived in handsomely appointed streetcar suburbs and enjoyed the fruits of industrial capitalism. At the bottom of the scale was the region's considerable "other half": the immigrant masses who toiled long hours for low pay in the smoke belching mills, and huddled in overcrowded, substandard housing. Pittsburgh's "Dickensian" social conditions generated considerable attention, especially from social investigators working through the Russell Sage Foundation. But the

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<sup>22</sup> Susan B. Carter et al., eds., *Historical Statistics of the United States: Earliest Times to the Present. Millennial Edition. Volume One, Part A: Population* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 327; Campbell Gibson, *Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790-1990* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998), Tables 10 & 14; Edward K. Muller, "Industrial Suburbs and the Growth of Metropolitan Pittsburgh, 1870-1920," *Journal of Historical Geography* 27/1 (2001), 58-73.

Pittsburgh Survey (1909-1914) could have easily been duplicated in other industrial communities across the state, from Bethlehem in the east to Sharon in the west.<sup>23</sup>

Pennsylvania's extensive and largely immigrant working-class population; its visible and influential patrician class; and its various units of government, whether state, county or local, all play prominent roles in this story. So too does the Commonwealth's physical and social geography. Despite being pockmarked by heavy industry and densely settled in its southeastern and southwestern sections, Pennsylvania was still sufficiently large and physically diverse to accommodate the range of playing fields that figure into this story. The availability of timbered land in the state's northern tier was obviously critical for the development of sport hunting, and the state's impressive network of public game preserves. But as we will see in subsequent chapters, the spatial arrangement of its population – southwestern Pennsylvania's network of "industrial suburbs" for instance – generated a large enough market to support high school football and later, public golf courses, and the physical space on which to build them.

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This investigation is structured around case studies of three amateur sports which at the turn of the century were closely identified with Pennsylvania's new Leisure Class. Each case study begins by analyzing how and why social elites were drawn to the sport and the ways in which they controlled participation, mainly through private ownership of the playing fields. It then

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<sup>23</sup> Paul H. Kellog, ed., *The Pittsburgh Survey* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Published in multiple volumes between 1909-1914). See also, Maurine W. Greenwald and Margo Anderson, eds., *Pittsburgh Surveyed: Social Science and Social Reform in the Early Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996); and Samuel P. Hays, ed., *City at the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989).



documents the process through which broader public access to each sport was achieved. The state played an especially critical role here, but so too did market forces (especially in regard to college football). Each case study concludes by describing how the influx of non-elite participants, especially working-class Pennsylvanians, impacted each sport.

Chapter Two focuses on hunting, one of the first field sports embraced by Pennsylvania's Leisure Class. During late nineteenth century, dozens of private shooting clubs and an increasing number of enclosed private game preserves established themselves in the state's northern tier. By the 1890s, private, members-only hunting clubs owned and controlled some of the Commonwealth's best game lands. But the rapid depletion of game and natural habitats compelled sportsmen to lobby for state-directed game management. Initially, the policies and practices of the Pennsylvania Game Commission served the interests of upper-class urban sportsmen. But over time, the Commission began to undertake policies that laid the infrastructure for public hunting and opened access to non-elites, including legions of "hard hat" hunters from southwestern Pennsylvania.

The state played a comparable role in seeding broader public participation in golf, the subject of Chapter Three. Like hunting, golf at the turn of the century was a strictly private affair, monopolized by private country clubs in suburban Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Few pastimes were more closely intertwined with the Leisure Class. But much as sportsmen lobbied for state game management, upper-class amateur golfers lobbied municipal governments, especially parks departments, to construct golf courses within city limits. Many of the first municipal golf courses, although established on public land, operated as de-facto private clubs. But over time, often as a result of political pressure, such courses were compelled to open their fairways to ordinary Pennsylvanians and abolish quasi-private administration. By the late 1920s,

the movement for “free links” developed its own political momentum and gave way to a second generation of municipal courses designed from the beginning as “people’s country clubs.”

Government played more of a supporting role when it came to expanding participation in college football, the subject of Chapter Four. During an era in which less than ten percent of the college-aged population ever set foot on a university campus, college football was inherently exclusive. The growth of public high schools and interscholastic athletics helped introduce the sport to thousands of Pennsylvania schoolboys. But it was the market – in particular, the rise of competitive college athletics after World War I – that stimulated a demand for athletes from beyond conventional, upper-class sources and which compelled colleges and universities to develop a system for integrating working-class student athletes into colleges and onto their football teams. Pennsylvania’s mill towns and mining districts contributed disproportionately to these new sources of football material and literally changed the face of college football, not only at schools such as the University of Pittsburgh, but at “Big Time” college programs around the country.

Market forces continued to drive the democratization of college football after World War II. But as the closing chapter and epilogue argues, the market also began to play a more visible role in golf and hunting as well. This trend became most pronounced in golf, especially as suburbanization and other social changes created opportunities for private-sector alternatives to municipally-owned courses. In hunting, the state continued to direct game management, but it was forced to concede some ground to the private sector, especially when it came to recognizing the growth of private sportsmen’s clubs and the limitations of public game lands. Chapter Five closes with a discussion of the social and institutional changes in college football after World

War II and argues that as the “massification” of higher education and “proletarianization” of college gridirons continued, elites responded by withdrawing from Big Time college football.

## 2 JOINING THE CHASE: THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF SPORT HUNTING IN PENNSYLVANIA

I should much regret to see grow up in this country a system of large private game-preserves kept for the enjoyment of the very rich. One of the chief attractions of the life of the wilderness is its rugged and stalwart democracy; there every man stands for what he actually is and can show himself to be.

Theodore Roosevelt

If we keep on, conditions will become as they are in the Old Country, where the farmers lease their grounds to people who can afford to stock them with game . . .

John Phillips, *In the Open*

There is in fact better hunting in the Keystone State today than in many Western States famous for game. . . .The largest Legion of hunters in the Union walk the woods of Pennsylvania . . . many thousand of factory workers are able through the very attitude on the part of the authorities to enjoy the full joys of the chase.

Henry W. Shoemaker, *Pennsylvania Deer*

For most Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, the image of the recreational sport hunter in America was embodied by Theodore Roosevelt. Along with being the nation's most avid Big Game hunter, he was its most enthusiastic proselytizer. In 1887, Roosevelt established the exclusive, 100-member Boone and Crocket Club to promote a sportsmen-driven conservation ethos capable of influencing game management policies at both the federal and state level. He was also a tireless promoter of the sport's social benefits. Like other forms of strenuous outdoor

activity, Roosevelt believed that sport hunting offered Anglo-Saxon Americans an antidote to the “softening” of modern life.<sup>24</sup>

Pennsylvania was certainly not to be confused with the Western states frequented by Roosevelt and his peers, but its concentration of wealthy businessmen and industrialists, combined with its relatively wild northern tier, helped make it the most popular hunting state east of the Mississippi. Many high-born Pennsylvanians, including future forester and two-time governor Gifford Pinchot, were among the gentleman hunters who joined Roosevelt on the membership roster of the Boone and Crockett. And before it would become inextricably linked to one of the greatest natural disasters in American history, the South Fork Hunting and Fishing Club, located just outside of Johnstown, drew together some of the most famous names in Pennsylvania’s chapter of the Gilded Age, including such well-known Pittsburghers as Henry Clay Frick, Andrew Carnegie and Henry Phipps.<sup>25</sup>

Pennsylvania’s industrial and business elite embraced hunting as a social marker which signified not only wealth but membership in a refined leisure class with aristocratic bearings and taste. But by the middle of the twentieth century, the image of sport hunting as the domain of the privileged upper classes had changed. In Pennsylvania at least, the image of Theodore Roosevelt would be replaced by that of Michael Vronsky, the Pennsylvania steelworker-hero of Michael Cimino’s fictional Vietnam War epic, *The Deer Hunter*. Hunting still revealed itself to be enormously popular among city-bred sportsmen of Pennsylvania, but it was a popularity now primarily rooted in the urban working class rather than with its captains of industry. As early as

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Russell Cutright, *Theodore Roosevelt: The Naturalist* (New York: Harper, 1966), 68-79; Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1966. Originally published 1900); George B. Grinnell, *Brief History of the Boone and Crockett Club* (New York, 1910).

<sup>25</sup> David McCullough, *The Johnstown Flood* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1968), 39-78.

the 1930s, more hunting licenses were sold in heavily urbanized Pittsburgh and Allegheny County than anywhere else in the state. Elites still enjoyed “shooting,” but they clearly no longer comprised the majority of the state’s license holders. Most were hard-hat hunters.<sup>26</sup>

This shift seems inscrutable, particularly when one considers hunting’s upper-class origins, and the sport’s limited appeal and access to other social classes. At the turn of the century, Pennsylvania’s densely settled urban and industrial neighborhoods did not represent prime markets for recreational hunting. Indeed, as revealed in the plethora of social studies generated by Western Pennsylvania’s Dickensian living and working conditions, hunting was simply not part of the social world of most mill workers. And yet over the course of the twentieth century, urban-industrial workers from here and elsewhere came to constitute a significant albeit largely unacknowledged and undocumented segment of American hunters, both for small game such as rabbit and squirrel, but also increasingly for large game such as deer and bear.<sup>27</sup>

Historians of sport and society have not accounted for this transition. Although most acknowledge the importance and persistence of hunting among rural, native-born Americans, sport or recreational hunting has largely been interpreted within the context of social elites and

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Cimino (director) *The Deer Hunter* (Universal Studios, 1978). The Pennsylvania Game Commission began collecting statistics on hunting license sales, by county, in 1938. From 1938 to 1998, Allegheny County consistently reported higher sales than any other county in the state. It was not simply a function of population. Although Philadelphia County had, on average, three times as many residents, on average, as Allegheny County, it generated on average about one-third the number of licenses. *Pennsylvania Game Commission Data Book* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Game Commission, c. 1998).

<sup>27</sup> For most industrial workers at the turn of century, leisure-time activities were limited to “cheap amusements” in mill-town commercial districts, as revealed by the Pittsburgh Survey (1909-1914). See, for instance, Margaret Byington, *Homestead: Households of a Mill Town* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910), 110-114. Recreational hunting also failed to make the list of leisure-time activities identified by Philip Klein in his 1938 de-facto sequel to the Pittsburgh survey. The omission is most likely the result of Klein’s emphasis on organized recreation. Philip Klein, *A Social Study of Pittsburgh: Community Problems and Social Services of Allegheny County* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 838-876.

“status building.” Even when interest in leisurely hunting turned to more serious matters, such as land and habitat preservation, upper-class hunters led the charge. Thus, historians such as John Reiger have correctly focused on the role of wealthy sportsmen in the history of the early conservation movement, but ignore the degree to which working-class Americans, particularly urban-industrial workers in the twentieth century, began permeating the sport during the twentieth century. In a similar fashion, Louis Warren has examined the conflict between patrician sportsmen and market hunters over issues such as conservation and game management, but overlooks the large numbers of blue-collar, urban hunters who did not fit comfortably into either category.<sup>28</sup>

Journalists have been more cognizant of this demographic. In his 1990 book *Buck Fever*, Mike Sajna tracked a group of hunters from the steel towns of Western Pennsylvania as they indulged in their seasonal ritual in search of white-tailed deer. Sajna documents the Pennsylvania deer hunting tradition from a variety of perspectives, including a natural history of the target game animal, but he is at his best when describing the cultural milieu: the blue-collar camaraderie and social bonding, vivid sense of place, and striking contrasts between the wilds of the state’s northern tier and the emphatically gritty urban neighborhoods from which most hunters came. But his largely anecdotal account offers little explanation for how this particular segment of hunters emerged, especially given the sport’s patrician origins.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See John Reiger’s *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986) and Louis Warren’s *The Hunter’s Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997). British historians have been more conscious of the relationship between social class and hunting. See, for instance, E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origins of the Black Art* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975) and P.B. Munche, *Gentlemen and Poachers: The English Game Laws, 1761-1831* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>29</sup> Mike Sajna, *Buck Fever: The Deer Hunting Tradition in Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990).

More so than any other field sport, the democratization of sport hunting relied almost entirely on intervention of the state – and quite literally so. Although the federal government would develop its own system of national parks, the propagation and management of both game animals and public hunting land occurred at the state level, and among the state-based game management programs that placed hunting in the hands of more and more ordinary Pennsylvanians. Established as a unit of state government in 1895, the Pennsylvania Game Commission initially sought to advance what conservation historian Ted Cart has characterized as the “enlightened hedonism” of upper-class hunters: i.e., the preservation of wild game for its future consumption by gentlemen sportsmen. This chapter examines the evolution of public policy on game conservation in an effort understand how recreational hunting broadened its base.

As was the case with other amateur sports that will be examined in subsequent chapters, the democratization of sport hunting was not the result of an explicit campaign to open the sport to the masses. Over time, Game Commission policies did come to benefit the many rather than the few and many of those were promoted in the context of their broad social benefits, en vogue during the Progressive era. But at least initially, many of those policies were driven by the desires and class interest of upper-class sportsmen. The fact that those same policies accrued to the benefit of “the masses” was in some way as much an unintended consequence as it was a conscious goal.



## 2.1 Sport and Subsistence: The Social Basis of Hunting in Nineteenth-Century Pennsylvania

Sport hunting has been part of the Pennsylvania scene since colonial times, but up until the mid-nineteenth century, hunting for most was a necessity, not an idle pastime or sport. During the winter months especially, farmers and other rural Pennsylvanians routinely took to the woods in search of small and large game to fill winter stew pots. While only a small percentage hunted commercially, market hunters tended to have a disproportionate impact on game populations and were frequently vilified by early conservationists as rapacious “pot hunters” and later, “sports.” In Pennsylvania’s northern-tier counties, tales circulated as late as the early twentieth century of hunters who routinely slaughtered upwards of several hundred deer and other game every year. A Pennsylvania folklorist recorded the deeds of one such hunter from Clearfield County who claimed to have killed 3500 deer over his lifetime.<sup>30</sup>

The motivations of market hunters varied. Many looked to sell meat, fur and plumage in towns and cities. Some also perceived themselves as agents of civilization, ridding Penn's Woods of animals, such as bears, wolves, and mountain lions, considered nuisances at best and predators of livestock and humans at worse. One of the best documented nineteenth-century hunters was Philip Tome – a.k.a. the “Pine Creek Deerslayer.” In 1854, he took the unusual step of recording his feats for posterity in a self-published book subtitled “scenes and adventures in the life of Philip Tome.” During the first third of the nineteenth century, Tome hunted bear, elk, deer and rattlesnake by methods that would be discredited even by that century’s standards. He

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<sup>30</sup> Henry W. Shoemaker, *Stories of Great Pennsylvania Hunters* (Altoona, Pa.: Altoona Tribune, 1913). Shoemaker, Pennsylvania’s first state folklorist, integrated additional accounts of Pennsylvania hunters into his multiple volume studies of Pennsylvania regional folklore and natural histories. See Shoemaker, *Pennsylvania Deer and Their Horns* (Reading, Pa.: Faust Printing, 1915).

also killed prodigious amounts of game animals. On one typical hunting excursion in October, 1823, Tome and his two companions registered 67 deer kills with the help of dogs, salt licks and pitch-pine torches.<sup>31</sup>

It was not until the mid- to late nineteenth century that upper-class Pennsylvanians turned to hunting as a form of leisure, and as part of a broader initiative to cultivate a more socially refined, European lifestyle. Fox hunting had been imported to Philadelphia from England in the eighteenth century, where it was popular among a segment of the urban elite. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the sport followed the city's patrician class as it moved out to the western suburbs. By the turn of the century, most of Philadelphia's largest and most prestigious hunt clubs, such as the Marion and Radnor Hunt Clubs, and the Rose Tree Fox Club, were located along the Main Line. The sport also had a small following in and around Pittsburgh by the early nineteenth century where it similarly functioned to reinforce social hierarchies and class boundaries.<sup>32</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, new varieties of sport hunting were gaining a foothold among the "commercial classes" in Pennsylvania and in other northern states, helping to transform hunting into a respectable hobby for manufacturers, businessmen and other members of the new managerial class. In Chicago and New York, rifle shooting contests, once relegated to lowly "woods loafers," became *de rigueur* among the new leisure class in those cities. Since winged game animals such as quail and grouse were frequently in short supply in American cities in the late nineteenth century, trap shooting with clay targets evolved as a substitute. In

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<sup>31</sup> Phillip Tome, *Pioneer Life; or, Thirty Years a Hunter* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Aurand Press, 1928).

<sup>32</sup> See E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1958), 362-363; Scott Martin, *Killing Time: Leisure and Culture in Southwestern Pennsylvania, 1800-1850* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994); and Frances Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in Industrializing Pittsburgh, 1877-1919* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1984).

1875, a group of wealthy Philadelphia residents, among them financier Alfred Biddle and A.J. Cassatt of the Pennsylvania Railroad, formed the “Holiday Shooting Club” and met at “country places belonging to members” to shoot both live birds and clay targets. The *Pittsburg Dispatch* in 1896 testified to the “thousands of lovers of the Rod and Gun in the district.” Many of the sportsmen were sufficiently organized – and well off – to belong to clubs which owned property in Canada and Michigan. Other, such as the Cambria Fish and Protective Association, hunted on land which they leased from private property owners in their home state.<sup>33</sup>

The sportsmen movement in Pennsylvania began in earnest during the first decade after the Civil War. During the 1870s, more than a half dozen such clubs were established in Pittsburgh alone and by 1876 there were enough clubs scattered around the western half of the state to warrant the establishment the state’s first sportsmen’s association.<sup>34</sup> The trend continued into the first decade of the twentieth century. Membership was effectively limited to well-to-do businessmen able to afford annual dues of \$25 to \$50 a year. Among the more notable in the western half of the state was the Spruce Creek Rod and Gun Club, an exclusive Pennsylvania hunting club established in 1904 along Spruce Creek in Huntington County. Over the course of the century, its pristine hunting grounds hosted Presidents from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Jimmy Carter. Another, the Rolling Rock Club, was started by the Mellon family on 2200 acres in the Ligonier Valley in Westmoreland County and was open to friends and

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<sup>33</sup> Russell Gilmore, “‘Another Branch of Manly Sport’: American Rifle Games, 1840-1900” in Kathryn Grover, ed., *Hard at Play: Leisure in America, 1840-1940* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 93-111; *Philadelphia Gun Club: Charter, By-Laws, Officers and Members* (Philadelphia: Privately Published, 1896); *Pittsburg Dispatch*, 14 October 1896; “Sportsmen’s Clubs and Members, 1896,” Box 8, Records of the Game Commission, Record Group 39, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa. (Hereafter cited as Game Commission Records).

<sup>34</sup> The Sportsmen’s Association of Western Pennsylvania incorporated in February 1876, preceding a state-wide sportsmen’s organization by nearly 20 years. Box 3, Folder 3, Robert D. Christie Papers, Archives of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, Pa. (Hereafter cited as Christie Papers).

associates by invitation only. John M. Phillips, a future state Game Commissioner, was a member of the Union Outing Club. Based near Dubois in Jefferson County, the club owned and controlled 530 acres in an “ideal hunting and fishing location.”<sup>35</sup>

Undoubtedly the most well-known private Pennsylvania hunting club was the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club. The club’s 1879 charter stated its objective in strictly conservationist terms: “the protection and propagation of game and game fish, and the enforcement of all laws of this state against unlawful killing or wounding of the same.” But most members likely perceived the club’s purpose more pragmatically – as a wooded oasis sufficiently far from “the roar of the city.” Although the charter was filed in Allegheny County, the club’s property was located in Cambria County, just east of Johnstown in the Allegheny Mountains. The heart of the club’s property was a 450-acre reservoir, Lake Conemaugh, but it also owned an additional 160 acres of hunting grounds on the surrounding hillside. Most of the club’s property, including the lake, was fenced off to deter trespassers.<sup>36</sup>

In 1889, South Fork became the subject of world-wide attention when its damn burst, disgoring an avalanche of water which within minutes obliterated the city of Johnstown below. Reports filed in the wake of the Johnstown Flood speculated on the club’s negligence in failing to maintain the earthen damn, but they also helped sketch a picture of everyday life at the otherwise exceedingly private 61-member club. In return for an \$800 membership fee, sportsmen were permitted unlimited fishing in the club’s fully stocked lake, as well as access to the hunting grounds surrounding the club. Members without cottages boarded at the opulent 47-

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<sup>35</sup> Couvares, *Remaking of Pittsburgh*, 36; Theodore Cart, “The Struggle for Wildlife Protection in the United States, 1870-1900: Attitudes and Events Leading to the Lacey Act” (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1971), 32; Phone interview with Larry Schweiger, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, 7 March 1997; F.M. Shaffer to John M. Phillips (hereafter abbreviated as JMP), 12 November 1919, General Correspondence, John M. Phillips Papers, Manuscript Group 161, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa. (Hereafter cited as Phillips Papers).

<sup>36</sup> “South Fork Hunting and Fishing Club,” Box 3, Folder 10, Christie Papers.

room clubhouse, which locals took to calling “the Bosses Club.” Lists made public after the flood revealed a Who’s Who of Pittsburgh industrialists and financiers, including Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, Henry Phipps, and Andrew Mellon.<sup>37</sup>

Many businessmen were undoubtedly attracted to the social status which membership in such clubs conferred, but others became committed sportsmen and strong defenders of the “sportsmen’s code,” a position which placed them at odds with subsistence and especially market hunters in rural Pennsylvania. The idea originated in the mid nineteenth century and became formalized in the 1880s through upper-class conservation clubs. The most prominent of these was the Boone and Crockett Club, established in 1887 by Theodore Roosevelt and a small coterie of naturalists and proto-conservationists, including such Pennsylvanians as Gifford Pinchot and industrialist John M. Phillips.<sup>38</sup> National organizations were frequently augmented through local chapters or entirely local organizations. Pittsburgh had a sufficiently well-heeled sportsmen’s base by 1905 to support its own version of the Boone and Crockett, the Lewis and Clark Big Game Club. Membership in the exclusive, 100-man club was limited to “big game hunters, explorers and naturalists, many with national reputations.” An unstated but perhaps even more important criterion was personal wealth; virtually every noteworthy Pittsburgh industrialist was on the list.<sup>39</sup>

At the heart of the sportsmen’s code was the ethic of “fair chase.” The goal of subsistence and market hunters was to harvest as much game as possible through any and all

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<sup>37</sup> McCullough, *Johnstown Flood*, 42-61.

<sup>38</sup> The Boone and Crockett Club continued to attract wealthy Pennsylvania sportsmen well into the twentieth century. In 1950, for instance, the club accepted Richard King Mellon, patriarch of the wealthy and influential Mellon family of Pittsburgh.

<sup>39</sup> JMP to William Houston, 2 March 1919, Box 4, Folder “Horne,” Phillips Papers. Members of the Lewis and Clark Big Game Club in 1913 included R.B. Mellon, W.B. Scaife, George Laughlin of Jones and Laughlin Steel, A.A. Corey of Bethlehem Steel, and George Shiras III, a prominent politician and son of a former Supreme Court justice.

means available. By contrast, the purported objective of “true sportsmen” was to pursue game in a manner consistent with patrician ideals of courage, honor and self restraint. From the perspective of sport hunters, most techniques employed by market hunters were reprehensible since they gave hunters an unfair advantage over their game. (Indeed, the term “unsportsmanlike” – now used in a wide variety of contexts – was most often used by hunters to denounce those who violated fair chase strictures.) Fair chase required hunters to rely on patience and cunning and rather than on traps, nets and other techniques designed to yield the most game with the least effort. Sport hunting also testified to one’s “manliness” and, in turn, one’s social status.<sup>40</sup>

Market hunters repudiated the “sportsman’s code” as an upper-class imposition on their livelihood. The clash of interests was apparent. Market hunters approached game in purely economic terms; sporting methods did not figure in at all. Gentlemen hunters regarded wild animals as a means to an end: namely, the pleasure that derived from the thrill of the chase and the exercise of skill required to patiently stalk target animals. Their goal was to preserve game so that it might be hunted in this fashion and put an end to market hunting entirely. One Pennsylvania sportsman complained of the “large numbers” of partridges “now destroyed not only by the gun, but by the aid of traps, net and other ingenious contrivances” and of “Philadelphia markets, and the villages of the interior, fairly overstocked with . . . birds, taken in various ways by the farmer boys.” Market hunters, in turn, accused sport hunters of engaging in

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas Altherr, “The American Hunter-Naturalist and the Development of the Code of Sportsmanship,” *Journal of Sport History* 5/1 (Spring 1979): 7-22. Sportsmen believed that the only way to end the wholesale slaughter of game was to eliminate the profit incentive. Thus, they frequently campaigned to ban the sale of plumage and skins at public markets.

their own gluttonous game habits. One market hunter from central Pennsylvania complained of “city hunters who come in bunches and carry back to the city big bags full of game to waste.”<sup>41</sup>

Several developments helped to spread sport hunting among the middle and upper middle classes. Advances in firearms technology and the advent of the railroad (which helped open previously inaccessible hunting grounds) certainly made the sport more accessible to city residents. But it was the perceived social-therapeutic benefits that drew most adherents. On the most general level, hunting was thought by many of its followers to restore a spiritual element that had been eroded by modern life. More specifically, encounters with nature, and with traditional field sports such as hunting, reinforced masculine characteristics of cunning and self-reliance. What could be more masculine than hunting large game animals in the wilds, especially when one’s survival no longer required such potentially dangerous encounters?<sup>42</sup>

As early as the 1840s, William Henry Herbert, the nation’s foremost sportsman, argued that hunting offered an antidote to the “the demoralization of luxury” and encouraged “the maintenance of manhood in an age [where] the leading characteristics . . . are fanaticism, cant and hypocrisy, added to a total and general decay of all that is manly or independent . . .” Hunting was thus another variant of “muscular Christianity,” the mid- to late-century crusade that promoted physical fitness, competitive sport and outdoor activity as antidotes to the feminization of American culture. By the 1870s, Herbert’s message was being widely distributed and read in *American Sportsman*, *Field and Stream* and other magazines devoted to

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<sup>41</sup> Cart, “Struggle for Wildlife,” 79, 85; Elisha J. Lewis, *The American Sportsman: Containing Hints to Sportsmen, Notes on Shooting and the Habits of Game Birds and Wild Fowl in America* (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Co., 1863), 69; Gilmore, “‘Another Branch’,” 103; *Mount and Stream Journal*, April 1912, 34.

<sup>42</sup> Cart, “Struggle for Wildlife,” 34. Cart credits the breech loading gun with making sport hunting “a much more pleasant and productive experience than it had ever been with muzzle loading weapons.” Railroad companies soon thereafter began offering special “sportsmen’s excursions” to capitalize on the gun’s popularity among urban hunters.

this burgeoning audience. It was echoed by individuals such as Theodore Roosevelt, who believed hunting represented “stalwart democracy; there every man stands for what he actually is and can show himself to be.”<sup>43</sup>

Ironically, just as demand surged, wild game supplies plummeted. By the 1870s and 1880s, lumbering, coal mining and agriculture had combined to eviscerate thousands of acres of forest cover and obliterate habitats that were critical for the survival of white-tailed deer and other sought-after game. At the same time, increased consumer demand for plumage, furs and meat was decimating the Commonwealth’s natural reserves of both large and small game. The combination of habitat depletion and market hunting had nearly exhausted the state’s deer herd. One leading conservationist would later describe Pennsylvania during this period as “shot-out, cut-over, burned-over [and] water-polluted.”<sup>44</sup>

In the face of this impending crisis, as John Reiger, Ted Cart and Thomas Altherr have shown, sportsmen became self-interested, but ultimately influential and effective, conservationists. Many experienced something similar to what happened to John Phillips, the wealthy Pittsburgh industrialist destined to become a leading light in Pennsylvania’s conservation movement during the first half of the twentieth century. Phillips described an epiphany which he had at the conclusion of a successful hunting trip to Jefferson County in 1880. After tracking a large buck for miles in the snow, Phillips finally caught it in his sights and pulled the trigger. “During all that long chase, we didn’t cross another deer track. I said to

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<sup>43</sup> Philip G. Terrie, “Urban Man Confronts the Wilderness: The Nineteenth Century Sportsman in the Adirondacks,” *Journal of Sport History* 5/3 (Winter 1979): 7-20; Wirt Gerrare, “The Story of the Sporting Gun,” *Outing Magazine* (1896), 510-515; William Henry Herbert quoted in Cart, “Struggle for Wildlife,” 85. Michael Kimmel discusses the recreation and sport as means of cultivating masculinity in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 117-156. Harvey Green explores the relationship between muscular Christianity and the rise of athletics in *Fit for America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 181-215.

<sup>44</sup> JMP, “The Future of Wildlife Conservation in Pennsylvania,” Speech given at Glen Hazel, Elk County, c. 1949, 2, “Speeches and Addresses,” Phillips Papers.



my friend, ‘I am done – I think I have killed the last deer in Pennsylvania.’” Alexander Billmeyer experienced a similar personal transformation after a successful deer hunt near his native Danville in Montour County. The bittersweet kill prompted the wealthy lumberman to create his own enclosed deer park where large game animals would be protected within a no-shoot sanctuary.<sup>45</sup>

## 2.2 Gentlemen Sportsmen and Private Game Preserves in Pennsylvania

Billmeyer’s preserve was the exception to the rule. Most sportsmen’s approached game conservation as “enlightened hedonists.” Game animals should not be protected indefinitely, but managed in a way that would allow them to increase so that they might be hunted safely and fairly – not harvested to the point of extinction. Before the advent of scientific forestry and game management, most sportsmen believed the state to be a largely ineffective vehicle for accomplishing this goal. Laws designed to forestall the wholesale extermination of game had been on the books since the early nineteenth century. But seasons and bag limits were poorly or erratically enforced, both because the state legislature had provided no means for doing so, and because there was very little political will for enforcement, particularly in rural sections of the

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<sup>45</sup> JMP, Speech before the 14<sup>th</sup> American Game Conference, New York City, December 1929 (Transactions of the American Game Conference), Phillips Papers; *Historical and Biographical Annals of Columbia and Montour Counties* (Chicago: J.H. Beers and Co., 1915), 393; *New York Times*, 26 May 1924. Another deer park which had a shooting moratorium was the 1400-acre Trexler Game Preserve, established in the Lehigh Valley in 1906 by General Harry G. Trexler, an Allentown industrialist. By the 1930s Trexler Park also had the largest herd of bison east of the Mississippi. See Herman L. Collins, *Pennsylvania the Golden* (Harrisburg, Pa.: National Historical Association, Inc., 1933), 122.

state which relied on long standing notions of “common” hunting grounds and perceptions of an unlimited supply of game.<sup>46</sup>

Laissez faire game management was bad for hunting, but it was not the only problem. In industrial states such as Pennsylvania, game faced the continuous threat of habitat depletion at the hands of rapacious extractive industries, particularly coal mining and lumbering. On this score, the state was considered even less effective. With the exception of the occasional right-of-way, private interests trumped public benefit, again especially prior to Progressive era sensibilities. Aside from a handful of old growth forests, by the close of the nineteenth century most of the forest stands in the state’s northern-tier counties had been clear cut. Pennsylvania would not establish its first tracts of public land, initially referred to as forest reserves, until 1898. Even then, most of the early state forest reserves were acquired through tax sales and consisted of unproductive and “unseated” land that had been timbered over.<sup>47</sup>

During the nineteenth century, most sportsmen believed hunting was best secured through private means and initiative. The 75-member Pottstown Fish and Game Committee relied on its own resources to stock bass and pike perch in the Schuylkill River, which though badly polluted in many stretches was considered the best option. Thanks to “several lovers of hunting in the association,” the club also imported German hares, a popular late-century game animal and released them “in the neighboring hills of Montgomery and Chester County,” both relatively under-populated counties at the time. Unfortunately, clubs which stocked their own

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<sup>46</sup> Louis Warren offers an insightful discussion of nineteenth century conceptions of the commons as they related to public hunting grounds in *The Hunter’s Game*, 5-20.

<sup>47</sup> Dan Cupper, *Our Priceless Heritage: Pennsylvania State Parks, 1893-1993* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1994), 33-35. At the turn of the century, the state forestry department was primarily interested in acquiring land for watershed and forest fire protection – not for public recreation.

game often had difficulty tracking the game after it had been released, as wild game had a tendency to roam on to lands to which members did not have access.<sup>48</sup>

One solution to this problem was to own and control the land where the game was stocked and released. By acquiring large tracts of land in relatively “wild” but still physically accessible sections of Pennsylvania, particularly its northern tier, well-heeled urban sportsmen were able to both propagate game and protect it, not only from natural predators but also from other hunters. Unwittingly or not, this more comprehensive approach to game management recalled European-style private forests. In France and Germany, monarchies had for centuries maintained large tracts of forests, stocked with wild boar and white-tailed deer, for their exclusive use. The most famous of these was the Forest of Fontainebleau, located outside of Paris, where game was stocked and protected for the benefit and pleasure of kings and noblemen. Pennsylvania’s industrial tycoons took note. R.B. Mellon explained his decision to carve out a game preserve on his Ligonier estate in this way: “I want to develop a place here at Rolling Rock where I can invite my friends from all over the country and where they will find the same quality of shooting they get in Europe.”<sup>49</sup>

Historically, Americans viewed such aristocratic traditions with a mixture of suspicion and contempt; royal hunting parks, much like thoroughbred horse racing, was considered ill suited to the new Republic. But after the Civil War, such social taboos fell away rapidly, especially among *nouveau riche* eager to ape European lifestyles and affectations. By the 1880s,

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<sup>48</sup> “Sportsmen’s Clubs, 1898,” Box 8, Game Commission Records.

<sup>49</sup> John Ittman, *Forest of Fontainebleau: Refuge from Reality, French Landscape, 1800-1870*, Exhibition Catalog (New York: Shepherd Gallery, 1972); J. Blan van Urk, *The Story of Rolling Rock* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1950), 87. The club associated with the game preserves on the Mellon estate was distinct from the Rolling Rock Club. While membership in the main club was free, those who wished to hunt on the game preserves were required to become members of the Rolling Rock Rod and Gun Club and pay \$25 in annual dues to help cover the costs of game management.

both enclosed and open “deer parks” were cropping up across the state’s northern tier, most of them financed and maintained by industrialists, bankers and other well-to-do businessmen, for pleasure hunting. It is difficult to say how many private “deer parks” were established, but scattered evidence suggests that there were enough in existence to attract the attention (and often the suspicion) of local rural residents. They varied considerably both in size and ownership patterns. In heavily timbered sections of north central and north western Pennsylvania, lumber companies considered deer parks to be an attractive “adaptive re-use” in sections which had been timbered out. Others deer parks were operated by urban sportsmen who purchased property collectively in remote sections of the state’s northern tier for the express purpose of creating sprawling private hunting grounds. Such private game preserves were thus both a response to the disappearance of natural habitats, and elites’ sense of entitlement – i.e., the prerogatives of wealth.

Hall’s Park, also known as Jimanandy Park, in deer-rich Elk County, typified the lumber-company model. James Knox Park Hall, a prosperous lumber baron, politician and hunter from St. Mary’s, established the park in 1883 “solely for the entertainment of [his] friends.” Hall used product from his lumber mill to fence in just over 3,000 acres of land some nine miles south east of town. A 700-acre section within the grounds was set aside for a “hunting park;” its enclosure was described as “horse high, bull strong, hog tight.” Deer could enter the preserve but not leave. From an original 12 head of deer introduced in 1883, the local white tail population grew to 100 by 1889. Moreover, Hall maintained it as a sportsmen’s preserve: in contrast to the “indiscriminate slaughter” that obtained in other deer parks, hunters invited into Hall’s Park were only permitted to shoot “when the deer is on a full run or not at all.” In hopes of expanding the

herd through natural increase, does were strictly off limits. Game seemed to thrive under such a system, “leading the hunters on the liveliest kind of chase.”<sup>50</sup>

Game preserves maintained by wealthy sportsmen’s clubs tended to cluster in the northeastern corner of the state, likely because of that area’s proximity to the New York metropolitan market. By the late nineteenth century, Manhattan sportsmen were finding themselves landlocked. When John D. Rockefeller desired to create his own private deer park, he was forced out to the Catskills. Northeastern Pennsylvania, already connected by rail to New York through the mountain resort industry along the Delaware River, offered an ideal alternative. Moreover, the fact that much of it had already been timbered over made it attractive to both wild game and real estate speculators. The Forest Lake Association, a New York sportsmen club formed in 1881, snatched up 1500 acres of prime real estate in Lackawaxen Township, Pike County, for a mere \$2,000. The grounds included several small lakes and an excellent trout stream. Over the next thirty year, the club managed to double its holdings.<sup>51</sup>

The enclosure of common hunting grounds did not sit well with local populations, particularly in northeastern Pennsylvania. By the late 1800s, there was genuine concern that all the good hunting and fishing spots were being claimed by city “sports” with money. The *Milford Dispatch* noted in 1898 that private sportsmen clubs owned or controlled almost all of lakes in Pike County. That same year, the *Times* in nearby Stroudsburg reported that New

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<sup>50</sup> A. Margaretta Archambault, *A Guide Book of Art, Architecture and Historic Interests in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1924), 469; Michael A. Leeson, comp., *History of the Counties of McKean, Elk, and Forest, Pennsylvania, with Biographical Selections* (Chicago, J.H. Beers & Co., 1890), 793-794; *New York Times*, 23 December 1890.

<sup>51</sup> William Caldwell Calhoun, *History of the Forest Lake Club, 1882-1932* (Pike County, Pa: Privately Printed, 1932), 20-23. The Pennsylvania Game Commission identified several sportsmen’s clubs in the state’s northeastern counties. Along with their proximity to New York, Pike and Monroe counties were blessed with mountainous terrain and deep lakes. The holdings of many associations, including that of the Porter’s Lake Hunting and Fishing Club, included glacial lakes as well as densely forested grounds. “Sportsmen and Others, 1908,” Box 8, Game Commission Records.

Yorkers already owned six hunting preserves there, including the newly formed Forest Park resort, and cautioned that the “pleasures of the few” were taking precedent over the rights of “the formerly free people of Pike.” The clash between city hunters and local hunters continued well into the twentieth century.<sup>52</sup>

The most politically and socially influential of the new private game preserves was the Blooming Grove Park Association. Operated by and for wealthy, mainly New York-based businessmen, Blooming Grove’s 12,000 contiguous acres in northern Pike County constituted for nearly 30 years the largest incorporated game preserve in the country and perhaps the most self consciously aristocratic. Fayette Giles, a wealthy Manhattan merchant, conceived the idea for the park in the late 1860s. Giles had lived for a time in Europe, and while there he had enjoyed the privilege of hunting on the private estates of both Fontainebleau and the Grand Duchy of Baden. Back in New York, Giles became intrigued with the idea of creating a hunting and fishing resort in the States along the lines of royal European hunting grounds. With no land available within the metropolitan area, Giles and a few business partners began surveying locations “within a reasonable distance of New York.”<sup>53</sup>

In 1870, Giles stumbled across what he described as a veritable “sportsmen’s paradise” in the extreme northeastern corner of Pennsylvania. The tract of land which he discovered in Pike County included eight lakes within walking distance of one another, a pair of relatively unpolluted streams “running through pleasant valleys,” a range of wooded hills, and, as an added bonus, “great numbers” of deer, ruffed grouse and fresh-water trout. “The sportsmen who conceived the idea of establishing an American Fontainebleau saw at once that they had found

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<sup>52</sup> Lawrence Squeri, *Better in the Poconos: The Story of Pennsylvania’s Vacationland* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State Press, 2002), 88-89.

<sup>53</sup> Frank L. Froment, *History of the Blooming Grove Hunting and Fishing Club, 1871-1999* (Blooming Grove, Pa.: Blooming Grove Hunting and Fishing Club, 1999), 7-13.

the proper location for it,” the club’s historian would later write. Perhaps the site’s greatest advantage was the fact that it was a mere four and one-half hours from New York via the Erie Railroad. “The sportsman may leave New York, or any other adjacent city, and in twenty-four hours return with a saddle of venison, a bag of birds or a basket of trout. To active business men whose time is precious, this is an advantage worthy of consideration.”<sup>54</sup>

In 1871, the state general assembly granted a charter to the Blooming Grove Park Association. By this time, Giles had managed to recruit over 100 charter members willing and able to pay \$450 to join the association. Among the members were several of the most influential gentlemen sportsmen in the country, including Charles Hallock, publisher of *Field and Stream* magazine and perhaps the nation’s foremost naturalist, and Edgar Pinchot, uncle of future forester Gifford Pinchot. Undoubtedly the most important aspect of its charter was a provision which exempted the association from state laws relating to hunting and fishing, while simultaneously empowering it to make its own fish and game laws, along with “anything necessary for the accommodation of its members.” The arrangement owed much to Blooming Grove’s political influence in Harrisburg; its charter members included Pennsylvania’s current governor, John White Geary, and at least one state representative. Gamekeepers at the private club were granted special legal powers to arrest poachers, which they did with little hesitation, often imposing what would have been considered astronomical fines for the taking of a deer or moose on Park property.<sup>55</sup>

By the mid-1870s, Blooming Grove appeared close to achieving its Fontainebleau ambition. Nestled in the center of the grounds was an opulent stone clubhouse, surrounded by a

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<sup>54</sup> Charles Hallock, *The Fishing Tourist: Anglers’ Guide and Reference Book* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1873), 225-226.

<sup>55</sup> Hallock, *Fishing Tourist*, 228; Froment, *Blooming Grove*, 26; *New York Times*, 12 July 1891.

string of equally lavish private “cottages.” But the heart of the Association was its 620-acre breeding park, enclosed by an eight-foot-high wire fence and stocked with a herd of 30 deer, as well as wild turkeys and English pheasants. The Association hired professional game keepers to manage both these and an impressive catalogue of zoological specimens, including buffalo, German boar, caribou, moose, white hares, and a range of game and water fowl. Game keepers patrolled the grounds year-round to fend off both natural and human predators; local poachers were a constant threat and required steady vigilance.<sup>56</sup>

For those who could afford its steep membership fees, Blooming Grove did offer a sportsman’s paradise. Game was so abundant by the mid-1870s that Hallock guaranteed potential new members “a shot at a buck and a good bag of birds” – an extravagant promise in an era of game scarcity. In November, 1873, Hallock breathlessly reported in sportsman’s circles of a buck, “fat as a seal,” shot within 300 yards of the clubhouse. Another 15 ruffed grouse and 7 ducks were “hanging in the gun room. Not bad, that.” Hallock attributed the cornucopia to “our system of protection and breeding” which had deer and fowl “rapidly increasing.” Blooming Grove also benefited from wealthy patrons. Among the gifts the Park received were 125 pairs of English rabbits supplied by Count de Mouzilly, and another 200 fawns dispatched to the club by a former Civil War general – Confederate, no less – from Tennessee. In 1879, the *New York Times* enthused that deer were “never so plenty in Pike County,” thanks largely to the efforts of Blooming Grove’s influential members. “Fifteen deer have been killed in the preserves of this association this Fall,” an astonishingly large harvest for the 1870s.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Froment, *Blooming Grove*, 14-15.

<sup>57</sup> Hallock quoted in Froment, *Blooming Grove*, 15-16; *New York Times*, 28 November 1879. As one might have expected, members enjoyed long, open seasons on most game animals. Deer season ran for nearly six months, from August 1 to December 3.



It is testament to Blooming Grove's political influence that the provision which literally placed the club above the law generated little or no public comment in Harrisburg at the time. But it quickly became a source of contention between Blooming Grove and the year-round residents of rural Pike County. In 1873, for instance, the club drew on its special provision to sidestep a state law prohibiting the hunting of deer with dogs. According to the club's official history, the membership's decision to continue the practice "led to some protest in the neighborhood" but triggered no legal challenges. Locals were also upset when club members used their influence with the state legislature to impose a three-year ban on deer hunting in Pike County. The moratorium was intended "to let the very few [deer] left increase in numbers" but according to the *New York Times* it was met with "great opposition" by local hunters. Blooming Grove also stirred up local resentment by openly engaging in unsportsmanlike behavior, including the hunting of game inside fenced enclosures.<sup>58</sup>

As successful as Blooming Grove seemed to be, its operation pointed to the limits of private, or "pay for play" approaches to conservation and sport hunting. As members of the Blooming Grove Park Association learned, private game preserves and propagation efforts were doomed to only partial success in the absence of state-wide conservation programs. They were also prohibitively expensive. During the 1880s, the club spent considerable time and money stocking the grounds for the privilege of its members, only to see deer and other game wander out, or local poachers wander in. In the end, most sportsmen concluded that it would be more effective to leverage the power and the authority of the state to create uniform game policies that

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<sup>58</sup> Froment, *Blooming Grove*, 12; *New York Times*, 28 November 1879.

would be applicable across the Commonwealth.<sup>59</sup> At least initially, this change in strategy reinforced the perception among rural hunters, and the great swath of non-hunters, that state-administered game conservation served the interests of wealthy sportsmen. That perception would shadow the operation of the Game Commission for decades to come – even as it became apparent that it was those very same policies, and the work of the Game Commission, which ultimately ensured the sport’s democratization.

### **2.3 Game Laws and Social Class: The Early Years of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1895 - 1909**

In 1890, a group of influential Pennsylvania sportsmen, led by Pittsburgh manufacturer John Phillips, joined together to form the Pennsylvania State Sportsmen’s Association (PSSA). The PSSA was heavily biased toward gentlemen hunters; two of its three founding members were trap shooters devoted to shooting clay pigeons without leaving the safety and confines of their city neighborhood. (One of these, Elmer Shaner of Slippery Rock, helped organize and promote a high-profile trap shoot for affluent New Yorkers from the rooftop of Madison Square Garden in 1895.) The PSSA was also uniformly dissatisfied with the status quo when it came to conservation. Its members doubted the effectiveness of local custom and questioned the

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<sup>59</sup> On sportsmen as conservationists, see the previously cited works of John Reiger, Theodore Cart, and Thomas Altherr. Although historians agree on the salient role played by sportsmen in the early conservation movement, they have disagreed on motive. Reiger believes that sportsmen’s interest in hunting did not contradict or detract from the conservationist ethos. Cart, while acknowledging their importance, argues that sportsmen were motivated by “enlightened hedonism” – i.e., the preservation of game for the future hunting of game. Cart also points out that sport hunters, given their own prodigious consumption of game, were not entirely beyond blame themselves. Reiger, *American Sportsmen*, 64-65; Cart, “Struggle for Wildlife,” 79-80, 36-37.

competence of local law enforcement officials who had been entrusted with arresting and prosecuting poachers. (One member derided local constables as “politicians willing to trade . . . the lives of our beasts and birds in exchange for votes.”) Members of the PSSA were also in agreement that Pennsylvania was at the cusp of becoming a barren land for sportsmen – in the words of John Phillips, a “shot-out” state – and required swift, dramatic action to turn it around.<sup>60</sup>

Pennsylvania’s organized sportsmen formed a powerful and influential lobby by the late nineteenth century, and their numbers continued to grow. A state-wide survey conducted in 1895 revealed 47 active sportsmen’s associations – variously referred to as “gun clubs,” “shooting clubs” or “protective associations” (the latter a reference to the conservation program supported by upper-class hunters). One of the largest, the Pottsville Game and Fish Protective Association, boasted over 200 geographically diffuse members. Another nearby club, the Lykens Fish and Game Protective Association, included members from Williamsport, Philadelphia, and nearby Harrisburg. With seven sportsmen’s associations, Philadelphia and its environs boasted the most sportsmen’s associations, but Pittsburgh, with six, was close behind. Not surprisingly, the addresses of the Smoky City’s clubs – Squirrel Hill, Wilmerding and Allegheny City – testified to its appeal among the city’s upper middle classes.<sup>61</sup> Along with leasing or owning land in Pennsylvania, many of Pittsburgh’s clubs controlled land in Michigan and Canada.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Joe Kosack, *The Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1895-1995: 100 Years of Wildlife Conservation* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1995), 22; *In the Open* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1913).

<sup>61</sup> “Sportsmens Clubs, 1895,” Game Commission Records.

<sup>62</sup> *Pittsburg Dispatch*, 14 October 1896.

Working behind the scenes, members of the PSSA exercised their political and business connections to persuade state officials to step in. In 1889, for instance, PSSA members invited several “political leaders of the state” on a deer hunting expedition to the mountains of Snyder County, mainly to expose them to the horrible game conditions which currently prevailed in even remote sections of the Commonwealth. “They were in camp three or four days and hunted every day. During this time, they killed one small deer and saw besides one buck,” one member of the expedition reported. The junket achieved its intended effect. Several of the politicians “were experienced Rocky Mountain hunters, and the conditions in Pennsylvania were in sad contrast to what they had been accustomed.” One of those elected officials, powerful Republican senator Boise Penrose, would become a key supporter of pro-conservation legislation at both the state and federal level. “For over thirty years no legislation on these subjects was passed without his approval and backing.”<sup>63</sup>

Pennsylvania’s politicians were not uniformly enthusiastic. When fellow U.S. Senator Matthew Quay was approached to support a bill creating a state game commission along the lines of those already up and running in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, he demurred. Many politicians feared the political competition which an organized body of sportsmen might represent. After being rebuffed by Quay, the PSSA turned to a state representative from Dauphin County who agreed to introduce a bill calling for a state game commission with a ten-member staff: one chief game protector and nine associate game officers. Although rural legislators were eager to reverse the steady decline of wild game, they were perhaps rightfully suspicious of the new measure. Many mistrusted the motives of urban sportsmen and questioned the impact which such a body might have on the hunting practices of their constituents. After

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<sup>63</sup> “Dr. Charles B. Penrose and Game Administration in Pennsylvania,” Box 5, Phillips Papers.

some wrangling among legislators, the bill passed both the house and senate and was signed into law by Governor Hastings in June, 1895.<sup>64</sup>

Not surprisingly, those who were appointed to direct the affairs of the State Game Commission closely resembled the sportsmen who had lobbied for its creation. The Commission itself would later describe its early leaders as “men of experience, in hunting and in the business world.” The body’s first chairman, Charles Penrose (appointed in 1899), was brother of Pennsylvania’s powerful Republican Senator and GOP party boss Boise Penrose of Philadelphia. The next two chairmen to succeed Penrose were both Pittsburgh industrialists. The only truly diverse aspect of the six-member Commission was its relatively balanced geographic distribution; the first board consisted of sportsmen-businessmen from Pittsburgh, Wilkes-Barre, Harrisburg and Philadelphia and Lewisburg/Williamsport. But regional balance aside, newly appointed Commissioners were in effect a small sportsmen’s club unto themselves – a fact which became evident in its early approach to game management.<sup>65</sup>

The newly created Game Commission’s first priority was not propagation but enforcement, specifically of existing and newly drafted state game laws establishing bag limits and discreet hunting seasons. Although game protection laws had been on the books for years, the new commission now had the legal authority to “manage, protect and preserve” the Commonwealth’s “game, birds and fur-bearing animals.” In practice, this meant enforcing laws

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<sup>64</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 23-24; Joseph H. Kalbfus, *Dr. Kalbfus’ Book: A Sportsman’s Experiences and Impressions in East and West* (Altoona, Pa.: The Times Tribune, 1926), 280-281. Boise Penrose, whose brother Charles came to chair the Commission, was also at least initially unsupportive of measures which would give the Game Commission more political power. According to Phillips, Penrose opposed the resident hunters license on the grounds that it would give more clout to sportsmen. “The Politicians were afraid if we go in there we would want to know how the money was expended and see that our representatives spent it right.” Phillips, untitled/undated typescript, Folder “Resident Hunters License,” Phillips Papers.

<sup>65</sup> Kalbfus, *Dr. Kalbfus’ Book*, 281-283; Kalbfus, *Game Protection. Bulletin No. 1* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1911) title page. Phillips, who was president of his own Pittsburgh manufacturing company, served as chairman after Penrose. After Phillips resigned in 1924, Governor Gifford Pinchot replaced him with Ross Leffler, another Pittsburgher and Carnegie-Illinois Steel executive.

which up to this point had been largely and conveniently ignored. A case in point were the restrictions imposed on the hunting of white-tailed deer, Pennsylvania's most important native contribution – along with black bear – to the sport of Big Game hunting. Prior to the creation of the Game Commission, the open season on white-tailed deer extended from September through December and came with no bag limits. But in 1897, the State Game Commission drafted a new law which reduced the season to just two weeks in late November and early December and limited the bounty to one deer per hunter.<sup>66</sup>

Another objective was to mitigate decades of unfettered market or “pot” hunting, which urban sportsmen had long argued to be the main culprit in the extermination of game. In 1897, Commissioner Penrose persuaded the legislature to pass a law prohibiting the sale of a wide range of game, including ruffed grouse, along with elk, deer, turkeys and quail. Penrose also engineered new laws designed to ban many traditional, subsistence hunting practices which it felt to be unsportsmanlike, such as hunting deer with hounds or over salt licks. There were also threats posed to game by modern technologies. In 1900, the Commission made it a crime to hunt quail from a boat propelled by steam. A few years later, it successfully lobbied for a ban on automatic guns, which had arrived on the scene just a few years before but which had already resulted in the decimation of certain game populations.<sup>67</sup>

Urban sportsmen, who had been engaged in off-and-on battles with market hunters for years, applauded the new restrictions. As a group, they had for years inveighed against the blatant disregard for game laws. Sportsmen were especially incensed at the “general apathy of

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<sup>66</sup> Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners, *Report of the Game Commission of the State of Pennsylvania 1902* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1903), 4-6. (Hereafter cited as *Game Commission Annual Report*)

<sup>67</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 30-31; Kalbfus, *Dr. Kalbfus' Book*, 283; JMP to Edmund Seymour, 14 August 1923, General Correspondence, Phillips Papers.

the rural population” and the “error into which they have fallen of regarding all game laws as passed to their detriment, and for the pleasure of the dwellers in the city.” Particularly during the Commission’s first two decades, many rural hunters behaved according to expectation, openly defying the state’s authority to set (and more importantly, enforce) bag limits and seasons or to ban practices deemed “unsportsmanlike.” The term itself, they argued, spoke to a class of hunters who shot for pleasure rather than for subsistence or income. One man’s poaching was another man’s livelihood.<sup>68</sup>

A minor class war broke out over the establishment of seasons and bag limits, but Game Commission officials – particularly Dr. Joseph Kalbfus, who in 1898 was hired as secretary to tend to the Commissions day-to-day affairs – stood firm. Kalbfus conceded the Commission’s unpopularity with the “majority of the people of Pennsylvania” during its early years. “[They] appeared to think they had . . . an inherent right to destroy game and birds at pleasure.” Most had supported the idea of a Game Commission, so long as it focused solely on increasing the supply of game animals without limiting access, whether through seasons or bag limits. Despite the hostility and outright threat, Kalbfus directed his game wardens to move forward and prosecute transgressors. “One by one the violators fell into greater trouble than they had expected,” Kalbfus later wrote.<sup>69</sup>

Most of the violations involved rural poachers and market hunters, groups which urban sportsmen referred to collectively as “natives” or, more bluntly, common criminals. But some Game Commission policies also ensnared new immigrant groups who could not be accurately categorized as either. Heavily concentrated in industrial districts of southwestern and

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<sup>68</sup> Herbert quoted in Cart, “Struggle for Wildlife,” 85.

<sup>69</sup> Remarks by Admiral Kalbfus cited in *Tribute to Dr. Joseph Kalbfus* (c.1940), Phillips Papers; Kalbfus, *Dr. Kalbfus’ Book*, 284.

northeastern Pennsylvania, and most often employed as coal miners, they shared rural Pennsylvania's subsistence orientation to hunting but in important ways represented a distinct tradition. Deprived of the ability to hunt game in their native countries, many Italian and Slavic immigrants regarded wild game as a facet of American abundance to which they were now entitled. They were also not averse to hunting species considered taboo by native-born Pennsylvania hunters and frequently ignored other game laws specifying what could be killed when, and in what quantities.<sup>70</sup>

It is unclear whether these groups did so out of ignorance or willful disregard, but Secretary Kalbfus was inclined to believe the latter. Like other conservationists, he believed immigrants to be habitual transgressors of game laws. "From the time spring opens and our migratory birds begin to return, until that time comes again, they are at it, with guns, and traps, and snares, and every conceivable method, whereby living creatures can be killed or captured," he wrote. "There was a time when I thought these violations were the result of ignorance. I have changed my mind, and am satisfied at this time, that the great majority of these people know our laws and understand they have no right to do as they do; they not only understand the law but seem to be organized to violate." William Hornaday, another prominent conservationist and head of the American Game Protective Association (AGPA), elaborated on this position in a 1909 screed titled *Our Vanishing Wildlife*: "Let every state and province in America look out sharply for the bird-killing foreigner; for sooner or later, he will surely attack your wild life. The Italians are spreading, spreading, spreading."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Warren, *Hunter's Game*, 26-28. On the attitudes of new immigrant groups to American abundance and their consumption of meat-rich diets, see Ewa Morawska, *For Bread With Butter: The Life- Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 135-137.

<sup>71</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 31-32; Warren, *Hunter's Game*, 26; William Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wildlife: Its Extermination and Preservation* (New York: Arno Press, 1970. Originally published 1913),



For Southern Italians especially, small-game hunting was indeed part of an established tradition, albeit one that conflicted with American practices. Sparrows were a delicacy in southern Italy and hunted as an ingredient to spice up traditional red sauce, a practice that struck most native born Americans as barbaric. State game officers made some attempt to bridge the language barrier by printing and posting game regulations in Italian and several Slavic languages as well as in English, but the attempt seemed half hearted. Commission officials made little effort to bridge the cultural gap, and for the most part responded to real or perceived violations of the law simply by using more forceful methods, not all of them lawful. After the state passed the Alien Gun Law, Kalbfus admitted that “some complaint has come to us regarding the manner through which some of our officers have gained entrance to houses of aliens in search of guns.”<sup>72</sup>

The Commission’s ongoing dispute with new immigrants reached a violent climax in 1906 with the murder of game officer Seeley Houck. Houck had been assigned to patrol hunting grounds in Lawrence County, a heavily industrialized county northwest of Pittsburgh on the Ohio border. Well known throughout the county for his zealous enforcement, Houk had on more than one occasion been reprimanded for unprofessional behavior, particularly his vindictive treatment of “foreigners.” In April, 1906, the game protector’s bullet-ridden body was discovered in the Mahoning River near Hillsville, a limestone quarry settlement populated by Italian immigrants. Anxious to see the case solved, Kalbfus brought in the Pinkerton Detective Agency. Their investigation insinuated the involvement of the Italian mafia (then known as the Black Hand) and led to the arrest and conviction of two Italian immigrants for Houk’s murder.

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ii. The cover of Hornaday’s book carried an illustration showing a crowd of immigrants, presumably Italian. One of the immigrants holds a sign which reads “We are Aliens. We Kill the Song Birds.”

<sup>72</sup> Warren, *Hunter’s Game*, 27-28; *Game Commission Annual Report 1910*, 26.

(During the course of the investigation, Kalbfus himself reportedly received a death threat from the secret society.) One of the two convicted men, Rocco Racca, was sent to the gallows.<sup>73</sup>

Houk was the third state game protector killed in the line of duty, and, in 1906 alone, one of 14 who had reportedly been fired upon while executing their duties. The Commission responded by beefing up security in the field and appealing to the state legislature. Although only a small group was responsible for the violence, Kalbfus lobbied vigorously for a statute that would prohibit all un-naturalized residents from owning guns. “Hardly a week passes without an assault of some kind on our officers, from these people,” Kalbfus reported. “The question of the right of these people to carry arms is not one of game and bird protection only . . . but of protection and justice to all our people.” In 1909, the state legislature passed a law making it illegal for “un-naturalized, foreign-born residents” to own or possess firearms.<sup>74</sup>

Pennsylvania’s Alien Gun Law generated little public debate, probably owing to the anti-immigrant climate of the times. Indeed, a not-so subtle xenophobia under-girded the Game Commission’s repeated arguments for the law.<sup>75</sup> But cases challenging the ruling did surface in the courts. In 1910, Indiana County struck down the law, only to have it upheld in Supreme Court. Challenges continued. In 1916, John Papsone, an Italian immigrant, openly defied the

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<sup>73</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 31-32; Warren, *Hunter’s Game*, 21-33; Kalbfus, *Kalbfus’ Book*, 291. Although historians dispute the extent of this group’s influence over Italian Americans, to Kalbfus its presence was quite real. A few weeks before the verdicts against the New Castle Italians were handed down, the secretary received what he believed to be a death threat from the organization – a piece of paper with a tracing of a black hand. The document sent to Kalbfus and attributed to the Black Hand is in the State Archives in Harrisburg.

<sup>74</sup> While it in no way justifies the murder of Seeley Houk or exonerates those accused of committing the crime, Louis Warren’s study argues that the Game Commission made little effort to understand the clash of cultures which the conflict between Italian immigrants and conservationists represented. See Warren, *Hunter’s Game*, 34-47.

<sup>75</sup> In 1919, for instance, the Game Commission issued an official bulletin outlining its argument for retaining the Alien Gun Law. Although the Commission focused on the threat which armed aliens posed to game species, it also alluded to the general threat from such segments of the population. “[T]here have been elements among the foreign born who, in one way or another, threaten the stability and authority of our Government and unconsciously and unfortunately this fact has contributed towards a feeling of antipathy against all foreigners.” Board of Game Commissioners, *Reasons for Alien Gun Law in Pennsylvania. Bulletin No. 6* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1919), 10.

law in the hopes of having it declared unconstitutional. His lawyer argued that the Pennsylvania statute violated the right to bear arms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and abrogated a U.S. treaty with Italy. Several years later, an immigrant from Yugoslavia also brought his case to court in hopes of triggering another Constitutional test. In both these and subsequent cases, the statute was upheld, but only after a vigorous legal battle waged in part by private attorneys in the employ of individual Game Commissioners. The Alien Gun Law managed to stay on the books until 1967.<sup>76</sup>

The immediate effect of the law was to prevent un-naturalized immigrants from hunting in Pennsylvania. Its long-term impact is more difficult to gauge. If one accepts the premise that hunting was (and still is) a family-based tradition passed from father to son, it seems reasonable to conclude that law effectively barred many second-generation Southern and Eastern Europeans from access to the sport, as many of their fathers would have been classified as aliens and therefore unable to join the chase. Mike Sajna's father, a second-generation Slavic American, was likely typical. The elder Sajna, who had been raised in a small coal patch town in Westmoreland County, had always been attracted to the outdoors, but "without money to travel, *or a father to lead the way* [my italics] . . . he had never had a chance to hunt deer."<sup>77</sup>

If early enforcement practices were tinged with class bias, so too were early efforts at active game propagation. Many rural hunters were concerned that urban sportsmen had undue influence over what species would be stocked and where – a concern that was not entirely unfounded. As late as the 1920s, gentlemen hunters did not hesitate to personally solicit

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<sup>76</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 38; *Game Commission Annual Report 1910*, 19. John Phillips used his own personal attorneys to defend the Alien Gun Law from challenges that went all the way to the Supreme Court. See marginal notations in "Charles B. Penrose and Game Administration in Pennsylvania," 8, Phillips Papers.

<sup>77</sup> Sajna, *Buck Fever*, 9.

individual Commissioners to stock game on their own private reserves. In 1919, a group of Philadelphia lawyers beseeched the Commission to procure “young red foxes this summer” for release at the private Valley Forge Park. Another concern was that state game officials committed too much of their limited resources to propagating water fowl, a game species that tended to be favored among big city sportsmen, and also Big Game. Commissioners were not averse to using their own personal connections to bring in exotic game for their own pleasure. In 1914, Commissioner Penrose secured a herd of 50 elk from Yellowstone Park through the intervention of his brother Boise. The Commission continued its effort to stock elk even after they became implicated in widespread crop destruction and were found to roam great distances from release points.<sup>78</sup>

A more politically popular approach was to focus efforts on depleted game animals, especially deer, bears, wild turkey, quail and ruffed grouse. As perhaps the most popular game animal from a sport hunting perspective, the reintroduction of white-tailed deer became the priority. The first restocked white-tailed deer – a herd of 50 procured from a Michigan game preserve – were released into Pennsylvania forests in 1906. Over the next 20 years, the Game Commission continued to supplement the native population with imported deer, until natural increase began yielding them in sufficient numbers to obviate the practice.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> W.C. Wilson to JMP, 23 April 1919; Dr. Charles Penrose to JMP, 4 November 1914, General Correspondence, Phillips Papers. Although several Game Commissioners were keen on the re-introduction of elk, Kalbfus believed it to be foolhardy. “They are not only disposed to wander far but also to raid growing crops. . . It seems to me that it would be well to wait for a few years at lest before releasing more of these animals.” *Game Commission Annual Report 1913*, 10-11.

<sup>79</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 35; Thomas E. Winecoff, comp., *The Pennsylvania Deer Problem. Bulletin No. 12* (Harrisburg, Pa: Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1930), 5-6. In 1916, for instance, the Pennsylvania Game Commission offered to buy about 100 deer from New York State which had been rounded up on Long Island. *New York Times*, 3 May 1916.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the early game commission was its chosen methods for game propagation. Early on, the Commission had expected that it could regenerate Pennsylvania game populations through a combination of game farms and imported game. But Game officials quickly concluded that farms were not cost-effective. Also, as Secretary Kalbfus repeatedly reported, wild game raised in captivity simply failed to thrive and were more vulnerable to disease, as were imported game birds. As an alternative, Commission officials turned to the idea of game preserves or sanctuaries, parcels of enclosed land where game could multiply in natural but protected habitats. In 1905, several game commissioners met to consider creating a trial game preserve. Since the Commission did not own or control land, they contacted officials from the Pennsylvania Department of Forest and Waters – themselves relatively new to the idea of land management – who agreed to allocate a section of state forest land in north central Pennsylvania for that purpose.<sup>80</sup>

Yellowstone Park had been the site of the country's first public game preserve, and the model seemed effective at promoting game regeneration. But erecting fences on public land did not sit well with an American public with long-standing suspicions of land enclosure. Shortly after the Commission opened its first protected refuge in Clinton County in 1905, rumors circulated that state politicians were using it as a private hunting ground – a charge that was partially true.<sup>81</sup> Critics also argued that the location of such game preserves – often in remote areas inaccessible to ordinary hunters – disadvantaged almost all except well-to-do sportsmen

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<sup>80</sup> *Game Commission Annual Report 1908*, 22; Kalbfus, *Game Protection*, 11; John M. Phillips, "Pennsylvania Game Preserves," Address before the Sixth Biennial Convention, National Association of Game Wardens and Commissioners, Denver, Co., 2 September 1912, Phillips Papers.

<sup>81</sup> Access to "Camp Penrose," which was located within the Clinton County game preserve, appears to have been limited to Commissioners and their friends. In 1907, Secretary Kalbfus invited Commissioner Phillips to the preserve, telling him "I believe you will have good sport. You will at least have some good exercise and I will be glad to have you into that camp during deer season." Kalbfus to JMP, 24 October 1907 Box 1, Folder "Kalbfus," General Correspondence, Phillips Papers.

who could afford to travel to such remote locations and acquire private hunting grounds near the enclosures.<sup>82</sup>

In the minds of many, the establishment of the state's first game sanctuary was just one more piece of evidence that Commission was nothing more than a wealthy sportsmen's club with governmental powers and legitimacy. Kalbfus admitted as much: "Up to two or three years ago . . . the general idea entertained by the public regarding the work of the Game Commission was that it was composed solely of sportsmen, whose chief objective point was to increase the different species of game found in the Commonwealth for the benefit and pleasure of other sportsmen." It would take a considerable effort to convince most Pennsylvanians otherwise.<sup>83</sup>

#### **2.4 Preserving Hunting for the People: The Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Promotion of Public Hunting, 1909 - 1919**

Although they made little effort to conceal their own self interest in game conservation, Pennsylvania sportsmen realized it was politically untenable to have their new Game Commission appear to serve their interests only. One reason the Commission had difficulty securing a regular state appropriation during its first two decades was the broadly held view that its activities benefited only a very narrow segment of the population, and a privileged one at that.

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<sup>82</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 24, 34; Kalbfus, *Dr. Kalbfus' Book*, 283. Within the context of the times, enclosures of land for the purposes of hunting smacked of old European aristocratic privilege. Their best known precedents were the royal parks and forests of Europe, where game was stocked and protected for the benefit and pleasure of kings and noblemen. The Blooming Grove Park Association in Pike County was Pennsylvania's most well-known example.

<sup>83</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 41; *Game Commission Annual Report, 1908*, 8.

“When our game commission was first organized, we tried without success to get the 98% of our people who do not hunt to furnish the funds to purchase and propagate game for us to kill,” Phillips recalled in 1923. That circumstance became particularly noticeable when the Commission found itself competing against other state programs which served a broader constituency. “It is hard to convince the legislature to fund us when it is being asked to support hospitals and other public institutions,” Secretary Kalbfus admitted in 1908.<sup>84</sup>

In an effort to allay those suspicions, Pennsylvania’s sportsmen-conservationists engaged in an informal campaign to persuade both elected officials and a skeptical electorate of the trickle down effects of conservation. Gentlemen hunters may have been in the best position to reap the rewards of the chase, but even ordinary Pennsylvanians benefited from ecological balance restored through rational wildlife management. Sportsmen argued that the protection and propagation of insectivorous birds, for instance, benefited everyone, most certainly the farmers for whom such birds functioned as natural pest control, and in turn, consumers of grains, fruits and vegetables that farmers were able to cultivate more efficiently as a result. By the 1920s, supporters also pointed to the ways in which a rebounding game population stimulated local economies and, as in the case of Blooming Grove, improved land values. In 1924, for instance, a Game Commission report characterized hunters as “mortgage relievers,” particularly for rural residents who provided meals and lodging to the scores of hunting parties which journeyed north for various game seasons.<sup>85</sup>

The Commission also argued that conservation had the potential to introduce more people to the socially palliative effects of the great outdoors, an idea which had gained many adherents

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<sup>84</sup> JMP, “The Future of Wildlife Conservation in Pennsylvania,” Box 5, Folder 1 “Address, Articles and Speeches, 1906-1950,” Phillips Papers; *Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report 1908*.

<sup>85</sup> See “Benefits of Pennsylvania’s Public Game Preserves.”

during the Progressive period. “Through this increase in game, we feel that an incentive to outdoor exercise and recreation is supplied that cannot be secured through any other process,” Kalbfus declared in an annual report to the state legislature in 1907. Active game management was thus consistent with other Progressive-era programs such as “good roads, forestry, fish, the creation of parks . . . each one of them an incentive to outdoor exercise, pure air, better health and therefore better citizenry.” Kalbfus even went so far as to suggest that the sport of hunting, if adequately supported, could act as a preventive medicine and a better investment of public dollars than state hospitals and sanitariums. “Millions of dollars are annually appropriated by the State for the building and maintenance of such institutions, while nothing comparatively is given to care for and increase our game, the hunting of which keeps the well man from becoming sick and the sick man well.”<sup>86</sup>

Kalbfus was a singularly enthusiastic proselytizer, but he was not alone in extolling the social benefits of the sport. During the 1930s, for instance, another Pennsylvania official noted approvingly of the way in which hunting took its participants “far a-field to meet and become better acquainted with their fellow citizens” and familiarized them with the state’s topography and natural resources.<sup>87</sup> A more verifiable claim, most commonly heard during World War I, was that hunting provided martial training for the masses. According to this rationale, sport hunting made possible by an expanded game supply was “not simply recreation, or pleasure . . . or a waste of time,” in the words of Joseph Kalbfus, “but . . . a training in the use and manipulation of firearms.” As proof, the secretary pointed to the “Bucktails,” a well-known Civil

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<sup>86</sup> “Why should the state not contribute fairly to the pleasure as well as the benefit of its sturdy citizens who wish to take their recreation in the field or the woods with their guns?” Kalbfus asked rhetorically. “It seems to me that the state should contribute fairly to this purpose, placing deer and wild turkeys and other game on state lands.” *Game Commission Annual Report 1907*, 17.

<sup>87</sup> *Game Commission Annual Report 1908*, 24; Frederic A. Godcharles, *History of Pennsylvania, Volume 4* (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1933), 253.



War regiment. “The great majority of these men were Pennsylvania hunters, trained to the use of the rifle in hunting game and in shifting for themselves in the woods.” Henry Shoemaker, a prominent state naturalist and conservationist, was among many who believed that hunting still contributed directly to America’s military preparedness. “The boys of today who ‘bark’ squirrels are the riflemen of tomorrow . . . [T]he sport of the chase, saved for Americans by Dr. Kalbfus’ initial efforts, doubtless had its effect on American courage and marksmanship in the World War.”<sup>88</sup>

Although it would take time for its policies to catch up with its rhetoric, the Game Commission was unequivocal in its support of public over private interests. Part of this was the consequence of legal precedent. The federal Lacey Act of 1900 not only prohibited the interstate shipment of wildlife, it also upheld the role of states in enforcing conservation laws. Testifying before the state general assembly, Kalbfus underscored the point: “The Supreme Court has already ruled that game and wild beast belong to all the people, not as individuals, but instead of in their collective capacity . . . where the benefits flowing from any cause, especially game, to a limited number came in conflict with the rights of the many, the benefits to the limited must give place to the rights of the many . . .”<sup>89</sup>

Blooming Grove offered Kalbfus the opportunity to apply the principle. Since its founding in 1871, the private Pike County preserve had flouted its special status with impunity.

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<sup>88</sup> Kalbfus, *Game Protection*, 9; G. Marsh to JMP, 16 April 1918, Box 4, Folder “Ma,” Phillips Papers; Henry Shoemaker quoted in Kalbfus, *Dr. Kalbfus’ Book*, ii. As Thomas Altherr has shown, the connection between hunting and good soldiering became even more explicit during the next world war. See Altherr, “‘Mallards and Messerschmitts’: American Hunting Magazines and the Image of American Hunting During World War II,” *Journal of Sport History* 14/2 (Summer 1987): 151-163. Another corollary to the martial training argument was that hunting, and the Great Outdoors generally, buffered Americans from the temptations of radicalism. A c.1920 promotional flyer for Cook Forest, an old growth forest in northern Pennsylvania, included the following comment: “No man can learn Bolshevism in ‘Cook Forest,’ but he does learn it in the congested alley districts of the cities.” Flyer for Cook Forest (ca. 1920) Box 2, Folder “Cook Forest,” Phillips Papers.

<sup>89</sup> *Game Commission Annual Report 1913*, 23-25; Kalbfus, *Game Protection*, 5.

By the turn of the century, though, a new political climate, along with a stiff breeze of Progressive reform, was beginning to erode the club's political clout. The first blow came in 1901, when the Pennsylvania Supreme Court rejected the club's right to prosecute locals who had violated its game laws. In the much publicized case, *Hazen vs. Blooming Grove*, the state's highest court overturned the conviction of a local hunter who had been arrested for poaching a deer on club property. The court's ruling in that case effectively negated the provision, set forth in the club's 1871 charter, granting Blooming Grove the right to make its own laws and ignore those imposed by the state. The club's new charter permitted game stocking and property enclosure, but its members were now subject to all state game laws, including those which set seasons and bag limits.<sup>90</sup>

The court case was just the beginning of Blooming Grove's reversed fortunes. Perhaps in an effort to demonstrate the sincerity of the Commission's professed populist agenda, Secretary Kalbfus vowed not to be swayed by the club's wealth and power. In his 1902 report, for instance, Kalbfus alluded to the Commission's recent legal battles with the club over a variety of game law infractions. "These gentlemen are all non-residents, but claim by virtue of an act of 1871 to have the right to do as they please in that section regardless of subsequent laws. . . . Being wealthy, these gentlemen are in a position to cause us no little annoyance," Kalbfus conceded, no doubt referring to a countersuit filed on behalf of Blooming Grove's wealthy members. He implored the governor to provide the Commonwealth with sufficient funds "to enable us to push these cases to a conclusion."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The court required the club to drop "Park" from its title on the grounds that the term connoted land maintained for the benefit of the general public, which Blooming Grove's most certainly did not.

<sup>91</sup> *Game Commission Annual Report 1902*, 9.

The real issue was whether the Game Commission could force compliance. The provisions of Blooming Grove's new charter required it to discontinue several long standing traditions, including the club's annual pheasant shoot. The practice violated not only the Commonwealth's closed season on that species, but also a provision of the recently passed Lacey Act prohibiting the interstate transport of game birds. But club members were, as Kalbfus had suggested, less than cooperative. Anticipating that the club would likely continue the practice in spite of the law, the secretary in 1904 decided to make a personal visit to the Glen Eyre train station on the eve of one such scheduled shoot. There, he encountered several members who had just de-boarded from New York with crates of English pheasants. Kalbfus had the men arrested and convicted for game law violations. The club appealed the conviction, but the highly public trial served notice that special privileges would no longer be accorded to sportsmen in deference to personal wealth or property. Still, Blooming Grove remained tenacious. Two years later, it attempted to circumvent a non-resident hunters license law – most club members were from New York – by purchasing a 34-acre tract for its 175 out-of-state members for \$38. The Game Commission responded by closing a loophole that exempted landowners. Times were indeed changing.<sup>92</sup>

As a corollary to the same policy, the Game Commission also strove to reassure the general public that it was willing and able to make distinctions between wealthy sportsmen who hunted merely for pleasure, and working-class woodsmen who hunted out of necessity and who might unwittingly violate a game law here and there. The Commission, according to public statements by Kalbfus, had little interest in strict enforcement when it interfered with an individual's right to put food on the table. "I cannot believe . . . that it is my duty to arrest a poor

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<sup>92</sup> Cart, "Struggle for Wildlife," 90-91; Froment, *Blooming Grove*, 66-67.

man who may kill game out of season when he needs the same for food . . .” the Secretary wrote in 1908. Later, during the Great Depression, the Commission likewise used discretion in pursuing poachers, recognizing that prosecution to the full extent of the law “would have only increased the suffering of [the offenders’] wives and children.”<sup>93</sup>

As it turned out, the Game Commission’s best argument on its own behalf was the work it achieved in the field. Although many would disagree with specific conservation measures and prohibitions, there were few quarrels (at least initially) with the results. The figures were perhaps most dramatic where the depletion had been greatest. Between 1898 and 1912, the number of deer harvested in Pennsylvania increased from a scant 150 to 1,000. The deer harvest would get even better by the following decade, when the number taken rose from 1,700 in 1916 to close to 12,000 in 1926. Interestingly, the increase had the additional consequence of eliminating the incentive for the private enclosure of land, at least on some places. In 1913, after noting with some curiosity that the supply of deer was as great outside the fence as within, Blooming Grove decided to abandon its deer enclosure and “open the gates.” The club continued to raise its own game birds, however.<sup>94</sup>

The Commission’s biggest challenge was persuading hunters that the policies responsible for the turn-around were designed to benefit all, not just urban sportsmen. One such example was the public outcry that followed passage of the 1907 Buck Law. More scientifically oriented game conservationists long realized that the most effective way to boost the native deer population was to allow does to birth more fawns, and to allow male fawns to grow to full maturity. By banning doe hunting and requiring game bucks to have exposed antlers, the Buck

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<sup>93</sup> Kalbfus, *Save Our Birds and Game: Recommendations as to the Trapping and Care of Quail* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1908), 7; Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 78.

<sup>94</sup> Shoemaker, *Pennsylvania Deer*, 9.

Law would ensure a future yield of healthy, “sport-worthy” white tails. But at the time, such novel approaches posed a threat to decades of unfettered market hunting, when does were taken in equal proportion to male deer. Again, many believed the law was made for the benefit of the city and sport hunter who hunted less out of need (or long standing tradition) than for pleasure.<sup>95</sup>

Rural, working-class hunters also objected to measures the Game Commission imposed, often at the behest of urban sportsmen, to keep game supplies balanced with demand. Despite the measurable gains in the deer population – by 1907, naturalist Henry Shoemaker determined that Pennsylvania’s deer herd was doubling in size each year – buck-hungry hunters often decimated the current population, leading to a diminished herd the following year. In 1912, a frustrated Kalfbus actually bemoaned improved highways for this reason. “With the various methods of rapid transit in use today . . . the only wonder to us is that we have any game at all.” Getting the balance right required the Game Commission to shorten or entirely close seasons in particular sections of the state where the herd had become perilously thin.<sup>96</sup>

Another unanticipated problem was periodic surges in deer populations in some sections of the state which resulted in considerable crop damage. The problem became so acute that the Commission’s initial goal of increasing the herd changed by the second decade of the twentieth century to “one of adequately controlling it.” Managing deer was no easy matter, particularly since it proved difficult to coax game animals from agricultural districts to areas where they could be legally and safely hunted by sportsmen. In this instance again, the Game Commission found itself walking a tightrope between the interests of urban sportsmen and their demands for

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<sup>95</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 35-36.

<sup>96</sup> *Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report 1912*, 2

adequate supplies of large game, and those of farmers and rural residents who even by the 1910s were beginning to view the white-tailed deer as more nuisance than sport.<sup>97</sup>

State game officials believed inadequate funding lay at the root of the problem. Without revenue to pay game protectors, for instance, the Commission found itself fighting a losing battle against poachers who continued to hunt certain species to near extinction. In 1907, game officials seized on what it believed to be the ultimate solution: an annual levy on hunting in the guise of a resident hunter license. Up to this point, only non-residents were required to purchase hunting licenses. But the Commission reasoned that if everyone who hunted were required to purchase one, it would reap sufficient revenue to fully fund all of its conservation activities. Commissioner Phillips, the bill's leading proponent, believed the license would resolve what had been a persistent dilemma. "We found it was fruitless to try to convince the 98% of people who did not hunt to fund the pleasures of the 2% who did." Phillips regarded the quest for a hunters' license law as nothing less than a measure to "guarantee the future of public hunting in Pennsylvania." With funding, the Commission would be able to hire professional game protectors, pay out bounties on vermin, and purchase or protect game animals more effectively.<sup>98</sup>

The license required public approval and politicians were predictably skeptical, at least initially. Pennsylvania Senator Boise Penrose expressed concern that the funding stream provided by license fees would transform the sportsmen lobby into a political force in

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<sup>97</sup> Winecoff, *Pennsylvania Deer Problem*, 7.

<sup>98</sup> In private correspondence with a fellow sportsman, Phillips vented his frustration with the state legislature over annual appropriations: "I for one am tired of going before [state legislators] . . . and practically holding out my hand begging for these so called 'true sportsmen' of Pennsylvania, only to be answered that the hunters should pay for their own sport, as all other sportsmen do, rather than depend on the State, which hasn't sufficient funds for hospitals, and other worthy charities." JMP to S. H. Garland, 11 March 1911, General Correspondence, Box 1, Folder "S.H. Garland," Phillips Papers.

Pennsylvania that would “upset the balance.” But many sportsmen believed that the lukewarm reception they received from other elected officials had much to do with the sport’s perceived, upper-class base. “Many of those who rise to positions of authority in this State are not hunters,” Secretary Kalbfus noted in 1911. “They look at hunting as a pastime or pleasure at best.”<sup>99</sup>

The bill’s most vociferous opponents were rural and small-town hunters, many of them concentrated in central Pennsylvania. From their perspective, they had done just fine without a license and believed the conservation programs for which the Commission was seeking funding – mainly such activities as law enforcement, game propagation and public game sanctuaries – to be superfluous and most importantly, of primary benefit to big city sportsmen. (This was at least partly true: in arguing for the license bill, Game Commission officials admitted that funds would be used for the stocking of quail and other game birds that “many sportsmen have in years past paid out of their own pockets.”) Many of these opponents also believed that by financing paid game protectors, the license fees would encourage overly vigilant law enforcement that would in turn undermine rural hunting practices, all simply for the benefit of city hunters and their “protected” game.<sup>100</sup>

The most organized opposition to the proposed license law came from a group calling itself the Hunters and Anglers Protective Association (HAPA). Claiming a membership of some 75,000 hunters, mostly in central Pennsylvania, and headed up by the owner of a sporting goods supply store in Harrisburg, the group cast the license fee debate in explicit class terms. Voicing its opinions through the *Mount and Stream Journal*, an organization newsletter published intermittently beginning in 1911, HAPA denounced the license bill as “mischievous legislation”

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<sup>99</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 23; *Harrisburg Telegraph*, 22 January 1911.

<sup>100</sup> “Dr. Charles B. Penrose and Game Administration in Pennsylvania,” Phillips Papers. Likewise, rural hunters objected to game laws that threatened to infringe on private property rights and their access to locally recognized hunting commons.

that “would not accomplish a single good result. . . . But it will keep the country men and boys out of the woods until the city gun club game pirates have found leisure to come out and slaughter.” HAPA also railed against a clause in the original bill – later omitted – that would have required farmers to purchase a license to hunt on their own land. “The farming population cannot understand why they should be taxed to hunt over their own property while ‘sportsmen’ from the city, upon payment of a nominal sum, can roam at will, destroying property and slaying every living thing that comes within range of their guns. . . . The licensing of hunters savors of feudalism and will be resented by a large body of citizens.” HAPA’s president bluntly told Phillips “your sympathy and interest seems to be with the privileged few.”<sup>101</sup>

In effect, license opponents accused the Commission of being part of a vast, urban conspiracy to hoodwink rural and small town Pennsylvanians. In order to persuade state legislators of the bill’s merits, proponents supposedly promised that a license would generate revenue that would kick back to their constituents in the form of bounty payments. (The elimination of animals identified as “vermin” – foxes, crows and wild cats – had been an important component of game management.) Another critic accused pro-license forces of promising to ban foreigners from hunting altogether. “That was another falsehood uttered with criminal intent” – apparently to influence the vote by pandering to the nativism of small town legislators. HAPA concluded its screed by condemning the power of sportsmen in Allegheny County and the “game wardens from the *dirty corner* [my emphasis] of our State.” As the leader of the pro-license lobby, Commissioner Phillips responded by launching his own journal – based

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<sup>101</sup> Cited in John G. Mock, “It Couldn’t Happen But it Did” 8 January 1939, Phillips Papers; S.H. Garland to JMP, 8 July 1913, Box 1, Folder “Garland,” Phillips Papers.



in Pittsburgh and titled *In the Open* – to combat the negative publicity and promote the interests of urban sportsmen.<sup>102</sup>

Sportsmen such as Phillips reiterated the argument that license fees were imperative for funding an effective, state-wide conservation program. But perhaps partly in an effort to deflect charges of elitism, pro-license forces began to emphasize another element of the argument: namely, that license fees would save the sport for ordinary Pennsylvanians and prevent it from becoming a pastime that only the wealthy could afford. Secretary Joseph Kalbfus outlined the argument in a letter to the editors of the *Harrisburg Telegraph*: “The rich man, against whom many of these articles written is aimed, has but little interest in the bill; he will either continue to go out of the state, as he does today, or he will build preserves of his own, in which he can hunt at leisure, while the poor man looks through the fence.” Kalbfus also noted that the burden of the licensing fees disproportionately fell on city folk and its benefits – mainly, in bounties which paid out for the extermination of vermin – would accrue disproportionately “to the country boys.” Kalbfus estimated that about half of the income from the bill would come from cities and towns, a figure which suggested that more and more urban hunters would move beyond the privileged class.<sup>103</sup>

The argument was slightly disingenuous: hunters who went out of state for their sport likely represented only a small percentage of all sportsmen. But there was enough truth to it to provide the Game Commission a new defense – and a renewed obligation to serve the interest of ordinary hunters. Theodore Roosevelt, whom John Phillips had drafted for the cause, made it the theme of an open letter written in 1913 to Pennsylvania hunters and published in dozens of

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<sup>102</sup> Mock, “It Couldn’t Happen,” Phillips Papers; Phillips, “Securing Game Refuges and Recreation Grounds,” 5, Phillips Papers.

<sup>103</sup> Kalbfus to Editor, *Harrisburg Telegraph* (c. 1911), Box 2, Folder “Resident Hunter License,” Phillips Papers.

sporting journals and newspapers around the state. “The very wealthy men who can afford private game preserves or who can travel to the uttermost parts of the earth have no personal interest . . . but the man who cannot travel, or has no private preserves, can have his shooting . . . only if there is proper preservation of game.” Phillips reiterated the point: For a mere one dollar, ordinary Pennsylvanians could join the largest sportsmen’s club in the world – the forests of Pennsylvania. The license would give them a chance “to help in the creation of a great game preserve, not private, but public, open to all and covering all state Lands and vast tracts of private lands.”<sup>104</sup>

In a broadly circulated pamphlet, the Commission called attention to the broad public benefits of a resident hunters license: by increasing game, “an additional lure to out-door recreation and exercise; therefore better health and better citizenship;” “an added incentive to the use and manipulation of guns” and the encouragement of “self reliance.” But even more persuasive was the Commission’s description of what would happen if it were not approved: “No hunting to any man, on the public lands of the Commonwealth, because there will be no game to hunt.” And perhaps most disastrously, “the poor man will see the man of means hunting upon his own property for game that he has brought into the State or has raised and has protected, while his (the poor man’s) gun is rusting in its case.” Echoing Teddy Roosevelt’s sentiments, the Commission underscored that “the man of means does not need the help of this law.” By contrast, “we have many more men of limited means, financially, in the state who

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<sup>104</sup> Of Roosevelt’s contribution, Phillip wrote “I am convinced his letter turned the tide of battle in favor of the law.” Theodore Roosevelt to JMP, 21 January 1913, General Correspondence, Phillips Papers. Phillips was fond of comparing subsequent game lands purchased through license fees to a vast hunting club. Regarding the Allegheny National Forest, established in Pennsylvania’s northern tier, Phillips wrote: “To my way of thinking its half million acres of public land makes it the biggest single hunting and fishing club in the State. And the only membership requirement is a stat hunting or fishing license.” R.J. Costley to JMP, 27 November 1951 Box 2, Folder “Cop-Cu” General Correspondence, Phillips Papers.

desire and deserve to go hunting than we have land-owners or rich men. This bill means everything to the poor man, and we beg of you, each one, to consider the proposition before it is too late . . . it is intended to benefit all people, and especially the man of ordinary means.”<sup>105</sup>

Although the rhetoric was perhaps a bit inflated, the sources of support for the bill suggested that there was something to the Commission’s claim. To help push it along, Kalbfus and other sponsors canvassed the state, taking the message to sportsmen everywhere, including potential backers in the Commonwealth’s mill and mining districts. After a visit to the steel town of Braddock during the third and ultimately successful campaign to have the bill signed into law in 1913, Kalbfus reported that residents there “were all for the bill and many will write [state representative] Mr. Connor individual letters concerning their thought.” A petition circulated by the Commission on the bill’s behalf affirmed Kalbfus’s instincts. Not only did most petitioners list urban addresses, they seemed evenly distributed between blue and white-collar occupations. In addition to “gentlemen” professions such as doctors, lawyers and merchants, the petitioners included a fair number of bricklayers, carpenters, miners, machinists and laborers.<sup>106</sup>

The broadening base of the pro-license lobby was enough to persuade once skeptical politicians to support the bill, even if it meant alienating them from rural voters and the handful of wealthy but influential sportsmen who had helped defeat the bill when introduced in earlier legislative sessions. Senator Penrose, who had initially been scared off by the political

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<sup>105</sup> “Benefits of a Resident Hunters’ License by Game Commission of Pennsylvania,” Phillips Papers. Phillips and his coterie of affluent sportsmen reasserted this same argument in an effort to draft federal legislation in 1924 calling for a national system of public hunting grounds. “The only way to forestall the advent of the European system in this country is through the establishment of game refuges to preserve the breeding stock . . . and through the establishment of public shooting grounds where anyone, rich and poor alike, may find good shooting.” Phillips, “Game Refuge-Public Shooting Ground Bill,” nd, Phillips Papers.

<sup>106</sup> Kalbus to JMP, 16 February 1914, General Correspondence, Folder “Kalbfus, 1913-1919,” Phillips Papers.

consequences of the license, believed it to be the one true guarantor for the future of public hunting in Pennsylvania. The state of hunting as a form of recreation was in peril, Penrose declared. In 1913, the state legislature voted in favor of a \$1 annual resident hunters' license. The only exemption granted was to farmers, who were permitted to hunt game on their own property.<sup>107</sup>

It was only a matter of time before urban sportsmen began to sound other populist themes related to hunting. Game was one, but another was land. The Pennsylvania Forestry Commission already struck out in that direction when it began buying open tracts in Pike County in 1900. State forestry officials apparently set their sites on acquiring 40,000 acres. In a boldly political move, the state allowed hunters to camp on its newly purchased grounds, a direct admonition to Blooming Grove, which had recently expelled local hunters. "The clubs, it was stated, were preventing the poor classes from enjoying the pleasures of the hunt." In response, Pennsylvania's chief forester offered asylum. "It is my desire to have every citizen of this State feel that the lands which the State purchased are for the good of all citizens."<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> "Open Letter to Citizen Hunters of Western Pennsylvania" 20 May 1911, General Correspondence, Box 2, Folder "Resident Hunter License"; JMP to Archibald Roosevelt, 21 August 1949, General Correspondence, Phillips Papers.

<sup>108</sup> *New York Times*, 31 December 1900.

## 2.5 From Sanctuaries to Shooting Grounds: The Evolution of Public Game Lands, 1919-1939

By providing money to hire game protectors, restock game animals, and pay out bounties on vermin and certain predatory species, license revenue contributed directly to a rebounding supply of game, including trophy species such as white-tailed deer. But for many would-be sport hunters, large deer herds were only as good as access to them, and on this count the Commission had not managed to keep pace with its otherwise impressive record of achievement. Where deer and other re-established game animals were in abundant supply, access to hunting grounds depended on either private wealth or personal relationships with private landowners, particularly farmers. Affluent sportsmen could do as they had done since the 1870s: buy their own property in sparsely settled townships in northern-tier counties. Those with fewer resources were at the mercy of local property owners, most often farmers, who were free to refuse permission for trespass or extract high fees for the privilege of hunting on their property.<sup>109</sup>

The distance that separated state-propagated game from its potential pursuers presented another problem. In the days before well-established state highways, traveling from population centers in southern Pennsylvania to the northern woods was inconvenient at best. Rail travel was possible, but expensive, and likely out of reach for the city dweller of modest means. In effect, access to game was limited to rural populations living adjacent to game habitats, and to city dwellers who could afford the time and expense it took to get there. While extolling the natural

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<sup>109</sup> Although hunting was permitted on state forest land, the number of acres available for public hunting before the aggressive acquisition of game lands was limited. In addition, state-owned lands were usually in the most remote regions, far from the reach of individuals of modest means. The game commission was eager to lease private property from farmers for auxiliary game land for that reason. Such farms were usually closer to population centers and theoretically more accessible to more hunters.

virtues of the state's northern-tier counties, naturalist Charles Hallock conceded it was "no trifle of an adventure to penetrate into its jungle." By the 1870s, Hallock noted that there were "increased facilities," thanks to the Philadelphia and Erie, which provided rail access to Emporium. But from there, hunters still needed the time and money to hire a stage or wagon to get to Coudersport in Potter County.<sup>110</sup>

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Commission officials acknowledged these obstacles to public access and redirected their policies accordingly. If law enforcement and restocking had been the goal during its first decade of operation, securing public land for both propagating and hunting game became the Commission's *raison d'etre* up to and through World War II. "I believe for various reasons that hunting is a national necessity," Kalbfus reported in 1914; "[and that]... it is the duty of the State to supply to the fullest extent possible lands whereon men may hunt without running up against trespass notices."<sup>111</sup>

A 1905 law allowing for protected game refuges on state-owned forest lands was a first step in this direction. The first refuge in north central Pennsylvania was determined to be an overall success, at least in terms of its impact on game propagation. The refuge consisted of approximately 3600 acres enclosed with a single wire of galvanized steel; the land was then posted to alert hunters that trespassing inside the refuge was prohibited. Kalbfus spent the first season patrolling the Clinton County refuge himself, and was gratified when he noted that there were more tracks going into the refuge than leaving it – evidence that game animals were indeed seeking sanctuary inside the refuge and propagating undisturbed. The Game Commission

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<sup>110</sup> Sajna, *Buck Fever*, 9; Hallock, *Fishing Tourist*, 84. Some determined, city-bound mill hands got "up north" by jumping freight trains, which, while inexpensive, were neither safe nor reliable. Schweiger interview.

<sup>111</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 54, 55.

embraced game refuges and promoted more. By 1910, it had added another two sanctuaries, and by 1915, there were more than a dozen, most clustering in the state's north central counties.<sup>112</sup>

The Commission believed that game refuges benefited both the hunter and the hunted. In theory, game would wander out into state forest land, where it could be hunted by the general public. Indeed, Kalbfus argued that preserves “should never be fixed on or close to the line of private lands, so that the people of the state may be able to hunt in all directions . . . without being turned aside by trespass notices.” But many state forest lands on which sanctuaries were being located were already ringed by private property, and there was little that the Commission could do to prevent game from wandering onto adjoining land. To make matters worse, game officials noted with dismay that some of neighboring properties were owned by large sportsmen's clubs which used salt licks and other illegal baiting methods to lure white-tailed deer and other prey to their property. “These clubs . . . attract many species of game, while the general public, which pays the bill, only gets what game filters through.”<sup>113</sup>

Another problem with early game preserves is that they were forced to compete with other uses. Because the Commission was effectively a tenant on state forest land, managing game took a back seat to lumbering and other primary uses for state forests. “Naturally game is of secondary consideration,” noted one Commission official. Wardens could patrol the sanctuaries, but they did not have the authority to plant seedlings and make other habitat improvements that would have been more beneficial to game animals. As a result, state forest preserves did not yield nearly as much game as they could have. In the words of the Commission, game animals, especially deer, “were limited in numbers to the carrying capacity of

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<sup>112</sup> *Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report 1907*, 16; Phillips, “Securing Refuges and Recreation Grounds,” 8, Phillips Papers. The first game refuge was dubbed the C.P. Penrose Preserve in honor of the then-chairman of the Commission.

<sup>113</sup> JMP to E. Seymour, 18 December 1923, Box 2, Folder “Hornaday,” Phillips Papers.

the woods.” Another problem was their general location: state forests lands were sited without much regard for their accessibility to hunters, especially those of ordinary means. In 1913, the Wild Life League noted that nearly 90 percent of all state-owned forest lands were located east of the Alleghenies, despite the fact that more than half the hunters lived west of them.<sup>114</sup>

The only long-term solution was for the Commission to own and control the land on which game would be located. Under the provisions of the original license law, revenue generated through license sales could only be spent on specifically enumerated conservation activities. Land acquisition was not one of them, a circumstance which required the Commission to lobby the legislature for an amendment which would permit it to use a portion of the revenue collected to purchase game lands. In pleading their case before the state legislature, game officials argued that by owning the land on which game was being propagated, they would be able to manage game in such a way as to “produce the greatest good to the greatest number.”<sup>115</sup>

Political leaders who were initially skeptical of the license fee and its political repercussions eagerly embraced this policy. A year after the license fee was signed into law, Boise Penrose addressed the annual meeting of the Scranton-based United Sportsmen of Pennsylvania, primarily to muster support for game land acquisition. “We have five million acres of barren land remaining in Pennsylvania, and I urge upon you the importance of having our State acquire this acreage for the perpetual possession of all the people of the State for all

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<sup>114</sup> General Correspondence, Box 1, Folder “Garland,” Phillips Papers; *Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report 1911*, 19. Sportsmen also complained that the Department of Forest and Waters leased portions of state forest lands “to nature lovers, sportsmen and others, often so close to the wires surrounding the refuges as to interfere with the free movement of game to and from the refuge and to handicap the hunters in the taking of game in the surrounding territories.” Around 1915, Pittsburgh sportsmen formed the Wild Life League of Pennsylvania, largely to lobby the Game Commission for “the selection of men who will see to it that western Pennsylvania gets its share of Forest Reserve areas.”

<sup>115</sup> G. Ward Conklin, *Pennsylvania’s State Game Refuges and Public Hunting Grounds. Bulletin No. 14* (Harrisburg, Pa: Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1931), 17.



time as a pleasure ground.” In demanding immediate action by the state legislature, Penrose warned the sportsmen of an impending crisis: “I refer to the acquiring of the most desirable fishing and hunting grounds by wealthy people, either as individual or clubs. . . . This gives food for thought, to an association such as ours, as to where the poor man, or the individual not a member of some club, can in a few years go for a day’s outing, either to fish or hunt, without being a trespasser.” Although the situation in the states was not as severe as in Europe, “numerous places in Pennsylvania have been acquired and fenced in the same way.” (Penrose knew this from first-hand experience; he belonged to at least one such private club.)<sup>116</sup>

Key Commission board members such as John Phillips concurred. “If we keep on, conditions will become as they are in the Old Country, where the farmers lease their grounds to people who can afford to stock them.” But Phillips was among those who insisted that the future of public hunting depended much on the type of game preserve which the state chose to adopt. The sanctuary model, which emphasized propagation and protection, worked to the advantages of some hunters, but disadvantaged those of ordinary means. Such hunters required public shooting grounds as well. To accommodate both, Phillips developed what became the accepted model in Pennsylvania: an inner sanctuary, ideally of about 3,000 acres, encircled by approximately 7000 acres of “ample hunting grounds.” Such “mini-Yellowstones” would encourage the multiplication of both game and hunters. “During the hunting season, the hunting grounds are open and accessible to the man of moderate means who cannot spare the time or

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<sup>116</sup> “Dr. Charles B. Penrose and Game Administration in Pennsylvania,” 13-16, Phillips Papers. Boise Penrose addressed the meeting in 1914 along with his brother, Commission chairman Charles Penrose. The address was later reprinted in a special edition of the *Pennsylvania Sportsmen*, the publication of the United Sportsmen of Pennsylvania based in Scranton. The published speech was sent to elected officials, up to and including President Woodrow Wilson.

money for an extended trip.” In 1919, the Commission’s proposal to establish its own lands was signed into law.<sup>117</sup>

Pennsylvania’s first officially designated state game land, State Game Lands #25, opened at the end of 1919 on just over 6,000 acres in Elk County. With money flowing in from hunting licenses, the program expanded rapidly. By 1924, the Commission owned 86,000 acres; six years later, its holdings had nearly doubled to more than 175,000 acres.<sup>118</sup> Most offers came from companies eager to part with land which had outlived its economic usefulness. Game officials were actually very eager for timbered land, since it yielded low brush, an ideal habitat for game animals, particularly deer. Most of the game lands were purchased in at least 1,000 contiguous acre increments. The Commission was forced to reduce this minimum to 500 acres in more densely settled southeastern and southwestern corners of the state.<sup>119</sup>

Per Penrose’s prediction, the Commission did indeed frequently find itself competing against private interests. In once case, game officials urged the immediate acquisition of 4,000 acres after a scouting report determined that it would “likely be acquired by private parties.” Seth Gordon, who succeeded Kalbfus as commission secretary in 1919, echoed Penrose’s earlier assessment: “A lot of desirable lands unless bought by some branch of state government will pass into the hands of private clubs and be gone forever.”<sup>120</sup> Even some sportsmen recognized this, and cooperated with the push for public land. In the fall of 1919, the Millstone Rod and Gun Club, based in Verona, Allegheny County, offered to sell its 900-acre property in deer-rich Elk County to the Commission. “We bot [sic] this land some time ago [when] things looked like

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<sup>117</sup> JMP to F. Hertzl, 17 March 1921, Box 4, Folder “*In the Open*,” Phillips Papers; Godcharles, *Pennsylvania*, 255.

<sup>118</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 55-56.

<sup>119</sup> Conklin, “Pennsylvania’s State Game Refuges,” 16-17.

<sup>120</sup> S. Gordon to J. Gable, 5 February 1923, Box 1 Folder “Gordon,” General Correspondence, Phillips Papers.

the Big Moguls where [sic] going to press out the small fry.” “[We] are willing to let go and share with other sportsmen.”<sup>121</sup>

The clash with private clubs gave the Commonwealth an opportunity to underscore its good intentions and populist credentials. The state was particularly eager to acquire land in places such as Pike County which were thought to be under siege from private “outsider” interests. After acquiring close to 24,000 acres there by December, 1900, the state forestry commission announced that it had no intention of allowing “the best hunting ground in the county to be purchased by [wealthy New York] associations.” As a first act, the state permitted a group of local hunters whom “the clubs and associations” had barred from “the pleasures of the hunt” to encamp on state land. “It is my desire,” the *New York Times* quoted then forestry commissioner Joseph Rothrock as saying, “to have every citizen of this State feel that the land which the State purchased are for the good of all citizens.” The Game Commission re-echoed those sentiments during its land acquisition program. “There is no better way to preserve the American system of free shooting than by the outright purchase of hunting grounds,” it concluded in 1930. By that time, the Game Commission controlled close to a million acres.<sup>122</sup>

But not everyone was pleased with the Commission’s land grab, and its insistence on buffering sanctuaries with public shooting grounds. Most urban sportsmen were understandably content with the original system of game sanctuaries on state forest land, mainly because they had little need for hunting grounds. Most were already members of clubs with ample holdings – many of which were located close to deer-rich enclosures or game populations – and were

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<sup>121</sup> Among the lands offered to the Commission in 1919 were tracts owned by the Wright Chemical Company and the Armstrong Forest Company near Punxsutawney. Charles Wetzell to JMP/Wild Life League, 6 October 1919, Folder “Wild Life League,” General Correspondence, Phillips Papers.

<sup>122</sup> *New York Times*, 31 December 1900; H. Hilton to JMP, 3 January 1930, General Correspondence, Box 1 Folder “H,” Phillips Papers.

successful in luring game animals to their own property. Moreover, many feared that the creation of a network of public shooting grounds would draw too many to the sport and crowd the woods which they had had to themselves. The resulting congestion would “lay waste” to the state’s supply of wild game and leave gentlemen hunters with little to shoot at. They were also probably concerned that the state would in fact beat them at their own game of grabbing the best available hunting land.<sup>123</sup>

Hunters who lived in counties where private land acquisition represented a sustained threat applauded the state’s efforts. But elsewhere, many rural and small town hunters joined with urban sportsmen in opposing the Commission’s new game refuge model, albeit on slightly different grounds. These hunters tended to view combination sanctuaries and public shooting grounds – particularly as owned and controlled by the Commission – as yet another instance of state intrusion into traditional hunting practices. What the Game Commission saw as fair play – the creation of a buffer zone that separated game preserves from privately controlled lands – they saw as an infringement on their natural right to take game in the most expedient manner possible. Even if protected sanctuaries did yield an increase in game animals, “abundance of game is of no use if the game cannot be taken . . . . Birds in a ten thousand acre forest with a five mile margin from which hunters are excluded is as far from the hunters of Pennsylvania as if it were at the antipodes.”<sup>124</sup>

Rural and small town hunters saw little utility in public shooting grounds, mainly because their access to game was not dependent on them. For most of these hunters, private lands –

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<sup>123</sup> JMP to E. Seymour, 22 August 1926, Box 2, Folder “Hornaday,” General Correspondence, Phillips Papers. In the “American Sportsmen’s Platform” of the American Game Protective Association, sportsmen later modified their view, so long as it was understood that public shoot grounds “are not intended to take the place of shooting on private grounds.” Flyer, “Program of Wild Life Conservation,” American Game Protective Association, January 1925, Phillips Papers.

<sup>124</sup> *Mount and Stream Journal* (April 1912), 16.

whether local farms or commonly recognized “commons” – were bountiful and accessible. As a result, they insisted that “the only game preserves worth while are small areas upon which friendly farmers and fond hunters shelter and feed the game.” They cared little whether this system disadvantaged and discouraged potential hunters from cities and industrial centers who were far less likely to be personally acquainted with local farmers or to be directed to locally recognized commons. Indeed, there is ample evidence to suggest that many small town hunters resented the influx of hunters from the cities and regarded public shooting grounds as a magnet that would attract more of them. Small-town hunters proposed instead that farmers be allowed to sell hunting privileges to their property, an alternative which Kalbfus and subsequent Commission officials adamantly rejected. “If the farmer has the right to sell the hunting privilege upon his premises, it seems to me this is the end of sport of this kind for the poor man, who is unable to pay the price asked.”<sup>125</sup>

Even conservationists who were otherwise supportive of the Commission’s efforts also had concerns with public shooting grounds which encircled Pennsylvania’s game sanctuaries. William Hornaday, perhaps the nation’s most prominent conservationist, opposed such areas out of concern that they would attract “millions of free shooters” and decimate game. But Phillips believed that it was precisely for this reason that such grounds needed to be created and maintained by the state. Phillips equated each piece of land acquired for this purpose as helping to create the largest hunting and fishing club in the country whereby “the only membership requirement is a state hunting or fishing license.” Phillips was later hailed as a sort of hunter-philanthropist: “He was a wealthy industrialist who was able to do his hunting in far places,”

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<sup>125</sup> *Mount and Stream Journal* (April 1912), 16-17; JMP to Edmund Seymour, 22 August 1926; Kalbfus to JMP, 9 November 1910, General Correspondence, Box 1, Folder “Kalbfus,” Phillips Papers.

noted Commissioner Seth Myers in a 1953 tribute, “but he felt sorry for those less fortunate than he and determined to provide hunting for them.”<sup>126</sup>

The system seemed to work: wherever public game preserves were created, hunters multiplied and prospered. Phillips pointed to the success of one parcel of land about 50 miles from Pittsburgh where “thousands of men” hunted over public shooting grounds and killed about 100 “large pronged bucks.” The United Sportsmen of Pennsylvania noted that Somerset County had more sportsmen’s camps than any other county in the state, thanks largely to the location of a large game preserve straddling Westmoreland and Somerset counties. “For this reason I am in favor of a noisy public shooting ground surrounded by a sanctuary.” Phillips concluded:

State Game Lands are, in reality, the property of the Commonwealth’s army of sportsmen since each individual who takes out a resident hunting license donates 75 cents toward their purchase. The lands are set aside for their pleasure and enjoyment and should be so used . . . The Game Commission simply acts in the capacity of custodian for sportsmen and manages the lands to produce the greatest good to the greatest number . . . ‘equality for all.’<sup>127</sup>

Despite the program’s overall success, Game officials continued to struggle to find land that was both close enough to sources of wild game and close to large population centers. The Commission had early on been made aware of the disparity between the location of most hunters – increasingly in the mill and mining districts of Western Pennsylvania, where there was a growing public appetite for both small and large game – and the public hunting

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<sup>126</sup> Hornaday, “The End of Game” 13; “Wild Life League of PA,” 5 December 1918; R.J. Costley to JMP, 27 November 1951, General Correspondence, Box 2, Folder “COP – Cu,” Phillips Papers. Hornaday, the author of the xenophobic *Our Vanishing Wildlife*, was also equally concerned about the impact of the automobile, since it proved more hunters with access to more game, a position which he underscored in an article titled “The Deadly Game-Killing Automobile,” published in *Nature Magazine* in 1923.

<sup>127</sup> “Charles B. Penrose and Game Conservation,” 9; JMP to E. Seymour, 18 December 1923, Box 2, Folder “Hornaday”; Frank Blair to JMP, 12 October 1914, Box 1 Folder “Bi-B1,” Phillips Papers. Phillip’s formula for game lands was so popular and so widely emulated that it became known in conservation circles as the “Pennsylvania model.” State game officials even commissioned a scale model of one such preserve for display at the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial in 1926. Box 7, Folder “Sesquicentennial Model Game Refuge, 1926,” Game Commission Records.

grounds where those of ordinary means might hunt without encountering “no trespass” signs. Three years into the state game land program, Phillips continued to note the disconnect between hunting grounds and hunters; Western Pennsylvania by 1922 generated 60% of the license revenues and yet was home to less than 2% of the state’s 1.1 million forest acreage. The situation was improving slowly; that year Phillips noted with satisfaction that the Commission had successfully acquired land in Elk, Warren, Jefferson and Cambria Counties for combined sanctuaries and public shooting grounds.<sup>128</sup>

While Western Pennsylvania may have been given short shrift, it was also true that large tracts of land near heavily populated or industrialized counties was simply hard to come by. Even in relatively remote Clarion County, one land agent confided that it was “some task to get land in my county that is not under lease for one thing or another. Some own the timber, some the gas, some the coal and some the oil rights . . .”<sup>129</sup> One solution was to lease the hunting rights from private property owners – mainly farmers – who owned large tracts of land in close proximity to either cities or industrial districts. In exchange for a fee, landowners agreed to allow licensed hunters access to their land during open seasons. There were obvious drawbacks to this arrangement, described variously as “auxiliary” game refuges or “farm-game” cooperatives. The lease was subject to the often capricious demands of property owners, who could and did cancel at will. But it was the best solution to the long standing problem of getting free public shooting grounds near cities. The Commission’s first farm-game project was on a

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<sup>128</sup> JMP to *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, August 1922, Box 2, Folder “Cook Forest,” Phillips Papers.

<sup>129</sup> H.N. Fenstermaker to JMP, 30 December 1919, Box 1, Folder “Fe-Fr,” General Correspondence, Phillips Papers.

700-acre farm in Oakdale, Allegheny County – considerably closer to Pittsburgh hunters than the closest game refuge at the time, still nearly a two-hour car ride away.<sup>130</sup>

The expansion of public shooting grounds and state game lands was supplemented by other efforts to enhance opportunities for urban hunters of “ordinary means.” In 1919, for instance, the Commission refused to bow to pressure from rural hunters to create frequent, short seasons for grouse hunting, perhaps the state’s most popular game bird after wild turkeys. In articulating the sportsmen’s position, Phillips argued that short seasons would translate into a closed season on the game bird for city dwellers. “Many thousands of our finest sportsmen live at such distances from the game fields . . . These men are compelled to work for their livings and they jealously save their vacation period in order to be able to enjoy a week’s hunt of grouse.”<sup>131</sup>

By the same token, the Commission after 1920 put forth considerable efforts to stock game of interest to the greatest number of hunters. Officials opposed suggestions to use license funds to increase waterfowl and lake habitats, reasoning that such game was of little interest to ordinary hunters. The decision was a marked change from even ten years earlier, when the Commission expended considerable resources in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to stock Western elk, mainly out of deference to wealthy sportsmen. “Many of our hunters have never shot at or killed a waterfowl, and it would be unfair to tax them for duck hunters.” (Even this circumstance Phillips thought might have been resolved if the state could have built duck blinds

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<sup>130</sup> *New York Times* 2 November 1924; “Tributes and Memberships,” 1931, Box 11, Folder 5, Phillips Papers. Commission officials were particularly enamored of the auxiliary game lands because through them, “it is thus possible to create game refuges where the State could never hope to purchase land. Many of these will be within easy reach of some of the larger industrial centers.”

<sup>131</sup> JMP to Dr. H.J. Donaldson, Williamsport, 30 December 1919, General Correspondence, Phillips Papers.



on Pymatuning Lake, in the northwestern corner of the state, “for the working man who has neither the time nor the money to go South.”)<sup>132</sup>

In the same vein, Phillips strenuously defended rabbit hunting, which he believed to be the primary sport for the vast majority of the hunters during the 1920s and 1930s. As late as 1937, Phillips estimated that 80% of the state’s license holders hunted rabbits – along with nearly all of the estimated 150,000 farmers who took up the gun. For that reason, Phillips opposed a law in 1937 which would have extended the number of days allowed for training dogs, since it would have negatively impacted the state’s rabbit population.<sup>133</sup>

Phillips was unapologetic regarding his efforts to protect this less glamorous – but popular – game species. Rabbits had nearly been annihilated as a game species in 1900, but by 1921, over five million were killed in a single season, thanks entirely to Game Commission stocking and habitat rebuilding efforts. “Remembering my boyhood days on a farm and *the working men with whom I have been associated with for many years* [my emphasis], who have neither the means or the time to go far afield for their sport, I took an active part in passing laws to make the rabbit the best protected animal in the state.” Phillips also noted correctly how small game – protected through state game lands, particularly auxiliary preserves on farms – introduced many ordinary Pennsylvania’s to the thrill of the sport, and provided an entrée to Big Game hunting. “Many mines and factories close the first day of [rabbit] hunting season to allow their workmen to go

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<sup>132</sup> “Phillips Testimony before Congress,” typewritten mss, nd, Box 5, Folder “Addresses – M,” Phillips Papers.

<sup>133</sup> JMP to T. Frye, 14 May 1951, General Correspondence, Box 1, Folder “Fe-Fr”; Hornaday to Florent Gibson, 17 May 1923, Box 3, Folder “Hornaday,” Phillips Papers.

hunting,” he noted in 1937. By the next decade, that practice would be extended to the opening of deer season.<sup>134</sup>

## **2.6 “A Veritable Army of Annihilation”: The Increase in Recreational Hunters and the Democratization of Sport Hunting, 1915-1940**

In 1949, John Phillips reflected back on his moment of triumph nearly three decades earlier during the fight for the passage of the resident hunters’ license. “I was accused of trying to regiment our hunters like a European ruler,” he recalled, “and of trying to tag them like dogs. I was charged with trying to take hunting away from the working man although . . . it was for the working man that I was trying to bring game back to Pennsylvania, since he had neither the time nor the means to go far a-field.” Since then, both the resident hunter license and the state’s network of public shooting grounds had proven their worth. “In the shot-out, cut-over, burned-over, water-polluted Pennsylvania of 1913, it was estimated there were only 140,000 hunters; when passed in 1913, 305,000 applied for licenses. Today . . . there are over 1,000,000 hunters in our industrial state.”<sup>135</sup>

Pennsylvania had come a long way from the days when sport hunters were synonymous with its business elites. Hunting’s appeal was by 1940 widespread and the formula for expanding the ranks was simple: since 1919, the Game Commission used license fees to

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<sup>134</sup> “The rabbit brings in the hunters license money,” Phillips told his fellow conservationists. James Stuber to JMP, 12 May 1946, Box 5 Folder “Stu-,” Phillips Papers.

<sup>135</sup> JMP, “Future of Wildlife Conservation,” 2.

underwrite the expansion of public hunting grounds; in turn, each additional acre added to the public complement of game lands allowed more and more hunters “of modest means” to join the hunt. As early as the 1920s, Pennsylvania was developing a well-earned reputation as a poor man’s hunting paradise, with ample game and ample land on which it could be hunted. “There is in fact better hunting in the Keystone State today than in many Western States famous for game. . . .The largest Legion of hunters in the Union walk the woods of Pennsylvania . . . many thousand of factory workers are able through the very attitude on the part of the authorities to enjoy the full joys of the case.”<sup>136</sup>

The Commission never believed nor intended that state game lands would replace the practice of hunting on private land. It merely hoped that by providing public shooting grounds, it would allow more hunters in on the chase. Game officials estimated that public and private lands supported hunters in roughly the same numbers. In 1907, for instance, Kalbfus used permits issued by the state forestry department to arrive at the number of hunters on state land. He estimated that 4600 hunters had traversed state forests during the fall season, and that an equal number hunted on private lands. In 1924, the Department of Forest and Waters reported that 58% of all deer taken legally in Pennsylvania that year were harvested on state-owned forest grounds – a figure which suggests that the public lands were probably a little more fertile than private lands, and likely more crowded.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *New York Times*, 2 December 1924.

<sup>137</sup> Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 56-57; Phillips, “The Future of Wildlife Conservation in Pennsylvania,” Phillips Papers; *Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Department of Forest and Waters 1924-1926* (Harrisburg, Pa: Department of Forest and Waters, 1926), 13. In an astute political move, the acquisition of new game lands was being financed almost entirely by hunting license sales. Observers lauded them: “[The new state game lands] played an important part in successfully increasing game and providing lands where licensed hunters do not encounter ‘No Trespass’ signs.” Godcharles, *Pennsylvania*, 254.

The rate of growth in the number of hunters was indeed impressive. In 1907, Commission secretary Joseph Kalbfus estimated that during the open season on white-tailed deer – by far the most popular Big Game species available in the eastern United States – 5,000 men had joined the hunt. Four years later, the number had climbed to 7,000. Over the next two decades, the numbers kept climbing, clearly well ahead of figures for other states. During the 1930s, more game animals were killed in Pennsylvania than in any other state. Moreover, during the same decade, one-sixth of all active sportsmen's organizations and one-seventh of all licensed hunters in the United States resided in Pennsylvania. Commission officials understandably regarded this as vindication of their work and their mission, even as they continued to fret about the balance between supply and demand. With the number of hunters increasing at the rate of about 10% a year, Phillips in 1921 admitted to a fellow conservationist that “our game is getting to be like a small blanket, not large enough to cover a large crowd.” Still, Pennsylvania's reputation as a hunter's paradise would continue into the second half of the century, a position unchallenged by any other state except Texas.<sup>138</sup>

Not all conservationists applauded the trend. Organizations such as the American Game Protective Association (AGPA) conjured up doomsday scenarios of irreversibly depleted game species resulting from hordes of hunters released into the woods for the “ritual slaughter.” One official referred to the scene as a “veritable army of annihilation.” Hornaday and other influential members of the AGPA had already established themselves as hostile toward hunters of less than noble birth. In a speech before fellow conservationists in 1919, he praised Pennsylvania's Alien Gun Law – the first such law in the nation – and urged its adoption in New York, New Jersey

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<sup>138</sup> *Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report 1907*, 16; Shoemaker, *Pennsylvania Deer*, 9; *Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report, 1925-1926*, 10-11; JMP to F. Hertzell, 17 March 1921, Box 4, Folder “In the Open,” Phillips Papers. “Our laws are the subject of envy of other state, nineteen of which have sent representatives to learn our setup,” a 1933 state publication boasted. Godcharles, *Pennsylvania*, 257.

and Massachusetts as well – states with high concentrations of new immigrants. Hornaday would have preferred to return to a time when only the well-born could hunt. It was partly about fewer hunters, but also about returning sport hunting to its aristocratic origins. In 1923, he lamented public access to American forests and games, and pined for the creation of European-style forests where access was limited to a privileged minority. “In Europe, it has been proven over and over that private owners of large hunting grounds preserve game . . .,” Hornaday wrote. By contrast, the “millions of free shooters” in the United States, “each one asserting the rights of a sovereign,” were annihilating game.<sup>139</sup>

Despite the generally even upward trend in hunting, as measured through license sales, short-term dips and spikes did occur. Fee increases invariably caused license sales to drop off for a few years before recovering to their previous levels. When the Commission increased fees in 1949 from \$2 to \$3.15, perhaps in an effort to capitalize on the astounding 43% jump in hunting licenses between 1944 and 1948, sales fell off by 5%. Within five years, license sales returned to their pre-1948 level. Likewise, sales of hunting licenses dropped 4% when the Commission raised the fee from \$1.25 to \$2 in 1927, only to recover to their former level within four years. The announcement of a new hunting season, or rumors of a particularly good harvest, could also send a record number of hunters into the woods – a situation which occurred at least twice in the 1930s.<sup>140</sup>

The biggest swings were the result of factors beyond the Commission’s control. Returning servicemen, for instance, created dramatic surges in the general hunting population. Between 1918 and 1919, World War I vets swelled the ranks of hunters by 30%. Likewise,

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<sup>139</sup> Hornaday, “The End of Game,” 27; Hornaday to JMP, 1926, Box 3 Folder “Hornaday,” General Correspondence, Phillips Papers. Hornaday opposed a federal game refuge and public shooting grounds bill on the same grounds that it would attract “an army of hunters” detrimental to game stocks.

<sup>140</sup> *Game Commission Data Book*.

between 1945 and 1946, the state witnessed a 20% jump in licenses. License sales were also affected by the state of the economy, although it is difficult to say whether a bear or bull market was more likely to drive up the numbers. During the first year of the Great Depression, the number of registered hunters rose by only 7%, but the deer harvest increased almost four-fold. This statistic, combined with reports from the field, suggests that many Pennsylvanians were hunting for food, and few either wished to or could afford to purchase licenses in order to do so legally. Thus, at first glance, it would seem that the Great Depression did more for stimulating an increased interest in hunting than post-war surges. Hunting licenses increased some 26% during the 1930s, compared to a 22% increase during the previous period, and a 21% increase during the 1940s. However, if one looks more closely at the year-to-year increases in license sales, the post-World-War-II years accounted for the largest total increases.<sup>141</sup>

The most sustained period of growth occurred between 1938 and 1958, when the number of resident hunting licenses rose by over 30%. Returning GIs were responsible for much of this increase. World War II had introduced many “city boys” to firearms and trained them in their proper use. The Army also literally placed guns in the hands of men who would have been unlikely otherwise to own them. Veterans tramped through the woods with rifles they had been issued during the war, picked up on the beaches of Normandy, or purchased at servicemen’s discount. The incentive of a free hunting license also induced many returning servicemen to take up the sport for a season or two. But while these circumstances explain the immediate, postwar increases, they do not account for hunting’s sustained growth into the 1950s. Just as the Depression likely compelled many to hunt (or poach) for food, so too the prosperous postwar

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<sup>141</sup> *Game Commission Data Book; Pennsylvania Deer Harvests and Road Kills* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1997).

years, centered around Pennsylvania's booming manufacturing economy, enticed many to hunt for pleasure.<sup>142</sup>

Another salient feature of Pennsylvania's hunting population was its increasingly urban character. In 1925, Commissioner Phillips reported that the upsurge in recreational hunting had nearly wiped out sportsmen's supply stores in Pittsburgh. "During the last hunting season," Phillips reported, "our gun and hardware stores found that it was almost impossible to supply all these men with guns and ammunition. One of them . . . sold over a million shells and if they had been obtainable would have sold more." Forested sections of Westmoreland and Somerset counties, home to the most accessible public hunting grounds and game preserves, proved extremely popular among Pittsburghers, and not just those from affluent suburbs. In 1925, the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* reported with only mild exaggeration that "the census of most any town in the Pittsburgh district might best be taken here. You meet hundreds of city hunting parties on the trails leading to secluded club houses and to the most remote mountain cabins." In 1935, Commission Secretary Ross Leffler estimated that hunters from Allegheny County accounted for 15,000 of the state's estimated 200,000 deer hunters, a significant proportion given that county's distance from large deer herds. It also seems likely that Pittsburgh hunters were among those in an "unbroken string of cars" reported by state game wardens on "Big Game Highway" – a 15-

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<sup>142</sup> On the impact of returning servicemen on recreational hunting, see Sajna, *Buck Fever*, 8-9; F.T. Ogrin, "The Deerslayers" *Pennsylvania Game News* (July 1975): 21-23; Kosack, *Pennsylvania Game Commission*, 102; and Altherr, "Mallards and Messerschmitts," 162. During the 1940s and 1950s, the deer harvest was roughly equivalent to the number of licenses sold, suggesting, when compared with similar date from the 1930s, that hunters were now hunting not merely for food, but for pleasure. During the Depression, the number of deer harvested considerably exceeded the number of licenses, suggesting that many were poached by non-license holders for consumption rather than sport.

mile stretch of highway between Elk and Clearfield Counties – during the opening of the 1930 buck season.<sup>143</sup>

The two decades which followed World War I also witnessed a slow but decided shift in the geographic center of the annual deer harvests. Counties like Clearfield, Potter, McKean, Elk, and Forest had always regarded themselves as Big Game country, and since white-tailed deer hunting had been formally reintroduced through the Game Commission at the turn of the century, the harvest in this section of the state easily surpassed that of other regions. During the 1910s, middle-tier counties such as Lycoming, Clinton, Centre and Huntingdon led the annual deer harvest, sparse though it was. (Not coincidentally, the Commission's first game refuges were located here.) But during the next three decades, northern-tier counties steadily overtook them. During the 1930s, Elk County led the annual deer harvest, followed closely by Centre, McKean and Clinton counties. Thanks to both the automobile and improved roads, eager hunters were able to follow the herd.<sup>144</sup>

Another discernable shift by the 1930s and 1940s was in the social class background of Pennsylvania's hunting population. One local observer in Elk County recalled a time when the woods became populated by "new hunters," many of them urban blue-collar workers who had decided that "deer-hunting was no longer to be confined to the well-heeled of the city." Even though many went home empty handed, "[a]fter all the time spent in the factories and mills of the big city, it was those days in the woods which were great times for them." Game officials testified to the trend as well. "Fifty years ago . . . there was scarcely enough wildlife in Pennsylvania to satisfy a mere handful of hunters," a Commission official reported in 1946.

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<sup>143</sup> *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 29 November 1925; 1 December 1930; 2 December 1935.

<sup>144</sup> Pennsylvania Game Commission, *Deer Harvests and Road Kills*.



“Today, giants from the steel mills, miners from the pits, quarry men and railroaders, workers in textiles, metals and chemicals bankers and bus drivers . . . in short, the butcher, the baker, the cigarette maker” have joined the opening day parade.<sup>145</sup>

Residents of northern-tier counties came to refer such sportsmen as “Pittsburgh hunters,” a largely pejorative – and geographically expansive – term for the thousands of hunters from southwestern Pennsylvania who streamed north on Route 68 for the opening of deer season.<sup>146</sup> While it may be unfair to characterize this annual convocation as a culture clash, there was a strong perception among locals that Pittsburgh hunters were different. “They’d shoot at anything,” one Elk County resident recalled. When the Pittsburgh hunter came north for the opening of deer season, so the story goes, farmers kept their cows in the barn for fear that they might be mistaken for doe. Another distinguishing mark of the city hunter, according to one year-round resident of Venango County, was their tendency to post private property. “As soon as they got out of town and got a piece of land, they posted everything. These people were not used to having trees on their property.”<sup>147</sup>

Another certain sign of the “Pittsburgh hunter” was overcrowding, and the expected complications that came with it. In 1933, the Game Commission engaged in a campaign for hunter safety driven in large part by the high percentage of new city hunters not attuned to

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<sup>145</sup> *Dubois Courier Express*, 29 November 1952 ; Ogrin, “The Deer Slayers,” 21; William C. Shaffer, *Greed and Carelessness: An Analysis of the Hunting Accident Problem* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Telegraph Press, 1946), 12.

<sup>146</sup> According to Deborah Che, residents of Pennsylvania’s northern tier counties also referred to hunters from outside the region as “up here’s”, “flatlanders” and “Ohio-sians.” See Che, “Going to the Mountains: Flatlander, Ohio-sian and Up-here Deer Hunters in the Allegheny National Forest Region,” in Kevin Patrick and Joseph Scarpaci, Jr., eds., *A Geographic Perspective of Pittsburgh and the Alleghenies: From Precambrian to Post-Industrial* (Washington, D.C: Association of American Geographers, 2000), 148-158. Che’s data confirms the presence of Pittsburgh steelworkers in northern tier hunting counties in the 1960s and 1970s, but she does not address how they got there, either literally or historically. This study argues that their participation depended in large part on game policies established during the first half of the twentieth century.

<sup>147</sup> Phone interview with Ken Foster, Pennsylvania Sportsman’s Association, 28 July 1998.

hunting etiquette. Realizing that it was unable to cover all the acres where hunters were congregating, the Commission encouraged hunting clubs to distribute tags and posters such as the one issued by the Mauch Chunk Rod and Gun Club: “WE DO NOT WANT TO BE SHOT IN THESE WOODS, NEITHER DO YOU – YOU BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU SHOOT AT, SO WILL WE AND WE’LL ALL GO HOME ALIVE AND WELL.” The Commission illustrated the article with a cartoon, titled “The Season Opens,” showing hordes of hunters descending on a field. In one corner of the frame, a farmer paints his cows while muttering “I’ll camouflage ‘em, by gum.” In another, an ambulance rushes to a scene of mayhem as hunters unwittingly aim their guns at one another. “This reminds me of the Argonne!” the driver says. Another character tiptoeing across an open field wears a sign strapped to his back which reads “I’m not a bear – don’t shoot.”<sup>148</sup>

## **2.7 The Working Man’s Hunting Club: Industrial Workers as Sport Hunters**

Although such anecdotes intimate the increasingly diverse base of Pennsylvania’s hunters, the paucity of sources makes it difficult to identify them with precision. While the Commission diligently compiled and analyzed a wide range of data on game animals, it was far less concerned with collecting accurate or detailed information about hunters themselves. Even such basic information as the geographic distribution of hunters at any given point in time is difficult to ascertain precisely from Commission records. The Game Commission had since 1938 tracked license sales by county, but this data was likely skewed by the fact that hunters frequently

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<sup>148</sup> “News from the Commission,” *Pennsylvania Game News* (September 1933), 8.

purchased their licenses in the county where they hunted instead of the county where they lived.<sup>149</sup> Other data that might be used to divine the relative popularity of sport hunting in any given region are likewise frustratingly incomplete.<sup>150</sup>

The one source that can be used to sketch a rough aggregate profile of Pennsylvania hunters are the membership lists of permanent and semi-permanent hunting camps. Hunting camps were a long established part of the sport hunting tradition, and during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, almost exclusively the purview of gentlemen hunters. During the late 1800s, their well-appointed lodges dotted the Adirondacks and, to a lesser extent, Pennsylvania's Big Game country along the state's northern tier. But as the appeal of recreational hunting broadened beyond this class, more modest versions began cropping up in ever increasing numbers on both public and private land around Pennsylvania, generally in close proximity to state game lands.

In Pennsylvania, hunting camps fell on along a broad continuum. The most informal type was organized on a seasonal basis by hunters who gathered together in temporary shelters such as tents or lean-to's set up on private or public hunting grounds, or who hunted together on day trips. At the next level were camps which maintained more permanent structures on land which they leased from the state or private landowners. The next tier consisted of camps owned and maintained by incorporated sportsmen's clubs. The most organizationally elaborate of these

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<sup>149</sup> The Commission initially required applicants to indicate occupation along with other personal information. Unfortunately, an extensive search of available repositories, including county records, yielded no extant applications. Counties which had retained early hunting license applications subsequently destroyed them in the 1970s and 1980s with the consent of the State Archives. Other Commission records containing potentially invaluable social data have also been lost. Up until 1983, hunting parties of six or more were required to register with the Game Commission; unfortunately, these forms were not retained.

<sup>150</sup> Since taxidermists tend to set up shop near hunters, not hunting grounds, they could be used as an index of hunting's popularity in a given locale. Unfortunately, taxidermy for most practitioners has been a sideline, and part-time taxidermists leave little if any trace in the historical record. The Game Commission began licensing all taxidermists as early as 1910, but again, licensing records have not been retained.

were incorporated sportsmen's clubs associated with statewide sportsmen organizations such as the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs (PFSC). Depending in part on the size of their membership, such clubs frequently owned property both in their home communities (for shooting and socializing) and in northern-tier counties (for seasonal hunting).<sup>151</sup>

Camps established on private property were usually located on parcels of farm land or wooded lots which had been subdivided by farmers or other large rural property owners. Camps on public land were generally administered through agencies associated with the state and less commonly, the federal government, as in the case of the Allegheny National Forest. Permanent lease camps were not evenly distributed across the state's northern tier. Forest County, for instance, had few state administered sites but hundreds of private hunting camps maintained on private property and which, as a result of their proximity to southwestern Pennsylvania, attracted a large number of hunters from Allegheny, Westmoreland and other southwestern counties. Although not designed intentionally for the use of hunters, camps built on public lands were used overwhelming for that purpose, except in state parks that were frequented by church groups and other organizations with summer youth programs. Because hunters could lease the land for a nominal fee, the program was particularly attractive to sportsmen of more modest means.<sup>152</sup>

Beginning in 1913, the state Department of Forest and Water offered "permanent lease" camp sites on state-owned forests and park land. Pennsylvania residents who desired to lease a small piece of land simply made application to the department, which granted a ten-year lease on a specified lot. Lease holders were permitted to renew the lease at the end of their original ten-year period, or with the state's approval, transfer the lease to another applicant. The program

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<sup>151</sup> Tom Fegeley, *A Guide to Hunting Pennsylvania Whitetails* (Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1994), 3-5.

<sup>152</sup> State camp records, including leases, are maintained by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) at the agency's headquarters in Harrisburg and are organized numerically by county. (Hereafter camp files will be identified hereafter by county or district and abbreviated as DCNR Records.)

proved so popular that the state discontinued granting new leases after 1930, after which time new hunters could be admitted only by inheriting a lease from a current lease holder. Ironically, the harshest critic of the program was the state Game Commission, which complained that the camps interfered with game management and gave lease holders an unfair advantage over day hunters, since many were able to set up camps on the perimeter of game sanctuaries.<sup>153</sup>

Most state forest hunting camps were very modest efforts designed to provide hunters with cheap and efficient shelter during the season. During the 1930s, permanent residents of Ridgeway, Elk County, referred to these seasonally occupied settlements as “shanty towns.” Often, the structures themselves were little more than sheets of plywood built directly over naturally occurring formations and rocks to reinforce foundations. Camps frequently adapted available man-made structures as well. A 1998 windshield survey of hunting camps near Ridgeway revealed aging school buses converted into cabins, some with improvised additions designed to accommodate more hunters. Small aluminum campers were similarly used as a base structure and then, over the years, reinforced and expanded with plywood and other makeshift building materials.<sup>154</sup>

The growth of hunting camps corresponded with the growth of hunting in general (as measured by hunting license sales). A random sample of 50 camps established on state-owned land in Elk County between 1920 and 1960 indicates that about one-third were built during the 1930s while nearly half were constructed during the 1950s. Only a handful of camps were

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<sup>153</sup> The state required lease holders to list the names of all camp members, thus making it theoretically possible to document all hunters associated with a given camp.

<sup>154</sup> T.B.T. Baldwin, “The Hunting Camp,” *Pennsylvania Game News* (August 1994). The 1998 survey revealed the typical hunting camp in Elk County to be no larger than a standard backyard shed. Cabin designs and styles are aggressively eclectic, although it is possible to discern trends in materials and styles. The author wishes to thank Wildlife Conservation Officer Richard Bodenhorn of the Pennsylvania Game Commission’s north central office for a tour of hunting camp “shanties” in Elk County in 1998.

established during the 1910s and 1920s; during the 1940s and 1960s, hunters staked out camps even more sporadically. The building boom of the 1930s was likely fueled by the Depression, which idled many hands which would have otherwise been engaged in work. Fewer camps were went up during the 1940s than one would have expected, given the marked increase in license sales during that decade. But it is important to remember that hunting camps were not built by first-time hunters but by those who had developed a taste for hunting after at least a few seasons. It is quite plausible that the camp building boom in the 1950s was the direct result of hunters who had become involved in the sport immediately after the war. (Returning servicemen were eligible for free hunting licenses; many apparently took the Commission up on its invitation to enter the woods.)<sup>155</sup>

During the early years of the state's leased camp program, hunters were drawn overwhelmingly from rural Pennsylvania. The vast majority of the 186 lease holders identified in a 1916-17 Department of Forest and Waters report came from small towns and rural districts. When larger towns did appear on these lists, they were most often located in central- and northern-tier counties. Residents from cities such as Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and their surrounding suburbs appeared occasionally as lease holders, but accounted for just 7% of the total. Moreover, their social profile generally conformed to that of the "gentleman hunter."

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<sup>155</sup> Leased Camp Files, Elk County, DCNR Records; Ogrin, "Deer Slayers," 21-24; Sajna, *Buck Fever*, 13-15. Relying on individuals who belonged to or owned hunting camps as a proxy for the state's total hunting population has its limitations. Many licensed hunters roamed the woods without ever setting foot in a camp. This was especially true before World War II, when many hunters from Pittsburgh and its surrounding industrial communities were more inclined to board in private lodgings and hunt on private property. These hunters remain largely anonymous. Still, in the absence of other collective data on hunters, hunting camp rosters offer the best statistical snapshot of Pennsylvania hunters.

Many hailed from upper-class suburbs or city neighborhoods. Among the Harrisburg sample, at least three were physicians.<sup>156</sup>

The social composition of the Minnisink Hunting and Fishing Club was typical of the first generation of leased sites established on state forest land. The club came together informally in 1900; during its first dozen years, members stayed in tents during summer outings on state forest land near High Knob in Pike County. When the state law was amended to allow permanent structures on such property, the group secured a leased site and in 1914 built a hunting lodge for year-round use. “Since the law has permitted cabins in these woods,” wrote the club’s founding member, “the familiar sound of tent peg driving, with its accompanying profanity, is no longer heard in the land.”<sup>157</sup>

Although not landowners, in both social profile and attitude, members of the Minnisink were gentlemen hunters. Most lived in Radnor, an affluent suburb located along Philadelphia’s Main Line. Two of its eight members were physicians. The club was sufficiently well-off to retain the services of a private cook during hunting season. In a self-published “chronicle” of the Minnisink’s brief history, member Oliver Wolfe sounded the themes of fair play and the restorative power of nature that had distinguished gentlemen hunters from subsistence and market hunters. “So far as we are aware, still hunting for deer in Pennsylvania has had no known influence on literature or philosophy. Yet there is no other sport or occupation that should be more conducive to profound thought and clear reasoning. Every inspiration that nature affords is about you, as you sit musing on your fallen log.” Much like other urban sportsmen, members of Minnisink placed “pleasure in the sport” above carcass counts. “Naturally, he is the more

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<sup>156</sup> *Pennsylvania Department of Forest and Waters Annual Report, 1916-1917* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Department of Forest and Waters, 1918); *Polk’s Harrisburg City Directory* (Malden, Mass.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1917).

<sup>157</sup> Oliver Howard Wolfe, *Back Log and Pine Knot: A Chronicle of the Minnisink Hunting and Fishing Club* (Privately Printed, 1916).

pleased when he is successful but it is not necessary that he always win to be happy,” Wolfe philosophized. “He is content to play fair and abide by the rules, taking keen delight in the strength, skill and cunning of the quarry against which he matches his wits.”<sup>158</sup>

Although it is difficult to gauge with absolute precision, a sample analysis of individuals listed on state-issued leases in Elk and Cameron Counties during the 1930s reveals a gradual shift in the geographic origins of Pennsylvania hunters.<sup>159</sup> Well over half of the camps in the sample were leased to residents of small rural communities such as Ridgeway and St. Mary’s, but camps leased to residents of industrial towns such as Vandergrift, Apollo and New Castle in western Pennsylvania could also be found alongside a smaller percentage of camps leased to residents of Pittsburgh and steel towns such as McKeesport and Braddock. By the 1940s and 1950s especially, residents from Pittsburgh’s steel-making districts began appearing more frequently. In 1930, for instance, only one camp could be traced to Westmoreland County, a heavily industrialized county that shared an eastern border with Allegheny County; by 1950, there were eight camps leased to residents there.<sup>160</sup>

Anecdotal and circumstantial evidence suggests that many of these “Pittsburgh” camps eventually fell into the hands of individuals known colloquially as “mill hunkies” – i.e., steelworkers of Eastern European extraction. Hunters with Slavic surnames first began appearing

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<sup>158</sup> Wolfe, *Back Log and Pine Knot*.

<sup>159</sup> Leased Camp Files, DCNR Records. Camp members were frequently from the same community, but not always. In cases where camp members hailed from geographically proximate and similar communities, it was possible to classify the camp as either rural or urban. When the same camp included members from disparate communities – Ridgeway and Pittsburgh, for instance – the camp was classified according to the community from which the majority of its members were drawn.

<sup>160</sup> Leased Camp Files, Elk and Cameron counties, DCNR Records. A c.1945 road map reveals the reason One reason for this region’s popularity among Pittsburgh hunters, as revealed in by a c.1945 Pennsylvania road map, was its accessibility. Pittsburgh hunters could easily reach it by way of Rt. 8, which traversed the city’s northern suburbs. Elk County was considered prime hunting ground for white-tailed deer, thanks in part to the fact that it contained the most northwesterly game preserve in Pennsylvania in 1920. The next closest game preserves in 1920 were in Clearfield, Cameron and Potter Counties. Pennsylvania Road Map Collection, MG 11, State Archives; Interview with Richard Bodenhorn, Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1998.



on camp leases during the 1930s and 1940s, supplanting hunters of northwestern European ancestry. The Nuss brothers from Homestead, a steel town just outside Pittsburgh, originally held the lease on State Camp #7 in Elk County, but in the 1940s, a group of Slovak-Americans steelworkers assumed title. Likewise, State Camp #16 in Potter County had been originally leased to John Woodley, a hotel owner in Hastings, Cambria County. In 1958, Andrew Kmett, Jr., a second-generation Slovak steelworker from Johnstown, wrote to the Department of Forest and Waters to express his interest in acquiring the lease from Woodley, which he eventually did.<sup>161</sup>

Since hunters like Kmett could only acquire a lease from a current lease holder, local communities must have had networks through which hunters exchanged information on optimum hunting territories and an expiring lease on hunting camp in prime forest land. Large industrial workplaces were as good a place as any to develop contacts with fellow hunters. As the owner of a large manufacturing plant on Pittsburgh's South Side, Commissioner Phillips introduced countless numbers of his own workers to the pleasure of the hunt. Fellow manufacturers also referred their employees to Phillips for suggestions on the best deer territory.<sup>162</sup> That is also likely where many camp leases changed hands. In 1945, Stephen Vinski of Etna obtained the lease to State Camp #6 in Potter County from George Wood of Pittsburgh's North Side. Wood was the camp's third lease holder. According to the city directory for that year, Vinski and Wood were both steelworkers, suggesting that this camp, like perhaps many others, had been

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<sup>161</sup> Leased Camp Files, Northwestern District, DCNR. Although hunting camps on private property were not examined for this study, it seems likely that they followed a similar pattern of class and ethnic succession. Their limitation as a data source, when compared against camps on public land, is that tax records provide only the name of the parcel's owner and not the names of camp members who may have hunted there as well.

<sup>162</sup> In 1918, a group of employees from the "Ft. Pitt Malleable Iron Company" in McKees Rocks wrote to Phillips near the beginning of deer season and at the urging of their supervisor, who suggested that Phillips would be able to inform them "of a good place to go in this state, some place where we can secure lodging and board." Seiffert to JMP, 18 November 1918, General Correspondence, Phillips Papers.

organized on the factory floor. Whatever the case, this pattern of succession suggests that hunting may have transcended traditional ethnic and class boundaries.<sup>163</sup>

In at least some cases, northern-tier camps could be traced directly to city-based hunting clubs, which established them for the use of their members. Typical of these was the Pottstown Hunting Club, founded by a group of skilled foundry workers in Pottstown, a manufacturing town about 25 miles northwest of Philadelphia. During the 1920s, club members pooled their resources to purchase supplies and build a cabin outside of Williamsport in Lycoming County. In Pottstown, the group met regularly to target shoot, promote group camaraderie, and plan backwoods outings. One surviving photograph shows the group gathered outside of a local hangout in downtown Pottstown, admiring a twelve-point buck taken by one of its members. The Lyndora Sportsman's Club, founded in the 1930s by a group of Armco steelworkers from Butler, north of Pittsburgh, provides another example of a working man's hunt club. Like many of the clubs being developed during this period, the Lyndora was modeled after upper-class hunting clubs, but with working-class variations. Club members built their camp on state leased land in Forest County and hunted on public game lands (as opposed to the private game lands favored by well-to-do sportsmen). Most members were also of Southern and especially Eastern European extractions – most likely the first American-born generation.<sup>164</sup>

The Colliers Sportsmen's Association reflected a similar pedigree. According to its self-published history, the club was founded by a “group of local men who met in the back room of

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<sup>163</sup> Leased Camp Files, Northwestern District, DCNR. Pennsylvania's ethnic enclaves prior to World War II were thought to be relatively insular; newly arrived immigrants, and even the American-born generation, had limited contact with native-born, Protestant Americans. They certainly would have been unlikely to have mingled socially in the northern woods. For a discussion of Western Pennsylvania immigrant communities and neighborhood dynamics during this period, see John Bodnar, et al., *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1930-1960* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983) and Morawska, *For Bread with Butter*.

<sup>164</sup> Pottstown Hunting Club Collection, Section of Popular Culture, The State Museum of Pennsylvania; interview with LeeAnn Heist, Butler County Historical Society, 30 July 1996.

Happy Miller's Bar" in Oakdale, a small industrial and mining town in western Allegheny County. At least one of the men in the club's inner circle, Michael Moore, was an Italian-born shop keeper who had changed his name from Marra "so that local prejudice against Italians wouldn't hurt his business." By the end of its first year, the club had grown to 75 members, each of whom paid a modest \$.60 in annual dues. The club collected just enough money to purchase five crates of rabbits from the Game Commission. Since the group did not yet own its own property, it improvised its own commons. According the club's minutes from the 1930s and 1940s, rabbits were released at such locations as "Rock Pile by PRR tracks" and "Strip Mine Tokarsyzk's."<sup>165</sup>

Workingmen's clubs thrived in even more urban settings. The Sto-Rox Hunting and Fishing Club was located in the "bottoms" of McKees Rocks, a gritty Pittsburgh mill town better known for its taverns, gambling dens and machine politicians than its avid sportsmen. The vast majority of the residents who lived in the cramped row homes around the clubhouse were first and second generation Southern and Eastern Europeans who worked at the local mill or the Pennsylvania and Lake Erie Railroad repair shop. Along with its club building in the rough-and-tumble "Bottoms," the Sto-Rox maintained two hunting camps in northern Pennsylvania from the 1930s through the 1950s. Members apparently enjoyed at least a few successful seasons up north; a description of the club's headquarters in 1950 noted a "large number of mounted deer and fish heads." Of equal interest were the surnames listed as part of the club's original application, indicating that at least five of the six officers of the club were Slavic Americans.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Collier Sportsmen's Association, *Club History, 1937-2003* (Oakdale, Pa.: Collier Sportsmen's Association, Inc., 2004), np.

<sup>166</sup> "Sto Rox Hunting and Fishing Club," Allegheny County case files, Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB), Harrisburg, Pa. In 1934, the Sto-Rox Hunting and Fishing Club applied for a liquor license through the PLCB. Along with its building in McKees Rocks, the group maintained a hunting camp near Coudersport in Potter

The growth and location of taxidermists offer another index of the sport's popularity within mill and mining towns. Businesses which specialized in stuffing and mounting game animals were an especially reliable barometer of recreational hunting, since their services were used almost exclusively by those who hunted for trophies rather than for meat. Some taxidermists were located in rural hinterlands, near game, but even early on, most set up shop close to their customer base, perhaps on the assumption that it was more convenient for hunters to have their prized game trophies dressed and mounted close to home. In 1913, the Game Commission listed nine licensed taxidermists in Allegheny County, as compared with four in game-rich Lycoming County. No doubt many of these served the county's gentlemen hunters. But by the 1930s and 1940s, scattered evidence suggests that taxidermists were working in mill and mining towns. The borough of Irwin, a small manufacturing town located in Westmoreland County and just outside of McKeesport, had several taxidermists to serve the needs of local hunters. Each year, the storeroom windows of local hardware stores displayed the best specimens from the previous season. As late as 1998, Westmoreland County was home to more licensed taxidermists than any other county.<sup>167</sup>

Another revealing sign was the degree to which both employers and unions proved willing to accommodate workers' appetite for recreational hunting. By the 1930s, many mines and factories were shutting down for the opening day of rabbit season, a practice which was

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County. Two years later, PLCB records indicate the club had established a hunting lodge or camp in Forest County funded in part by money from membership dues and liquor sales.

<sup>167</sup> "Licenses Under Act May 1, 1909," Game Commission Records. Interview with Frank J. Boch, North Irwin, 12 September 2002. Beginning in 1909, the Game Commission required taxidermists to be licensed and each year compiled a list of licensed taxidermists. Unfortunately, only a handful of these older lists were retained. A relatively recent county-by-county list (c. 1998) generated by the state Game Commission revealed 41 licensed taxidermists in Westmoreland County. Most of that county's mill towns, including Jeannette (glass), Irwin (glass), Belle Vernon (steel), New Kensington (steel), and Mt. Pleasant (coal and glass) had at least one taxidermist. Mt. Pleasant had four. In adjacent Washington County, the steel town of Donora boasted two taxidermists. "All Active Taxidermists by County in Alphabetical Order," Special Permits Section, Bureau of Law Enforcement, 29 July 1998, Game Commission Records.

eventually extended to deer season. Unions made similar concessions. In 1938, the membership of a United Mine Worker (UMW) local in Cambria County, near Johnstown, voted overwhelmingly not to report to work on the first day of buck season (traditionally, the first Monday after Thanksgiving). While “opening day” was not recognized as an official holiday in national contracts for either the USWA or UMW, many recently formed locals likely observed that day as a holiday in their local agreements. Union members, agreement or not, simply did not report for work on opening day, forcing their plant to effectively shut down or operate at diminished capacity. Other workers reserved their “floating holiday” (part of the national union contract) for opening day, but when this practice began, what percentage of the union membership this applied to, and how employers managed this unofficial holiday is difficult to determine.<sup>168</sup>

This would not have been particularly surprising to state game officials. Even during the pre-union era, steelworkers and coal miners were showing a strong predilection for hunting and took their opportunities where they could find them. The problem for many workers was that ten-hour work days and six-day work weeks left very little time for recreational hunting. Often, workers had to wait for strikes or other work stoppages. The correlation between industry-wide strikes and increased game harvests first surfaced during the 1922 hunting season, when game officers reported a higher than normal harvest of groundhogs. Game officials attributed the uptick to the bituminous coal strike, which had put thousands more Pennsylvanians out in the

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<sup>168</sup> Local UMW minutes, c.1938, Cresson, Pa., United Mine Workers Labor Archives, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Pa. Employee time books for U.S. Steel, Bethlehem Steel and other large regional employers would have been useful for verifying whether large industrial plants experienced higher than normal rates of absenteeism on the opening day of deer season. Unfortunately, these records are inaccessible, either because these corporations have not retained them or will not make them available for research. Phone interview with Ernie Glenn, USX Corporation, 29 July 1998; interview with William J. Gaughan, Homestead Steel Works, 11 November 1988.

woods. Although many were hunting for food, striking miners also took the opportunity to poach large game such as deer and even bear, both of which were culled in higher than average numbers. Four years later, another coal strike, this time confined to the anthracite region, resulted in a sharp increase in the total number of resident hunter licenses. There is no reason to think that the trend did not continue during the strike-worn decades of the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>169</sup>

Such evidence helps to explain why Pennsylvania's urban-industrial areas consistently outstripped other regions in license sales by mid century. The trend was actually evident as early as 1938, the first year for which the Game Commission systematically recorded license sales by county. With close to 47,000 licenses, Allegheny County led the state, so much so that it issued nearly twice as many licenses as the next highest county. By contrast, Philadelphia was eighth in license sales, well behind such heavily industrialized but less populous counties as Luzerne (second), Westmoreland (third) and Cambria (sixth). Twenty years later, with the Commission reporting having issued just under one million licenses, Allegheny continued to outpace the second closest county in license sales by a two to one margin. Industrial counties such as Westmoreland, Luzerne and York rounded out the top five along with rural Lancaster.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> *Pennsylvania Game Commission Annual Report 1925-26*, 11. In 1926, the Pennsylvania Game Commission reported that "last year, due to the anthracite coal strike...the total number of resident and non-resident hunters licenses increased to 525,044." A related avenue of investigation would be to determine whether industry-wide strikes, such as the 1959 "long strike" called by the United Steel Workers, resulted in higher than average deer harvests.

<sup>170</sup> "Resident and Non-Resident Hunters' Licenses Issued by County" in *Data Book No. 2*, "Old Material" Pennsylvania Game Commission.

By nearly every measure, the emergence of the “Pittsburgh hunter” would have seemed an unlikely development in the history of this pastime. Despite improved working and living conditions, many of Pennsylvania’s industrial workers still lived and worked in an environment that was heavily urbanized, yielded little green space for even small game, and offered little leisure time for the necessary jaunt to the wild northern woods. There was, moreover, the long standing perception that hunting was either a rural folkway, best suited to farmers and “country folk,” or a rich man’s hobby. Steelworkers were presumed to be more comfortable shooting pool than deer.

And yet by mid-twentieth century, industrial workers from southwestern Pennsylvania had become a viable segment of the state’s hunting population. Their representation among the state’s sizeable community of hunters cannot be attributed entirely to the work of the state, under the aegis of its game commission. But insofar as its policies expanded the supply of game, established a network of public hunting grounds, and otherwise encouraged the development of hunting as a popular form of recreation, the state’s conservation arm secured a form of leisure that would have otherwise been closed to them. Commissioner Phillips could hardly have anticipated that many of these new hunters would emerge from segments of the population he had effectively sought to ban from owning weapons, but he would nonetheless have likely approved the result. If nothing else, the emergence of these hard hat hunters vindicated the Commission’s efforts to transform Pennsylvania, in Phillips words, into “a great Game Preserve . . . open in season, bringing the game within reach of us all.”<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> JMP, untitled mss., c. 1915, F “Resident Hunters Licenses,” Phillips Papers.

### 3 OPEN FAIRWAYS: THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF GOLF IN PENNSYLVANIA

The policy of laissez-faire apparently is no more workable for leisure than it has proved to be for industry and business. Community and governmental action has been found to be necessary either to create or restore opportunities for recreation.... The wage earner or white collar person, who wishes to play golf . . . would be out of it except for municipal and county courses . . .

*New York Times*, 3 December 1933

Golf...is no longer a rich man's game. The public and the community courses have taken care of that.

Grantland Rice

Few Americans in 1939 would have figured Andy Szwedko for a national golf champion. The son of Polish immigrants, Szwedko had grown up in an ethnic, working-class neighborhood of Pittsburgh better known for its breweries, bars and brawlers than its golfers. Like many of his neighbors and kin, Szwedko toiled as a steelworker. But Szwedko played golf with the élan of a country-clubber and in 1939, at the age of 32, he was at the top of his game. That spring, Szwedko performed well enough in local and regional tournaments to qualify for the finals of the U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship (APLC) in Baltimore. On July 29, he edged out a California records clerk to win the national title.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Newspaper clippings scrapbook, Andrew Szwedko Collection, Section of Popular Culture, The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, Pa.



Although the APLC was not the sport's most prestigious national tournament, the story of a "working stiff" competing at a game so closely identified with the indolent rich made good copy, particularly in the midst of the Great Depression. That summer, *Time Magazine* published a photograph of Szwedko along with a brief report of how the "husky" Pittsburgh steelworker emerged victorious "after 36 holes of see-sawing brilliance and blundering." For social commentators, the event held deeper meaning. As part of one of the first histories of the Great Depression, historian Dixon Wecter used Szwedko's victory as an evidence of the "new leisure class" spawned by the New Deal. Publicly funded golf courses were just one example of federal programs intended to deliver "the greatest good to the greatest number of people."<sup>173</sup>

Wecter was partially correct. Through programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the federal government had invested heavily in public recreation facilities, including municipal golf courses. But when it came to placing golf within the grasp of ordinary Americans, the New Deal merely extended a trend that had been quietly gaining momentum since the turn of the century. The true catalyst behind expanding public access was municipal golf, a movement which began in earnest during the 1910s and which accelerated during the 1920s. The campaign for "free links" – i.e., publicly created and supported golf courses administered at the municipal and occasionally county level – aimed to place the sport within the grasp of ordinary Americans. Although amateur golf would continue to be perceived as an elitist hobby until well after World War II, the municipal golf movement laid the groundwork on which the sport's postwar popularity depended.

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<sup>173</sup> *Time Magazine* August 7, 1939, 30; Dixon Wecter, *The Age of the Great Depression, 1929-1941* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1949), 225. John Tunis also pointed to Szwedko's victory as evidence of the impending democratization of traditionally upper-class sports. See Tunis, *Democracy and Sport* (New York: Barnes and Co., 1941), 35.

Curiously, historians have paid scant attention either to the development of public golf or the sport's expanding social base during the first half of the twentieth century. Steven Riess acknowledges increasing spectator interest in professional golf during this period but hews to the standard interpretation of amateur golf as the province of the wealthy. Elliot Gorn and Warren Goldstein's overview of American sport presents an even more myopic interpretation. Golf warrants just two passing mentions, both within the context of upper-class "status building." The sport clearly served that purpose, particularly early on, but the picture becomes much more complex by the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>174</sup>

Studies which implicitly acknowledge golf's great democratic leap forward have tended to extrapolate from anecdote and event. The most frequently cited turning point is Francis Ouimet's 1913 victory in the U.S. Open. The son of working-class French Canadians, Ouimet became the darling of the American press for having unseated heavily favored Harry Vardon, the perennial British champion. Ouimet's surprise showing helped to broaden popular interest in a game which up to that point had been inextricably tied to wealthy, East Coast patricians and their network of private country clubs. But aside from expanded coverage in the popular press, the 1913 U.S. Open seemed to have had little direct impact on the still relatively narrow social base of the amateur game. The changing social composition of professional golfers offers more compelling proof of the sport's broadening base. By the 1920s, professionals were increasingly

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<sup>174</sup> Steven Riess, *City Games: American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 59; Elliot Gorn and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 134, 136. One social history theme relative to golf which has been documented is the history of racial and gender discrimination. See, for instance, Calvin Sinnette, *Forbidden Fairways: African Americans and the Game of Golf* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Thomson Gale, 1998) and Marcia Chambers, *The Unplayable Lie: The Untold Story of Women and Discrimination in American Golf* (New York: Pocket Books, 1995). Curiously, no historian has yet tackled the question of how a sport with such notorious barriers to participation became so incredibly popular and widespread.

coming from the ranks of the American working class. But this trend had little impact on or application to the world of amateur golf.<sup>175</sup>

During the first half of the twentieth century, the social implications of municipal golf were much discussed by golf and public recreation professionals alike. Since few other sports were more closely associated with the Leisure Class, golf carried much social-symbolic freight. The pastime had become so synonymous with power and privilege few public figures openly embraced it, lest they be charged with being out of touch with ordinary Americans. The reverse class stigma attached to golf dissipated after World War II, but only slowly. President Dwight Eisenhower's penchant for golf earned him rebuke from Democratic opponents and, according to Richard Moss, "confirmed many Americans' belief that golf, country clubs and conservative Republican politics go together naturally." By contrast, many national political leaders since Eisenhower's time have been quite comfortable to be seen and photographed on the fairway. That many public figures at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century used golf to project a sense of middle-class normalcy is as revealing an index of golf's changing public image as any.<sup>176</sup>

Golf's social transformation during the first half of the twentieth century paralleled changes occurring in sport hunting and college football. All three field sports were traditionally

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<sup>175</sup> While Ouimet's victory bolstered the game's appeal among Americans, the social impact of the event has been exaggerated. Mark Frost and Richard Moss both credit Ouimet's victory with helping to break down long standing public skepticism. "Clearly Ouimet's upset of the English legends helped to undercut the image of golf as being only for the elite, the old and the un-heroic," Moss concludes. But neither provides concrete evidence that more Americans of ordinary means played the game as a result. Mark Frost, *The Greatest Game Ever Played: Harry Vardon, Francis Ouimet and the Birth of Modern Golf* (New York: Good Comma Ink Inc., 2002); Richard J. Moss, *Golf and the American Country Club* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

<sup>176</sup> Don Van Natta, Jr., *First Off the Tee: Presidential Hackers, Duffers, and Cheaters from Taft to Bush* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003); Moss, *American Country Club*, 157-158. Striking workers made an issue of Eisenhower's profligate golf habit during the 1959 steel strike. One steelworker told the *New York Times* that if workers had to go back to work for 80 days without a contract, then "companies should produce for eighty days without profit and President Eisenhower should do without golf for that period." *New York Times*, 10 November 1959.

reserved for and dominated by elites, but over the course of the twentieth century, a variety of social forces combined to break that monopoly and broaden the social base of its participants. What distinguished golf's democratization was the means through which it was achieved. Initially carved into landscaped parks and later managed through city recreation programs, municipally-owned golf courses became the primary means through which ordinary Pennsylvanians participated in the sport during the first half of the twentieth century. But like public hunting, the development of public golf was only partially the result of good, or even conscious, intentions. Much like state game management, the municipal golf movement was spearheaded by urban elites, acting in their own self interest; only later did it trickle down to the masses.

### **3.1 The Upper Four Hundred and the Front Nine: Golf and Pennsylvania's Social Elites, 1887-1920**

In Great Britain, golf had been the sport of both kings and commoners since at least the fifteenth century. Scotsmen regarded it as their national pastime. In other parts of Great Britain, including England, the game was less well established but still avidly played. By contrast, golf on the other side of the Atlantic was muted during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Scattered, anecdotal evidence suggest that some colonial Americans were playing a very crude version of the game in the mid-eighteenth century, but it rarely if ever developed into anything

more than an infrequent diversion and sporting novelty. As an organized pastime, golf was largely off the American sporting map for most of the nineteenth century.<sup>177</sup>

Golf began making its world tour in the late nineteenth century. Most date its arrival in the United States to 1888, with the establishment of the country's first permanent club, St. Andrews Golf Club in Yonkers, New York. The initial course was limited to three holes, but in 1894, the club purchased 100 acres of farmland a few miles north and expanded the subsequent course to nine holes. At that point, St. Andrews claimed 75 members, "all well known residents of Yonkers and New York." Among those who caught the golfing bug at St. Andrews was future White House occupant William Howard Taft, who distinguished his otherwise unremarkable tenure in office by being the first sitting President to openly and enthusiastically take up the game. Andrew Carnegie was another St. Andrews regular.<sup>178</sup>

From Yonkers and St. Andrews, the game spread to other cities, mainly along the East Coast. Although limited to the same narrow segment of the elite – as commentators described it, the "upper Four Hundred" – interest in golf grew perhaps more quickly than any other sport before or since. By 1900, just a dozen years after the first official course was laid out, golf courses and country clubs had established themselves firmly in the soil of metropolitan America. The *New York Times* famously dismissed it as "another fad in the fickle minds of the rich" but it was a fad that was quickly becoming institutionalized. In 1894, St. Andrews banded together with the Brookline and Newport Country Clubs to form the National Golf Association, later

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<sup>177</sup> Geoffrey Cousins, *Golf in Britain: A Social History from the Beginnings to the Present Day* (London: Routledge, 1975); Herbert Warren Wind, *The Story of American Golf* (New York: Farrar and Strauss, 1948).

<sup>178</sup> Wind, *American Golf*, 10-15; *New York Times*, 13 May 1894. The United States Golf Association (USGA) recognizes St. Andrews in New York as the first organized golf club in the country, having been established in 1888 in Yonkers. For another discussion of its development, see H.B. Martin, *Fifty Years of American Golf* (New York, 1936), 16-31.

renamed the United States Golf Association (USGA). As a governing body, the USGA set forth the game's rules and regulations, certified new courses and clubs, and organized interclub matches. One of its first actions was to create a two-tiered membership that served as a de-facto class standard. Those courses that met club standards were granted "associated club" status. Those that did not, including courses which had been "laid out in any old place," were designated as "allied clubs."<sup>179</sup>

The USGA also established golf's tournament structure, an important benchmark in the game's development as a competitive sport worthy of attention and respectability among social elites.<sup>180</sup> In 1895 the USGA launched the American game's first national tournament, the U.S. Amateur, closely followed in 1896 by the U.S. Open. From the beginning, the titles of both tournaments were, if not misnomers, misleading. The Amateur was open only to amateur golfers who belonged to a member USGA club, a criterion which limited the field, in practice, to men of wealth and privilege who constituted the vast majority of country clubbers. Participation in the Open was only slightly more "open"; in addition to amateurs, the tournament was also open to golf professionals employed at private clubs. At the time, most professionals were British nationals who had migrated to the United States to fill the void in native expertise. During golf's first decades, these two categories represented nearly every player involved in the game. But by

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<sup>179</sup> Wind, *American Golf*, 40-42; Jack Connelly, "Of Links and Legends: The History and Humor of Golf" *Golf Today Magazine* (October 2002); Moss, *American Country Club*, 40. The two-tiered membership obtained for several decades, despite occasional calls, such as one issued in 1924 by some USGA officials, urging the governing body to create just one class. *New York Times*, 6 January 1924.

<sup>180</sup> Early proselytizers such as John Reid, president of St. Andrews Golf Club, actively campaigned on the sport's behalf. Less than a half dozen years from the founding of the club, Reid confidently predicted that "it will not be long before all true lovers of first-class sports will be as well posted on the game as they are now . . . in tennis, football [and] yachting . . ." *New York Times*, 12 May 1894

the 1920s, an increasing number of golfers, including those who would come to play and eventually dominate the greens on weekends across Pennsylvania, fell outside either one.<sup>181</sup>

As the second most populous state at the turn of the twentieth century, Pennsylvania played a proportionately prominent role in golf's development. The Commonwealth had slightly fewer courses than New York, but it competed with its neighboring state for boasting rights to the oldest golf course in continuous operation. The Foxburg Golf Club in Clarion County was organized in 1887 by Joseph Fox, the scion of a prominent Philadelphia family with vast property holdings in Western Pennsylvania. Fox became enamored with the game while touring Great Britain in 1884 as a member of a Philadelphia cricket team. (Fox had played cricket as a student at Haverford College.) When he was not playing cricket with his Merion Cricket Club teammates, Fox was on the golf course, including St. Andrews, the legendary Scottish links long regarded as the cradle of the modern game. A year after returning stateside, Fox built a primitive, five-hole course on a portion of his family's sprawling, 13,000-acre Clarion estate, which the family used as a summer home. The game proved popular enough among Fox's family, friends and associates to warrant an expansion to nine holes the following year and was still so relatively novel that Fox sent to Scotland for its first sets of clubs and balls.<sup>182</sup>

Foxburg typified the game's development within the United States during this period. In the sport's ancestral home of Scotland, golf courses were found rather than made. The design of most fairways conformed to that country's topography and courses often took root along rocky

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<sup>181</sup> Moss, *American Country Club*, 40-41; Geoffrey Cousins, *Lords of the Links: The Story of Professional Golf* (London: Hutchinson Benham, 1977).

<sup>182</sup> John P. English, "The Case for Foxburg's Old Course," *USGA Journal* (April 1952): 5-6. The long running dispute between St. Andrews and Foxburg over title to "oldest golf course in continuous operation" was never conclusively resolved, although the Congress did side with Foxburg while the USGA bestowed the honor on St. Andrews. [http://www.csonline.net/foxburglibrary/local\\_history3.htm](http://www.csonline.net/foxburglibrary/local_history3.htm)

coast lines where naturally occurring links of commonly held land created dunes, bunkers, sand traps and other natural hazards. No such tradition obtained on the other side of the Atlantic, thanks both to the sport's time of arrival – near the apex of the urban industrial period – and radically different attitudes toward property rights. In Great Britain, golf courses were often established on “commons.” In the United States, by contrast, golf appeared only at the behest and sponsorship of private individuals, such as Joseph Fox, who had both the wherewithal to learn of the game first hand (usually by traveling to Great Britain) and the financial resources to site and construct the grounds on which it could be played. In Pennsylvania and elsewhere, the acquisition and control of private property was a prerequisite to course construction, a circumstance that naturally helped delineate and delimit the game's participants. Brits also critiqued Americans penchant for dull uniformity in course layout. “Scotchmen say that we do not do justice in laying out the green, when instead of punching the holes at distances indefinitely variable, we preserve distances of one, two or three hundred yards.”<sup>183</sup>

As an oil tycoon, extensive property owner, and member of the Merion Cricket Club in Philadelphia, Fox also epitomized the well connected patrician who turned to golf for amusement and, at least subconsciously, for social status. Invited guests arrived at Foxburg by horse-and-carriage and, later, chauffeured cars. With the exception of the resident Scottish professional, most players were either Philadelphia socialites or local industrialists. One of the early club members was A.J. Dixon, a prominent Philadelphian who served as president of that city's premier lawn tennis club. Even as late as the 1920s, many members and guests were wealthy

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<sup>183</sup> Robert Hunter, *The Links* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), 161-163; Willard H. Morse, M.D., “The American Naturalization of Golf” *Outing* 11/3 (December 1886), 285. While it is conceivable that a farmer may have had the land for such a course, it would have been considered an immense waste of a resource that could be better utilized for furrowing or in the very least, hunting. Wasting time was one thing; squandering valuable real estate on faddish amusement was another.



businessmen who made their money in and around the oil fields in northwestern Pennsylvania. Although the Foxburg Country Club charged nominal annual dues, Fox financed most of the club's operations with his own money. Much like private hunting preserves established by wealthy sportsmen, membership at Foxburg was by "invitation only," a criterion that further restricted who could play.<sup>184</sup>

During this period, golf was confined not just to the moneyed elite but to those who had withdrawn from the workaday world of business and manufacturing. Businessmen in the late nineteenth century were simply too beholden to the time clock and the ledger sheet to indulge in regular rounds of golf. Before the advent of the country club, leisurely weekends for Pennsylvania's managerial class entailed roundtrip train trips to a rustic resort, where they often rejoined families that had been put up there during the summer months. By contrast, wealthy pensioners had the luxury of time, money and limited family obligations. Having made their fortunes, they now had time to enjoy them "mashing" the ball around a course.<sup>185</sup>

Pennsylvania's most famous amateur duffer, Andrew Carnegie, typified the silver-haired legion that congregated along the nation's scattered golf courses and country clubs in the 1890s. Although Carnegie did not take up the sport of his native Scotland, according to his biographer Joseph Wall, until he the age of 61, he made up for lost time with characteristic zeal. He became a regular at St. Andrews, the Holy Mecca of the ancient Scottish game, and in 1898 built his own private course on the grounds of Skibo, his sprawling 7500-acre estate in northern Scotland. In

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<sup>184</sup> English, "Foxburg's Old Course," 7; *Outing* 9/4 (January 1887), 378; *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 15 June 1997.

<sup>185</sup> Joseph Wall, *Andrew Carnegie* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 787; Squeri, *Better in the Poconos*, 29-37. On the leisure habits of Pittsburgh's industrial-managerial class at the turn of the century, see Couvares, *Remaking of Pittsburgh*, 96-105.

1911, he expounded on the therapeutic value of the game in an article aptly titled “Dr. Golf” and published in *The Independent*. One of golf’s most evocative images from these years shows a diminutive, white-haired Carnegie posing agreeably on the first tee at St. Andrews, his face notably devoid of business and financial concerns.<sup>186</sup>

Over the next decade, golf in Pennsylvania and the rest of the nation grew rapidly but remained within the same narrow social channels. In 1896, golf was being played at 80 country or golf clubs around the country. Pennsylvania that year was home to eight of them. A dozen years later, the number of its courses had multiplied to 68, a total which placed the Commonwealth third behind Massachusetts and New York. More so than either of those states, Pennsylvania’s courses were distributed fairly evenly between hotels and private clubs. Many of the state’s resorts turned to golf at the turn of the century in hopes of keeping up with the times. Golf helped hoteliers bridge the gap between the therapeutic spas of the mid-nineteenth century and the active summer playgrounds of the late nineteenth and early twentieth. During the 1870s and 1880s, resorts in the Blue Ridge Summit in Franklin County prospered from mineral springs. But as patrons expressed interest in more active leisure forms, many resorts added primitive, three to five-hole courses to maintain interest and profits. Even well-established mineral resorts such as Bedford Springs, which had been attracting well-heeled patrons since before the Civil

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<sup>186</sup> Wall, *Carnegie*, 787, 788; Andrew Carnegie, “Dr. Golf” *Independent* 70/1 (June 1911), 1181-92. Another oft-cited example among prominent, moneyed golfers was John D. Rockefeller. Like Carnegie, Rockefeller did not discover the game until he was well into his golden years, but as with Carnegie, the “golf bug” bit hard. Also like Carnegie, Rockefeller enjoyed pontificating on the game, sometimes, according to associates, insufferably so. Harry Leach, *The Happy Golfer* (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1914) 219-222.

War, by the 1890s touted an “unusually picturesque” golf course designed by a native Scotsman.<sup>187</sup>

Pennsylvania’s early hotel courses mimicked the naturalistic, pastoral features that characterized golf courses in the British Isles. During the early 1890s, the Buena Vista Springs Hotel’s original five-hole course in Blue Ridge Summit was maintained “by a shepherd and his flock.” Within a few years, though, the course was enlarged to nine holes, cut by horse-drawn mowers, and as indicated in the minutes, played by “many dignitaries” who visited the hotel at the turn of the century. (In the United States, early Scottish course designers improvised a much different set of hazards, incorporating railroad tracks and ploughed fields along with artificially created bunkers and sand traps.) In 1912, the Eagles Mere Hotel followed suit, replacing its rustic course with a new nine-hole course “very carefully laid out by experts.” Resort courses were sufficiently numerous to warrant a separate listing in the national golfers guide by 1908 under the heading “Summer and Winter Resorts Having Golf Links in Connection or within Easy Access.” In Pennsylvania, hotel courses, especially those clustered around the Poconos and Delaware Water Gap, were the primary source of semi-public or daily-fee courses until after World War II.<sup>188</sup>

On one level, it seemed like the perfect marriage. Golf’s foremost requirement was land and most resort hotels had sufficient grounds which could be dedicated to that purpose. The average 18-hole golf course required 200 acres (even though most private courses started with

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<sup>187</sup> USGA, *1908 American Annual Golf Guide* (Hereafter AAGG), 301-325; John H. McClellan, *Blue Ridge Summit: The Beginnings of a Resort Area* (Chambersburg, Pa., 1982), 27-47. The USGA considered hotel courses inferior to club courses, and rarely permitted the former the same status in competitions.

<sup>188</sup> McClellan, *Blue Ridge Summit*, 51. “Eagles Mere” Box 1, Folder A-E, Private Papers/Addresses and Articles, Horace McFarland Papers, Manuscript Group 59, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa. (Hereafter cited as McFarland Papers); *1908 AAGG*, 189.

six or nine holes). Even by the late 1930s, the typical nine-hole course was estimated to require a minimum of 130 acres. But the arrangement between resort hotels and golf courses was not ideal. Since most resorts were by definition located some distance from cities and other population centers, they were subject to seasonal and weekly patterns of use. Hotels courses were busy on weekends, but frequently vacant during the week, when most businessmen returned to the city for work. By contrast, metropolitan country clubs permitted golf courses to be used nearly every day of the week. Most were built in residential suburbs just beyond the city, frequently in locations that were just far enough removed from population centers to avoid congestion, but close enough to be accessible seven days a week. By 1900, country clubs established themselves as the sport's long-term partner.<sup>189</sup>

The Philadelphia Country Club, established in 1890 just outside the city limits in Glenwynne, became the first country club in Pennsylvania designed to accommodate golfers. Before long, most affluent residential neighborhoods in metropolitan Philadelphia had their own clubs with their own courses, including, by the mid-1910s, the prestigious Sunnybrook Golf Club on Chestnut Hill and, along the Main Line, the comparably exclusive Gulph Mills Golf Club. During the late 1890s, according to E. Digby Baltzell, golf was running a close second to cricket and fox hunting as the sport of Philadelphia's Leisure Class and by the early twentieth century had begun to overtake them. In the 1920s, for instance, the exclusive Merion Cricket Club was better known for its golf courses than its cricket matches. By World War I, according to Baltzell,

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<sup>189</sup> Wind, *American Golf*, 48; W.D. Richardson, ed., *The Golfer's Year Book 1938* (New York: Golfers Year Book Company, 1939); Moss, *American Country Club*, 21-27.

the aristocratic sport of cricket was “dying on the vine.” But not to fear: the city’s golf clubs boasted equally high proportions of members on the *Social Register*.<sup>190</sup>

Golf developed in a similar fashion at the other end of the state. Between 1890 and 1910, a succession of private golf clubs began sprouting up in the Iron City to serve that city’s growing segment of industrialists, bankers and manufacturers. Pittsburgh’s first private course, operated by the Allegheny Country Club, opened in 1895 on the city’s North Side. The Shadyside Country Club (later renamed the Pittsburgh Golf Club) built a clubhouse in the civic center of Oakland and on the edge of the Schenley Park Golf Course a year later. In the early 1900s, another group of wealthy city residents formed the Stanton Heights Golf Club on the largest open plot of land left within the city limits. Private golf clubs also quickly set down roots in the suburbs. The Oakmont Country Club and Golf Course, opened in 1904, established itself as one of the nation’s premier courses for USGA tournament play. The Edgewood Country Club in the East End featured a nine-hole golf course when it opened in 1907.<sup>191</sup>

The frenzy of club and course building in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia underscored why country clubs were so conducive to golf: access to capital. Establishing a golf course was an expensive proposition. In addition to acquiring (or leasing) land, courses required the services of a professional designer/architect and a battalion of both skilled and semi-skilled workers to construct and maintain the course. No other sport, not even such even such aristocratic pursuits as yachting or fox hunting, exceeded the capital outlay required to build a modern golf course. By 1900, according to one estimate, the average golf club demanded an initial capital investment

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<sup>190</sup> 1926 AAGG, 405, 407; Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, 356, 361.

<sup>191</sup> 1920 AAGG, 283-284; Hax McCullough, *So Much To Remember: The Centennial History of the Pittsburgh Golf Club* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pittsburgh Golf Club, 1996).

of \$200,000 and a minimum of 75 to 100 acres for even a nine-hole “starter” course. As standards of design and construction rose, so too did final price tags. To pull it off, golf clubs needed to recruit a sufficiently well-heeled membership to absorb the costs.<sup>192</sup>

Under the country club system, a group of wealthy individuals recruited peers and associates interested in organizing a golf course. Members would then take out subscriptions to help raise the necessary funds. Most clubs averaged 250 members. (Subscription fees and annual dues ranged broadly, depending on the club’s wealth and prestige. Membership dues at country clubs in sparsely settled rural counties could run as little as ten dollars a year.) Members paid initiation fees to help offset the cost of construction, and then were expected to pay out annual dues for the upkeep. The moneys were used to maintain the courses and also the opulent clubhouses that were invariably built near the first and last holes. These were just the club fees. Maintaining the country club “lifestyle” required the services of caddies and club professionals, wait staff and chefs, and so forth. In 1931, *Golfdom* published an info-graphic of a “golf club ‘tree’” to underscore the administrative complexities and financial challenges of maintaining a private club. The tree’s branches corresponded to the various job categories, from groundskeepers and men’s locker room attendants to the dining room staff and pro shop specialists – 41 discreet occupations. A broad and deep membership formed the “roots.”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Richardson, *Golfer’s Year Book 1938*, 7. In 1929, Clifford Wendehack, a prominent clubhouse architect, published a manual detailing the various steps involved in creating a modern course and club. His intended audience appeared to be would-be clubs. Unfortunately, the timing could not have been worse; shortly after his book was published, private course construction came to sharp halt owing to the Depression. See Wendehack, *Golf and County Clubs: A Survey of the Requirement of Planning Construction and Equipment of the Modern Club House* (New York: W. Helburn, 1929).

<sup>193</sup> Moss, *American Country Club*, 27-33, 116-119; *Golfdom Magazine* (May 1931), 23.

Under the auspices of country clubs, the number of golf courses built between 1888 and 1920 soared. In 1915 alone, more than 100 new courses appeared around the country. In large cities, the rate of growth was particularly impressive. New York that year added a half dozen courses to the metropolitan district's already substantial complement. The coming season called for even more, including ambitious plans for a four-course complex on 600 acres in Long Island. "It hardly seems possible that there is room for any more," the *Times* wrote. Philadelphia was not far behind. In fact, the country club scene there was sufficiently vigorous to yield its own school of course architecture – the eponymous Philadelphia School of Design. Golf's dependence on private clubs also helped reinforce in the public mind the sport's connection with upper-class privilege, a connection that was clearly American made. With its fastidiously manicured grounds, lavishly appointed "clubhouse" and self consciously patrician bearings, the American country club embodied, for the "super rich" in the word of Benjamin Rader, the conspicuous consumption which Thorstein Veblen had first identified in the 1890s.<sup>194</sup>

It would have been an understatement to say that most country clubs of this period were opulent. In 1899, the Pittsburgh Golf Club used a good portion of a \$35,000 bond to hire a prestigious architectural firm to design and build its new clubhouse on the edge of Schenley Park. The building featured a cavernous assembly hall on the first floor appointed with expensive furnishings, exotic oriental rugs and an imposing mantelpiece topped with a Boone and Crockett moose head. The clubhouse also included separate dining rooms for male and

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<sup>194</sup> *New York Times*, 14 December 1915, 24 January 1916, 9 April 1916; Geoff Shackelford, *The Golden Age of Golf Design* (Chelsea, Mich.: Sleeping Bear Press, 1999); Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1990) 194. The most famous member of the Philadelphia school, and one of the game's most prolific architects, was A.W. Tillinghast. His first commission was the hotel course at Shawnee-on-the-Delaware, a Delaware Water Gap resort. His last, completed in 1936, were the municipal courses in New York's Bethpage State Park. Tillinghast's Bethpage courses were long considered the finest and most ambitious public links in the country.

female members along with private studies and sitting rooms on the second floor. At the other end of the state, the Merion Cricket Club, Whitemarsh Valley Country Club and other private courses made similar levels of investment in architecture and landscaping. When the Merion Cricket Club decided to completely revamp its original course in 1910 and relocate it to more ample grounds in suburban Ardmore, the club sent a team of architects to Scotland to study its classic links and copy their configuration.<sup>195</sup>

Perhaps even more importantly, country clubs came to symbolize the social exclusivity of American upper-class life. The most daunting hurdle was simply getting in. The time-honored tradition of membership recruitment, whereby new members were nominated or sponsored by current members, was self-reinforcing and virtually guaranteed that club membership would be socially and culturally homogenous. Once “in,” members faced another set of financial and social pressures. Along with the built-in initiation fees and annual dues, members were expected to pay for and otherwise support a wide range of activities and rituals designed to reinforce the club’s social status. “Keeping up” with fellow country clubbers required one’s presence at weekend dinners, seasonal galas and various balls and dances, to say nothing of the incidental fees pertaining to a round of golf. In Philadelphia, clubs were further stratified by geography; the further from the city center, the higher the social prestige.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> McCullough, *So Much to Remember*, 8-10; Shackelford, *Golden Age of Golf Design*, 73-73.

<sup>196</sup> Moss, *American Country Club*, 17-19; McCullough, *So Much to Remember*, 24-25; Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen*, 361-362. “As the more exclusive neighborhoods are usually farther out from the center of the city,” Baltzell observed of 1940s Philadelphia, “it is of interest to see that, on both the Main Line and in Chestnut Hill, the more exclusively upper-class clubs are farther out in the country than those of lesser status.” As neighborhood demographics changed, formerly prestigious clubs, such as the Philadelphia Country Club, found themselves “no longer fashionable.”



As this would suggest, golf was an important but still secondary consideration for most club members. Even for those who played regularly and often, the sport was a means rather than an end. Businessmen in particular perceived private golf clubs as career enhancers, where business connections could be established, as often as not over meals and drinks in the clubhouse as over a round of golf. In time, according to one golf historian, such members would “sooner or later be converted to golf,” but during the early decades of the twentieth century, the game was subordinate to members’ financial ambitions. “Already golf has revolutionized the whole life of business men in America,” one observer declared as early as 1899. “The American businessman golfer works in the city for part of the day in the summer and spends the rest of his time at the country club . . . . [T]he predominant features of the life are golf, rest and sociability.” Even the convention of golfing in foursomes seemed perfectly suited to business meetings.<sup>197</sup>

The connection between golf and business was so strong that in some cases, courses literally became extensions of the corporate board room. This was especially true during the 1920s, a decade which witnessed an unprecedented boom in golf course construction. Between 1920 and 1930, the number of privately owned courses in Pennsylvania more than doubled, from 83 to approximately 174. Among them were several courses operated as private links adjacent to “management clubs” of Bethlehem-based Bethlehem Steel. Its first, the 18-hole Saucon Valley Country Club, opened in 1921 on the outskirts of Bethlehem near an exclusive residential district reserved for “Steel” management. Charter members, capped at 250, paid a \$100 initiation fee

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<sup>197</sup> Horace Hutchinson, *The Book of Golf and Golfers* (New York: Longman’s, 1899), 214. Harry Leach offered one of the more vivid descriptions of golf’s prevailing social type in *The Happy Golfer*, 215-219. One of the most significant mergers in the history of American business, the creation of United States Steel in 1901, was reportedly consummated after a vigorous game of golf at St. Andrews, with Andrew Carnegie conceding to sell his control of Carnegie Steel to J.P. Morgan through his designated associate, Charles Schwab. Since then, the links have helped to launch and secure countless deals of more modest proportions. See Wall, *Carnegie*, 787-788.

and \$30 annual dues. A year later, Cambria Steel, soon to be absorbed into the Bethlehem Steel empire, built a similar club in Westmont, a hilltop neighborhood that served as home for steel executives at the Johnstown plant since the 1890s. In Bethlehem, the original country club proved so popular with executives that the company built a second club and course, dubbed the “Bethlehem Steel Club,” exclusively for management and upper level white-collar workers.<sup>198</sup>

Other companies followed Bethlehem’s lead. Pennsylvania’s largest corporation, the Pennsylvania Railroad, operated a golf course for management at its Altoona Shops in Blair County. Although it did not own its own golf course at its corporate headquarters in Philadelphia, several PRR executives were instrumental in the establishment of the exclusive Gulph Mills Golf Club on Philadelphia’s Main Line around 1919, including the son of PRR president Alexander Cassatt. Smaller companies or local branches of larger firms based outside of Pennsylvania either built private courses or underwrote memberships for salaried executives at private country clubs. Executives and management at the McKeesport plant of the National Tube Works received complimentary memberships in the Youghiogheny Country Club, founded in 1911 by a group of retired company executives, including former National Tube president W.A. Cornelius. Although fairway privileges were extended to management, industry courses were operated as private clubs and membership was regulated accordingly.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> 1920 AAGG, 273-287; 1930-31 AAGG, 349-368; 1923 AAGG, 392, 397; Ralph Grayson Schwarz, *Saucon Valley Country Club: An American Legacy 1920-2000* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Saucon Valley Country Club), 19. Although the *Bethlehem Globe Times* reported that Saucon Valley “will be thoroughly cosmopolitan and democratic in its make up,” it noted that the new club “is to be strictly a Bethlehem association.” Interestingly, the paper’s obsequious editors applauded the private club on the grounds that the course would offer pleasant scenery for Sunday drives. “Of course we need public parks right in the city . . . . But if we are to have real natural parks we must seek them on the outskirts of the city.” *Bethlehem Globe Times*, 2 September 1920.

<sup>199</sup> A. Willing Patterson, *The Story of Gulph Mills Golf Club, 1916-1976* (Lititz, Pa.: Sutter House, 1916); John C. Paige, *Pennsylvania Railroad Shops and Works, Altoona Pa.: A Special History Study* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1989); “History,” <http://yough.wpga.org/membmenu.asp>. Typical of industry golf courses was the Armco Golf Club in Butler, which operated for the benefit of management at the Armco Steel Company.

For all these reasons, golf became shorthand for post-Gilded Age excess, and as such had as many detractors as supporters. Theodore Roosevelt, unquestionably the country's most vocal advocate of muscular Christianity and the strenuous life, despised the game and denounced it as "downright undemocratic." Judging from entrants in the game's premier annual event, the U.S. Amateur, Roosevelt was not far from the mark. Even golf's most avid boosters admitted that during the first several decades, the sport's main tournament was essentially restricted to "titans of American industry" and that "only highborn American players" contended for its trophy. By contrast, the only other national tournament at the time, the U.S. Open, was widely regarded as inferior since it was opened to professionals, often of foreign birth.<sup>200</sup> Golf's class associations worked both ways. While growing up in Brookline, Massachusetts, Francis Ouimet was ostracized by his working-class classmates for carrying his clubs to school.<sup>201</sup>

Still, country clubs were socially exclusive to varying degrees. In medium and small sized Pennsylvania cities, golf courses owned by private clubs could be quite modest. The first

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Membership was "exclusive," according to popular accounts of the club, although guests could play on the fairways at the invitation of managers.

[www.ecaddy.com/courses/US/PA.htm](http://www.ecaddy.com/courses/US/PA.htm).

<sup>200</sup> Roosevelt quoted in Frost, *Greatest Game*, 180; Van Natta, *First Off the Tee*, front matter. Richard Moss cites the proliferation of country clubs in small towns as evidence that country clubs and golf were not nearly as elitist as critics claimed and had descended from the ranks of the "super rich" to the broader "middle class." While Pennsylvania conforms to this pattern – particularly during the 1920s, there were as many country clubs opening in towns with populations under 20,000 as in large cities – there is no evidence, as Moss contends, that small town clubs were "more closely tied to the community" or, for that matter, less elitist than clubs in Philadelphia or Pittsburgh. It is more likely that they simply performed the same, socially exclusive function as the big city country clubs, but in a smaller setting. The prerequisite for membership in private country clubs, regardless of location, was social connection and disposable discretionary income. Moss, *American Country Club*, 37, 78.

<sup>201</sup> In describing Francis Ouimet's adolescence, Mark Frost notes that "the boys at Brookline caught more flack on game days for carrying their clubs to school than they would have for a violin." Frost, *Greatest Game*, 61. This of course did not obtain at private preparatory schools, which had taken to the game. In Western Pennsylvania, for instance, both Shadyside and Kiski Prep had by the early 1920s built nine-hole golf courses for the use of faculty and students.

golf course organized by the Harrisburg Country Club was built on land that was leased rather than purchased and featured nine holes rather than the standard eighteen. Like its big city cousins, the club was located on the outskirts of town, but the grounds hardly projected the sort of exclusivity one would have encountered along Philadelphia's Main Line or Pittsburgh's East End. A school house separated the first and second tee and the club continued to lease several holes adjacent to the No. Nine tee to a local farmer. During World War I, the club nearly accepted a motion to let a herd of sheep graze on the course. (The sheep would help raise wool for the boys overseas, but they would also help keep the fairways trim, and defray the cost of the lease.)<sup>202</sup>

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, private golf clubs were surfacing in parts of the Commonwealth not customarily regarded as bastions of wealth and privilege. In 1909, a group of Lock Haven businessmen formed the Clinton County Country Club on land just outside the city limits. Situated in the central part of the state, Lock Haven was home to lumbering and related industries, including paper mills. By 1908 private golf courses were under construction in such communities as Montrose, Mt. Union and Stroudsburg. According to a 1909 article published in *Country Life* magazine, many small-town country clubs featured low annual dues and "the simplest of food and drink." This is not to say that such clubs were any less exclusive, within the context of their own communities, than were clubs along Philadelphia's Main Line or in Pittsburgh's East End. But it does suggest that golf was slowly moving beyond the "upper Four Hundred."<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Sharon Doremus and Sally Gibson, *The Country Club of Harrisburg, 1896-1996* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Country Club of Harrisburg, 1996), 20-21.

<sup>203</sup> 1908 AAGG, 248; Moss, *American Country Club*, 81.

Another sign that golf was expanding beyond its exclusively patrician base was the degree to which it was becoming commercialized. In 1900, there were relatively so few golfers in the general population that most retailers ignored it, or left the market for golf apparel and equipment to a handful of high-end outfitters such as Abercrombie and Fitch. The elite sporting goods store maintained a “golf school” on the sixth floor of its flagship store in downtown Manhattan, complete with resident professional. But starting in the mid-1910s, regional urban department stores such as Philadelphia-based John Wanamaker and Pittsburgh-based Horne’s Department Store routinely advertised golfing apparel on the sports pages of local newspapers, and sponsored special, in-store promotions to move an increasingly large line of equipment and apparel devoted to the game. During the 1920s, both Horne’s and Gimbels in Pittsburgh added golf instructors to their sales force in order to entice ambitious businessmen to take up the game and purchase the accessories that were thought to be indispensable to its pursuit.<sup>204</sup>

Golf knickers and the latest golf jacket were optional, but a set of clubs was mandatory and over time tended to become more elaborate and extensive. At the turn of the century, a few “mashers” or clubs sufficed; in 1900, the average golfer owned six clubs. But by the 1920s 12-club sets were the norm, along with more “scientifically” designed golf balls, golf bags and other accoutrements. In 1915, it was estimated that the average golfer spent just under \$40 a year on clubs and golf balls alone. “Certainly no other game in the country has as much money spent on

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<sup>204</sup> William A. Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 81; “Of Special Importance to Men Who Golf” (McCreery’s) 9 May 1930; “Outfitting Summer Sportsmen,” (Hornes) 10 May 1930; “Gentlemen! The Story in Golf Clothes This Year is Neat, But Not Gaudy” (Gimbels) 28 June 1930, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*; . The A. J. Spaulding sponsored-tour of British golf champion Harry Vardon in 1899 was considered the first organized golf equipment promotion in the United States. Vardon was here to promote Spaulding’s new “Vardon Flyer” golf ball. The following year, Goodrich Rubber began marketing a new type of golf ball composed of rubber threads wrapped around a gutta percha core. The new ball could be driven much further, thus making the sport easier for the average player. Frost, *Greatest Game*, 46.

it, and no devotees of a sport spend more money than do the American golfers.” Mass production may have helped bring the cost down somewhat, but golf continued to entail high outlays for paraphernalia. By 1929, according to one industry expert, money spent on golf equipment accounted for 40% of all expenditures on sporting and athletic goods manufactured in the United States.<sup>205</sup>

The proliferation of competitive tournaments also testified to the game's growing popularity beyond the “Upper Four Hundred.”<sup>206</sup> In 1920s Pittsburgh, it appeared as if virtually every business and professional group had its own seasonal tournament. During one typical spring weekend in 1923, the city's private courses hosted tournaments for such disparate groups as Rotary Clubs, the Hotel Proprietors Association and Carnegie Steel. Private country clubs sponsored their own tournaments, at local, regional and even national levels. The best club duffers played at the state amateur competition, which was hosted each year by a different country club in a different city. Private clubs dispatched their best professional – even as late as the 1920s, Scottish nationals – to compete for boasting rights in state and national open tournaments.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> “Golfer Pays for His Fun,” *New York Times*, 14 November 1915. The industry expert was Dr. Jesse Steiner, an academician who authored the recreation survey for President Hoover’s Research Committee on Social Trends. He was quoted in the *New York Times* on 13 February 1933.

<sup>206</sup> Although the practice of specific “women's days” on golf courses testified to the sport's male flavor, women amateurs competed both locally, regionally and nationally in tournaments. In 1900, for instance, Frances Griscom brought home the national women's amateur title held at Shinnecock to the otherwise conservative Merion Cricket Club. Fifteen years later, Mrs. C.H. Vanderbeck of the Philadelphia Cricket Club won the U.S. Women's Championship. The press was reluctant to recognize women as competitive golfers. Through the 1920s, local tournaments for women golfers were more likely to be published in the “women's pages” than the sports pages. *Golf of the Year*, 1916, 39-45 (USGA Golf House, Far Hills, N.J.). In their annual guide to golf courses, the AAGG continued to note whether women were permitted to play at a given course and, if so, on what days. See, for example, *1916 AAGG*, 39.

<sup>207</sup> Content survey of *Pittsburgh Press* sporting pages, May-August 1923.

It was even becoming possible for public figures to play golf without fear of political repercussions. President Taft was first off the tee. He not only ignored Roosevelt's advise to abandon the pastime, but once in office Taft actively promoted it. "They say that I have been playing golf this summer and that it is a rich man's game, and that it indicated that I was out of sympathy with the plain people." But golf was, to Taft "a game for people who are not active enough for baseball or tennis . . ." Despite some early criticism along the lines of Roosevelt's prediction, most innuendo focused on Taft's waist line, not his choice of sport. Two years into his term, the *New York Times* conceded that the President was responsible for much of the game's popularity – especially "among men and women of his own size" for whom golf had become recognized as "a great flesh reducer."<sup>208</sup>

Although Taft did not see a second term, the game of golf did. One year after he left office, the sport scored its biggest public relations victory to date with Francis Ouimet's underdog victory over British champ Harry Vardon in the 1913 U.S. Open. Newspapers, ever cognizant of the fickle interests of the general public, followed the game closely. Still, conventional prejudices proved resistant to change. Even after grabbing the sport's most prestigious title, Ouimet's own father continued to disapprove of his son's interest in the game. Like many other Americans, the senior Ouimet dismissed it as effeminate and implicitly un-American.<sup>209</sup>

The more substantive social changes during this period were occurring not among amateurs but rather professionals. During golf's first few decades, most pros retained by private

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<sup>208</sup> Frost, *Greatest Game*, 180; Van Natta, *First Off the Tee*, 16-17; *New York Times*, 26 June 1910.

<sup>209</sup> According to Frost, golf became "a convenient target for all of Arthur Ouimet's social and economic bitterness." Frost, *Greatest Game*, 56.

clubs as instructors and course managers were British nationals. But over time, Americans began vying for such positions, and attracted considerable attention as former colonials beating the British royalty at their own game. Anticipating Ouimet's victory was Philadelphia native Johnny McDermott's surprising first place finish at the 1911 U.S. Open. Described as a "postman's son," the 19-year-old former caddie became the first native-born American to win the title. His victory that year was a sure sign not only that golf had arrived in America, but that given the right circumstances even Yanks of humble birth could compete at the game. His fellow, mainly Scottish competitors took to calling him "the Little American Boy." McDermott's victory received less attention than Ouimet's two years later, likely because McDermott had competed as a professional rather than as an amateur. The American golfing establishment also frankly disliked the confident Philadelphian and his "flaunting of extreme optimism."<sup>210</sup>

### **3.2 Landscaped Parks and the Origins of the Municipal Golf Movement, 1895-1915**

While it may have been encouraging to see American-born golfers displacing the British nationals in the ranks of club professionals, most amateur golfers in 1910 were still upper class and privileged. At best, the country club building boom helped transform golf from a pastime for the social elite – "the upper Four Hundred" – to a pastime favored by the country's striving business classes, or what some observers cheekily referred to as "the upper Four Million." And

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<sup>210</sup> James Finnegan, *A Centennial Tribute to Golf in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Golf Association of Philadelphia, 1996); A.W. Tillinghast, *Reminiscences of the Links* (Short Hills, N.J.: TreeWolf Productions, 1998), 94-95. McDermott was ostracized in 1913 by both the golfing establishment and the popular press after boasting that he would win his third successive Open title that year.



the social changes that were transforming the world of professional golf, while impressive, had very little bearing on the world of amateurs. In short, neither development had any effect on the ever present reality of golf: namely, access predicated on membership in organizations that were financially and socially beyond the reach of ordinary Americans.<sup>211</sup>

It likely would have remained that way were it not for another countervailing trend: the appearance of the first generation of public golf courses on the grounds of large urban parks. The country's first, Van Cortlandt Park, opened in the summer of 1895 in New York. The nine-hole course had a few interesting features, including a final hole that stretched for nearly 600 yards. But what made the course unique was not its layout or design, by noted golf architect Thomas Bendelow, but rather its location. In an effort to find a spot within easy commuting distance for the city's golfers, New York's Park Commission settled on a large tract of land within an existing city park, specifically, the eponymous Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. During the first two decades of public course construction, nearly every public course relied on a similar arrangement.<sup>212</sup> Playing the game still required sufficient leisure time and disposable income, but public parks helped surmount one of the most prohibitive obstacles to broader public access: the acquisition of sufficient land. At the same time, this also meant that public golf courses were vulnerable to the same political and social conflicts that made public parks "contested terrains."<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Rader, *American Sports*, 195.

<sup>212</sup> *New York Times*, 21 May 1899; Leslie Claytor, "Evolution of the American Municipal Golf Course, 1895-1940" (Master's thesis, Department of Landscape Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, 1992).

<sup>213</sup> There are many excellent social histories which examine the development of large urban parks within the broader social-political context. Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar reexamine the traditional landscape narrative for Central Park in *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992). Terence Young wrestles with similar themes in *Building San Francisco's Parks, 1850-1930* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004). For Pennsylvania's parks, see Couvares, *Remaking of*

Golf was not part of original plan for most urban parks. Park developers envisioned the first landscaped parks as oases of nature within the country's increasingly congested and denuded cities. The first and most well known of these was New York's Central Park. Designer Frederick Law Olmsted wanted the park to serve as a "breathing space" where harried residents of Gotham could enjoy the therapeutic effects of fresh air and open space and, more implicitly, the moral succor provided through physical immersion in a naturalistic setting. Olmsted designed Central Park to be more idyllic than nature itself, with winding roads and man-made fountains intended to encourage thoughtful repose and reflection.<sup>214</sup>

Although few parks would ever match Central Park's scale or scope, most urban parks emulated its design principles. During the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries, Olmsted and his disciples traveled around the country, including to Pennsylvania, to promote parks as antidotes to both the physical and social-psychological effects of urban-industrial life and as reservoirs of the pastoral ideal. In the 1870s, the city of Philadelphia contracted Olmsted and Vaux to redesign Fairmount Park, a vast but disjointed and undeveloped expanse along the Schuylkill River that had been donated to the city years earlier. In 1889, Edward Bigelow persuaded Mary Schenley, heiress to an old Pittsburgh estate, to donate 300 acres of undeveloped land in the city's East End for a much needed public park. Bigelow promptly began landscaping the parcel according to Olmsted aesthetics.<sup>215</sup>

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*Pittsburgh*, 105-111; Kenneth J. Heineman, "The Changing Face of Schenley Park" *Pittsburgh History* 72 (Fall 1989): 112-127; and Michael J. Lewis, "The First Design of Fairmount Park" *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 130/3 (July 2006): 283-298.

<sup>214</sup> Rosenzweig, *The Park and the People*; David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 77-146.

<sup>215</sup> Lewis, "First Design of Fairmount Park," 283-286; Barbara Judd, "Edward Bigelow: Creator of Pittsburgh's Arcadian Parks," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 58 (January 1975): 45-71.

As in New York, Pennsylvania's large landscaped parks were promoted as "breathing spaces" where city dwellers might find refuge and rejuvenation from smoke belching mills of industry. More often than not, those natural features had to be created and shaped by human hands. Professionally trained landscaped architects directed the massive tree and vegetation plantings that transformed barren and unsightly ravines into hillsides of verdant green and horticultural exhibits. Both Schenley and Fairmount Park were also outfitted with gently curving bridle paths and reflecting pools that were thought to further enhance public appreciation of nature. Boasting over 3400 acres, when completed Fairmount Park was the second largest city park in the country. Schenley, although smaller, became regarded as the jewel of the Oakland Civic Center and was complemented by a second park to the north, Highland Park.<sup>216</sup>

City leaders justified the public expense involved in building and maintaining such parks by asserting their broad benefits. Philadelphia officials defended Fairmount as a "fine asset" for all city residents. But in both their location and design, landscaped parks favored the standards and tastes of the wealthiest citizens. Most early parks were consciously devoid of the commercial amusements associated with popular trolley parks that were being built at the end of streetcar lines. Pittsburgh's Schenley Park, for instance, featured bridle paths and serpentine drives for private carriages, but no playgrounds and only one boating lake and increasingly restrained Fourth of July celebrations. Beulah Kennard, a local leader in the national playground movement, characterized Pittsburgh's largest park as "a very uneven tract with valleys to be

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<sup>216</sup> Esther M. Klein, *Fairmount Park: A History and a Guidebook* (Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Harcum Junior College Press, 1974); Franklin M. Toker, *Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait* (State College, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 1986), 102-105. As late as the early 1970s, Philadelphia still boasted having "the world's largest landscaped municipal park."

bridged and steep hillsides more ornamental than useful.” There was a city zoo and a fine conservatory, but Schenley was “otherwise without any provision for recreation.”<sup>217</sup>

Critics contended that parks needed to make concessions to more active use, while supporters adhered to Olmsted’s original vision for passive use. Location had as much to do with maintaining this upper-class tone as anything else. Like other large urban parks, Schenley was surrounded by upper-class residential neighborhoods and programmatically conformed to the tastes and preferences of those constituents. Working-class neighbors were kept at bay, either through natural or man-made obstacles. Kennard noted that a “deep ravine separated [the park] from the crowded section west off the park.” Both Schenley and Highland Park, she concluded bluntly, “were out of reach of the poor.” The lack of public transportation did not help matters. During Schenley’s first 15 years, no public streetcars traversed the park, a fact which effectively limited the far recesses of the sprawling property to those with access to horse and carriage, and later private automobiles.<sup>218</sup>

Within the context of this on-going debate over the form and content of landscaped parks, golf courses emerged as something of a middle ground. Advocates of “passive” parks tolerated golf as the lesser of many evils, and in some instances came to encourage their development as relatively consistent with the overall Arcadian ambience. Another advantage of golf courses over more “plebian” amusements was that they tended to attract more well-behaved patrons in manageably sized groups. In contrast to the hordes that convened for Fourth of July ceremonies,

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<sup>217</sup> Beulah Kennard, “The Playgrounds of Pittsburgh” in Paul Kellog, ed., *The Pittsburgh District: Civic Frontage* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation/Survey Associates, 1914), 306-324. For a discussion of Frederick Law Olmsted’s “Arcadian” parks movement, see Schuyler, *New Urban Landscape*, 77-146. Francis Couvares discusses the competing class-based approaches to Schenley Park in *The Remaking of Pittsburgh*, 105-111.

<sup>218</sup> Kennard, “Playgrounds,” 307.

golf was a low-density activity. The typical golfing party consisted of two or four players, spaced out across the course at relatively predictable intervals. Park courses also appealed city officials since they entailed less direct supervision than other alternative uses, while at the same time fulfilling public demand for “active” parks.

Pennsylvania’s first official municipal links opened in Harrisburg in 1907. Like many other early “muny” courses, the Harrisburg Golf Course was an enhancement to a pre-existing landscaped park. Reservoir Park had been owned by the city since 1880, but for its first twenty years, it laid largely neglected and undeveloped. The advent of the City Beautiful movement at the turn of the century gave it new life, and new purpose. Between 1902 and 1906, largely at the urging of prominent local residents such as Horace McFarland, head of the American Civic Association, Reservoir Park expanded from 25 unkempt acres clumped randomly around the city’s main water supply to 75 acres of professionally landscaped greenery. By the time the facelift was completed in 1906, Reservoir Park stretched from uptown Harrisburg to the edge of a ravine near the State Capitol and boasted a swath of playgrounds, tennis courts and other public recreation facilities. At year’s end, the city announced the opening of a nine-hole golf course on the park’s steep southern slopes.<sup>219</sup>

The Harrisburg Golf Course embodied many qualities common to the first wave of municipal course construction. The links occupied a relatively small amount of space and accommodated nine holes instead of the customary eighteen. It also featured straight fairways,

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<sup>219</sup> *City of Harrisburg Annual Report, 1904/1905* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1905) MG 30, Archives, City of Harrisburg, Harrisburg, Pa. (Hereafter cited as Harrisburg City Records); Horace McFarland, “General Recreation Facilities” in John Nolen, ed., *City Planning: A Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan* (New York: D. Appleton, 1916); McFarland, *The Awakening of Harrisburg: Some Account of the Improvement Movement Begun in 1902; with the Progress of the Work to the End of 1906* (New York: National Municipal League, 1907), 18.

greens that were lightly maintained and thus nearly indistinguishable in surface characteristics from fairways, and a very limited number of bunkers and other hazards. A park map from 1908 reveals a minimalist, non-descript design, with the nine holes nearly overlaid on top of the serpentine driveway installed a few years earlier. Had it not been for the naturally occurring slope, the course would have hardly quickened the pulse of the experienced golfer. Thrift only partly explains such Spartan design. Courses with straight fairways and limited obstructions were also thought to be easier and therefore less discouraging to inexperienced golfers, and thus ultimately more accessible to players of ordinary means and average skills.<sup>220</sup>

Since the city financed the course, the cost of playing a single round of golf – referred to as “permits” rather than green fees – was cheap compared to fees charged by private clubs. During its first decade of operation, play was entirely free outside of tournaments. Fees remained low. In 1930, the city parks department charged a seasonal fee of \$3 and a per-round charge of just 25 cents – well below the going rate for annual dues and greens fees on local private courses. As a benefit a course attached to a city park, Harrisburg’s many links were also more physically accessible. The “Lucknow Links” of the Harrisburg Country Club could only be reached on a spur of the Pennsylvania Railroad some distance north of most residential neighborhoods. The Reservoir Park course was accessible by both foot and by streetcar, located as it was in the city's Uptown section.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Map, “Reservoir Park Golf Club, Harrisburg, PA., 1910”; (Harrisburg) Parks Department Scrapbook of Clippings, 1914, Harrisburg City Records. Early municipal golf courses averaged nine holes and 50 to 75 acres. By the 1930s, the size of the average public course had doubled. Claytor, “Municipal Golf Course,” 20.

<sup>221</sup> Map, Metropolitan District, Harrisburg, 1930, Box 2, Folder “Pictures and Maps,” Private Papers/Harrisburg Regional Planning Commission, McFarland Papers; (Harrisburg) Park Commission, *Report for the Year Ending December 31, 1908* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Telegraph Printing Company, 1909), 41-43.

At the same time, the administration of the Harrisburg Golf Course underscored another reality. Although open to all in theory, in practice its use remained closely controlled and managed by private entities, in this particular case the Harrisburg Park Golf Club. Although membership was not mandatory, golfers were “strongly encouraged” to join the Harrisburg Park Golf Club and pay annual dues in lieu of daily greens fees, which was quite similar to how most private courses operated. When the Harrisburg Park Golf Club announced its first annual tournament, it reiterated the course was “open to all golfers in Harrisburg” at least 16 years of age. Still, the 40-member Harrisburg Park Golf Club frequently blurred the line between private and public, sharing the same golf pro with the emphatically private 300-member Harrisburg Country Club. Given its location near the tony uptown section of Harrisburg, it is likely that the two clubs also shared members.<sup>222</sup>

The precedent for the de-facto public-private “partnership” that obtained at most municipal courses had been established by Van Cortlandt Park in New York. The nation’s first public course was not the product of Progressive ideals or government philanthropy, but of politically influential, self interested members of the “well-to-do-class.” “The petitioners do not pose as public benefactors,” the *New York Sun* noted in 1895, after the efforts of a group of businessmen to lobby the Park Commission were disclosed. “When they asked for permission to play golf at Van Cortlandt Park it was with the idea of having a private club there. They had searched the nearby suburbs in vain for a suitable plot of ground at a modest rental, and decided upon the park as a last resort.” Although the club could not legally exclude the general public, it successfully persuaded the parks department to set aside the links “on two or three days a week .

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<sup>222</sup> 1908 AAGG, 221; *City of Harrisburg Annual Report*, 1905, Harrisburg City Records.

.. for its sole use.” This unofficial arrangement persisted for years, despite repeated denials from the park’s politically appointed superintendent that such favors had been granted.<sup>223</sup>

Landscaped parks were not created with the intention of becoming ersatz golf courses for wealthy city residents. But by the time golf fever began spreading in earnest at the turn of the century, the only large swaths of open land left – at least within city limits – were within local parks. The very wealthy may have been able to afford skyrocketing real estate prices for whatever private land remained, but most could not. Superimposing courses on existing park land seemed like a reasonable solution. From the perspective of the petitioners, it was no harm done. Most park land lay fallow anyway, they argued, and most believed golf was “in keeping” with parks’ natural landscaping. Conversely, city officials found it expedient, and politically painless, to acquiesce to such requests. Indeed, in many cases, park managers welcomed the arrangement, since it often relieved them of the burden of superintending that section of the park.<sup>224</sup>

It is not entirely clear how many early municipal courses came about in this fashion, but most seem to have evolved from similar circumstances, whether through formal or gentlemen’s agreements. Municipal golf courses in public parks had become such standard practice that it was often their absence that proved newsworthy. Philadelphia was one of the few cities that actively and successfully resisted efforts by a group of politically influential citizens to carve a public golf course out of Fairmount Park, by then the largest landscaped urban park in the

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<sup>223</sup> *New York Times*, 21 April 1896; Martin, *Fifty Years of American Golf*, 222-223.

<sup>224</sup> Municipal golf courses were publicly visible projects and in larger American cities fraught with class tensions, proposals for their construction in the early years often triggered criticisms. When the New York city park commission proposed creating a second 18-hole course in 1901 to supplement Van Corlandt, a local athletic organization protested that “a free golf course is as little needed as a free ground for polo or a riding academy conducted at public expense.” Clayton, “Evolution of Municipal Golf Courses,” 19.



country. By 1913, Philadelphia was the only major American city without a municipal links. Park commissioners rejected proposals on the grounds that any course would require the removal of many trees and intrude on the park's Arcadian ideal. That year, the city's pro-golf lobby asked outgoing President William Taft if he would weigh in on their behalf. Taft was more than happy to oblige. In an open letter directed to Philadelphia city officials, Taft argued that golf "is the least injurious of outdoor games to the landscape features of our public parks." Moreover, the use of parks should not be confined "to those who use carriages and motor." In 1916, the city's pro-golf forces welcomed Philadelphia's first municipal course along 100 acres bounding Cobb's Creek.<sup>225</sup>

Pittsburgh's golfers required no such Presidential intervention. In 1896, just a year after the formation of Van Cortlandt Park, a group of prominent Pittsburghers solicited the city's public works director, Edward Bigelow, to construct a nine-hole course on 60 acres of undeveloped land within the recently donated Schenley tract. Bigelow agreed to the suggestion immediately and without hesitation: "Ladies," he purportedly told the petitioners, three East End society women, "the grounds are there for that purpose, go out and play just as much as you like." Years later, the club would point to Bigelow's response as proof that the city had not simply been "keeping up an expensive playground for the rich at the city's expense." Indeed, on some level Bigelow seemed to welcome the proposal, since the group intended to build the links on an undeveloped section of the park that might aesthetically benefit from the careful

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<sup>225</sup> Finnegan, *Golf in Philadelphia*, 84; *New York Times*, 23 February 1913, 6 July 1916. A similar social-class dynamic helped shape the first municipal golf courses in Canada. Donald Wetherel and Irene Kmet, *Useful Pleasures: The Shaping of Leisure in Alberta, 1896-1945* (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Center and Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism 1990), 142-145.

stewardship and tasteful landscaping that the course would entail. It was also meant one less section for Bigelow and his crew to look after.<sup>226</sup>

The relationship worked for a while. Members of the Pittsburgh Golf Club not only administered the course but also built a sumptuous clubhouse on a piece of private property that bordered the course and the park. The club also took on the responsibility for maintaining the course and managing permits for those who played on it. But it became increasingly evident that the club operated the Schenley links more like a private course than a public facility and evidence surfaced which suggested that the general public was in fact not particularly welcome, despite Bigelow's claim to the contrary. Although the course sat on publicly owned land, the USGA still identified it as "private," with a membership of 550 and a course that spanned 4,589 yards. Even the local papers conceded that the course tended to serve wealthy interests. "The club has been one of the most popular clubs in the county, owing to its easy accessibility from the business section of town and also from Oakland, East End and Squirrel Hill districts."<sup>227</sup>

Even without private clubs standing guard at the gates, there is little evidence that public courses in this period would have attracted a broader following. In 1916, the USGA implied as much when it noted that of the 50,000 playing the game for the first time, most were out on public courses, "many finding it both difficult and expensive to become associated with private courses." Scattered and admittedly incomplete social data on players who used Harrisburg's Reservoir Park course seems to confirm this. The president of the park's affiliated club, for

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<sup>226</sup> McCullough, *So Much To Remember*, 26.

<sup>227</sup> *Pittsburgh Post*, 17 July 1910; *1908 AAGG*, 449-450. This public-private arrangement was not exclusive to large cities. In 1921, the USGA reported that in Tyrone, Pennsylvania, the one and only public golf course was located on an "athletic park" which was administered by the local YMCA. The golf club, though, was identified as a "separate organization" responsible for rules and regulations, including the current ban on Sunday play. *AAGG*, 1921, p. 305.

instance, was a lawyer, and while no records survive to document who used the park on a daily basis, tournament players came largely from the ranks of the professional class. Included among the dozen or so entrants in the 1910 spring tournament was a lawyer, a newspaper editor, an assistant manager, a salesman and an engineer.<sup>228</sup>

Younger golfers were also conspicuous among those who queued up at the local munny courses, reflecting perhaps their status as moneyed but less established members of the upper middle class. Serious, private golf courses deferred to the middle aged and older. The social composition of golfers at the Reservoir Park course remained virtually unchanged two years later, although in both 1910 and again in 1912, clerks, stenographers and a smattering of low and mid-level civil servants managed to enter the tournament field. Only one identifiably working-class occupation – a tinsmith residing on Second Street – surfaced among the early grouping of golfers identifiable in city directories. Otherwise, the ranks of public golfers appeared solidly upper middle.<sup>229</sup>

And yet there were signs that municipal golf courses were begrudgingly yielding to new participants. The Pittsburgh Golf Club's "special relationship" with the Schenley links began to unravel in 1906 after Pittsburgh city council convened a special investigation to look into allegations that members of the club exercised undue influence over its day-to-day operations, including deciding who could and could not play. City residents who wished to golf but were

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<sup>228</sup> 1916 AAGG, 56; Harrisburg *Patriot News*, May 16, 1910; May 23, 1910; June 6, 1910; *Polk's Harrisburg City Directory* (Malden, Mass.: R.L. Polk and Co., 1911). Occupational data on Harrisburg's public course golfers was assembled by matching the names of tournament participants, as reported in the Harrisburg *Patriot News* with names and occupations listed in the Harrisburg city directory for that year.

<sup>229</sup> Harrisburg *Patriot News*, 12 May 1912, 3 June 1912; 1 July 1 1912; 1912 *Harrisburg City Directory*. Another factor discouraging broader participation was the state's Sabbatarian laws. As late as 1925, the Harrisburg course was one of many Pennsylvania links which apparently prohibited Sunday play. 1925 AAGG, 348.

not members complained of being made to feel unwelcome, as if they were trespassing on private property. “I have no doubt the club would not have the intruder arrested,” one council member concluded after looking into the matter. “But a man has to have the hide of a rhinoceros to insist on playing when he knows he is not wanted.”<sup>230</sup>

Council members determined that the club had been a good physical steward. The Schenley links were in markedly better condition than “the rest of the park sod.” But city council concluded that it had no choice but to take over administration of the course at once, and drafted an ordinance “providing for the rules and regulations of the proposed public links.” The *Gazette* noted a certain irony to the motion. Just a few years earlier, city council rejected a proposal to establish a second public links elsewhere in the city on the grounds that golf was “not a game for the people and that Pittsburgh would be keeping up an exclusive playground for the rich at the city’s expense.” But under the circumstance, council could not risk the political fallout of appearing to grant special privileges to a select group of affluent constituents. A city policeman patrolled the grounds and regulated play on a first-come, first-served basis.<sup>231</sup>

It took the Schenley links six years to transition from private to public control. In 1910, the city assumed full management of the course, with park personnel now assigned the task of monitoring course play. As part of the new arrangement, memberships were eliminated. Any city resident who could afford the modest greens fees could now play. City council also that year authorized construction of a clubhouse on park grounds. The city found that it required the services of eight to ten men during the season just to keep the course up to standard. But it was

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<sup>230</sup> *Pittsburgh Gazette*, 17 June 1906.

<sup>231</sup> *Pittsburgh Gazette*, 17 June 1906; McCullough, *So Much to Remember*, 28.

worth the effort. Joseph Armstrong, director of public works, reported that the links were “one of the main attractions” to Schenley and that it was now “used constantly.” “Since these grounds have come[sic] under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Parks, there has been such a marked increased demand up the part of the public from all of the City . . . that at many times the grounds were inadequate to accommodate them.”<sup>232</sup>

By the time the Schenley links were formally re-dedicated in the spring of 1912, along with its new \$10,000 clubhouse, politicians were no longer questioning the political wisdom of publicly financed golf. “It must be distinctly understood that the man who makes \$2 a day is just as welcome here as any millionaire,” councilman Enauch Rauh noted during his speech. “This must prevail and we hope the workingman will come to enjoy the recreation this beautiful spot will provide.” Rauh also used the occasion to announce council’s intention to authorize construction of a trolley line “so that the poor man can enjoy his park ride just as well as the more fortunate who spin through in his automobile.” Public Works director Armstrong, “neither a golfer or much of a speechmaker,” told the assembled crowd: “Now the links are yours and I want you to make use of them.” The day’s ceremonies concluded with a band striking up “Everybody’s Doing It.”<sup>233</sup>

If Schenley re-dedication provided insight into urban politicians and their changing attitudes toward municipal golf, the origins of the Buhl Farm golf course in Sharon illustrated the

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<sup>232</sup> *Annual Report of the City of Pittsburgh 1912* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1913), 713; *Annual Report of the City of Pittsburgh 1913* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1914), 822.

<sup>233</sup> *Pittsburgh Gazette*, 12 May 1912. Schenley was sufficiently well managed by the early 1920s to attract the attention of parks departments from as far away as California. In 1922, the superintendent of San Diego’s parks wrote to Pittsburgh seeking advice: “We believe that you can materially help us . . . in regard to methods employed in so successfully introducing and handling the game in Schenley Park.” Board of Park Commissioners, San Diego to City Park Commission., Pittsburg, 20 April 1922, Box 3, San Diego Board of Park Commissioners Correspondence, San Diego Public Library, San Diego, Calif.

philanthropist view. The man behind that course was Frank Buhl. During the 1880s and 1890s, Buhl headed up a number of manufacturing concerns in the Shenango Valley, including by the 1890s, the Sharon Steel Company. In 1899, Buhl sold the company to Carnegie Steel and promptly retired from business. With the help of his wife, Buhl embarked on a second career in public philanthropy, which would come to include gifts of a hospital, library and, in 1903, a community recreation center. Modeled loosely on Carnegie's multi-use libraries, the F.H. Buhl Club in downtown Sharon featured billiards, bowling alleys and a several reading rooms, all free to community residents. A few years later, Buhl began setting his sites on a large outdoor recreation complex to complement his downtown settlement house. By 1911, he had accumulated 300 acres of farmland on the edge of town and began seeking advice on transforming it into a bona fide recreation park.<sup>234</sup>

Buhl intended his grounds to be "a pleasure park for the working people of the Shenango Valley." But in order to avoid confusion with commercial amusement parks of the period, Buhl insisted on calling it Buhl Farm rather than Buhl Park. Customarily, working residents of Sharon and nearby New Castle repaired to Idlewild Park, a cheap amusement park on the Ohio border. Buhl intended his Farm as a more wholesome, invigorating alternative. Instead of offering tawdry entertainments and dissipation, Buhl aimed for moral uplift. Money was taken out of the equation entirely; the park and all of its diversions would be entirely free to area residents. Over the next several years, Buhl and his wife spent over a million dollars to develop the park, which

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<sup>234</sup> Charles A. Rook et al., eds., *Western Pennsylvanians: A Work for Newspaper and Library Reference* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Western Pennsylvania Biographical Assn., 1923), 395, 420. "Being in no way familiar with the planning of a park," Buhl wrote in a letter to a Boston architectural firm, "I am desiring of getting into communication with some specialist in this class of work," F.H. Buhl to Warren Manning, Boston, Mass., 25 August 1911, Buhl Farm Trust Archives, Sharon, Pa. (Hereafter cited as Buhl Archives).

included an ambitious planting scheme of 75,000 trees. In 1915, the couple established a \$500,000 endowment for its perpetual upkeep.<sup>235</sup>

With its large artificial lake and reflecting pool, supervised children's playground and miles of winding, paved carriage roads, Buhl Farm resembled an Olmstedian landscaped park. The Farm even included what had now become *de rigueur* among city parks: a nine-hole, par-36 golf course. What distinguished this course from other park courses was that it was administered impartially and without exceptions: local elites and politicians received no special playing privileges and no private clubs regulated play. Most Shenango Valley residents in 1914 likely had little acquaintance with the sport, but they no doubt ascertained the significance of its location. The new nine-hole course, free and open to all, stood cheek-to-jowl with the Sharon Country Club's course, a fact which ensured that at least on the fairways, the businessman and the working man would be social equals.<sup>236</sup>

Officials at General Electric's Erie plant went one step further. In 1921, the company approved a plan to install and layout a nine-hole golf course on the edge of Lawrence Park, a company-built residential development on the eastern edge of the city. It is unclear how conscious the plan for the course had been. Originally, corporate officials had intended to use the acreage for more company housing. But when those plans fell through, the company acquiesced to a plan brought forward by four company managers. The plant's superintendent – a non-golfer – agreed to donate the land and the manpower to build the course on the condition

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<sup>235</sup> "Dum Dum," typescript, nd, Buhl Archives; *Sharon Herald*, 3 July 1914; 5 September 1914.

<sup>236</sup> "Dum-Dum," Buhl Archives. As of 2005, the Buhl Farm course was identified by the USGA as the only completely free golf course in the United States.

that it be thrown open “to all employees of General Electric.”<sup>237</sup> It was one of the only such corporate courses made available to employees irrespective of job title.<sup>238</sup>

### 3.3 Expanding the Fairways: Golf Reaches Out to the Masses, 1915-1925

In an article published in *American City* in 1916, golf course architect Tom Bendlow reviewed the progress that had been made over the past 20 years in the movement for municipal golf. In the early days, according to Bendelow, most park officials were “antagonistic” toward golf on the grounds that it “was a rich man’s game” and an incursion into the park’s naturalistic setting. As a tireless advocate of public golf, the Scots-born architect “tried to show [them] the error of their thinking.” Landscaped parks, after all, were not really for the people. “[O]btaining beautiful effects was really done for the cultured classes who had the [sic]esthetic taste to appreciate such things . . . the artisan and his family were really not looked after at all.” Since then, city parks officials had become “more liberal minded” about setting aside land for recreation. Chicago, by way of example, now had six public golf courses, patronized by “millions.”<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> *The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of the History of Lawrence Park Golf Club, 1921-1996* (Erie, Pa.: Lawrence Park Golf Club, c. 1996), 6-9. General Electric established Lawrence Park in 1907 as a model housing development for its employees, complete with manicured lawns, single-family homes, and plenty of open space. The community had also been designed to accommodate all income levels, from management to skilled workers, many of whom were housed in over 400 row homes that were added around World War I.

<sup>238</sup> General Electric also built a golf course at McCall Field, an athletic field which the company maintained in suburban Philadelphia for the use of its employees there. Although the course was laid out by Donald Ross, a noted course architect, the McCall Field course was very attenuated. When it opened around 1920, it consisted of nine “one-shot” holes on a mere 77 acres. See “McCall Golf and Country Club, History,” <http://www.gapgolf.org/clubs.asp?cid=86>.

<sup>239</sup> Thomas Bendelow, “Municipal Golf” *American City* 15/1 (July 1916): 1-8.



Between courses “maintained at public expense” and clubs being made available “at a reasonable cost,” Bendelow declared, “there is no reason [for] the average citizen’s being without this form of exercise because he cannot afford it.” The conclusion was likely a bit optimistic. In 1916, despite more relaxed attitudes among park officials, it was doubtful that golf had filtered down to the artisan and his family. But Bendelow’s comments marked an important turning point for the municipal game and its new status among both golf professionals and progressive reformers. Henry Leach, a well-known British golfing commentator, declared municipal golf to be one of the unexpectedly “strong features” of the American game. “The leaders of the people are appreciating the necessity of it and preaching it . . .” American civic leaders had “come firmly and decisively to the conclusion that golf is the only recreation that meets the requirement of the times. Therefore they say that it must be provided for everybody, for the ‘common people,’ and given to them absolutely free with every inducement put forward for them to play it.”<sup>240</sup>

University of Chicago sociologist Charles Zueblin reached a similar conclusion in the revised edition of *American Municipal Progress*, originally published in 1902. “One of the most helpful aspects of park development in America [since 1902] is the increase of patronage following the multiplication of activities permitted or encouraged in parks,” Zueblin noted in his 1916 revision. Chicago again supplied the model. A “pioneer in public courses,” the Windy City’s four public links enjoyed steady patronage. The shorter of the two courses in Jackson Park was seeing “as many people in one day as are dispatched in national tournaments.” To Zueblin and other like-minded Progressives, the intriguing element of municipal golf was the way it drew ordinary citizens to city parks. He noted approvingly how “two five-cent car fares

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<sup>240</sup> Bendelow, “Municipal Golf,” 8; Leach, *The Happy Golfer*, 223.

enable many people to spend most of their waking hours in the summer at the Jackson Park golf course. . . . A mahogany tan may be acquired for ten cents a day by people who carry their own lunch.”<sup>241</sup>

Few other places matched Chicago’s appetite for public golf, but Pennsylvania managed to keep pace. In 1921, with its eight municipal courses, the Commonwealth was identified as one of the more public-golf friendly states in the northeast. Philadelphia, likely home to one of the “antagonistic” parks alluded to in Bendelow’s report, capitulated to active park proponents with the opening of Cobb’s Creek Municipal Golf Course in 1916. Although it encompassed just over 100 acres, Cobb’s Creek came to be regarded as one of the most interesting and challenging public links in the state and the nation. Even mid-sized cities were getting into the act. In 1915, Lancaster squeezed a nine-hole golf course into Long’s Park, a 70-acre park built in the northwestern corner of the city on land donated by a wealthy former resident. That same year Wilkes-Barre opened a nine-hole course in the 107-acre Hollenback Park. Erie had not one but two public links in operation by 1921. The first course generated such strong interest after opening in 1918 that city officials almost immediately began making provisions for a second nine-hole course.<sup>242</sup>

The public’s growing attraction to golf was indeed impressive. In 1916, the USGA estimated that 50,000 new golfers had tried the game that year, many on public golf courses. It

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<sup>241</sup> Charles Zueblin, *American Municipal Progress* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1916. Rev. ed.), 290-291. “That golf is not a luxurious game for the leisure class is evidenced by the signboard at Jackson Park that says the golf shelter will be open at 4:30 A. M.!”

<sup>242</sup> Finnegan, *Golf in Philadelphia*, 84; *1920 AAGG*, 15; Michael Baker, Jr., *A Comprehensive Municipal Plan: City of Lancaster, Pennsylvania* (Rochester, Pa.: Baker Engineers, 1945), 168; *Municipal Golf Courses in the United States with Statistical Information* (New York: USGA, Public Links Section, 1931), 27. Even as late as 1945, urban planners were ambivalent about golf courses in public parks. Lancaster’s Long’s Park “presents an excellent appearance” the firm of Michael Baker Jr. reported in 1945. “A nine-hole golf course, unfortunately, has been superimposed on the park.”

was not an aberration. Between 1900 and 1912, it was estimated that the number of golfers grew from 50,000 to 350,000. Ten years later, the USGA estimated that the number of golfers in the United States had risen to 2,000,000. Part of the trend was marked by significant spikes. In 1920, for instance, an estimated 200,000 returning veterans teed up on the nation's courses, partly as a result of what the USGA described as "an adjustment to civilian life via outdoor recreation." The heavy traffic over the nation's golf courses was reflected in usage statistics for individual courses. During its first two months of operation, Philadelphia park officials estimated that fewer than 3,000 golfers played Cobb's Creek. But the numbers rose quickly and dramatically over successive seasons. By 1921, it was estimated that as many as 80,000 golfers were playing the course on an annual basis.<sup>243</sup>

Such data revealed an interesting paradox. Despite the fact that municipal courses accounted for only a fraction of the nation's golf courses, they were responsible for the vast majority of the golf that was being played. In 1924, a survey published in *American City* magazine identified just 140 municipal courses nationwide; by contrast, during the same period there were over 2800 private club courses in operation. By even the most conservative estimate, during any given year during the 1920s, more than half of all golf was being played on just 5% of all courses. That trend would continue well into the early 1950s, even in the face of competition from semi-public, pay-for-play courses. In 1955, based on much more precise data, the National Golf Foundation reported that 40% of the country's golfers were playing on municipal courses, which by then comprised 15% of all courses. By contrast, semi-public courses, which by then accounted for 26% of all courses, were responsible for 30% of the golf

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<sup>243</sup> Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 73-74; *The Golfer's Yearbook* (New York, 1931), 655; 1920 AAGG, 15-18; Rebecca B. Rankin, "Municipal Golf in a Hundred Cities," *American City* (June 1924): 597-602.

being played. Many courses were still carrying more golfers than other course types, but that would change.<sup>244</sup>

While some commentators chalked up the widespread enthusiasm for golf to a general zest for outdoor recreation, there were other changes that were boosting the game's popularity beyond the country club set. One measure of golf's mass popularity was increased coverage on the sports pages of American newspapers. Between 1921 and 1922, according to the USGA, the amount of column space devoted to golf nearly doubled. While the game's spectator base was still modest compared with that of baseball and college football, the expanding audience for professional golf was impressive. Although the U.S. Open had been held annually since 1896, public interest during the tournament's first 20 years was at best sporadic. In 1915, the *New York Times* reported a "revival of interest" in professional golf, as indicated by the "large galleries" that gathered around high-caliber professionals. But the enthusiasm was limited to devotees who had both the time and money to see the match, and the background to appreciate the talent on display. With only slight hyperbole, one observer described the early U.S. Open tournaments as "a Masonic cloister of lower-class foreign-born professionals gathering like an annual tradesmen's guild convention."<sup>245</sup>

The blossoming of home-grown talent helped change that. Although Scottish and English professionals still dominated the game during the 1910s and 1920s, a crop of talented, American-born professionals offered the British golfing establishment some stern competition. It started in 1911, when the "small American boy" Johnny McDermott became the first native-born American to win the U.S. Open. From that point on, American-born golfers could routinely

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<sup>244</sup> Rankin, "Municipal Golf," 598; Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 74; Verne Wickham, *Municipal Golf Course Organizing and Operating Guide* (Chicago: National Golf Foundation, 1955), 4.

<sup>245</sup> 1923 AAGG, 13; *New York Times*, 2 December 1915; Quoted in Frost, *Greatest Game*, 107.

be found among the field of competitors for both Open and Amateur. Personalities such as Francis Ouimet, Walter Hagen, Bobby Jones, Gene Sarazen (the first “new ethnic” to compete at the top level in the U.S. Open) and a steady stream of other competitive Americans stimulated a groundswell of public interest, even among non-traditional golf audiences. American sportswriters were more than willing to play to national pride and class aspirations. As one observer noted in 1923, “when a former caddy rises to championship, a million lads or more grit their teeth and vow to copy him. Golf has given the rising nation an equivalent of the successful pugilist, idol of other days.”<sup>246</sup>

Another trend that helped close the gap between golf and ordinary Americans was the increasingly widespread use of adolescent caddies at private clubs. Although well established in Great Britain, caddies were initially absent from the game in the United States. But as the pastime evolved, caddies came to be considered indispensable appendages to country club courses and an important feature that distinguished private from public courses, or within public courses, the wealthy from the less wealthy. The *New York Times* noted with some derision how the otherwise democratic spirit at Van Cortlandt was qualified by the occasional “aristocrat bearing a caddy.” By 1938, one golf publication estimated that there were 600,000 caddies servicing the nation's estimated 5,000 courses. On an average weekend on a typical course, one might expect to find between 200 to 250 caddies carrying clubs for 50 cents to \$1 a round.<sup>247</sup>

For many schoolboys, caddying represented the ideal summer job, offering outdoor employment that coincided with summer vacations. But while the prospect of caddying appealed to all classes, working-class youths proved better suited to the task, if for no other reasons than

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<sup>246</sup> Frost, *Greatest Game*, 111; M.B. Levick, “The Why of a Million Golfers” *New York Times*, 8 July 1923.

<sup>247</sup> *New York Times*, 26 June 1910; *1938 Golfer's Yearbook*.

that their circumstances were more likely to compel them to seek such work. Many of the teens who caddied at the Harrisburg County Club came from Marysville, a working-class railroad town just across the Susquehanna River from the club. Sunnehanna Country Club, in Westmont, Cambria County, drew many of its caddies from Brownstown, a working-class section of Johnstown that cascaded down the hillside and merged with the city's industrial West End. The continued expansion of golf courses during the 1910s and 1920s increased demand for caddies during these decades.<sup>248</sup>

Most caddies worked for tips. During the 1920s, the more generous golfers at the Harrisburg Country Club paid upwards of a quarter a round. But for most caddies, the benefits of carrying clubs around private links extended beyond dollars and cents. Some were attracted to the social contacts that such work often yielded. Pat McGovern, who grew up in a blue-collar neighborhood of Philadelphia, viewed caddying as an opportunity to meet “a lot of very interesting people. You could spend about three hours chatting with them about what was happening in the world in some business discussion or some social or cultural discussion.” Caddying also offered boys from working-class families their one and likely only opportunity to play the game. For many, it was an extended, informal apprenticeship; those who expressed an interest (or talent) were likely to receive tips on the proper backswing, the best putting technique and frequently, a set of used clubs.<sup>249</sup>

For most caddies, the best perk was the weekly tradition of “Caddie Day,” part of a day which most clubs set aside every week for caddy play. At the Harrisburg Golf Course, Caddy

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<sup>248</sup> Doremus and Gibson, *Country Club of Harrisburg*, 26; Research files, Westmont Centennial Project, Johnstown Area Heritage Association, 1991. Bill Barninger was “among the caddies who lived in Marysville. Hoping for a day's work, he would row across the shallow waters of the Susquehanna and tie up at the Fort Hunter dock.”

<sup>249</sup> Doremus and Gibson, *Country Club of Harrisburg*, 26; Interview with Pat McGovern, David Morrow, 4 August 2000 (Video tape transcript, International Archives, Computerworld Honors Program, Boston, Mass.).

Day fell on Monday mornings. From sun-up until noon, according to the club's official history, dozens of boys "swarmed over the course" in an attempt to complete as many holes as possible during the allotted time frame. "It was bedlam." Pat McGovern caddied for two summers in high school on a private course in Philadelphia, and also took advantage of the club's Monday caddy day. He viewed it as an opportunity "to play your own round of golf on a very nice, challenging, first class golf course." Beside, he noted, in his section of town there were no neighborhood courses to join.<sup>250</sup>

Particularly ambitious or promising caddies rose through the ranks of club personnel to become caddy masters, golf club makers and in some cases, teaching professionals. Many of the most successful professional American golfers, from Frances Ouimet to Arnold Palmer, started out as caddies. But for the great mass of caddies who never rose to the professional rank, the handful of years spent trudging up and down the course still offered an indispensable apprenticeship. Caddying gave many a taste for the game that they would return to in adulthood, not as hired hands but as players – invariably on municipal courses. By the 1930s, a significant number of public links players were former caddies.

Another trend which encouraged the spread of golf among ordinary Pennsylvanians was the general increase in leisure time, especially among skilled and semi-skilled workers. While the average work day and week varied greatly from industry to industry, and from trade to trade, the trend in such industrial centers as Pittsburgh, and across the Commonwealth as a whole, was toward shorter work days and weeks. In 1907, for instance, the Pittsburgh Survey found that most steel workers clocked in 12-hour days, often seven days a week. In 1913, that number had not changed, and the average laborer in the steel industry was still working 72-hour weeks. But

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<sup>250</sup> Doremus and Gibson, *Country Club of Harrisburg*, 21; McGovern interview.

within almost every other industry, the average work week between 1899 and 1913 dropped a full ten hours. Brewery and printing house workers, for instance, had both won the 48-hour week by 1907.<sup>251</sup>

Pennsylvania's skilled craftsmen – its labor aristocracy – were in the best position to enjoy the general increase in leisure. But after World War I, even Pennsylvania's giant industries were beginning to yield to the logic of shorter work weeks. In 1911, U.S. Steel, traditionally a bellwether for other large-scale manufacturers, issued a resolution calling for the end of the industry-standard 72-hour work week. Many executives, such as Bethlehem Steel's Eugene Grace, resisted, even when continued labor unrest suggested the financial benefits of stabilized working conditions. The disastrous results of the industry-wide 1919 steel strike finally forced steelmakers to act. In 1923, they formally agreed to work toward an eight-hour day. Although it would take several years to implement, other major industries followed suit. Analysts argued that the resulting rise in worker morale and satisfaction would offset any initial loss in productivity.<sup>252</sup>

The one tradition which worked against these trends was long standing “blue laws” which banned Sunday play on many of the nation's golf courses. During the 1920s, the laws varied widely from one region to the next, as did enforcement. Technically, the prohibition against Sunday sports remained on the books in Pennsylvania until 1933, but individual cities

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<sup>251</sup> Peter R. Shergold, *Working-Class Life: The “American Standard” in Comparative Perspective, 1899-1913* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), 57-60. On the adoption of the eight-hour day in the American steel industry, see Gerald Eggert, *Steelmasters and Labor Reform* (State College, Pa: Penn State Press, 1981).

<sup>252</sup> For most companies, sports and recreation programs were limited to a scattering of baseball or bowling leagues. Even the more ambitious programs, such as those administered through the Carnegie Library in Homestead for the benefit of the Homestead Work employees, focused on gymnasium sports such as swimming or basketball. But at least a few corporations went one step further and opened golf course to all its employees. For background on welfare capitalism and employee recreation in the American steel industry, see Miner, “The ‘Deserted Parthenon,’” 109-135.



began relaxing restrictions a full decade or more earlier. Philadelphia, for instance, lifted its ban on Sunday golf in 1919. Smaller cities proved more resistant. Harrisburg Park prohibited Sunday play until 1925. Robert Hunter, an enthusiastic promoter of mass golf, was likely not alone when he chastised politicians who upheld such antiquated restrictions, comparing them to Scottish kings who likewise tried to suppress Sunday golf among the masses while granting themselves an exception. “I look for similar evasions here among our distinguished legislators – most of whom love the game – when those who have given us prohibition and promise to abolish evolution turn their thoughts to the preservation of the Sabbath.”<sup>253</sup>

A final obstacle was clothing and equipment. Thanks to the relaxed dress codes in place at most if not all public courses, clothing was not the obligatory expense that it became at private courses. The only requirement at Sharon’s Buhland Farm golf course was that players not wear narrow heels that might damage greens. Equipment was another matter. In 1915, it was estimated that it cost the average golfer \$40 to become properly outfitted. By the 1920s, it was still possible to spend that much, and more, particularly as the number of clubs and related paraphernalia multiplied. But it was also possible to spend less, thanks to the entrance of mass retailers into the golf market. As late as 1920, Sears, Roebuck and Co. carried no golf equipment of any kind, but by the end of the decade, the major catalog-based retailer had added two lines of golf clubs. An entry level set cost just \$6.50, a price at least technically within the reach of potentially millions of modest means.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> 1920 AAGG, 15-18; 1925 AAGG; Hunter, *Links*, viii. Many private clubs, like the York Country Club, were ambivalent toward Sunday play. In 1921, the club noted that “Sunday play with caddies is permitted but not encouraged.” Thomas Jable’s study offers an excellent overview of the Commonwealth’s long standing prohibition on Sunday sports. See Jable, “Sport, Amusements, and Pennsylvania’s Blue Laws, 182-1973” (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1974).

<sup>254</sup> 1937 Buhland Farm golf permit, Buhl Archives; *Montgomery Ward* catalog, 1908; *Sears, Roebuck and Co. Catalog*, 1920; *Sears, Roebuck and Co. Catalog*, 1929. Advances in golf “technology” also helped promote public

### 3.4 “The People’s Country Clubs”: The Democratization of Public Golf and the Second Generation of Municipal Links

In 1923, the *New York Times* exuberantly reported on the great upsurge in golf course construction. With 2200 golf links presently in operation and another 400-500 courses expected to be added within the year, the *Times* concluded that “new social strata have been reached.” A sociologist quoted for the article characterized the trend as “an example of the penetration of the culture,” not unlike that which occurred with the Model T. “The automobile has become a possibility for everybody; it has become the same with golf.” Skilled workers were particularly likely to benefit: “Workmen are coming into the social scheme as never before. They make more money than the clerk class. And they are playing golf.” The *Saturday Evening Post* concurred. The “golf germ” had “taken class distinction by the nape of the neck and shaken it to pieces.”<sup>255</sup>

One of the game’s most enthusiastic –and unlikely – champions was Robert Hunter. A native of Terre Haute, Indiana, Hunter embraced two seemingly distinct passions: golf and socialism. Hunter headed Chicago’s Board of Charities in the late 1890s and rubbed elbows with Jane Addams and other prominent social reformers. His relationship with Addams, and his first-

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interest in the sport. Even golf balls played a role. In 1900, Goodrich Rubber introduced a partially synthetic ball composed of rubber threads wrapped around a gutta percha core. The new ball could be driven much farther, a fact which made at least one critical aspect of the game much easier for average players to master. Frost, *Greatest Game*, 46.

<sup>255</sup> *New York Times*, 8 July 1923; Bozeman Bulger quoted in Moss, *American Country Club*, 105. The *Times* article quoted Dr. W. I. Thomas, a sociologist identified as a colleague of Charles Zueblin. Together, the *Times* reported, Thomas and Zueblin induced a skeptical Chicago parks department to lay out the first public course there.

hand experiences in the slums of Chicago, radicalized him. But Hunter was also an avid golfer and in 1926, his second passion compelled him to write a treatise on the modern game. In it, he commented on what he intuited to be a social revolution in the making. “Golf is rapidly becoming the national sport,” he opined. “Whether it is played in pastures or Pine Valleys is of little national importance. As a recreation for all classes, golf seems destined to become as universal as it is beneficial . . . The time seems not far distant when every man, woman and child will have a set of clubs.”<sup>256</sup>

Hunter likely overstated the case, but by the mid-1920s, municipalities and parks departments were seeing a dramatic increase in the numbers of non-traditional golfers. In 1925, 60% of the public golf courses in operation reported that close to six million nine-hole rounds had been played. Golf had always made heavy demands on land, but the pressure was especially acute in cities with a surfeit of golfers and a shortage of open space. No matter how well managed, the game could only accommodate a finite number of players per square mile at any one time. The only option for relieving congestion was to extend tee times and move golf parties along as briskly as possible. The problem was especially acute on weekends. Stories abounded of golfers starting or ending their games in near total darkness in pursuit of an unobstructed round. Officials in Cincinnati reported that “a great many [workers] give up playing because on week-ends and holidays there is no room to play.”<sup>257</sup>

For upper-class golfers, accustomed to having the public links to themselves, the trend was particularly irksome. Increased traffic was “ruining the game,” and perhaps more

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<sup>256</sup> Hunter, *Links*, vi-vii. In 1905, Hunter was a card carrying member of the Socialist Party of America and a prolific public intellectual. His first book, *Tenement Conditions in Chicago*, was published in 1901. He subsequently published several other treatises on American social conditions, including such titles as *Poverty, The Socialist at Work*, and *Labor in Politics*.

<sup>257</sup> Tam Deering, “Municipal Golf Makes ‘Hole in One’,” *Recreation* 32 (1938): 287.

importantly, transforming the course culture. Experienced, club golfers had to some extent always regarded public courses as an inferior form, if only because they were more likely than private courses to attract neophytes. In 1910, for instance, a rakish writer for the *New York Times* noted that Van Cortlandt Course made an ideal vantage point from which to observe “the various cranks, freaks, and ordinary human beings” drawn to the game. “Large people seem especially attracted to the game,” sent there under doctors’ orders. But despite the mass of humanity, particularly the “sharp-eyed Italians” who made a living stealing badly sliced golf balls, Van Cortlandt during this period still attracted its share of wealthy golfers. One of the regulars to Van Cortland in 1910 was an experienced golfer “reputed to be worth vast sums of money” who came dressed in “natty attire” with two caddies to carry his “huge bag of clubs.” Over the winter the man played at private courses in Florida, but during the warm months was a daily visitor to the free links. “He always insisted on two caddies.”<sup>258</sup>

Evidence suggests that this had begun to change dramatically after World War I. Writing in *Golfdom* in 1922, one writer advised that public golf courses were suitable as a “temporary” solution, but that any self respecting middle-class golfer would want to get himself onto a private course. Many from this social class came to regard public links as a necessary but hopefully temporary evil. If the experience in Pittsburgh was any indication, the more publicly accessible a course became, the more likely elites were to abandon it. Less than two years after the Pittsburgh Golf Club lost its exclusive use of Schenley Park, a second private golf club was

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<sup>258</sup> “Humors of Golf as Played at Van Cortlandt Park” *New York Times*, 26 June 1910.

established within city limits. This time, the course was unambiguously private, and undoubtedly a popular refuge for displaced members of the Pittsburgh Golf Club.<sup>259</sup>

During the 1920s, golf commentators complained that municipal courses were becoming devoid of protocol and discipline, which one writer attributed to “so many different kinds of citizens hearing the call of the outdoors and the down hill.” In 1921, satirist Walt Lantz wrote a facetiously cautionary tale about his first (and presumably last) experience at a public course. Lantz found its main advantage – its modest greens fees – offset by the exasperation that came with a game that “every taxpayer decided to play at once. . . . The Bureau of Parks issues brass checks, giving you the exclusive use of the links – that is with about 25,000 others.” Aside from relentlessly congested fairways, Lantz encountered poorly maintained grounds, ill mannered and erratic beginners, and a vigorous underground trade in stolen golf balls. The successful “tax paying golfer” had to be “fleet of foot” and was advised after hitting a long drive to be “under it before it falls” to avoid losing it to thieves. “The club's power to enforce certain dictions,” Lantz concluded, “is not present on public links.”<sup>260</sup>

Private course golfers were also taken aback by their uncomfortably urban character. Whereas the newer country clubs were accessed by automobile, public courses were accessed by streetcar. “[A]s a rule,” Lantz wrote, “you have to motor – pardon me, I mean trolley – through six suburbs or so, change for a coupla more trolleys, and then walk for a mile before reaching the links.” And the city never disappeared. “Any time you hit the ball, you don’t know whether it is going down the fairway or into somebody’s back yard.” Still, Lantz concluded that many courses offered some advantages over private courses. “Knickers are not compulsory,” initiation

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<sup>259</sup> *Golfdom*, 1922; *Pittsburgh Bulletin*, 16 April 1910. The membership list of the Stanton Heights Golf Club, located near (but not in) another major city park (Highland), closely resembled that of the Pittsburgh Golf Club. But the Stanton Heights club owned their course outright. *1916 AAGG*, 254.

<sup>260</sup> Walt Lantz, “When You Play on Public Links,” *The American Golfer*, 26 August 1922, 18, 33.

fees and annual dues are “all included in the \$5 brass check,” and perhaps best of all, no extravagant nineteenth-hole rituals are expected. “Instead of taking your wife to the club and buying her a \$12 plate dinner you escort her to the curbstone and buy her a hot dog right off the wagon for a nickel.”<sup>261</sup>

It may be tempting to dismiss such observations as simply a matter of changing aesthetics, but in golf, etiquette and fashion were integral elements of the game. Dress codes were a case in point. At many if not most private country clubs, they defined and upheld a club’s exclusivity. The same was true of clubhouses, which, like proper clothes, were technically superfluous to playing the game but vital for reinforcing protocol and maintaining a proper, upper-class tone. On this score, by the 1920s the distinctions between many courses and private courses could not have been clearer. Municipal players were frequently shown golfing in work clothes. For many private club golfers, the absence of standards betokened a coarsening of traditional course etiquette and the tyranny of the majority. Public links were required to accommodate “players of all ages, of all occupations, of all conditions of servitude – players who come on foot, players who arrive by trolley, players who drive up in the plebian Elizabeth, and those who come in the extravagant closed cars. . . . In all the bedlam of players, there must be conflicts.” Another observer described the “involuntary fraternization” that occurred on many courses as the most “striking difference” between private and public courses.<sup>262</sup>

Park and public recreation personnel did their best to manage the traffic, particularly on weekends. In 1922, Pittsburgh's Schenley Golf Course began requiring golfers to register for

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<sup>261</sup> Lantz, “When You Play,” 33.

<sup>262</sup> *American Golfer*, 17 June 1927. Golfers intent on displaying their “aristocratic tendencies” did have an option, according to a *New York Times* feature on Van Cortlandt Park. “Besides the unfailing sign of elaborate costume,” such golfers could also hire caddies. “That at once carries the assumption that the player could join a golf club just as easily as not if he only wanted to.” *New York Times*, 21 May 1899.

starting times rather than just “drop ball.” Many also took to enumerating rules that under normal circumstances would have been enforced by golf clubs and their seated members. Permits issued by the Buhland Golf Course set forth a stringent set of rules and regulations aimed at curbing behavior that was becoming common there. The course, the only entirely free links in the country, dispensed with “proper attire” codes but did require all golfers to carry a putter, a golf bag and a minimum of two other golf clubs. The permit also reminded golfers not to drive from putting greens, or to set off down the back end of the course, or to drive the hole flag randomly in to the putting green. Perhaps most revealing, managers of the Buhland course reserved the right to ban players who purchased used golf balls – a perennial problem on public courses where the trade in stolen balls was vigorous, no doubt because the demand was so strong.<sup>263</sup>

Despite all of its associated administrative headaches, crowded courses were regarded by most public recreation officials as a good problem to have. If nothing else, they countered the popular belief that interest in the game appealed to the privileged few. “That golf is not a luxurious game for the leisure class is evidenced by the signboard . . . that says the golf shelter will be open at 4:30AM,” Charles Zueblin wrote of Chicago’s courses. The fact that golf was popular and played by young and old alike made it a legitimate and desirable addition to any planned, comprehensive public recreation program. One measure of this was the increased attention given to public course construction and management on the pages of parks and municipal governance journals. In 1921, *Playground* declared public golf to be *de rigueur* “among all progressive cities” and urged parks and recreations officials to aim for improved course design. Many who used such courses were beginners, but it could no longer be said that

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<sup>263</sup> *American Golfer*, 22 April 1922; 1937 Buhland Farm golf permit, Buhl Archives.

public courses were just a “pass through” for wealthy city residents who would ultimately wind up on private courses. “While it is true that some . . . will become members of the Country Club where better golf is possible . . . there are fifty others who, because of the expense of belonging to the Country Club must continue to get their recreation on the public course. They, too, should have a good golf course.”<sup>264</sup>

Municipal golf was also proving its financial worth. Although space and start-up costs were significantly more than those associated with other forms of public recreation, public courses also generated enough revenue – despite their comparatively modest fees – to offset the expense. According to the USGA, golf courses in the “larger cities” and almost all 18-hole operations were in the least self sustaining; most turned a profit. In many cities, publicly financed courses also doubled as urban reclamation projects. In Chicago, for instance, Robert Hunter noted that one golf course had sprouted in an area “formerly abandoned to ash heaps and tin cans”; Los Angeles built a public course on a dried up river bed. The trend was generally true in Pennsylvania as well; the only public course to go under before World War II was the Commonwealth’s first, the Harrisburg Public Golf Course. As late as 1931, the modest course in Harrisburg’s Reservoir Park reported a profit but by the late 1930s it was inexplicably out of business.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Public recreation officials debated this point endlessly. In an article titled “Golf for the Common Man,” a University of Iowa physical education professor urged that municipal courses be re-designed for the benefit of “less adept” golfers. Among other changes, he suggested that cups be enlarged to ten inches in diameter. Larger holes would make putting easier, and less frustrating, for beginning golfers; they would also reduce the cost of course maintenance since “greens will not need to be as smooth as they are now supposed to be.” He also proposed making uniform what was already a largely accepted practice in the design of public courses – the elimination or reduction of traps, rough, bunkers and other “expensive,” and to the novice golfer “unpleasant obstacles to his game.” E.F. Voltmer, “Golf for the Common Man” *Recreation* 32 (1938): 662-684.

<sup>265</sup> Hunter, *The Links*, vi.; *Report of Superintendent of Finance, City of Harrisburg* (1925) 9, Harrisburg City Archives; Municipal League of Harrisburg, *Planning for the Future of the Harrisburg Area: Report of the Regional Planning Commission* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1939), 102. The city’s only municipal golf course was self-supporting, but



Municipal golf was also becoming more politically popular. In 1920, *American Golfer* published a profile of Robert McKinlay, a Chicago politician from a “hard boiled precinct” who was campaigning for county commissioner on a “pro-golf platform.” Chicago already operated eight municipal links, but McKinlay believed the people demanded and deserved more. Political opponents were understandably skeptical. “Twenty years ago a man carrying golf clubs through a back street in Chicago could have been arrested for attempted suicide. Golf was looked down upon as a lah-de-dah sort of game, fit only for softies among the idle rich.” Not so any more. During the course of his campaign, McKinlay – a “regular Mr. Common People of the links” according to *American Golfer* – received standing ovations at public meetings and kudos from fellow politicians who urged his reelection “for the sake of the thousands of citizens who play golf but cannot afford membership in private clubs.” *American Golfer* believed McKinlay’s subsequent success to be apocryphal:

This, then, is the story of what has happened in one city. With a game which but a few years ago was generally considered nothing more than a more or less ludicrous pastime for infirmed gentlemen rather fortunately bestowed with the world’s goods. Chicago has taken the lead but others will most surely follow. It is only a question of time.”<sup>266</sup>

Municipal golf was also being taken more seriously by the golfing world. Prominent golf architects such as Donald Ross and A.W. Tillinghast used their professional clout to advocate for improved design standards and at least a few did pro bono work on the movement’s behalf. When Philadelphia park officials asked Hugh Wilson to layout the first 18-hole golf course at Fairmount Park in 1916, he donated his services to the cause. Wilson was an

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by 1939, it had been abandoned “for various reasons.” By then, Harrisburg had ten golf courses in operation. Only one of those courses, a semi-public links just north of the city, was open to the general public.

<sup>266</sup> George P. Stone, “One Up on Demos: How Chicago is Bringing Golf Within Reach of Masses” *American Golfer*, 6 May 1932.

established golf architect who just years before had designed the prestigious 18-hole championship course at the ultra exclusive Merion Cricket Club. Wilson viewed designing the Fairmount course as his “civic responsibility.” Where professional golf architects often parted company was on principles and techniques of municipal course design. Some argued that municipal courses should be laid out for ease of play, access and safety. Other believed they should offer the same “thrill” and challenge as the best private courses.<sup>267</sup>

The second wave of municipal golf course construction that swept the country beginning in the mid-1920s reflected many of these new approaches. Municipal courses already enjoyed steady growth during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Between 1910 and 1920, the number of municipal golf courses “nearly trebled,” according to the USGA. By the mid-1920s, public course construction was on a tear; in 1927, there were 200 courses nationwide, up from 90 in 1920. “The list, no doubt, is incomplete,” the USGA noted, “as hardly a week passes without an announcement of an additional course being planned or constructed.” The next four-year period proved to be the most prolific yet. By 1931, the number of municipal courses had increased to 543.<sup>268</sup>

Pennsylvania joined the trend as well. During that same four-year period, new courses opened or began construction in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Lancaster and New Castle. In at least two of these cases, the new links were sponsored by county governments and regional park systems. Even the state got into the act. In the mid-1920s, Caledonia State Park, a 1200-acre

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<sup>267</sup> Finnegan, *Golf in Philadelphia*, 81; Voltmer, “Golf for the Common Man,” 663. Public recreation official preferred that public courses that could be played quickly and easily, both so as not to frustrate novices and to accommodate more golfers. Others, especially professional golfers and course architects, urged municipalities not to patronize the public golfer with dull, un-inspiring courses.

<sup>268</sup> Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 70-71; USGA, *Municipal Golf Courses*, 3; *New York Times*, 5 February 1933. Although almost half of all municipal golf courses were in the Midwest, Pennsylvania was identified along with New York as an important state for public course construction.

park in Adams and Franklin counties, absorbed a former hotel golf course that was located adjacent to park property. Although generally not in the business of golf courses, state park officials viewed the links as a useful enhancement. “It would be difficult to find a golf course more picturesquely situated,” officials noted. “Hardly has the golfer made a drive than he has passed from the sight of the road and all that reminds one of civilization, and is apparently deep in the heart of the forest.” During the 1930s, the course was expanded to 18 holes and made accessible by trolley from Chambersburg. The only other state-owned links was a nine-hole course at nearby South Mountain Sanitarium, maintained by the state Department of Health as “therapy” for mental patients committed there.<sup>269</sup>

The new many courses being constructed across the country were often larger and more professionally designed than their forbears. Whereas most first-generation courses were built as nine holes, most courses from the mid-1920s on were built as 18-holes. And whereas most first-generation courses were invariably built within city limits and within existing landscaped parks, second-generation courses tended to be built outside city limits and as central components within active recreation parks. Lancaster’s second golf course, for instance, was constructed just outside the city’s southern boundary in Williamson Park, and was eventually taken over by the county. But by far the most important difference between first and second generation courses was the target audience. Whereas the first municipal courses were often either implicitly or

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<sup>269</sup> USGA, *Municipal Golf Courses*, 27; Phone conversation with Duane Smith, Caledonia State Park, 3 July 1997; *Chambersburg Public Opinion*, 28 April 2004. The South Mountain Golf Course originally opened in 1921 as a three-hole course on the grounds of the state-owned South Mountain Sanatorium near Chambersburg. The course was expanded to nine holes in 1931 and continued to be operated by the state as part of the mental health facility until 1964. In 1967, the course was leased to a private operator, who added an additional nine holes and re-opened the links as a daily-fee course.

explicitly intended for the benefit of social elites or influential middle-class constituents, post-1920 courses were promoted, without irony, as “people’s country clubs.”<sup>270</sup>

In Pennsylvania, the most ambitious plan for new courses appeared in Allegheny County. By the late 1920s, few other areas of the state exhibited a more pressing need. Despite continued population growth – between 1900 and 1930, Allegheny County grew from 775,000 to just under 1.5 million – just one public course served residents’ needs. The Schenley Park Golf Course was well maintained, but it simply could no longer handle the increased traffic on the fairways, especially after World War I. During the 1910s Pittsburgh had made a few fainthearted attempts to site a second municipal course, but by the 1920s the city proper had effectively run out of open space. The only solution was to move beyond city boundaries and rely on the county to help meet the Pittsburgh district’s requirements for outdoor recreation. Even at the county level, open land was becoming increasingly expensive and scarce. Joseph Trees, a prominent Pittsburgher and park supporter, summed it up bluntly: “The city can do comparatively little toward the furnishing of ample recreational facilities for its people when it has grown to great size. It seems clear, therefore, that new parks hereafter must be provided chiefly by county and state governments.”<sup>271</sup>

At the time, Allegheny County seemed ill-equipped for the challenge. County government was run by three commissioners and substantially lagged behind the city in terms of the breadth and depth of its services. As late as 1928, for instance, the county had no parks or

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<sup>270</sup> Baker, “Comprehensive Municipal Plan,” 166-167.

<sup>271</sup> Joseph C. Trees, “Parks for the Millions” *University Record* (Pittsburgh) 11 (1928): 164-167. In 1922, Pittsburgh city council passed a resolution ordering the director of public works to survey all city parks and “other large plots owned by the city” for “the possibility of laying out an additional golf course.” The Schenley course “is extremely popular with the public” and as a result was overcrowded. But the city apparently concluded that it did not have sufficient space. See *Municipal Record: Minutes of the Proceedings of City Council of the City of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1922), 485-486.

recreation program. But beginning in the mid-1920s, Commissioner Edward V. Babcock became convinced that it was in the county's best interest to begin building parks to meet the demand, and to set aside land while it was still available and relatively affordable. Babcock did not wait for his fellow commissioners' approval; instead, he used his own money to purchase large plots of land in northern and southern portions of the county. By 1927, he had managed to assemble a combined total of over 3,000 acres, which he subsequently turned over to the county at cost. In 1928, a rival candidate running for one of the vacant commissioner seats accused Babcock of foisting undeveloped land on county taxpayers for his own personal enrichment. But by the time the new commissioner came on board, Babcock's park plan was already in the works and on its way to completion.<sup>272</sup>

For Babcock the realtor, the key was location, location and location. From the outset, he and other county officials strove to site the parks in such a way that they balanced proximity to present (and anticipated) population densities with the optimum natural setting. South Park's 1500 acres, only 90 of which were wooded, were intended to be within easy reach of the region's steel making Mon Valley. Bethel and Snowden townships were still rural, but the location was only "six miles from Bridgeville, Dormont, Glassport or Clairton; eight miles from Carnegie, the teeming South Side and Homestead; only seven miles from McKeesport." Moreover, "a perfect network of roads from all these industrial and commercial districts with their large population converge at the gateway of this new playground." The location chosen for North Park was

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<sup>272</sup> R. Jay Gangewere, "Allegheny County Parks," *Carnegie Magazine* June/July 1986, 12-14. Pittsburgh was hardly a model of urban planning, but county government was by comparison even more in arrears. According to Roy Lubove, a planning commission existed on paper in Allegheny County during the 1920s, but it was little more than a "board of review" within the county's public works department. Even when it came to core functions, the county appeared woefully behind the times. As late as 1924, for instance, Allegheny County had no general highway plan. Roy Lubove, *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business and Environmental Change* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969), 92-93.

presently more remote and as a result, more unspoiled. “Here is found more timber than in South Park, an unpolluted and ample water supply and rugged picturesque topography.” But Trees and Babcock were convinced that North Park was located “in the line of clearly marked population trends.” In any event, within time “the built up Pittsburgh district will not only have reached the North and the South Parks but will have enveloped them.” One needed to only “look back a few years to remember the day when Schenley Park was out in the country.”<sup>273</sup>

Much as Schenley had functioned as a “breathing space” within the city, North and South Parks were intended as oases of nature in an increasingly industrialized county. But whereas Schenley had been designed as a nature park, the county’s two-park system was from the outset envisioned and promoted as year-round, all-age “playgrounds” for the entire district. In April 1928, Babcock formed the county’s Department of Parks to direct and support subsequent park programming. The commissioner took to calling the developing parks “the people’s country clubs,” implicitly offering the same amenities to the general public traditionally enjoyed by the region’s patrician class through their network of private social clubs. “The parks belong to the people and are for their enjoyment,” the county parks director wrote in 1930, “. . . that ample opportunity be given to them to make full use thereof.” Babcock did not cut corners. In an effort to design the park to the highest standards, the county commissioned Paul Riss, a well respected landscaped architect who had worked on Yellowstone and several other national parks. In 1927, Riss was retained as parks director at the sum of \$7,500 a year.<sup>274</sup>

Under Riss’s direction, the county parks’ department embarked on an ambitious plan to create a constellation of both natural and man-made attractions. Each park would be criss-

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<sup>273</sup> Trees, “Parks for the Millions,” 164-165.

<sup>274</sup> Gangewere, “Allegheny County Parks,” 13; *Controller’s 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Fiscal Affairs of Allegheny County* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: 1930), 527-529. (Hereafter cited as *Allegheny County Annual Report* with publication date cited in brackets)

crossed with bridle paths and supplied with ample picnic groves, but work crews also built dance pavilions, horseshoe courts, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, and swimming pools. In December, 1928, the county announced plans for two championship quality, 18-hole golf courses, one for each park. Riss predicted the courses would be “championship caliber in every respect, of regulation distance and [with] every modern idea with respect to golf course construction.” To achieve that end, Riss employed a mix of sensitive natural landscaping and modern construction techniques. At the South Park course, “tons of rock” were blasted away to create “proper settings” for the greens and over 3,000 yards of soil were moved, and driveways were designed to encircle but not cross the course. At the same time, Riss was careful to grade the areas around fairways and greens “in harmony” with the surrounding landscape to create “a feeling of sincerity and unity.”<sup>275</sup>

The onset of the Depression and near drought conditions in 1930 combined to slow what had been expected to be a quick completion. By 1931, though, Riss’s crews were back at work and readied both courses for a spring opening. With characteristic modesty, Riss pronounced that his “eighteen years personal experience” in public course management had made them an all-around success. In design, both links achieved an unusual balance between accessibility and complexity. Each course was laid out in such a way that it could be played quickly and thus “accommodate a maximum of players every day.” At the same time, Riss believed the courses would also “furnish a thrill to the eighty five percent of public linkers who will ever shoot over a hundred for the eighteen holes.” (Riss noted with pride that par had not been broken at either course by Carl Kauffman, the so-called “Sphinx of the Links” and reigning champion at

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<sup>275</sup> 1931 *Allegheny County Annual Report* [1932], 531, 539.

Schenley.) Riss pointed to the 720 golfers who filed through the course on a typical day in May as “a concrete example of the course’s ability to absorb maximum crowds.”<sup>276</sup>

The South Park Golf Course officially opened to the public on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1931. Among the invited guests were local politicians, prominent amateurs such as Harmar Denny and professionals from local country clubs, including Oakmont. (Owing to water access problems, North Park’s course opening was delayed, with the front nine opening in June and the back nine in early fall.) Joseph G. Armstrong, former Pittsburgh mayor and presently county commission chair, presided over the dedication. The choice of Armstrong was appropriate. Nearly 20 years earlier, while serving as director of public works for the city, Armstrong had been among the public officials who formally opened Schenley Park to the people of Pittsburgh under then-mayor William Magee. This time, according to Armstrong, there was no ambiguity about who would be served by the new public course. While the commissioner admitted he still knew “nothing about golf,” he knew enough about county voters to reject “free playing privileges” for politicians.<sup>277</sup>

Perhaps because of its more urban location, South Park’s attendance figures during its inaugural season were particularly impressive. By the time the course closed for the season on December 1, the South Park links had attracted 53,000 golfers and \$22,000 in greens fees, in addition to the revenue generated from the sale of permits. The heavy clay soil had become so impacted from the steady foot traffic at both courses that the parks department was forced to reseed and bring in another thousand yards of top soil. Park officials also found it necessary to redesign certain holes where congestion had occurred, such as a water hazard in No. 7 hole at

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<sup>276</sup> *1931 Allegheny County Annual Report* [1932], 593.

<sup>277</sup> *Pittsburgh Sun Telegraph*, 15 May 1931; *Pittsburgh Press*, 15 May 1931. Armstrong served as mayor (1914-1918) and later as county commissioner (1924-1931).



South Park. As with nearly every adjustment, the county was guided by the principle of increased accessibility for more and more golfers; “this change will make it possible to admit more players per day to the course.”<sup>278</sup>

The issue of accessibility extended beyond the mechanics of course architecture. From the outset, the club system which obtained at many early municipal courses was banned. Instead, golfing was open to all on a first-come, first-served basis. Players had the option of buying season permits or paying for their golf on a per-round basis. In an effort to promote collegiality among the disparate lot of public golfers, both North and South Park courses began holding tournaments for both men and women. During the mid-1930s, county commissioners also launched a “Learn to Play Golf” program. Initially, the free lessons were limited to a few weekends in June, but the program proved so popular that in 1939 it was extended over the winter months and expanded to include group lessons for “junior boys and girls.” During the summer months, the county offered reduced fares on public buses and streetcars for park-bound patrons traveling from Pittsburgh and Clairton. Park officials also expanded the parking lots several times to accommodate golfers arriving in private automobiles.<sup>279</sup>

The county courses were also winning fans among the golfing establishment. At the inauguration of the South Park links, club professionals from Oakmont were invited to pass judgment. With perhaps only some exaggeration, the assembled guests declared it to be on par with some of the best private courses in the country. More reliably, the editors of *American Golfer* in 1933 judged South Park to be the best public course in the country. The following

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<sup>278</sup> 1931 *Allegheny County Annual Report* [1932], 612. As the decade wore on, the South Park course continued to receive more traffic than the North Park course. In 1943, for instance, South Park registered four times as many rounds of golf as North Park. 1943 *Allegheny County Annual Report* [1944], 344.

<sup>279</sup> 1939 *Allegheny County Annual Report* [1940], 366. Clairton was located just south of Pittsburgh in the steel making Monongahela Valley.

year, in only its fourth full season of operation, South Park was selected by the USGA to host the finals of the national public links championship. The event brought even more national exposure and accolade to what many were calling the finest public links course in the country.<sup>280</sup>

### 3.5 Golf's New Deal: The Great Depression, the WPA and Municipal Golf

For a time, it appeared that the critical acclaim would be for naught. After strong opening seasons in 1931 and 1932, both of Allegheny County's courses suffered sharp drops in receipts in 1933. Public golf courses were not the only venue facing hard times; compared with private courses, which essentially ground to a halt during the Depression, they were doing fairly well. In Allegheny County, though, park officials were concerned that even the modest fees charged at the courses were beyond the means of most county residents, and for a brief time considered lowering greens fees. But in 1935, both county-owned courses experienced an unexpected rebound in patronage and revenue that continued for the next five years. Park officials attributed the turnaround in part to the "excellent condition" they were able to maintain on the courses.<sup>281</sup>

The Depression-era experience at North and South Parks was not unique. Across the state, and the country, municipal golf managed not only to weather the storm; at times, it actually seemed to thrive under the adverse economic conditions. One curious fact made apparent by the

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<sup>280</sup> *Pittsburgh Press*, 15 May 1931; *1933 Allegheny County Annual Report* [1934], 562-563 ; *1934 Allegheny County Annual Report* [1935], 416-417. Not everyone was impressed. In his 1937 social survey of Pittsburgh, Phillip Klein registered skepticism about the value of municipal golf (and tennis) in meeting the recreational needs of the region's "lowest economic group . . . probably ¾ of the population." Klein advocated support for programs that were free and which did "not require substantial investment in paraphernalia. Public parks and playgrounds are important for [the poor] . . . public tennis and golf courses are less important." Klein, *Social Study of Pittsburgh*, 842.

<sup>281</sup> Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 73; *1933 Allegheny County Annual Report* [1934], 562; *1935 Allegheny County Annual Report*[1936], 452; *1937 Allegheny County Annual Report* [1938], 480.

Depression was the continued public appetite for golf, even in the face of fiscal crisis. In 1930, the USGA reported that municipal course construction since October, 1929, was actually on the increase. The reasons were not entirely clear, but certainly one effect of the Great Depression was a dramatic drop in the number of private courses under development. In an interesting inversion, municipal course construction for the first time outpaced private course construction.<sup>282</sup>

Another salient development during this period was the growth of courses built by private individuals or corporations but open to the general public on a fee basis. (They would eventually become known as “daily fee” courses.) Prior to the mid-1920s, such courses were virtually unknown. In fact, there were so few privately owned, commercial courses that the USGA did not keep statistics on them. But by the end of the 1920s, golf officials were seeing a dramatic rise in this type of course. Based on data supplied by the USGA and other sources, Jesse Steiner estimated that by 1930 there were close to 700 semi-public courses in operation across the country. Most of these had been built since 1927. Because of the USGA’s inconsistent classification system in its annual golf guides, it is difficult to determine the precise number in operation in Pennsylvania before 1940. In 1930, for instance, there were anywhere between six and 16 semi-public links among the Commonwealth’s 186-course complement that year.<sup>283</sup>

Semi-public courses represented an interesting hybrid of private and public forms. Since they did not require memberships, they offered the openness of public courses without the

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<sup>282</sup> Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 70-74.

<sup>283</sup> Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 71; *1931 AAGG*, 349-368. By 1931, only six of Pennsylvania’s 186 courses were explicitly identified as “public courses” (as distinct from municipal and private courses). But part of the problem was definition. Until 1940, the USGA did not clearly distinguish between traditional private courses with private memberships, and privately owned courses opened to public play. To wit: 16 of the 30 courses designated in 1940 as “semi public” had been in operation before 1930. This suggests that they may in fact have been operating as semi-public courses even by that point; they were simply not identified as such.

overcrowding. (Most were built on the outskirts of town or in the less congested suburban fringe.) At the same time, they were less expensive than private courses, which required membership and prohibitively high initiation fees. But for many blue-collar workers and lower middle-class types before World War II, semi-public courses were still either too expensive or too inaccessible when compared to many courses. The Baederwood Golf Course, which opened in 1928 in suburban Philadelphia, was conveniently located along a publicly accessible trolley line, but it charged \$3 per round of golf, a fee comparable to those levied by exclusive private courses. It was also twelve miles from the city. Conversely, the Overlook Golf Course in Lancaster, which opened the same year, charged half as much and was only three miles from the city center, but it could only be reached by auto.<sup>284</sup>

Another drawback to semi-public courses was their vulnerability to market forces. When times were good, they prospered. But when times were bad they were unable to fall back on the collective wealth of a well-heeled membership, and unlike municipal courses, they could not count on increased appropriations from the city's general operating fund (or, during the 1930s, an infusion of federal New Deal dollars). This situation likely accounts for their relatively slow growth during the 1930s. Between 1930 and 1940, Pennsylvania added just nine new semi-private courses. (Compare this to the 80-odd private courses built within the state during the previous decade.) During the depths of the Depression, semi-public course construction came to a near standstill. Only three semi-publics opened after 1931 and at least one of these was a private course that had been forced to go public.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> *1931 AAGG*, 349-368.

<sup>285</sup> *Directory of Golf Clubs in the U.S* (USGA, 1940), 100-104.

Private courses with private memberships were forced into a holding pattern. The oldest and most prestigious clubs, such as Oakmont and the Stanton Heights Golf Club in Pittsburgh, and most of the Main Line clubs outside Philadelphia, were buoyed by considerable amounts of private and collective wealth. But more recently established clubs with fewer resources and less solvent memberships were frequently required to reduce operations or in some cases take emergency measures to avoid bankruptcy. In some ways, they were in an even more vulnerable position than semi-publics, precisely because they had taken on so much debt to provide amenities. An impressive number of private courses did in fact survive, but many were forced to lower membership requirements, reduce initiation fees and annual dues, and cut back on operations. Club houses were often the first to be shuttered, followed by other peripheral amenities.

Philadelphia managed to keep most of its clubs in business, but even some of the most exclusive were forced to adopt austerity measures to do so. The Merion Cricket Club, one of the city's first and most prestigious, saw its membership fall by half between 1930 and 1938. In an effort to stem the losses, the club decided in 1933 to drop initiation fees. Individual members played nine holes instead of the customary 18 in hopes of saving money on greens and caddy fees. By the late 1930s, the Merion's \$500,000 mortgage was in default and the club was operating with an \$8,000 deficit. In a last ditch effort to avoid foreclosure, members agreed to split the Merion into two separate entities. The golfing membership reincorporated in 1942 as the Merion Golf Course. After considerable belt tightening, the new organization scheme worked and the club pulled through.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> *Directory of Golf Clubs*, 101.; "Merion Golf Club" Golf Association of Philadelphia, <http://www.gapgolf.org/clubs.asp?cid=73>

Municipal courses frequently benefited from these same circumstances, and found themselves absorbing refugees from private clubs. But in the long run, the major unintended consequence which accrued to the benefit of municipal courses was the federal investment which followed in the Depression's wake. Robert Moses, the architect of New York City's vast civic infrastructure, was one of the first to recognize the potential of public parks and municipal golf courses as work sites for public jobs programs. Moses reasoned that since golf courses often occupied a disproportionate amount of space in public parks, they warranted proportional amounts of upkeep. He also recognized that the single largest expense for new and existing golf courses was the manual labor needed for maintaining the sprawling acreage.<sup>287</sup>

Municipal golf also stood to benefit from the New Deal's ideological commitment to public recreation. Although no single government agency was charged with advancing such programs, public recreation received a proportionately large share of several New Deal agencies, especially the Works Progress Administration (WPA). As one WPA report put it, the mere size of the program – and the myriad public parks, tennis courts, ball fields, and swimming pools built as a result of WPA labor – proved that “officials recognize the growing problem of leisure time in America.” WPA officials for their part were well aware of the potential impact. “The general public . . . is being given many recreation opportunities which hitherto have been largely beyond the realm of the average citizen.” One writer conjectured that the work of the WPA and

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<sup>287</sup> *New York Times*, 27 January 1931. Golf enjoyed a boom year in 1930, even as private clubs retrenched. The *Times* reported with mild amazement that the game continued to flourish while attendance at most other sports, including football, basketball, and “intercollegiate sport generally” dropped. In the nation's larger cities, much of the increase in municipal golf was being fueled by “gentleman golfers” who were “forced by the exigencies of the business situation to play their golf on a pay-as-you-play plan.”

other related New Deal programs advanced the recreation movement by nearly a quarter century.<sup>288</sup>

In 1936, the WPA announced its intention to build or rehabilitate up to 600 golf courses, mainly in the interest of creating jobs per Moses' logic. Advocates of public golf were quick to seize the opportunity. Bobby Jones publicly volunteered his expertise to chief administrator Harry Hopkins. In 1930, Jones advanced to the top of the professional golf world when he became the only golfer in history to win four major championships in a single year. Since then, Jones used his celebrity to agitate on behalf of public golf. He believed that the infusion of federal funds could be more than just a make-work program. It could also be the ticket to improving the game's visibility and accessibility among ordinary Americans. His one concern was that the WPA might be persuaded to make the courses less challenging, design wise, in a misguided effort to make the game less frustrating for beginners. He was partially reassured when the government announced that it would be consulting with A.W. Tillinghast, a prominent and well respected golf architect, on location and design.<sup>289</sup>

By the end of 1936, the federal government had spent close to \$10.5 million on 368 courses. "Golf under WPA has the same significance as highways, bridge dams and reclamation. . . ." one observer noted with satisfaction. Unfortunately, because of the manner in which the WPA tracked its own projects, it is nearly impossible to determine where such courses were being built. In 1936, Pennsylvania's WPA reported that it completed one course and had started work on two more, but it seems likely these were underestimates, since golf course projects were often tucked under the broader category of "public parks and facilities for recreation." It was

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<sup>288</sup> Works Progress Administration (WPA), *Inventory, An Appraisal of the Results of the WPA* (Washington, D.C.: Works Progress Administration, 1938), 20; Max Kaplan, *Leisure in America: A Social Inquiry* (New York: Wiley, 1960), 142.

<sup>289</sup> "Jones Pays Visit to WPA Courses," *New York Times*, 1 May 1936; Claytor, "Municipal Golf Courses," 70.

also difficult to distinguish which agency was responsible for what course or set of courses. In a summary report filed in 1938, the WPA announced that it had constructed 123 courses nationally between 1933 and 1938 and improved or enlarged another 186. Roughly half of these were 18-hole courses; a “number of others,” according to the report were “extensions of existing 9-holes.” But the report noted that this referred only to WPA projects. If one included those courses constructed or improved through such ancillary agencies as the Civilian Works Administration (CWA) and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the federal government had built or rehabilitated “nearly 850 courses.”<sup>290</sup>

Public golf courses that were situated in large, suburban parks were often the most likely to benefit from the federal government’s largesse. In 1933, Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) camps were established in both of Allegheny County’s regional parks. Although crews spent most of their time on general improvements such as road building and mass plantings, in taking on routine park maintenance projects they helped free up park staff to tend to the new courses. The parks also availed themselves of other New Deal funding. In 1933, county officials used a CWA (Civil Works Administration) grant to build a dam to provide water for the perennially drought stricken North Park course. In 1936, the county parks superintendent directed WPA work crews to help with capital improvements to both golf courses. By the end of the 1938 season, the county had dedicated a new golf clubhouse in North Park, and had started

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<sup>290</sup> WPA, *Accomplishments of the Works Progress Administration in Pennsylvania, July 1, 1935 - June 30, 1936*. (Harrisburg, Pa.: 1936), 8; WPA, *Results of the WPA*, 19. According to this latter report, public parks and recreation facilities accounted for more than 11% of all WPA projects. Unfortunately, the WPA did not report data on golf course construction or improvements by state.



construction on a new nine-hole course (with clubhouse) in South Park. Park superintendent Riss described the contributions made by federal work crews as “immeasurable.”<sup>291</sup>

It was less typical for the WPA to build entirely new, stand-alone public courses, but in Johnstown, local officials were able to steer WPA project funds to create the city’s first and only municipal golf course. At the time, the mid-sized steel city was home to several courses, all of which were private. In 1938, WPA officials approved plans to build a nine-hole public golf course on land adjacent to Roxbury Park, a large recreation park in the city’s southwestern corner. During the mid-1930s, Roxbury Park had been the beneficiary of a number of internal improvements accomplished through the CCCC. With Corp manpower, Roxbury added tennis courts, playgrounds and a large community band shell to its existing attractions. Although the golf course would ultimately be constructed under the direction of the WPA, it was likely regarded as a continuation of general improvements initiated by the CCC. James Harrison, a Pittsburgh-based golf architect and protégé of Donald Ross, was commissioned to design the course. The Johnstown Municipal Golf Course was small by most standards. It featured nine holes laid out on just 130 acres. But use patterns indicated it was an immediate success, particularly among underemployed steelworkers.<sup>292</sup>

The Depression and WPA did more than just increase the state’s complement of public courses. Because of the unique circumstances under which they were created, Depression-era

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<sup>291</sup> 1933 *Allegheny County Annual Report* [1934], 565-566; 1934 *Allegheny County Annual Report* [1935], 416; 1936 *Allegheny County Annual Report* [1937], 475.

<sup>292</sup> Curtis Miner, *Forging a New Deal: Johnstown and the Great Depression 1929-1941* (Johnstown, Pa.: Johnstown Area Heritage Association, 1993), 39-40. The most prestigious course in town was the Sunnehanna Country Club, a private club located in an affluent hilltop residential neighborhood and built with Bethlehem Steel money. As was true of most courses with corporate ties, membership at Sunnehanna Country Club was restricted to management. In theory, steelworkers and non-management could play as invited guests. In practice, the only time steelworkers walked the private course were as caddies. Research files, Westmont Centennial Project, Johnstown Area Heritage Assn, 1991.

courses introduced the game to an entirely new demographic. It would be impossible to calculate how many local unemployed were involved in the actual construction of such courses, but for those who were, the sheer act of building the course offered an invaluable introduction to the mechanics of the game. In Johnstown, for instance, many of those who helped build the city's first municipal course were unemployed steelworkers. Not surprisingly many of these men became course regulars after the links officially opened to the public. Another unintended benefit of the Depression was the surfeit of leisure time it made available to hundreds of thousands of idled factory hands. Golf courses had always depended on the labor of work crews, often immigrant; but the Depression for the first time offered these same workers a sufficient block of time which could be spent enjoying the courses they helped to build.

The changes set in motion by the Great Depression also helped provide direction and leadership for local recreation departments previously lukewarm to publicly financed golf facilities. In 1937, *American Golfdom* recounted the turnaround that had occurred in Cincinnati. Before the WPA came to town, the city's recreation commission had done little to promote the game, or to counter popular perceptions that golf was nothing more than a rich man's pastime. "The average [Cincinnatian] who worships work and whose social traditions necessitate work as the very taproot of his life, has maintained a deep antagonism toward the game of golf." But by the mid-1930s, new attitudes had "largely swept away the old antagonism." In 1935, after the WPA completed the first of two municipal 18-hole courses, the local rec department responded in kind. Greens fees were lowered; group lessons (such as those at North and South Park) were instituted; and attendance and revenue rose accordingly. By 1938, Cincinnati officials were predicting that golf would surpass baseball and softball as that city's most popular participant sport, and not just for the aspiring middle class. For workers "harnessed to the machine during

working hours, and going to sleep physically and mentally at the ‘movies,’” the game of golf had become indispensable therapy.<sup>293</sup>

By the end of the decade, most observers agreed that golf had reached a level of accessibility and popularity that would have been unimaginable forty years before. In a 1939 photo essay titled “Everybody's Game,” the normally conservative *Golf Magazine* paid tribute to the municipal golf movement and its contribution to the game’s refurbished reputation. One photograph, showing a man and woman lugging golf clubs out of a subway station, was captioned “A nickel gets you to the course in a hurry.” It was arranged next to another photograph of a registration booth with a sign announcing “Daily Play 75 cents” and captioned “Then you fork out six bits more for a day's play.” The point of the paired images was that municipal golf was both affordable and accessible. Another set of images was intended to underscore its inherent social diversity. Two photographs from an unidentified public course were captioned thusly: “A Chinese player painstakingly practices the art of putting, while a young Italian girl smiles toothily as her ball sails down the fairway.”<sup>294</sup>

### **3.6 Blue-Collar Titlists: The Amateur Public Links Golf Championship, 1922-1939**

Public recreation officials were not the only converts. The sport’s official governing body, the United States Golf Association (USGA), had also come around to the value of municipal golf. In February 1921, incoming association president J. Frederic Byers created a new committee within the USGA for the sole purpose of tending to public links and appointed board members Robert

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<sup>293</sup> Tam Deering, “Municipal Golf Makes ‘Hole in One,’” *Recreation* 32 (1938): 286-288+.

<sup>294</sup> Walt Sander, “Everybody’s Game,” *Golf Magazine*, August 1939, 22-25.

Standish and Robert McKinlay to head the new section. Along with promoting golf on public and municipal courses, Byers declared the function of the new Public Links section would be to “render any possible assistance to municipalities interested in the great army of persons playing on these courses.”<sup>295</sup>

Neither Standish nor McKinlay conformed to the typical golf executive profile. McKinlay was an elected Cook County commissioner, a position which helped him to stand out from the bank presidents and manufacturers that dominated the USGA board. He was also the father of Chicago’s impressive network of municipal golf courses and currently head of its Forest Preserve Public Golf Links. On the surface, Standish seemed more typical. A life-long club member from Detroit, Standish hailed from a prominent Michigan lumbering family and had been an active USGA executive for years. But Standish had witnessed the popularity of golf among Michigan autoworkers and became a true believer in the power of municipal golf to help soften social distinctions. Byers’ politics were more difficult to discern. A Pittsburgh native, Byers served as president of the A.M. Byers Company, an iron manufacturer founded by his family in 1903, and sat on the board of directors of Mellon Bank. But perhaps like Standish, Byers intuited the value of public golf for bridging the chasm between labor and management.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> *New York Times*, 15 January 1922; 18 February 1922. A.M. Byers had long been considered one of the more progressive steel companies. It’s difficult to determine how much Byers’s experience in labor relations influenced his commitment to spreading the gospel of public golf.

<sup>296</sup> Stone, “One Up on Demos”; Amy Miller, “The Legacy of the Standish Cup Continues . . .” *Program*, 77<sup>th</sup> U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship (Orchards Golf Club, 1999), 16-17; Harvey O’Connor, *Mellon’s Millions: The Biography of a Fortune; the Life and Times of Andrew W. Mellon* (New York: The John Day Company, 1933), 15. As part of Henry Ford’s extensive corporate welfare program, autoworkers could avail themselves of one of many golf clubs built by both municipalities and private entrepreneurs. According to a *New York Times* editorial published a decade later, Ford’s approach to employee welfare was one reason why Detroit autoworkers did not experience the “entrenched class consciousness” that marked Pittsburgh steelworkers. “Detroit – Our Laboratory of Social Change” *New York Times*, 14 November 1937.

At the time, it wasn't entirely clear what form that assistance would take. Part of the committee's work involved disseminating information about municipal golf to city recreation programs. At the USGA's 1924 annual meeting, for instance, Chairman Standish reported that the Public Links committee had been in contact with 22 different cities which had expressed interest in starting public golf programs. Given such interest, Standish predicted that "the time was not far off when every city of consequence would have golf courses for those of its residents who are unable to afford to belong to private clubs." But the main work of the Public Links section involved the promotion of a national tournament exclusively for public course players.<sup>297</sup>

The idea of sponsoring a national competition specifically for many links golfers was no small commitment. For thirty years, the USGA contented itself with two national tournaments: the U.S. Amateur, begun in 1892, and the U.S. Open, established the following year.<sup>298</sup> In order to compete in the U.S. Amateur, one had to be able to prove membership in a USGA approved course. The U.S. Open was only in fact open to club affiliated amateurs and teaching professionals. Golfers who were not club affiliated – an indeterminate figure which the *New York Times* and USGA estimated to be about 100,000 in 1922 – were excluded from tournament play. Even had those rules not obtained, match play at the national level was expensive; in addition to club dues, players often were required to pay steep entrance fees. But national

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<sup>297</sup> *New York Times*, January 6, 1924.

<sup>298</sup> The U.S. Women's Amateur, which was begun in 1895, could have been interpreted as a third national tournament, but it was generally considered a sub-tournament within the U.S. Amateur and therefore not an entirely distinct event.

tournaments also taxed the USGA, which had always been selective about the types of organized competitions to which it would or could lend its name and financial resources.<sup>299</sup>

There seems to have been little audible opposition to creating a national tournament for public links players. Standish formally presented the idea to the USGA board in February, 1922 and offered to donate the perpetual trophy. The Public Links section selected the Ottawa Park Course in Toledo, Ohio, as site of the first national tournament, to be known as the U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship (APLC). In order to encourage the broadest possible participation, Standish proposed that the USGA subsidize the Public Links entry fees, making it the first and only national golf tournament to do so. Players competed as both individuals and in team play, consisting of four players from a nominating city. There were no limits on the number of individuals, but golfers had to shoot below a designated score to qualify for match play. Only the 32 lowest qualifiers competed in the APLC's four-round tournament. In 1934, match play expanded to 64 slots.<sup>300</sup>

The first few years of the APLC experienced mixed results. Not many public links players knew about the tournament, nor did they necessarily have the time or the resources to participate. When the first National championship was held in 1922, only 140 players registered; half of the entrants came without proper golf shoes and knowledge of the game's rules. But the tournament steadily gained legitimacy and numbers. During the second year, President Warren Harding, an avid golfer in his own right and honorary member of the USGA executive committee, donated a trophy for the team competition. Over the course of the decade, the

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<sup>299</sup> "How and Why of First Public Links Championship" *1940 Public Links Tournament Program*, Szwedko Collection; *New York Times*, 22 May 1922.

<sup>300</sup> James D. Standish, "Furthering Public Golf," *Bulletin of the Greens Section of the USGA* 3/9 (February 23, 1923): 26-27; John P. English, "How the Public Links Event Developed," *USGA Journal and Turf Management* (July 1953): 16. The tournament was also referred to as the National Public Links championship, and further abbreviated by the press as the "Pub Links."

number of entrants held steady and by the end of the 1920s was beginning to enjoy a small increase. The onset of the Great Depression seemed to have a positive effect on tournament registration. After averaging about 150 entrants per year through the late 1920s, the number of entrants in 1932 jumped to 214 and averaged in the low to mid 200s until 1939. Idled hands and unemployment were good for public golf.<sup>301</sup>

The golf establishment seemed to agree that public links or “free links” was golf at its “most democratic.” Commenting on the 1924 tournament, the normally staid USGA offered its begrudging respect for that year’s champion, Joe Coble, whom it described as having added “a rather human interest touch” in defeating Henry Decker of Kansas City in the final round. Coble was “a waiter by profession . . . . Here was a man taking his golf under great disadvantages and yet displaying a masterfulness on the links that was remarkable.” The tournament’s modest registration fees required the USGA to contribute “thousands,” which it was “delighted” to spend. “Hopeful players have for months been planning vacations so as to play in this year’s tournament. . . . They will temporarily cease to be accountants, policemen, teachers, carpenters, students, salesmen, railroad workers. They will just be golfers and sportsmen.” On the occasion of the 1934 national championship held at Pittsburgh South Park, the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* was similarly taken by the juxtaposition of golf and ordinary working stiff. It seemed as if everyone, including “the butcher, the baker, [and] the candlestick maker” now played golf. “The affair is golf’s most democratic gesture.”<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> USGA, *Record Book of USGA Championships and International Events, 1895 through 1971* (Far Hills, N.J.: USGA Golf House, 1972), 371-376 (Hereafter cited as *USGA Record Book*); Totton P. Heffelfinger, “The Public Links Championship” *USGA Journal and Turf Management* (July 1948): 18-19; English, “Public Links Event,” 19.

<sup>302</sup> Finnegan, *Golf in Philadelphia*, 114; Heffelfinger, “Public Links Championship,” 18; *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 7, 1934. Coble’s day job captured headlines after he won the tournament. But like many future pub links champions, Coble’s success during the tournament brought him offers from private clubs to turn professional, which he did. After 1924, he never waited tables again.

The tournament itself offered a reliable index of the changing social composition of public golf. During its first few years, Coble's victory aside, Public Links champions reflected the social profile of the first generation of munny golf. Many were younger members of the middle or upper-class, or solidly middle-class businessmen. Edmund Held, the winner of the first APLC in 1922, was a 19-year-old undergraduate at Boston University. (Held's low qualifying score stuck for 18 years.) A few years later, another college student, Lester Bolstad from the University of Minnesota, captured the title. Other tournament winners from that period included a *Wall Street Journal* reporter and a salesman for the Mentholatum Company. But by the end of the decade, collegiate champions and white-collar professionals were becoming increasingly rare. In 1927, another Pennsylvanian, Carl Kaufmann, captured the title, the first of three won in succession. The rail-thin Kaufmann, dubbed "the quiet Pittsburgh stenographer," worked at Mesta Machine in West Homestead. Kaufmann that year also led Pittsburgh to its first team title in APLC play.<sup>303</sup>

Geographic origins offered another revealing barometer. Both as individuals and as teams, tournament competitors came disproportionately from densely urban, industrial communities in the North East and upper Midwest. Among the cities sending teams to the 1934 tournament held at Pittsburgh's South Park, for instance, were Newark and Elizabeth, New Jersey; Brooklyn and Buffalo, New York; Dayton and Akron, Ohio; and such blue-collar towns as New Britain, Connecticut, Gary, Indiana, Molina, Illinois, and Detroit. In Pennsylvania, Sharon, Erie and Pittsburgh each sent teams. Overall, the state fared extremely well in national competition, particularly when one considers that golf was not the year-round activity that it was

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<sup>303</sup> English, "Public Links Event" 16-19. Judging from the list of tournament champions, the APLC had by the 1930s become unambiguously blue collar and "new ethnic." Charles Ferrara, a two-time champion during the 1930s, was a San Francisco riveter and second-generation Italian American. Al Leach, winner of the 1938 tournament held in Cleveland, worked for the WPA.



in the West and South. Between 1924 and 1939, Pennsylvania won five national titles, and produced several more runner ups and semi-finalists. During the late 1920s, the Commonwealth captured two team titles. On perennial source of competitive golfers within Pennsylvania was the steel town of Sharon, an otherwise inexplicable source until one considers the Buhl Park golf course made “free to the people” of the Shenango Valley by industrialist Frank Buhl. Meanwhile, Boston, a city with strong patrician links to the sport, frequently failed to send a team.<sup>304</sup>

At first blush, Pennsylvania’s competitiveness in public golf seemed incongruous. Very little about the Commonwealth, up to an including a harsh, northern climate which made year-round golf unfeasible, seemed conducive to producing golf champions. What it did have were legions of industrial workers, some of whom had found their way onto the state’s budding network of public courses. In this area, Pennsylvania enjoyed a decided demographic advantage over year-round golf states such as California and Florida. An occupational profile of the entrants in the city qualifying tournaments held at Schenley and later South Park bears this out. Throughout the 1930s, the list of entrants could have been easily transposed over the employee roll-call of any U.S. Steel plant. Players representing ethnic and religious groups often openly discriminated against by private golf clubs were also heavily represented. In 1934, Davey Wild, a postal worker and former Duquesne University basketball star, became the first Jewish player to reach the finals in 14 years of the city championship. The same social-cultural demographics carried to the national level. One-third of the golfers who qualified for match play in the 1934

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<sup>304</sup> *USGA Record Book* 372-384. At the 1936 national tournament, held on Long Island, two Sharon golfers, John Lucas and Vash Hromyak, survived to the final round. Both were steelworkers. *New York Times*, July 23, 1936

APLC, held on Pittsburgh's recently opened North Park course, boasted identifiably Southern or Eastern European surnames.<sup>305</sup>

Compared to the pageantry that surrounded the U.S. Open and U.S. Amateur, the U.S. Amateur Public Links Championship offered few frills. Assembling the participant was enough of a challenge. Organizers could not assume entrants' ability to pay transportation, lodging and other fees, let alone catered dinners at local country clubs. Local golfers were frequently called upon to help defray the costs entailed in sending a city's representatives to the national tournament. When Joe Coble qualified along with three other Philadelphians for the 1924 national public links tournament, members of the Philadelphia Golf Club "passed the hat among its members" to help defer the costs. (Coble had to pay a co-worker time-and-a-half to cover his shift while he was competing in Dayton, Ohio.) After four Pittsburgh "free links" golfers qualified for the National Pub Links tournament in Jacksonville, Florida in 1930, the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* published an editorial applauding the efforts of private club golfers to raise \$1200 to help send them there. "In golf government there is no provision to pay the expenses of these free links players to the tournament," the paper explained, "but golf is such a fine game that it engenders a comradely spirit among the better fixed and the not so well fixed." Still, there were limits. When the tournament traveled to San Francisco in 1937, the number of entrants from the Midwest and East Coast dropped precipitously; conversely, Californians made up over half of those who qualified for the tournament that year.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, July 19, 1934; *USGA Record Book*, 378. Twenty of the 64 match competitors bore distinctively Italian or Slavic surnames. Not surprisingly, players such as Dom Soccoli (New Britain, Conn.), Lester Jankaski (Elizabeth, N.J.), Ralph Strafacci (Brooklyn) and John Madera (Philadelphia) were more likely to hail from industrial cities on the East Coast than from places such as Columbus, Ohio and Los Angeles.

<sup>306</sup> Finnegan, *Golf in Philadelphia*, 114; *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 12 July 1930; English, "Public Links Event," 19.

Public Links tournaments cultivated an atmosphere akin to the rough egalitarianism of the ballpark. Local Pittsburgh newspapers covering the national tournament when it was held in North Park in 1934 compared the field to a gathering of “unemployed war vets,” a reference to the Bonus Army marches of a few years earlier. Many of the golfers had either hitchhiked or hopped the rails. Spectators were also rough hewn. The decorum that prevailed at private club tournaments often broke down, and crowds frequently had to be exhorted to observe protocol and remain quiet. During Carl Kaufmann’s bid to capture the Pittsburgh title at the Schenley Park course in 1930, for instance, the *Post Gazette* commented on an unruly crowd of “youthful rowdies” who had assembled around the eighteenth hole to watch the final dramatics. The gallery noise was sufficiently distracting to add “several promiscuous putts to Carl’s total, but the ‘sphinx of the link’ carried on nobly.” Just another day at the pub links.<sup>307</sup>

### **3.7 The Golfing Steelworker: Andy Szwedko and the 1939 Amateur Public Links Championship**

It was against this backdrop that Andy Szwedko first arrived on the golfing scene in Pittsburgh in 1930. That year, the 23-year old entered his first APLC qualifying tournament at Schenley Park and performed well enough against the 50-player field to garner one of Pittsburgh’s four spots. Carl Kaufmann, the three-time national pub links champion, led the pack again and was no patrician himself. Although he owned a bungalow in a middle-class section of Pittsburgh, his stenographer job made him just another ordinary Joe. But Szwedko’s pedigree was even more

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<sup>307</sup> *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 18 July 1934; *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 9 July 1930.

emphatically Pittsburgh. The first-born son of Polish and Russian immigrants, Szwedko had been raised in the tough, working-class section of Lawrenceville, a riverside neighborhood known for its prizefighters and pubs. Among Szwedko's fellow Ninth Warders was Fritzie Zivic, a.k.a. the Croat Comet, one of five brothers who fought professionally during the 1930s. In the Ninth Ward, according to Zivic, "you either had to fight or stay in the house. We went out."<sup>308</sup>

Szwedko went out too, but instead of "loafing" in alleys, he chose fairways. As an adolescent, he and a neighborhood friend, Johnny Paskowski, would hitchhike to the Pittsburgh Field Club and Fox Chapel Country Club to carry clubs. Szwedko and Paskowski caddied for the money. But like other working-class youth who worked private courses on weekends and during summers, they became enamored of the game and learned its finer points through observation and practice. One Fox Chapel member took the young Szwedko under his wing, and gave him his first set of clubs for use during "caddy days." When he could not play on a regular golf course, Szwedko and his two younger brothers improvised. Their favorite spot was St. Mary's Cemetery, a patch of green space in the otherwise concrete jungle of Etna, across the Allegheny River from Lawrenceville. There, the brothers constructed holes from soup cans, golf clubs from hockey sticks, and hazards from headstones.<sup>309</sup>

If Szwedko had limited opportunities to play the game as a schoolboy, he had even fewer chances when he began working in the mills of Spang, Chalfant and Co., in Etna in 1928. The average work week in the Pittsburgh mill district had been reduced from the 12-hour-day, seven-day-week schedule at the turn of the century, but work was still steady and opportunity for

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<sup>308</sup> *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 8 July 1930; Margie Carlin, "The Three Faces of Lawrenceville," *Pittsburgh Press*, 17 October 1976; *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 18 May 1984.

<sup>309</sup> "Andy Szwedko" in Rev. Francis Bolek, ed., *Who's Who in Polish America* (New York: Harbinger House, 1943); *New York Times*, 25 July 1940; Interview with Jerry Szwedko, East Liverpool, Ohio, September 30, 1999.

leisure scarce. Determined to pursue the game he had gotten a taste of as teenager, Szwedko signed on to the night shift so that he could reserve his daylight hours for golf. He continued the grueling work-practice schedule through his first years of competitive play, even into the final championship of the city public links tournament in 1934. The night before his victory in the final round that year, the *Post-Gazette* reported that Szwedko had worked “his usual night trick in the mill . . . . He does not believe his feat of toiling the night before his title capture is anything unusual.”<sup>310</sup>

Szwedko’s first tournament performance in Pittsburgh was good enough to send him to the national championship in Ft. Lauderdale, but he failed to qualify for one of 32 match-play slots. But the Lawrenceville steelworker persisted. In 1932, Szwedko gained his first match play spot at the national in Louisville, Kentucky and made it to the third round. His next national tournament start was in 1934 in Pittsburgh and on what would become his new home course, the recently opened North Park links. Szwedko was one of three local golfers to survive to the third round. From 1936 to 1941, he never failed to qualify for match play in the national championship. In 1937, he made it to the semi-final round at the national tournament held at the Harding course in San Francisco and became the only non-Californian that year to do so. At the 1938 national championship at Cleveland’s Highland Park municipal course, Szwedko turned in his best performance to date, making it to the fourth round before bowing out.<sup>311</sup>

Nineteen-thirty nine turned out to be Szwedko’s year. From the outset the national tournament looked to be the toughest competitively. It was the first year of a new qualifying system. In the past, entrants came to the national tournament from an unlimited number of city-

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<sup>310</sup> Paul Kellogg, ed., *Wage-Earning Pittsburgh* (New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, 1914), 293-294; “Szwedka Toils All Night Before Taking Title,” *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 20 July 1934.

<sup>311</sup> *USGA Record Book*, 376-382.

based qualifying tournaments. That structure worked well during the 1920s, but as the number of cities sending individuals and teams on to the nationals skyrocketed in the 1930s, the system became unwieldy. In 1938, according to the USGA, 73 cities “exercised their option to send representatives,” up from around 30 just a few years before. In its place, the USGA implemented 33 sectional qualifiers. The new structure consolidated the number of qualifying tournaments, but not the number of entrants. In 1939, the sectionals attracted 2400 entrants, “the largest number received to that time for any USGA Championship.” Szwedko qualified for one of the eight berths to the Nationals. His two brothers were among the sectional qualifiers.<sup>312</sup>

The 1939 national tournament was held in Baltimore at the Mount Pleasant Park Golf Course. This time, Szwedko took a commanding lead which he never relinquished, fighting off 64 other golfers who had qualified for match play and defeating Californian Philip Gordon by a single stroke in the 36-hole final. The victory earned him brief national fame, and probably some time off from work. Interestingly, though, Szwedko passed up the opportunity to turn pro or join a private golf course, two of the plums that usually awaited Pub Links champions. *Golf Illustrated* reported later that year that Szwedko had chosen to return to his job at the mill and not turn professional. He also rebuffed an invitation to join a private club where he caddied as a youth. “He has been asked to join a private club in the smoky city, but Andy replied ‘The Pub Links are good enough for me.’” They stayed good enough. Despite his considerable accomplishments on the fairways over the next 35 years – 23 Public Links and five U.S. Open appearances – the Lawrenceville pipe-fitter continued to play most of his golf at North Park.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> English, “Public Links Event,” 19; *USGA Record Book*, 383; *Pittsburgh Press*, 26 June 1939.

<sup>313</sup> Szwedko interview; *Golf Illustrated*, September 1939, 3; *Pittsburgh Press*, 21 March 1976.

## 4 GRIDIRON AND IRON MEN: THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL IN PENNSYLVANIA

What do we care for . . . the men in the Fall River Mills or in the silk mills at Paterson . . . the only Foot Ball in America is the Inter-Collegiate game . . .

*Caspar Whitney, 1896*

. . . [T]he high schools are filled with the sturdy sons of these exploited European peasants; and the football scouts come down from the colleges and hire these husky young men bearing Slav and Hungarian and Italian names, and the latter proceed to play rings around the Cabots and the Saltonstalls.

*New York Times, July 10, 1936*

College football began as a game played by and largely for social elites. In the late nineteenth century, schools such as Swarthmore and the University of Pennsylvania dominated the sport, invariably with teams whose social makeup resembled that of a private social club. Even as college football spread beyond elite East Coast institutions to schools such as the University of Pittsburgh, the game continued to project a strong, upper-class image. The sport's social exclusivity derived in large measure from the exclusive character of American higher education. Even as late as 1920, less than 5% of the country's college-aged population ever set foot on a college campus. Universities, and the pastimes and games associated with them, were reserved for the sons of Leisure Class.

By the mid-1930s, the situation had changed. Colleges and universities themselves were almost as socially exclusive then as they had been at the turn of the century. But a demographic revolution had taken place on their playing fields. The transformation was especially evident at

schools such as the University of Pittsburgh. Beginning in the late 1910s and continuing through the 1920s, Pitt's varsity football squad gradually came to look less like the membership of a private club and more like the work gang of an Open Hearth. By the 1930s, the new "All Americans" whom crowds of enthusiastic alumni cheered on at Pitt Stadium – and at other college stadiums across both Pennsylvania and the country – were overwhelmingly working class and ethnic.<sup>314</sup>

This shift in the demographics of college football coincided with a closely related but more frequently discussed trend: the so-called "professionalization" of college athletics, particularly football. That could explain why the democratization of college football, when compared against similar trends in other amateur field sports such as sport hunting and golf, received mixed reviews from observers of American sport. Some interpreted the increased representation of working-class youth on college football rosters as evidence of "the widening opportunity for sharing the sports life of the nation."<sup>315</sup> The more common reaction was more cynical. To many commentators, the proliferation of college football players with

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<sup>314</sup> Screen and fiction writers have often been more sensitive to football's social dimensions than historians. *All the Right Moves* (1983), filmed in Johnstown, Pa., starred Tom Cruise as a third-generation Slavic American who dreams of escaping his gritty home town through his athletic prowess on the football field. It is the most recent but by no means the first Hollywood film to interpret football as a path of upward mobility, especially for second-generation Southern and Eastern Europeans. In *Saturday's Hero* (1951), John Derek played a Polish American student-athlete who wins a football scholarship to a Midwestern land grant university. The movie, based on a novel by Millard Lampell, was a searing indictment of college football's creeping professionalism and its exploitation of working-class athletes. Earlier popular novels like *Huddle* (1930), by sportswriter Francis Wallace, mythologized the tale of the working-class youth, invariably from a Midwestern mill town, who parlays athletic talent into stardom and on-campus status.

<sup>315</sup> Writing in 1939, essayist Simeon Strunsky conceded that the "cynical explanation" for the proliferation of Southern and Eastern Europeans were mercenary football coaches who "went into the mining regions to hire husky young coal diggers, truck drivers, and ice peddlers to come to college and play football." But Strunsky preferred to attribute the "Slavic tinge" of college football teams to the public school system. See Strunsky, *The Living Tradition: Change and America* (New York: Doubleday, 1939), 219-220.



“indecipherable” ethnic surnames underscored the sport’s shameless hypocrisy, not its democratic impulse.<sup>316</sup>

To a large extent, the commercialization of college sports continues to frame the analysis of college football and its development over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>317</sup> The focus is understandable, particularly given its continued relevance for university administrators. But it has also distracted historians from appreciating one of the most dramatic and early examples of the democratization of sport in the twentieth century. Within a span of thirty years, the surnames on college football rosters and All-American lists changed from Anglo Saxon to emphatically Southern and Eastern European. In this sense, the democratization of college football paralleled changes occurring simultaneously in golf and hunting, two sports which shared the game’s patrician origins and incrementally expanded social base.<sup>318</sup> Where college football differed

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<sup>316</sup> One of the most trenchant critics during the interwar years was Paul Gallico, the sports editor for the *New York Daily News* from 1923 to 1936 and a frequent contributor to *Vanity Fair* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Gallico argued that money, specifically the various forms of compensation awarded to players based on athletic ability, had irrevocably corrupted the game. Like others in the “noisy anti-football crowd,” Gallico viewed players as unwitting pawns in a shameless game of profit-driven hypocrisy. Schools embraced the amateur code and then quietly continued to pay their players for services rendered. For such reasons, Gallico denounced the game as “the last stronghold of hypocrisy.” See *Farewell to Sport* (New York: Knopf, 1938), 208-221.

<sup>317</sup> The commercialization of college sport, particularly football, continues to be a much debated and much discussed issue, especially within and among members of the academy. The more measured accounts at least acknowledge the importance of historical perspective. See for instance, James J. Duderstadt, *Intercollegiate Athletics and the American University: A University President’s Perspective* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2000) and Andrew Zimbalist, *Unpaid Professionals: Commercialism and Conflict in Big-Time College Sports* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999). James Shulman offers historical perspective on the role of control and regulation in college sport, and a more dispassionate empirical analysis of such issues as recruiting and admissions, in, with William G. Bowen, *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001) and, with Sarah A. Levin, *Reclaiming the Game: College Sports and Educational Values* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003). Historians also have tended to analyze college football from its impact on core educational values, and the lengths to which colleges and universities have gone to field winning teams, even at the risk of violating admission standards, eligibility rules, and of course, the amateur code. See Murray Sperber’s *Onward to Victory: The Crises That Shaped College Sport* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998) and *Beer and Circus: How Big-Time College Sports Is Crippling Undergraduate Education* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000). The problem with this otherwise valid approach is that it overlooks demographic changes within the game that were revolutionizing college football from a social-class perspective.

<sup>318</sup> The ramifications went beyond the sport itself. Although outside the scope of this study, it is clear that as ethnic, working-class types replaced WASPs on the playing fields, they made symbolic gains outside of college

was in the mechanisms of change. The state clearly played a role, particularly when one considers how many future college players were introduced to football through public high schools. But colleges and universities did not need to be coaxed or compelled by the state to extend access to the working class. Competition for gate receipts and the desire to field championship teams inspired coaches, athletic departments, and a vast network of alumni to seek them out and open the door.<sup>319</sup>

Over the past fifty years, many scholars have commented on the outcome but have either ignored or oversimplified the process through which it was achieved. Sociologists David Riesman and Reull Denney were among the first to have taken notice. Using Walter Camp's All American lists as an index, Riesman and Denney noted how the domination of patrician elites in the 1890s had by the 1930s given way to players with distinctively Italian and Slavic surnames. The sociologists attributed the shift to a natural ethnic succession, but such reasoning fails to explain the predominance of particular ethnic groups, and their ability to permeate the otherwise still class-proscribed boundaries of colleges and universities. Beginning in the late 1920s and continuing through the 1950s, players of Southern and particularly Eastern European extraction played college football at a rate that far exceeded their representation in the general population, and even more so, in the general college student population. The democratization of college

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football stadiums as well. By forming a small but visible core of the student body on campuses across the country, ethnic, working-class student athletes helped break down the perception of college campuses as oases of upper-class privilege. The democratization of college football also appeared to play an important role in neutralizing ethnic and religious bigotry during the 1930s and 1940s, in much the same way that the increased visibility of African Americans in professional sport has been credited with tempering racial prejudice after World War II.

<sup>319</sup> In the sense that public education, particularly Pennsylvania's network of public high schools, introduced many working-class adolescents to organized scholastic football, it could be argued to that the hand of the state was still visible here. But the state played only a limited role in breaking down the barriers to college football. Unlike in hunting and golf, where the state played an active and conscious role in broadening public access, social changes within college football depended more on the "invisible hand" of the market.

football was being fueled by something other than “natural” succession, or even the democratization of higher education which occurred after World War II.<sup>320</sup>

Steven Riess’ empirical survey of professional football players reached similar conclusions. In an effort to assess the degree to which professional football functioned as “a vehicle of social mobility,” Riess analyzed the social class and geographic origins of pro football players from three distinct time periods (beginning in the 1930s). Riess acknowledged a distinctive “football belt” stretching from Pennsylvania into eastern Ohio, but he was unable to account for its appearance, or the unusual visibility of players from Southern and Eastern Europe in the early National Football League (1933-1945). Riess’s explanation – that Slavs and Italians were by that period “more fully acculturated and were able to earn football scholarships” – begs the question.<sup>321</sup> Michael Oriard’s cultural history is more satisfying, since he recognizes the “sons of Polish steelworkers and Italian coal miners” who “transformed the faces, and the names, of college football lineups.” But like other commentators, Oriard oversimplifies the process through which that transformation was achieved. “Polish and Italian youths were simply drawn to football in high school as a vehicle for achieving status. College coaches grabbed them . . . as rugged and hungry football players.” While this is undeniably true, it ignores the complex interplay of social changes which both stimulated demand for such athletes and created a supply

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<sup>320</sup> David Riesman and Reuel Denney, “Football in America: A Study in Cultural Diffusion” *American Quarterly* 3, 4 (Winter 1951): 309-325. Riesman and Denney’s article was later reprinted in Riesman, *Individualism Reconsidered, and Other Essays* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1954), 242-257. Based on a surname analysis of All-American lists from 1889 to 1950, Riesman and Denney observed an interesting pattern of ethnic succession, beginning with WASPs in the 1890s, German and Irish Americans in the next two decades, and finally Southern and Eastern Europeans by the 1930s and 1940s.

<sup>321</sup> Steven A. Riess, “A Social Profile of the Professional Football Players, 1920-1982” in Paul Staudohar and James Mangan, eds., *The Business of Professional Sports* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 222-246. Riess concludes that the majority of football players even as late as the 1930s were still coming from upper-class, white-collar backgrounds: “Merely 6.3% of all the fathers were miners, a fact that flies in the face of conventional beliefs.” Riess’s sampling – the next period is 1950 – led him to conclude that football did not become blue collar until after World War II, a fact which my analysis of Pitt and other Pennsylvania schools contradicts.

that could be integrated, through recruitment and subsidization, into socially exclusive colleges and universities.<sup>322</sup>

If the democratization of golf and recreational hunting depended on the agency of the state, football was democratized largely through the pressures, and resulting innovations, of market competition. The rise of college football as a spectator sport and universities' desires to exploit that popularity for profit, pride and publicity forced athletic programs to develop new approaches to building competitive teams. In this sense, the democratization of college football was not unlike the integration of professional baseball after 1945 – a policy change driven less by ideology than simple economics. After World War I, the demand for a qualitatively different sort of student-athlete compelled colleges and universities to aggressively recruit athletes from beyond the general student population. The influx of student athletes from working class, ethnic backgrounds democratized a sport that was once the exclusive province of elites. Expanding the social base of college football, though, was hardly a straight line: the process involved many moving parts, including the cultivation of private “feeder” prep schools; the development of public high schools with strong athletic programs; and the creation of well-oiled recruiting and subsidization programs within university athletic departments and alumni groups.<sup>323</sup>

If colleges, alumni and spectators stimulated demand, working-class, ethnic communities created the supply. Part of this was a matter of fortuitous timing. By the 1920s and 1930s, the

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<sup>322</sup> Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) and *King Football: Sport and Spectacle in the Golden Age of Radio and Newsreels, Movies and Magazines, the Weekly & the Daily Press* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>323</sup> Brian L. Goff, Robert E. McCormick, and Robert D. Tollison, “Racial Integration as an Innovation: Empirical Evidence from Sports Leagues,” *The American Economic Review* 92/1 (March 2002): 16-26. The authors argue that the integration of major league baseball occurred as owners came to understand the economic costs of segregation. Entrepreneurial teams with ambitious owners were therefore the first to integrate and the most willing to defy social convention in order to get at the talent pool represented by African American athletes.

children of Pennsylvania's immigrant population were enrolling in high school in record numbers, thus increasingly the supply of potential college athletes. But neither demographics nor the growth of public education fully explain why second generation "new immigrants" from Pennsylvania mill and mining towns came to dominate the ranks of college football programs beginning in the 1930s. Other factors must be considered.<sup>324</sup>

In order to more closely document and interpret these changes, this chapter pays special attention to the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt). Pitt forms an ideal case study not only because of its status as a private but still large, urban university,<sup>325</sup> but also because it produced two dynasties during the first half of the twentieth century which neatly encapsulated the social changes that were transforming college football. The first of these, in the late 1910s, emerged under Coach Glenn "Pop" Warner and relied on athletes who were consistent, in social profile, with the sport's elite origins. The second, which emerged under Dr. Jock Sutherland during the 1930s, was built on the backs of scholarship players from working-class, ethnic backgrounds. The change was hardly axiomatic, but rather the result of a complex interaction of supply and demand which opened opportunities for working class athletes at Pitt and most other "Big Time" competitive college football programs.

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<sup>324</sup> In a landmark study of the geographic origins of college and professional football players, geographer John F. Rooney identified a "football belt" stretching from eastern Ohio through Western Pennsylvania. Cities and towns within the "belt" produced college football players at a rate that was almost double the national average. Given the broad, national distribution of Pennsylvania recruits, the Commonwealth could legitimately be said to have played a disproportionately large role in the democratization of college football across the country. See John F. Rooney, Jr., "Up From the Mines, Out From the Prairie: Some Geographical Implications for Football in the United States," *Geographical Review* 59/4 (October 1969): 471-499. Rooney expanded on his original study in a chapter titled "Football: Where They Come From" in *A Geography of American Sport: From Cabin Creek to Anaheim* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1974), 113-145.

<sup>325</sup> During the 1920s and 1930s, the University of Pittsburgh boasted the third largest student enrollment in the Commonwealth. In 1929, Pitt's undergraduate population stood at 10,945 compared with 16,218 at Penn and 13,188 at Temple, both of which were in Philadelphia. Department of Public Instruction, *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1930), 167-168.

#### 4.1 Manly Brahmins: The Leisure Class, “Strenuousness” and College Football

In much the same way that golf and hunting were regarded as proper sports for cultivated gentlemen, football was perceived as the ideal sport for young men of wealth and privilege. What made football different from golf and hunting was its close ties to the academy, especially higher education.<sup>326</sup> Before the Civil War, the game more closely resembled a hazing ritual than an organized sport. Matches were erratic and rules were frequently improvised, with teams consisting of guileless first-year students scrumming against more physically mature upper-class men. Injuries were considered a rite of passage. Harvard referred to its annual initiation match for incoming freshman as “Bloody Monday.” Henry Cabot Lodge was typical of many of his class and generation who played a rugby-style game as part of his initiation rite into Boston’s private schools. As a student at Groton some fifty years later, Franklin Roosevelt continued the tradition. Like many other patrician youth, Roosevelt frequently relieved the monotony of his studies with “rough play” on the gridiron.<sup>327</sup>

After the Civil War, football evolved from a rite of initiation into a full-fledged competitive sport. The progression from intra to interscholastic play represented one

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<sup>326</sup> Steven Riess, “Sport and the Redefinition of Middle-Class Masculinity in Victorian America” in S.W. Pope, ed., *The New American Sport History: Recent Approaches and Perspectives* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 173-197. According to Riess and others, football attracted upper-class Victorians because it was thought to reinforce masculine values and, as a team sport, teach discipline and cooperation. Baseball by the late nineteenth century was considered too common, as were most subsequent and contemporary team sports, including basketball and ice hockey.

<sup>327</sup> Ronald Smith, *Sports and Freedom: The Rise of Big-Time College Athletics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 67-68; Elliott Roosevelt, ed., *F.D.R., His Personal Letters: Early Years* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1947), 228.

organizational benchmark. Most date the first official intercollegiate match to 1869, when a squad of Princeton students faced off against a group of Rutgers undergraduates. Harvard and Yale began their annual competition six years later. The following year, those two schools joined with Princeton and Columbia to form the Intercollegiate Football Association (IFA), the sport's first (and most prestigious) interscholastic body. Football also began to spread to other colleges during this period, including private institutions in Pennsylvania. Swarthmore College and the University of Pennsylvania both started football clubs in the 1870s. The following decade, Bucknell (1883) and Franklin and Marshall (1887) in central Pennsylvania launched football programs as well.<sup>328</sup>

Another important milestone was standardized rules of play. During the 1860s and 1870s, schools tended to favor one of two styles. The first, adopted by Harvard, closely resembled English rugby, with the ball carried or batted around by hand. The second, practiced at Yale, more closely approximated soccer. In an effort to facilitate inter-league play, the IFA established a rules committee in 1878 under the direction of Yale's Walter Camp to reconcile the two forms and create common ground. Under the IFA's auspices, Camp set forth such fundamentals as play from a fixed line of scrimmage, the eleven-player side and numerical values for goals. He was also the first to establish game strategies and a system for player training. At Yale, where he served as volunteer advisor to the field captain, Camp designed the first practice drills and convened the first "training table" to insure proper nutrition and conditioning. His penchant for imposing organization and codified rules and procedures helped

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<sup>328</sup> Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 69-72, 77; William Bruce Leslie, "A Comparative Study of Four Middle Atlantic Colleges, 1870-1915: Bucknell University, Franklin and Marshall College, Princeton University and Swarthmore College" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1971), 99-104.

separate the sport from its English rugby origins; it also helped shift control of the game from students to faculty.<sup>329</sup>

Still, college football in the 1880s and 1890s remained a largely student-centered social activity; as such, interest in and commitment to the sport ebbed and flowed. The 1886 football season for Wyoming Seminary, a private college preparatory school in Wilkes-Barre, consisted of just three games, one of them with Lafayette College and another against a local sandlot team. Football almost disappeared at Swarthmore College during the late 1880s due to student apathy, only to come surging back by 1890, where it became “nothing short of obsession” according to one commentator. Woodrow Wilson never played football while a Princeton undergrad, but he followed the team’s fortunes with typical collegiate devotion as editor of the *Princetonian*. During the 1880s, football fever at Bucknell ran equally high; literary clubs there were nearly driven to extinction because of the single-minded interest in football. Victories over rivals such as Dickinson College triggered spontaneous all-night bonfires and raucous student behavior.<sup>330</sup>

College administrators were concerned that football monopolized enthusiasms, but most believed the sport to be generally beneficial to students. The president of Bucknell University regarded football as a wholesome outlet for the boundless energies of young undergraduates. That conclusion was confirmed by child development experts such as G. Stanley Hall, who promoted “muscular culture” as a safety valve for adolescent energies and “tendencies.”

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<sup>329</sup> Ronald Smith discusses the role of the “Big Three” – Harvard, Princeton and Yale – in the development of college football in *Sports and Freedom*, 69-88. The history of athletic agreements struck between the Big Three are also recounted in Marcia Synnott, “The ‘Big Three’ and the Harvard Princeton Football Break, 1926-1934,” *Journal of Sport History* 3 (Fall 1976): 188-201. According to Elliot Gorn and Warren Goldstein, Camp eliminated the sport’s unpredictable elements and “modeled his teams on the structure of industrial production.” Gorn and Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 159.

<sup>330</sup> Leroy E. Bugbee, *Wyoming Seminary, 1844-1944* (Privately Printed, c. 1945), 516. Leslie, “Four Middle Atlantic Colleges,” 99-104. On the standardization of college football in the late 1870s and 1880s, see Michael Oriard, “In the Beginning Was the Rule” in *New American Sport History*, 88-120.



“Rational muscle culture, for its moral effects, offers for the young the very best possible means of resisting evil and establishing righteousness.”<sup>331</sup> Football’s physicality was also thought to toughen pampered college students. “In an age often accused of decadent materialism,” wrote one faculty defender at Amherst College, “it is an indication of national health and vigor that enthusiastic youth should sacrifice ease and luxury, should give and take hard bruises, under a regime of discipline and law, and in an honorable spirit of gentlemanly rivalry . . .” As an undergraduate at Harvard, Teddy Roosevelt was a stalwart supporter and in 1893 wrote to Walter Camp to express his “horror” at the thought that the sport might be banned. “I would a hundred fold rather keep the game as it is now, with the brutality, than give it up.” As President, Roosevelt sprinkled many of his homilies on the “strenuous life” with football metaphors, imploring his fellow Americans to “Hit the line hard. Don’t foul and don’t shirk, but hit the line hard.”<sup>332</sup>

Roosevelt believed football, like other forms of vigorous physical activity, to be an antidote to the feminization of America’s upper classes and he discussed the value of “rough sports” frequently.<sup>333</sup> Modern life usurped manliness. Football, which demanded courage and

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<sup>331</sup> Quoted in Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 157.

<sup>332</sup> Mark Denis Desjardins, “A Muscular Christian in a Secular World” (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1995), 223. Roughness, Roosevelt believed, was the sport’s best quality, since it encouraged manliness. Ironically, as President, he came very close to imposing a national ban on the sport to stem its inherent brutality and violence. Although he threatened to outlaw the sport in 1905 following a particularly bloody season that claimed several lives, his intervention allowed the sport to clean up its act and introduced reforms that saved the game from probable extinction.

<sup>333</sup> “Forty or fifty years ago the writer on American morals was sure to deplore the effeminacy and luxury of young Americans who were born of rich parents,” Roosevelt wrote in 1900. “The boy who was well-off then, especially in the big Eastern cities, lived too luxuriously, took to billiards as his chief innocent recreation, and felt small shame in his inability to take part in rough pastimes and field-sports. Nowadays, whatever other faults the son of rich parents may tend to develop, he is at least forced by the opinion of all his associates of his own age to bear himself well in manly exercises and to develop his body – and therefore, to a certain extent, his character – in the rough sports which call for pluck, endurance, and physical address.” Theodore Roosevelt, “The American Boy” in *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: Century Co., 1900), 2.

required physical strength, could restore it and as such became an important component in “redefining bourgeois masculinity.” For college administrators, football helped counter the common perception that American higher education was “effete and impractical” and dominated by “pale, dyspeptic scholars.” Some even believed the game could restore a sense of pilgrim’s pride. The University of Wisconsin’s Charles Adams declared football the ideal sport for promoting “those characteristics that have made the Anglo Saxon race preeminent.” Henry Cabot Lodge declared the injuries and time expended on the athletic field as “part of the price which the English speaking race has paid for being world conquerors.” Even Harvard president Charles Eliot, who had briefly contemplated banning the sport in the 1890s, concluded that “effeminacy[sic] and luxury are even worse evils than brutality.”<sup>334</sup>

Players were less effusive than faculty and administrators, but they too seemed to relish in the sport’s manliness. Bodily injuries, which commonly resulted from mass plays such as the notorious “Flying Wedge,” were worn as a badge of courage. “During our Freshman year our hospital list was a long one,” the Penn class of 1903 recalled. “Early in the season . . . Flowell fell over a prostate form and was laid up in the hospital with a badly contused thigh. Two days later, Keller celebrated our victory over Drexel . . . by breaking his leg . . .” But “these statistics are not given for the benefit of fond mother or trembling sweetheart, nor for anti football societies,” but as an explanation for their losing record. “There is no romantic glamour about class football games – hard knocks, little honor and no girls; but for those of us who have played

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<sup>334</sup> Gorn and Goldstein, *American Sports*, 132; Eliot quoted in Riess, *Sport in Industrial America*, 128; Raymond C. Gettell, “The Value of Football,” *American Physical Education Review* (Hereafter *APER*) 22/3 (March 1917): 139, 141.

together, we have learned a thing or two about men and mud. . . . Our unwritten motto has been ‘All for the class,’ and we have done our level best.”<sup>335</sup>

At the same time, football afforded elites the opportunity to compete within the socially exclusive confines of college campuses. In this regard, colleges and universities were to football what country clubs were to golf, or sportsmen’s clubs to hunting: carefully bounded social enclaves. At least up until 1900, the most competitive football was played at the most exclusive clubs. Between 1889 and 1900, Harvard, Princeton, Yale and the University of Pennsylvania accounted for 129 of the 132 spots on Walter Camp’s list of All-Americans, an annual compilation intended to recognize the best players in the country at each given position.<sup>336</sup> The Big Three would eventually relinquish their monopoly on the game, but the sport retained its de-facto exclusivity through the academy, as exclusive a social institution as the local country club. “What do we care for the men in the Fall River Mills or in the silk mills at Patterson,” Caspar Whitney wrote to Camp during a collaborative book project on football fundamentals. “[T]he only Foot Ball in America is the Inter-Collegiate Game.” The NCAA’s 1916 “football code”

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<sup>335</sup> *The Record of the Class of 1903 College, University of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Anvil Printing Co., 1903), 152-153.

<sup>336</sup> Dr. Harry A. March, *Pro Football: Its “Ups” and “Downs.” A Light-Hearted History of the Post Graduate Game* (New York: Privately Printed, 1934), 10. Harvard “abounded with the sons of old stock wealthy families of New England,” while the University of Pennsylvania drew many of its players from old-wealth Philadelphia Quakers and German families. Players from Ivy League backgrounds also dominated the ranks of semi-professional football, such as it was, in the 1890s. After his playing days with Yale were through, Pudge Heffelfinger played for Pittsburgh’s North Side Athletic Association, where he earned the dubious distinction of becoming America’s first professional football player in 1890. The Greensburg Athletic Club, another early semi-professional team, drafted “the entire backfield of Lafayette College.” It was not until after WWI that professional football pulled players from more plebian backgrounds. Bob Carroll and Bob Braunwart, *Pro Football, From AAA to ‘03: The Origin and Development of Professional Football in Western Pennsylvania, 1890-1903* (N. Huntingdon, Pa.: Professional Football Researchers Association, 1991), 13-27.

reasserted the sport's "distinctively academic" character and "high standards of sportsmanship."<sup>337</sup>

The protestations of the Penn class of 1903 notwithstanding, football also conferred social status and distinction on those who played. Of the "good old days" – football as it was played at private colleges and universities at the turn of the century – sportswriter Paul Gallico wrote: "[P]articipation in a college sport conferred a favor on the boy. He received, free of charge, the benefit of expert teaching and coaching in a sport, the pleasure of winning a place on the team . . . earning a distinguishing mark in the form an insignia or letter . . . and the joys of competing against equals as a member of a team representing a college." In the pantheon of college sport, football held a special place, precisely because of its rough play and the constant threat of serious injury, and even death. A student at Rutgers in the 1880s described it as "the rugged path to glory." Quite often, team captains on football teams found crossover popularity as class presidents or leaders in other student activities. Sol Metzger, Penn's team captain, also served as class president and on the boards of the school newspaper and yearbook. Robert "Tiny" Maxwell, Chicago and later Swarthmore standout, acted in the class play and was active in many other extracurricular activities.<sup>338</sup>

Although Pennsylvania colleges were not officially represented among the Big Three, the Commonwealth's top two football schools during the 1880s, Swarthmore College and the University of Pennsylvania, boasted comparable pedigrees. Penn's tuition fees and academic

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<sup>337</sup> Quoted in Gerald R. Gems, "Football and Cultural Values," *College Football Historical Society* 10/4 (August 1997): 1. College football's upper-class base did not go unnoticed, especially among promoters of competing sports with more working-class associations. The *Police Gazette* lampooned what it regarded as the pretense of college football, and those who "bragged of their sons' prowess on the playing fields." Whereas prizefighters spoke directly and plainly, college football players used "high falutin" language. Oriard, *Reading Football*, 140-141.

<sup>338</sup> Gallico, *Farewell to Sport*, 215; Richard J. Walton, *Swarthmore College: An Informal History* (Swarthmore, Pa.: Swarthmore College, 1986), 22-24; *Record of the Class of 1903*, 35-36; Richard Pagano, "Robert 'Tiny' Maxwell," *College Football Historical Society* 1/4 (May 1988): 2-3.

standards brought it the closest to the Big Three. (Penn was the only Pennsylvania school admitted into the Ivy League after its official creation in 1954.) By the 1890s, the Quakers were playing football at the same competitive level as Princeton, Yale and Harvard, as evidenced by its joining the IFA in 1891. In 1894, Penn broke onto Camp's list with four All-American selections, the most of any school that year. Over the next six years, Penn produced an average of three All Americans a year, outpacing Harvard and Yale. Penn would continue to contribute All Americans to the list at a steady rate for the next 15 years. Between 1898 and 1915, Penn produced more All Americans than any other schools except for Harvard and Yale.<sup>339</sup>

One aspect of the game which seemed to detract from its otherwise high social tone was the widespread use of so-called "tramp" athletes. The term referred to experienced players or ringers who were often surreptitiously inserted into lineups to give teams a competitive advantage. The main criticism against such athletes is that they were not part of the regular student body and therefore violated the amateur code. Frequently, such athletes were enrolled in academic programs for only the course of the season and often drifted in and out of lineups. In other cases, they were found to be registered in professional schools, or designated as "transfers." Andrew Smith began his athletic and academic career at Penn State in 1901. But in October, 1902, after playing an outstanding game against the University of Pennsylvania, he was spotted working out with Penn's team. For the next three games, he continued to play on Penn State's squad while being covertly courted by Penn. By mid-November, he was listed as part of Penn's lineup; by the end of the semester, he was enrolled as a full-time student there as well.

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<sup>339</sup> Walton, *Swarthmore College*, 33-36; Dan Rottenberg, *Fight on Pennsylvania: A Century of Red and Blue Football* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1984), 28.

Smith continued to play at Penn the next season, but just long enough to earn All American honors; at the end of the 1903 season, he dropped out of school.<sup>340</sup>

University officials decried the use of tramp athletes and lobbied for outright bans. Still, such athletes could hardly have been construed as evidence that college football had opened the gates. To be sure, many were not “bona fide students,” in the estimation of Walter Camp, but they were still generally drawn from the same social ranks as the regular student body. Indeed, many of the players who were later banned from playing were actually either transfers or graduate students enrolled in professional schools. These circumstances invalidated their undergraduate status but not their social rank. Joe Thompson was among the players “drafted” from Geneva College in 1904 to play for Pitt. But before coming to Geneva, Thompson had matriculated at Shady Side Academy, a private Pittsburgh prep school. After arriving at Pitt, he enrolled in its law school. Robert “Tiny” Maxwell, considered the country’s leading lineman in 1905, transferred from the University of Chicago to play football at Swarthmore. But Maxwell was neither a tramp nor merely an athlete. Maxwell had graduated from a competitive public high school in Chicago before enrolling at the University of Chicago. After Swarthmore, he studied medicine for two years before finally embarking on a career in newspapers.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 184. Given the lengths to which college administrators and alumni often went to conceal the practice, it is very difficult to measure with any precision the extent of “athletes-for-hire” within college football programs, or the nature of the financial reward accorded to football players, particularly before the adoption of formal athletic scholarships. There is reason to believe that semi-professional football players were transgressing the amateur code as early as the 1890s.

<sup>341</sup> March, *Pro Football*, 60-61, 76; Charles A. Rook, ed., *Western Pennsylvanians: A Work for Libraries and Reference* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Western Pennsylvania Biography Association, 1923), 177; Pagano, “Robert ‘Tiny’ Maxwell,” 3. There is no evidence that “tramp athletes” from this era played in exchange for tuition, as would become the case for working-class athletes by the 1930s. What they no doubt were attracted to was the social prestige conferred on them by excelling in the highly stratified world of extra-curricular activities. The opportunity to become “Saturday’s Hero” placed football at the center of that social world. For an excellent, first-person account of the role of athletics at Yale, see Malcolm Ross, *Death of a Yale Man* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1939).

The hysteria that surrounded tramp athletes also obscures the fact that most college football teams during this period were developed from the general student body. Even national powerhouses such as the Penn Quakers relied largely on material nurtured through the school's system of undergraduate "scrub" teams. The level of talent in any given year frequently depended on the luck of the draw. During the 1890s, even high school experience was hard to come by. In 1903, a Penn student recalled the freshman tryouts in 1899: "Here, [Coach] Heges, with that worried look of his, eyed us hopelessly and inquired concerning our past performances. Having found out to his dissatisfaction, and merely as a matter of form, what schools we had come from and what positions we had played while at school, he announced in an aggrieved voice that practice would begin the next day at twelve o'clock and continue regularly at the usual dinner hour." Other colleges assembled talent in much the same way. What they lacked in experience they made up for in sheer volume of prospects. In 1900, Franklin Roosevelt was one of 142 incoming freshmen – about a quarter of entering undergraduates – who turned out for tryouts at Harvard. The tall but gangly Roosevelt, who played at Exeter as a prep school boy, did not make the team.<sup>342</sup>

Relying on internal talent reinforced the socially exclusive character of the game. In the academically relaxed and socially privileged atmosphere of Victorian-era college campuses, football was part of the richly textured world of extracurricular activities which, far more than academics, defined the college experience for most sons (and daughters) of privilege. Grades

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<sup>342</sup> *Record of the Class of 1903*, 151; Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 14. William H. Lewis described the team-building process in a 1902 article published in *Outing*. Lewis likened assembling a football team to mustering an army. "The recruiting officer is at the gymnasium, where every candidate must pass a severe physical examination before he is allowed to take part in the sport. He is then sent to the field and put in the hands of the drill sergeant to be made or broken. If he is one of the eleven men among the three thousand, he is then attached to his regiment, the eleven." See Lewis, "Making a Football Team," *Outing* 41/2 (November 1902): 221-229

and course work were less important than attending to social affairs: “eating clubs,” fraternities, and, of course, athletic games. Part of the explanation for football’s popularity in the late nineteenth century is that, like literary societies and glee clubs, it helped break the monotony of deadly dull curricula. Indeed, even administrators concurred, especially by the 1890s when, in the words of Princeton man Woodrow Wilson, “the side shows” had all but “swallowed up the circus.” “We had our religion,” Malcolm Ross recalled of his days at Yale around World War I “– success in extra curriculum activities. . . . The punishment of the football squad, the hardihood an oarsman learned . . . these, more than a love of Fielding’s humor, may have prepared Yale men to become 20<sup>th</sup> Century executives; much as the strenuous training of Roman youth bred proconsuls able to keep the *pax Romana* in a far province of the Empire.”<sup>343</sup>

Football was becoming an increasingly important diversion for non-students as well. Popular accounts from the late nineteenth century depicted the typical spectator as a dandy clad in a raccoon-coat, waving a pennant and willing to pay big money for the privilege of rooting for his team. The annual match between Harvard and Yale, which moved to Manhattan Field in New York during the mid-1880s to accommodate fan interest, signaled the beginning of the winter social season for wealthy New Yorkers. A typical match in 1887 drew 20,000 spectators, some of whom paid upwards of \$40 for scalped tickets. After Harvard withdrew from the IFA, Princeton became Yale’s Thanksgiving Day opponent. Crowds typically averaged between 30,000 and 40,000 – astonishing numbers for a game still in its infancy. Spectators included

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<sup>343</sup> Ross, *Death of a Yale Man*, 9. On the prevailing attitudes within and character of higher education, see W. Bruce Leslie, *Gentlemen and Scholars: College and Community in the ‘Age of the University,’ 1865-1917* (University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press), 189-194.



multi-millionaire Cornelius Vanderbilt, along with a parade of New York celebrities and socialites.<sup>344</sup>

Few other college match-ups generated the same social buzz, but most still attracted an upper-class fan base. “A football crowd is essentially a downtown or mid-town hotel crowd,” one observer wrote in the 1930s. The reason was simple: most paying college football fans, especially those who filled out the stands on crisp autumn Saturday afternoons, were alumni who, by dint of having attended and graduated from a college or university, constituted a select demographic. In 1900, less than three percent of Americans of college age attended college or university. The percentage who graduated with degrees was smaller still.<sup>345</sup> With a few notable exceptions, colleges as late as the 1930s routinely projected attendance at home games based on sales to students and alumni, not to the general public. As colleges and universities increasingly discovered, wealthy alumni proved very loyal fans, and dependable financial boosters. By 1900, football had become the main vehicle through which colleges garnered alumni support. The relationship was symbiotic. The more competitive the team, the more alumni support; the more alumni support, the more competitive the team. Alumni would play a critical role in the sport’s eventual democratization.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 80-81.

<sup>345</sup> McCready Huston, *Salesman from the Sidelines: Being the Business Career of Knute K. Rockne* (New York: R. Long and R.R. Smith, 1932), 72; Kett, *Rites of Passage*, 178; Susan B. Carter et al., eds., *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present. Millennial Edition. Volume Two, Part B: Work and Welfare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 443-445.

<sup>346</sup> Huston, *Salesman from the Sidelines*, 72. The popularity of schools outside the Ivy League, notably Notre Dame's surging popularity during the 1920s and advent of radio broadcasts, did much to draw fans beyond alumni. For a discussion of “subway alumni,” see Sperber, *Shake Down the Thunder*, 264 and Francis Wallace, *The Notre Dame Story* (New York: Rinehart, 1949), 176-179.

## 4.2 Gridirons and Local Elites: College Football at the University of Pittsburgh, 1904-1918

From its epicenter on the East Coast, college football radiated out to other parts of the country. Although many Pennsylvania colleges were fielding football teams during the 1880s and 1890s, most did not begin to emphasize football until after the turn of the century. During this period, small private colleges, such as Washington and Jefferson in southwestern Pennsylvania and emerging public universities and land grants, such as Penn State College, began competing successfully against member schools of the future Ivy League. Again, Camp's All American lists supply a rough index of the changing center of nationally competitive college football. After 1910, Harvard, Princeton and Yale's production of All Americans dropped off; by 1933, not a single player from the Big Three was represented on Camp's illustrious list. In its place, new Midwestern and Western powers such as Minnesota, Chicago and Stanford rushed in.<sup>347</sup>

Although programs developed unevenly, the trend at almost all schools was toward competitive football, as marked by membership in recognized conferences and investments in professional coaching and training. The degree of competitiveness obviously varied based on how much schools were willing to emphasize the program and devote resources to it. In a matter of a dozen years, officials at the University of Chicago managed to take an unremarkable team associated with a relatively obscure Midwestern university and turn it into a national powerhouse. Along with hiring the best coaching talent that money could buy, the university engaged in an all-out drive to promote the sport, including an organized conspiracy between

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<sup>347</sup> March, *Pro Football*, 10, 12. "This shows how the strength of the game has swept Westward, leaving New England pretty barren of outstanding talent." It also signified a social-class shift in the composition of college football rosters.

administrators and faculty to keep athletically gifted but academically underperforming students eligible. While most schools never hoped or aspired to follow the Chicago model, the informal, student-centered college football program had become a relic of the past.<sup>348</sup>

The football program at the University of Pittsburgh followed a more typically gradual course. Known until 1908 as Western University of Pennsylvania (WUP), WUP fielded its first team in 1889 and played its first full season the following year. As during the early years of most programs, management of the team during the 1890s was left largely in the hands of students and a sprinkling of alumni. Play was often erratic. The team had no faculty coach for its first three years and had even less luck finding qualified or willing competitors. During its first few seasons, the team played against everyone from local prep schools to semi-professional athletic clubs. It was not until after the 1903 season that school officials acquiesced to alumni calls for a stronger program. Thanks to alumni contributions (funneled through a newly formed “football association”), the school purchased and furnished a rooming house for the use of student athletes. During the season it underwrote a Walter Camp-style training table. It also found ringers. Shortly after tiny Geneva College pulled off an upset win over regional powerhouse Washington and Jefferson in 1903, WUP raided the school’s roster and arranged for the transfer of most of the team to the Pitt squad in time for the start of the 1904 season. The use of transfer, professional and non-student athletes signaled, if not the arrival of Big Time athletics, at least the desire to emulate the success of powerhouses such as Princeton and Penn.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Robin Lester, *Stagg’s University: The Rise, Decline and Fall of Big-Time Football at Chicago* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 55-57.

<sup>349</sup> Francis J. Powers, *Life Story of Glen S. (Pop) Warner, Gridiron’s Greatest Strategist* (Chicago: Athletic Institute, 1969. Originally published in 1947); Robert C. Alberts, *Pitt: The Story of the University of Pittsburgh, 1787-1987* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986), 63-65.

With its hired guns, WUP ran up its best season yet in 1904, including lopsided victories over the recently eviscerated Geneva College and nearby rivals West Virginia and Penn State. But despite its open and liberal use of transfer students, WUP teams from this era still corresponded very closely to the upper-class social profile which defined college football as it was being played at most schools in the country. WUP's starting eleven in 1904 was dominated almost entirely by players of Scots-Irish decent and included four future lawyers, four physicians, one dentist, and one professor of engineering. (One of the future lawyers on the 1904 team, Joe Thompson, had graduated from Geneva College and had come to Western U to study law; after graduating from law school, Thompson returned to the team to become its head coach in 1908.) The 1904 and 1905 teams also included graduates from Harvard and Princeton, another measure of the degree to which college football during this period was still monopolized by elite Eastern schools and their upper-class kin at schools such as Western U.<sup>350</sup>

Through the early 1900s, the football teams at WUP, renamed the University of Pittsburgh in 1908, were coached by a series of competent (and often Princeton trained) coaches, but the arrival of Glenn "Pop" Warner as head coach in 1915 signaled a new era of competitive football at Pitt: the ascendancy of the full-time professional coach. Warner's hiring was the culmination of efforts by the school's athletic committee and supportive trustees to put the program into high competitive gear. Sometime around 1910, Karl Davis, the school's "graduate manager of athletics" – the forerunner of the modern-day athletic director – aligned with A.R. Hamilton, a university trustee, fervent football booster, and an executive with Berwind White Coal, then the largest coal operator in the country. Hamilton had been involved with WUP/Pitt

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<sup>350</sup> Alberts, *Pitt*, 65; Jim O'Brien, ed., *Hail to Pitt: A Sports History of the University of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Wolfson Publishing Co.), 62, 65.

athletics since 1904, but in 1913, he stepped up his role by donating part of his summer estate in Windber, Somerset County, for use as a pre-season training camp. Hamilton, whom one writer later characterized as Pitt football's "angel," also later organized the distribution of "scholarships" and campus jobs for student athletes and contributions from fellow alumni.<sup>351</sup>

Davis and Hamilton succeeded in luring Warner away from the Carlisle Indian School. At Carlisle, Warner had the good fortune to preside over such gifted athletes as Jim Thorpe and wracked up an impressive winning record against the Big Three. Warner would stay at Pitt until 1923, but he experienced his greatest success during his first four seasons. During his first season in 1915, Warner brought Pitt the first of what would be three national titles earned during his tenure. Warner's championship runs unofficially made Pitt the top college power in the Commonwealth and catapulted it to the top of the East alongside Cornell. In 1916, in what Warner regarded as perhaps the most important game of his career to that point – and likely the most important game to date for the Pitt Panthers – his starting eleven vanquished the once mighty Penn Quakers. At the end of the 1916 season, the *New York Times* breathlessly announced that the once "obscure" school in the Smoky City had officially ended Penn's gridiron monopoly.<sup>352</sup>

Pitt's rise may have meant the end to the old order, but it did not signal the sport's democratization. While occasionally dipping into the lower middle class for talented athletes, evidence suggests that Pitt players were largely derived from the same professional class, if not patrician stock, as those at Penn and the Big Three. Although Warner's hiring helped to raise the

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<sup>351</sup> Harry G. Scott, *Jock Sutherland: Architect of Men* (New York: Exposition Press, 1954), 38-38, 61; Mike Bynum, ed., *Pop Warner: Football's Greatest Teacher. The Epic Autobiography of Major College Football's Winningest Coach, Glenn S. (Pop) Warner*, By Glenn S. Warner (Langhorne, Pa.: Gridiron Football Properties, 1993), 152; "Alfred Reed Hamilton," *The University of Pittsburgh Record* 1/1 (October 1926):163, 187.

<sup>352</sup> Bynum, *Football's Greatest Teacher*, 59-60, 150-153; "Pitt Entitled to the Throne," *New York Times*, 3 December 1916.

game's competitive level at the university and attract more students to team tryouts, Warner did so by drawing off the regular student body, which was overwhelmingly old stock, upper middle class, albeit with a strong Western Pennsylvania flavor. During the 1916 season, 32 of the 35 players were from the region. Although less overt than the Duquesne Club and other bastions of upper-class society, as the local outlet for amateur football, Pitt football helped fortify upper-class consciousness all the same.<sup>353</sup>

Looking back on Warner's hiring at Pitt, sports journalist Frances Wallace intimated that selective recruiting was already playing a role: "even in those enlightened days, when a school hires a big time coach a stellar cast of athletes appears about a year later." But Warner was convinced that the mere size of the student body at Pitt – 3900 enrolled students – would yield sufficient athletic talent. After the team gathered for its first tryouts, Warner concluded that he had "football material generally superior in quantity and quality to that which he had at Carlisle." He also had the good fortune to assume the reins of a team which during the previous season had gone 8 and 1 under Coach Duff, a Princeton grad. "From the 1914 squad, Warner inherited several players who were to win All-America honors. It was a squad that needed only the Warner touch to become a champion." Warner indeed had the touch. At Carlisle, he introduced several new techniques which were credited with revolutionizing the game. Along with conceiving the wingback formation, Warner was noted for "tricks of the hidden ball," such as reverses, that relied on deception and timing.<sup>354</sup>

All a team needed was thorough training in the "Warner system." At Pitt, thanks to the support of "a community keen to share in the athletic development of the university," Warner

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<sup>353</sup> Powers, *Glenn S. (Pop) Warner*, 40; Couvares, *Remaking of Pittsburgh*, 104.

<sup>354</sup> Powers, *Glenn S. (Pop) Warner*, 37-38; Robert W. Wheeler, *Jim Thorpe, World's Greatest Athlete* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 39.

ramped up player training. At Camp Hamilton, he instructed his new players on the finer points of his “deception” techniques, from reverses on offense to the “block and interference” style of defense, both of which were perfected at Carlisle. (The camp’s relative physical seclusion helped maintain Warner’s trade secrets.) He also implemented a rigorous program of discipline, both on and off the field; players who violated curfew at camp were harshly penalized. Scouts for the University of Pennsylvania, whom Warner’s squad would face later that season, were impressed with the results. “Warner teaches his men to get the ball and keep it. Pittsburgh has the best interferes and tacklers in the game today.”<sup>355</sup>

As Pitt’s players were made rather than found, it is unsurprising to learn that Warner’s squad was still largely indistinguishable from the rest of the student body – that is, native born and upper middle class. Jock Sutherland, one of the athletes most famously associated with Warner’s early championship teams, was the exception that proved the rule. Sutherland came to Western Pennsylvania from Scotland in 1904 and had no formal education beyond the eighth grade. But the circumstances which brought him to Pitt in 1914 were more the product of happenstance than recruiting. An acquaintance enrolled in Pitt’s dental school persuaded Sutherland to apply there after prep school, a supplementary one-year program which he paid for from his own accumulated savings. The acquaintance sold Sutherland on dentistry, and then sold A.H. Hamilton on Sutherland’s athletic ability. (Sutherland had no prior football experience.) Only after Sutherland had been accepted into Pitt’s dental school was he introduced to his future

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<sup>355</sup> Bynum, *Football’s Greatest Teacher*, 152-155. Others echoed this sentiment, attributing Warner’s success to his system, based largely on “tackle and interference” and other innovations that left the opposition perplexed. At Carlisle, he introduced several new techniques, including the famous “Indian block.” Warner also used contacts cultivated at Carlisle to raise the caliber of Pitt’s opponents. Thanks to “Pop,” Pitt managed to schedule games with the Penn Quakers, whom it resoundingly defeated. Wheeler, *Jim Thorpe*, 38-46; Powers, *Glen S. (Pop) Warner*, 34-37.

sponsor and encouraged to try out for the football team. The future All American played his first college football at the ripe age of 25, old even by the standards of the 1910s.<sup>356</sup>

Most of Warner's other standouts were at least as middle-to-upper-middle class as the general student population, if not more so. George McClaren, who captained the 1918 squad, was of Scots-Irish extraction. McClaren was also one of several players on the 1918 team who had graduated from Peabody High School, one of Pittsburgh's largest public schools. Herb McCracken was another product of the city's Scots-Irish elite: McCracken hailed from Sewickley, an upper-class suburb north of town. A broader sampling of players who could be identified in university records from the 1917 and 1919 squads reveals a common social profile.<sup>357</sup> Most came from solidly professional households, with fathers who were real estate agents, merchants, civil engineers, and doctors and dentists. Only two players in the sample (both from the 1919 squad) could be reasonably categorized as from working-class households, as indicated by their fathers' occupation. Both of these players were of native-born, Protestant stock.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> Scott, *Jock Sutherland*, 37-39. In 1913, Sutherland enrolled for a year at Oberlin Academy with the expectation that he would attend Springfield College and work for the YMCA organization. During the interim, though, an acquaintance at Pitt's dental school persuaded him to apply to Pitt. Scott, *Jock Sutherland*, 34-36.

<sup>357</sup> *The Owl: The Annual of the University of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh, 1917), 273 (Hereafter cited as *The Owl* with publication date in brackets); *The Owl* [1919], 324, 327; *The Owl* [1920], 242, 245; *The Owl* [1921], 394, 397; Student Application Records, 1915-1924, University Archives, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa. (Hereafter University Archives). Student records for this period are incomplete: Twenty-one players on the 1919 squad and fifteen players from the 1917 squad could be identified in extant application files. Applications which could be located generally yielded a wealth of data. Pitt's application forms required students to indicate their religion, father's occupation, proposed course of study, extracurricular activities, and whether or not they were "self supporting."

<sup>358</sup> Within the 1917 sample, there were five merchants, two medical doctors, one dentist, one attorney, one realtor, one steel plant superintendent, and only one whose occupation which could be interpreted as lower middle class (a mail carrier). In the 1919 sample, only one player described his father's occupation as an "iron worker;" a second player listed his father's occupation as a "roller." These job titles stand out among a majority who were professionals or businessmen. Religious denomination was also consistent. Within the 1917 sample, there were 11 Protestants, four Jews and one Catholic. Within the 1919 squad, there were 15 Protestants (including nine Presbyterians), five Catholics and two Jews. Although Pitt was not in the same academic class as the Penn and Swarthmores, like most universities and colleges, it still enrolled only a narrow slice of the population. In 1915, for



Many players had also graduated from private prep schools, a strong marker, at least during this period, of wealth and privilege.<sup>359</sup> On the 1917 squad, for instance, about a third of the players came to Pitt by way of regional boarding academies and day schools, including Shady Side Academy, Kiski Prep in Saltsburg, Bellefonte Academy in Centre County, and Wyoming Seminary in Wilkes-Barre. Some of these would eventually evolve into “football factories,” i.e., prep schools which specialized in preparing, or worse, “harboring” student athletes for colleges and universities. But during this period at least, such students still conformed to middle to upper-middle-class profiles. Two of the most notable Kiski products on Warner’s championship teams were recruited at the beginning of the 1918 season to fill holes created by graduation and the general depletion from World War I. But both were middle class. In an era when the high school curriculum in even many cities was often inadequate, prep schools were frequently the only alternative for those who needed preparation to pass college entrance exams. They were not places for student athletes from poor families – yet.<sup>360</sup>

Those who did not attend prep schools graduated from large public high schools. On the 1917 squad, several players graduated from high schools in identifiable steel towns of the Monongahela and Ohio Valleys. Interestingly, though, their fathers worked not as steelworkers but as businessmen. The only identifiable player of Slavic background was from Homestead, a

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instance, only 3.3% of the college aged population attended an institution of higher education. Thus even “streetcar” universities were de-facto exclusive. This point is brought home by the fact that even during the 1920s, the University of Pittsburgh, situated within an increasingly immigrant city, enrolled a smaller proportion of second generation ethnics than the University of Chicago. See “Nativity Study of Student Population,” Unpublished report, Division of Research in Higher Education (June 1930), (Pitt) University Archives.

<sup>359</sup> On the relationship between private preparatory schools and colleges in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Leslie, *Gentlemen and Scholars*, 214-217.

<sup>360</sup> Prep schools maintained “charity funds” for students who could not afford fees and tuition. But the paucity of records makes it difficult to determine how many charity cases were awarded and at what point student athletes became the primary recipient of such funds. At Kiski Prep, the era of truly competitive football began in 1915, and active recruiting, implicitly so, as well. “Football scholarships during the teens, twenties and thirties were based on need. If [Coach] Marks needed the boy, he got a scholarship.” Nanney, *Kiski*, 40. This change in the social composition of prep school players is discussed more fully in a subsequent section of this chapter.

large steel town just outside of Pittsburgh. The player's father operated a hotel and real estate office. No players hailed from any of the dozens of small communities in the bituminous coal fields of southwestern Pennsylvania, or the hard coal region of northeastern Pennsylvania, important sources of athletes in later years. If Pitt was actively recruiting, there is little evidence that they went much beyond the city of Pittsburgh or the same string of regional prep schools which also fed the general student population.<sup>361</sup>

The only feature which seemed to distinguish football players from the general student body was their predilection for dentistry.<sup>362</sup> But even this was tempered by the fact that many of the dental students were on the second team rather than the starting lineup and that by 1919, economics had become just as popular as dentistry. In every other respect, from admissions to graduation rates to academic performance to involvement in extracurricular activities, football players were indistinct. Most importantly, there is no evidence that student athletes during this period played football in exchange for tuition. On their college applications, the vast majority of football players described their circumstances as "self supporting." Only one athlete indicated financial need. Any monetary inducements that were extended were unlikely to have been on the same scale as later scholarships; tramp athletes were paid by the game, and usually floated in and

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<sup>361</sup> In terms of both courses of study and extracurricular activities, players on Pitt's football teams during this period were largely indistinguishable from that of the general student population. While a few players listed football as their only student activity, most belonged to other clubs as well, such as literary societies, debate and glee clubs, and social fraternities. George "Tank" McLaren, Pitt's fullback during the Warner years and an All-American selection in both 1917 and 1918, served as both captain of the football team and president of his senior class. Although many squad lived together in an alumni purchased rooming house, football players at Pitt had not yet developed into a discreet subset of "student athletes."

<sup>362</sup> Dentistry was an extremely popular course of study among members of the 1917 squad, so much so that the team was dubbed "the fighting dentists." Of the fifteen players identified in student application records, eight studied dentistry, while four pursued medicine. The balance studied engineering, mines and economics. According to the Pitt Dental School, 19 players on the 1917 eventually earned dental degrees. Of the major courses of study indicated by players on the 1919 squad, economics was the most popular, followed closely by dentistry, engineering, and law. Student Application Records, University of Pittsburgh, 1916-1924, University Archives; Data supplied by Dr. Dennis Ranalli, School of Dental Medicine, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa. September 27, 1997.

out of rosters. The enticement of a college degree was simply not in play before World War I. Instead, the benefits derived from athletics were more intangible: recognition from one's peers, the thrill and camaraderie of competition, and the display of upper-class notions of masculinity.<sup>363</sup>

These circumstances changed gradually over the next decade. Under Coach Jock Sutherland, Pitt's 1927 and 1929 teams compiled impressive, undefeated records and in many ways recalled Sutherland's own playing days, when Warner's teams won consecutive national championships. But the players were noticeably different. Sutherland's team leader, Albert DiMeolo was the first Pitt team captain of "new immigrant" extraction. DiMeolo's parents had emigrated from Italy to Youngstown at the turn of the century. Quarterback Eddie Baker, a second generation Polish American, had been raised in Nanticoke, a hard scrabble coal town in northeastern Pennsylvania. Toby Uansa, a powerful running back known in the local (and ethnic) press as the "Damaging Slav," came out of McKees Rocks, an equally gritty steel town on the Ohio River. An alumni magazine declared, with fitting understatement, that the 1929 squad represented one of the "most diverse crews yet assembled." It would not be the last.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Leslie, *Gentlemen and Scholars*, 217-219; Student Application Records, University Archives. A student who played on the 1924 squad indicated in his application that he worked a number of odd jobs before applying to Pitt and that he would "do any work possible to get along." This player, though, seems to be the exception, and in every other way, blended with the rest of the student population. He identified himself as Presbyterian, for instance, with an interest in "literary clubs" along with football. During the 1930s, student athletes would enter into more formal agreements regarding compensation for tuition and room and board. The stakes for these athletes would be much higher.

<sup>364</sup> O'Brien, *Hail to Pitt*, 83.

### 4.3 “Stadiumitis,” the Commercialization of College Football and the Search for “Football Material”

Pitt never consciously set out to build non-competitive teams, but it ratcheted up its program at precisely the same moment that the sport entered its formative stages of commercialization during and after World War I. During this period, the sport completed its transition from the informal, player-centered era to the “spectator centered” modern enterprise, with all the related implications for marketing and promotion, and player recruitment.<sup>365</sup>

For the Big Three, interscholastic football had been lucrative almost from the beginning. Harvard’s football program generated \$42,000 in profits in 1894, mostly from just two games: one with long standing rival Yale, the other with Thanksgiving Day opponent Penn. As Ronald Smith has shown, by the 1890s, Thanksgiving Day games became the commercial high point in the football calendar for nearly all colleges driven by gate receipts. The key was finding a marquee large enough to capitalize on the demand. In 1886, Harvard and Yale agreed to move their annual match from their respective campuses to New York’s Manhattan Field (later renamed the Polo Grounds) to accommodate the legions of paying customers. The arrangement worked for a while, but by the 1900s, as spectator interest continued to intensify, colleges began to entertain alumni wishes for campus-based stadiums. Although dedicated college stadiums required considerable capital, they allowed schools control over the gate.<sup>366</sup>

With the opening of multi-purpose Franklin Field on its West Philadelphia campus, the University of Pennsylvania became the first of the major Eastern powers to move in this direction. Franklin Field cost \$100,000, a sizeable amount at that time. Even with a relatively

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<sup>365</sup> Riesman and Denney, “Football in America,” 253.

<sup>366</sup> Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 78-82,

generous seating capacity of about 20,000, university officials often found themselves in the envious position of having more fans than seats. Tickets sold so briskly for the Harvard game in 1897 that two temporary end stands were hastily assembled to accommodate another 2500 paying spectators. By the time game day rolled around, reporters noted that twice that many “would gaze and yell . . . if there was sufficient space around Franklin Field to accommodate them. . . .Scarcely a seat is to be had to-night for love or money.”<sup>367</sup>

Harvard got the hint. In 1904, thanks to both revenue collected from the school’s Athletic Committee and a nearly \$100,000 gift from the class of 1879 – evidence again of the financial resources of college alumni – Harvard opened its own modern sports arena in Cambridge. The new steel and concrete stadium, which could accommodate close to 40,000, marked the official beginning of the stadium era. The scale and grandeur of Harvard’s massive, horse-shoe shaped stadium invoked comparisons to the Coliseum. “The strength needed to support such a load is enormous, but the stadium has been built to last for ages,” wrote one reporter. “The lowest seats, like the seats in the old amphi-theater at Rome, are elevated about eight feet from the gridiron by a heavy wall, through an opening in which the players appear, like gladiators of old, from the dressing room underneath the stand.” Within 15 years, another three dozen new concrete stadiums appeared on campuses around the country. During the halcyon 1920s, that number nearly tripled as an additional 55 stadiums were erected by colleges eager to cash in on the football craze.<sup>368</sup>

According to John Tunis, one of the many sportswriter-critics of the interwar years, the appearance of such stadiums signified a critical turning point in the development – or devolution,

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<sup>367</sup> *New York Times*, 18 November 1897; 20 November 1897

<sup>368</sup> “Harvard’s Great Stadium,” *New York Times*, 21 November 1903; Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 91.

depending on one's perspective – of college football. During the pre-stadium/playing field days, the average college football coach was not motivated by money; “he himself was wealthy and needed nothing from the game; others did.” But after the stadiums were built, coaches and athletic directors became nothing more than, in Tunis' words, “professional promoters jockeying for position on each other's profitable schedules. The public wanted a show. They provided.” The new breed of football players who “earned the gate money which paid these men's emoluments had been bought for ridiculously small sums.”<sup>369</sup>

Pitt was at least a decade or two behind the Big Three, but by the 1910s it was poised to follow. The hiring of Glenn “Pop” Warner in 1915 signaled the start of the university's new commitment to Big Time athletics. By offering Warner the then staggering sum of \$4,500 per season, Pitt proved it was willing to make the investment. And it worked: in 1915, Warner coached the Panthers through an undefeated 8-0 season and the first of three national titles. The Warner hire paid for itself almost immediately in profits from gate receipts. During home games, Warner's squad generated enough interest to fill Forbes Field, home to the Pittsburgh Pirates of the National League, to its 32,000-seat capacity. During the 1915 season and the other championship seasons that followed, demand outstripped supply, translating into lost revenue for the university.<sup>370</sup>

Crews would not start construction on Pitt stadium until 1924, but planning began in 1919, after Coach Warner made it a condition of his contract renewal that year. Pitt may have

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<sup>369</sup> Tunis, *Democracy and Sport*, 25.

<sup>370</sup> Powers, *Glenn S. Pop Warner*, 35; Bynum, *Football's Greatest Teacher*, 159-160. Pitt began playing games at Forbes Field, home ballpark for the National Leagues' Pittsburgh Pirates, after the school moved its campus to the city's Oakland section in 1908. Between 1908 and 1915, the 32,000-seat Forbes Field proved adequate. But as Warner's national championship teams gained momentum, home games became “standing room only.” In his autobiography, Warner claims he began campaigning for a new stadium in 1919. O'Brien, *Hail to Pitt*, 65. Bynum, *Football's Greatest Teacher*, 179.

also sensed the coming of a bullish market for college football: between 1921 and 1930, attendance at college football games doubled and gate receipts tripled.<sup>371</sup> Unfortunately, Pitt's stadium project seemed cursed from the outset. The cost for the 67,000-seat stadium was originally estimated at \$1 million, but quickly rose to \$2.2 million. The increase required the university to float additional bonds, which saddled the school with a hefty indebtedness. Alumni boosters and supportive trustees had grossly miscalculated the team's revenue potential. While Notre Dame cautiously invested \$750,000 in a stadium for a team with proven box office appeal, Pitt had invested two-and-a-half times that for a team with a relatively much smaller and less profitable market. According to the project's critics, among them gadfly sportswriter Francis Wallace, Pitt had unwittingly succumbed to "stadiumitis," a disease which compelled many ambitious colleges and universities to reach beyond their means.<sup>372</sup>

Pitt Stadium was also the victim of bad timing. The Panthers' box office appeal was already sagging by the time construction crews set to work in late summer of 1924. Warner never turned in a losing season at Pitt, but after World War I he was unable to match the success of his first championship years. During the early 1920s, Pitt lost ground in the East as other teams decoded and then perfected Warner's system and as "materials became more evenly balanced." Pitt's system of drawing from the regular student body was no longer delivering adequate talent. Warner resigned after the 1923 season as the Athletic Council after years of feet dragging finally moved ahead on financing "the heavily bonded stadium . . . perched on a nearby hillside" which would open in time for the 1925 season. The advent of radio siphoned off

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<sup>371</sup> Bynum, *Football's Greatest Teacher*, 179; Steiner, *Americans at Play*, 88-90. In 1937, the *New York Times* reported that about forty college teams drew 60% of all fans. Pitt was among the forty. "20,000 Saw College Games as Football Scaled New Heights," *New York Times*, 26 December 1937.

<sup>372</sup> Sperber, *Shake Down the Thunder*, 337; Rader, *American Sports*, 209; Tunis, *Democracy and Sport*, 24-25; Francis Wallace, *Stadium* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1931).

another corner of the market. By the mid-1920s, Pitt Stadium had become a “concrete chaplet” around the University’s neck, although an impressive one; when it debuted on September 25, 1925, it was the third largest college stadium in the country.<sup>373</sup>

That fact, of course, did not stop athletic and university officials from trying to make the stadium work, or at least pay for itself. Those responsible for directing the program labored under the pressure of not only fielding winning teams, but also scheduling home games against blockbuster opponents. Matches against regional rivals such as Carnegie Tech, Penn State and Washington and Jefferson already generated enthusiasm and large crowds. But the pressure to fill the new stadium compelled Pitt to supplement games against traditional rivals with more “money games.” In 1927, Pitt tacked on Midwestern powerhouse Nebraska. Three years later, it added Notre Dame, a school that “never played an away game” thanks to its legions of Catholic fans – a.k.a. “subway alumni.” (During the Panther’s first four seasons in the new stadium, neither did Pitt. All games between 1925 and 1928 were scheduled at home in an effort to boost revenue.) At the same time, Pitt was also beginning to assemble teams with players who looked less and less like the rest of the student body, including an increasing number of athletes of Eastern European descent and from the steel towns and coal patches of both southwestern and northeastern Pennsylvania. Francis Wallace bluntly underscored the connection. “To pay off the

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<sup>373</sup> “The University of Pittsburgh,” *Pittsburgh School Bulletin* (May 1926), 70. Journalist Francis Wallace satirized the Pitt stadium debacle in *Stadium*, a thinly veiled fictional account published in 1931. The novel followed the efforts of a “Metropolitan University” to turn around its football program and relieve its stadium debt. “Five years before [the stadium] had been erected to house the crowds which overflowed the ball park [aka Forbes Field] . . . But the stadium had not earned enough to pay even interest on the bonds.” Pitt Stadium was built on the assumption that it would be able to generate enough revenue to offset construction costs. It turned out to be an illusory goal, and by the late 1920s, it was becoming evident that Pitt did not have a sufficiently large market, no matter how many home games it managed to schedule.



stadium debt it was necessary to schedule money games. To play money games it was necessary to get Grade A material. Pitt went out and got them . . . .”<sup>374</sup>

The job of getting both top-notch opponents, and players who were capable of competing against them, fell in 1924 to Jock Sutherland. A former standout on Warner’s 1916 national champions, Sutherland had been an attentive student, both on and off the field. After graduating from Pitt’s dental school in 1918, Sutherland gravitated back to football through coaching, first with the Army Reserves and a year later with Lafayette College in eastern Pennsylvania. At Lafayette, Sutherland pulled off an impressive turn-around at the small college, mainly by applying elements of the same Warner system, such as the single wingback offense, that he learned as a player. More importantly, particularly relative to Sutherland’s assignment at Pitt, he did so almost entirely with “found” material. Aside from one or two experienced athletes whom Sutherland enticed to play, most of the players on the Lafayette squad were drawn from the regular student body. “Many of them had just entered college as freshmen and had played nothing but high school football up to that point,” Sutherland recalled. He attributed his eventual success with the raw recruits – in 1921, Lafayette went undefeated and won the Eastern championship – to both the accumulated experience of previous seasons and pre-season training camps.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Alberts, *Pitt*, 115-117; Francis Wallace, “Test Case at Pitt: The Facts about College Football Pay for Play,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 28 October 1939, 49. The onset of the Great Depression barely put a damper on Pitt’s quest to field profitable teams. Although sports promoters believed that Pitt Stadium was physically situated given in a congested section of town and on top of a dauntingly steep slope, football fans proved resilient. Compared to other sports, in fact, college football actually prospered during the Great Depression with attendance doubling between 1930 and 1937. Rader, *American Sport*, 182.

<sup>375</sup> Scott, *Jock Sutherland*, 79-102. During his second year at Lafayette, Sutherland’s team lost only three games, all to national powerhouses. The following year, Lafayette went undefeated and was considered the best team in the country. Sutherland apparently managed with local talent. Most of the players on the squad were from Easton High School and there is no evidence that Sutherland actively recruited even a handful of players after his 1919 season. Despite the accolades that went to Sutherland during his five year tenure there, he retained a position as a demonstrator in the Crown and Bridge Department in Pitt’s Dental School, where he returned during the off season.

But the need to fill stadium seats forced Sutherland and many other college coaches during the 1920s to reconsider the conventional approach to assembling competitive teams. Despite periodically loading the dice with “tramp athletes,” most schools traditionally relied on a combination of undergraduate enthusiasm and intensive coaching and training. Penn’s widely emulated reserve or scrub system, for instance, ensured a core group of experienced players to cover the next year’s vacancies. By World War I, though, open casting calls and school-wide tryouts became nearly obsolete, at least among the more competitive college programs. Schools could no longer afford to take such a hit-or-miss approach to assembling student athletes. The average student body of even of a large university simply did not yield sufficient talent to compete with universities which had already crossed the threshold of athletic recruiting.<sup>376</sup>

Paul Gallico expressed the dilemma as a simple imbalance between supply and demand. “Out of a student body of one thousand, 750 must be discarded immediately because of the physical requirements of the game . . . Of the remaining 250, 150 will be eliminated for one reason or another . . . That leaves a squad of a hundred or so, out of which forty perhaps have had a thorough football training in prep school or elsewhere.” As Gallico’s comments suggested, football required specialized training not readily found even among otherwise willing and able athletes, at least the sort of athlete most likely to be found on college campuses. “Football is definitely a specialized sport – much more so than golf or tennis or swimming,” Gallico wrote. The ideal football player needed to be both physically fit for the job, and capable of “if not intelligence, then adaptability to regimentation and the formation of habits.”<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> “Thirty Candidates Appear for the First Day’s Practice” *New York Times*, 13 September 1899 and “Football Candidates Assigned to Tables for the Regular Training.” *New York Times*, 30 September 1899.

<sup>377</sup> Gallico, *Farewell to Sport*, 212-213.

Although Gallico's statements were laced with a class bias that came just shy of outright contempt, the premise of his argument – the inadequacy of the general student population for producing competitive football players – seems to have been accepted by most colleges and universities, including Pitt. The obvious solution was to locate and bring in talent from other sources. In the past, schools were able to finesse experience by defining the term broadly to include students enrolled in graduate and professional schools, transfers from other schools and even the occasional semi-professional. But the reforms which followed in the wake of the 1905 season had ended this practice. By the 1910s, it was expected that players would meet the same admission standards as other students, maintain eligibility through good academic standing, and of course, compete as amateurs. This does not mean that infractions did not occur, only that it became more difficult for colleges and universities to flout eligibility rules without consequence.<sup>378</sup>

#### **4.4 Noblesse Oblige and Football Farms: Private Prep Schools and the Cultivation of Working-Class Athletes, 1915-1930**

In the East, relations have been established between certain private preparatory schools on the one hand and certain colleges and universities on the other, whereby athletes, varying in number from one to as many as twenty, have been wholly or partly maintained at the schools until they are ready for college.

Howard Savage, *American College Athletics*

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<sup>378</sup> Although it would still be decades before the adoption of uniform eligibility rules – the game still depended on self regulation, whether by school or by conference – heightened public scrutiny made it more difficult for schools to insert athletes with previous college experience. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), formed in 1906 as a reform body, would eventually succeed in imposing and enforcing eligibility rules on member institutions. Until that time, schools helped to keep each other honest by insisting that competitors abide by the same rules. See Smith, *Sports and Freedom*, 206-208. It is unclear when Pitt drafted its first eligibility requirements, but some rules were clearly in place during Warner's tenure as head coach. In 1919, Pitt lost two starters for academic reasons. Bynum, *Football's Greatest Teacher*, 179.

One solution to the “materials” problem was to create it. On the surface, colleges adhered strongly to the belief that students with no football experience could continue to be “molded” through wise and attentive instruction. Up to a point, this appeared to be the case. When Sutherland arrived at Lafayette for his first college coaching assignment, he remarked at length, and in detail (as quoted by his biographer) about the general inexperience of the players who showed up for the first day of practice. But when Sutherland moved from Lafayette to Pitt, where the Silent Scot would make his permanent mark on the world of college football, Sutherland’s biographer offered curiously few details about the sources of talent, and how, aside from the standard nostrums on coaching genius, such astonishingly productive teams were assembled. Perhaps for good reason: even as late as the late 1940s, college athletic officials were still extremely sensitive to charges of recruitment and athletic subsidization despite the fact that nearly all schools indulged in such practices to varying degrees.<sup>379</sup>

The first strategy was to tap private preparatory boarding schools. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the appearance of football players with prep school experience would have been considered unremarkable. Far from signaling impropriety, preparatory schools were the standard course between common school and college. Even after 1895, when the number of public high schools in Pennsylvania grew dramatically, preparatory schools were still considered the preferred course of secondary education for young men intent on enrolling in college. Prep schools by definition prepared students to pass college admissions tests and helped acclimate them to the academic (and social) rituals of college life. By virtue of

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<sup>379</sup> Scott, *Jock Sutherland*, 104-106; John Sayle Watterson, *College Football: History, Spectacle, Controversy* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 158-177.

their tuition fees, they were also *de facto* exclusive; prep schools were regarded as “a kind of private preserve of the sons of the rich.”<sup>380</sup>

But beginning around World War I, the clustering of prep school graduates on college football rosters became closely identified with another, and to the sport’s critics, more pernicious trend: the surreptitious recruitment of students based on athletic abilities or for the purposes of specialized athletic training. According to Paul Gallico, the proprietary use of prep schools to “salt away” prized athletes corresponded with the rise of Big Time athletics. By the late 1920s, some prep schools were being so widely used for this purpose that they became compared to farm teams of professional baseball clubs. If Pitt’s experience is indicative, such observations were well founded. But private preparatory schools were also handmaidens in the democratization of college football. Although it escaped the notice of virtually every contemporary observer during the 1920s and 1930s, private schools became the conduit for the first generation of working class and frequently “new ethnic” student athletes on college football rosters after 1920.<sup>381</sup>

At Pitt, athletes with prep school experience were liberally represented on the varsity squads before World War I. About a third of the players on the 1917 team listed private prep schools. But with the exception of a cluster of players from Bellefonte Academy, a private, Methodist-affiliated boarding school in Centre County, the distribution of the remaining schools argued against any systematic “farming.” Although one of the players with prep school

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<sup>380</sup> Arthur G. Powell, *Lessons from Privilege: The American Prep School Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 84; James McLachlan, “The Emergence of the Prep School” in Michael B. Katz, ed., *Education in American History: Readings on the Social Issues* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 198-219.

<sup>381</sup> Gallico, *Farewell to Sport*, 215. Scholars have acknowledged the relationship between prep schools and athletics, but they have overlooked the role which they played as incubators of football material. Michael DeJardins’ recent history of Groton offers an excellent analysis of that institution’s passion for football, but ignores the complicit role which prep schools outside the Groton/Andover sphere played in recruiting working-class students on the basis of athletic talent. See DeJardins, “Muscular Christian.”

experience became an All American, the top players on the 1917 squad had all matriculated at large public schools such as Peabody High in Pittsburgh. One of the starting eleven had even played previously at a state normal school, evidence which suggests that, if anything, Pitt preferred but did not systematically seek out players with prior experience.<sup>382</sup>

The first perceptible change occurred at the start of the 1918 season when three student athletes from the Kiski School, a private boarding preparatory some 50 miles east of Pittsburgh, joined the team. According to one of his biographers, Warner had turned to Kiski in an effort to fill the void created by World War I. In 1917, three starters from the previous season left to enlist. Pitt managed to complete another unbeaten season that year, but because of the war, the team made no claims to a national title. By 1918, the war had drawn off so many players that Pitt's season was reduced to four games. The war had also left Warner with a seriously depleted core. Only senior All Americans McClaren and Stahl were among the experienced returning upper classmen. Two of the three Kiski products who joined the team that season became starters. One of them, halfback Tom Davies, won first-team All American honors that year; the other, center Herb Stein, earned similar honors in subsequent seasons – an impressive accomplishment given their lack of college-level experience.<sup>383</sup>

Over the next few years, Kiski products continued to filter into the lineup. In 1919, there were six; the following year, eight of the team's nine prep schoolers were Kiski boys. Over the course of the 1920s, the number of Kiski grads fluctuated. By 1925, for instance, there were only two Kiski players on the Panther squad. But two other Pennsylvania prep schools, Bellefonte Academy and Wyoming Seminary, picked up the slack. It is important to note that

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<sup>382</sup> "Varsity Team, 1917," *The Owl* [1919], 337.

<sup>383</sup> "Statistics of the 1918 Football Squad," *The Owl* [1920], 245.

throughout this period, players with prep school experience remained relatively constant; in any given year, about a third of all players graduated from private preparatory schools. What changed was the distribution. Where once a mix of prep schools supplied players, by the 1920s, there would be only three: Kiski, Bellefonte Academy, and Wyoming Seminary. Players from Shadyside Academy, a popular city prep school, nearly evaporated. The trend suggests that by the 1920s Pitt was relying on a different type of prep school which produced a different kind of student athlete: well trained athletically, but also increasingly ethnic and working class.<sup>384</sup>

Tradition offers a partial explanation. Prep schools existed to help students achieve the necessary coursework or pass entrance exams required for admission, particularly to elite Eastern colleges. But such schools also passionately believed athletics to be an indispensable ingredient in that preparation, particularly as American educators in the late nineteenth century emphasized “character development.” Endicott Peabody, the headmaster at Groton at the turn of the century, spoke for both his generation of prep school administrators and his social class when he promoted the “gospel of strenuousness” through athletics, particularly team sports such as football. “Athletics are of the most immense importance in establishing righteousness in the school,” Peabody declared in 1894. Nearly thirty years later, Lawrenceville headmaster Mather Abbott argued that athletics needed to be stressed as least as much as scholarship. “[T]he function of a school is to form character and the highest aim of every prep schools is to turn out a man who can stand four square against every wind that blows.” Through its controlled violence, football

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<sup>384</sup> “Statistics of the 1919 Football Squad,” *The Owl* [1921], 397; “Statistics of the 1920 Football Squad,” *The Owl* [1922], 277; “1925 Varsity Statistics,” *The Owl* [1927], 296. Although all private prep schools were exclusive, a well defined hierarchy existed. Lawrence, Exeter, Groton and others prep schools which directly fed Ivy League colleges occupied the top tier. Most of these were located in either New England or the East Coast and catered to old stock elites. Regional prep schools such as Pittsburgh’s Shadyside Academy served local elites and nouveau riche. Wyoming Seminary in Kingston served a similar function for northeastern Pennsylvania. Nonetheless, Wyoming Seminary remained more populist and accepted working-class “scholarship” boys at a rate that surpassed that of Ivy League feeder schools.

had the added advantage of encouraging aggression and manliness in the “idle rich,” whom his charges, without proper instruction in athletics, might otherwise become. Football was also thought to encourage a spirit of democratic cooperation and teamwork among an elite student body groomed for leadership positions.<sup>385</sup> In fielding football teams, preparatory schools were well ahead of even the largest public high schools.<sup>386</sup>

Prep schools also enjoyed close ties to elite private colleges where the game, at least through the 1890s, was played with unparalleled devotion. Princeton loomed especially large for Pennsylvania’s private preparatory schools, by dint of both proximity and, in the case of Kiski and Bellefonte, religious (Presbyterian) and ethnic (Scots-Irish) affiliation. Former Princeton Tigers played leading roles at two of Pitt’s three principal “feeder schools” during the 1920s. James R. Hughes, who succeeded his father as headmaster at Bellefonte Academy, played quarterback for Princeton before being hired to teach mathematics at the Academy in 1885. Kiski headmaster A.W. Wilson was described in school publicity as a “famous varsity man at Princeton” and a devout Presbyterian. Wyoming Seminary had no direct connections to Princeton, but in the 1880s the school’s new headmaster announced his intention of promoting

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<sup>385</sup> Powell, *Lessons of Privilege*, 53; Desjardins, “Muscular Christian,” 220, 227. Mather quoted in *APER* 26/2 (February 1921): 107. Despite Groton’s enthusiasm for football in the 1890s, Headmaster Peabody actively resisted the lure of competitive football and according to Mark Dejaridins actually spearheaded the reform campaign which followed on the heels of the injury-strewn 1905 season. Peabody wrote to President Roosevelt urging him to use the power of his office to prevail upon the Big Three to curb brutality and cheating thought to be endemic in college football. Roosevelt agreed. Groton quietly moved away from the sport after that. Dejaridins, “Muscular Christian,” 235-239.

<sup>386</sup> Roger Saylor, *Scholastic Football in Southwestern Pennsylvania, 1892-1982* (Camp Hill, Pa.: Saylor, 1982). Wyoming Seminary began fielding football teams in 1883 and routinely played against freshman teams at nearby colleges such as Lafayette and Bloomsburg Normal School. Kiski Prep, located in Indiana County in Western Pennsylvania, fielded its first team in 1889. Football at Shadyside Academy began in the mid-1880s; in fact, Shadyside’s team pre-dated the first team at Pitt – then Western University of Pennsylvania – by several years. See George Swetnam, *So Stand Throughout the Years: A History of Shady Side Academy, 1883-1958* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Shadyside Academy, 1958), 45. During this period, prep schools more closely resembled colleges and universities than they did public high schools, in both academic subjects and extracurricular life.



“athletics as well as academics.” Wyoming subsequently developed a close relationship with Pennsylvania and Lafayette, both college powerhouses in their own right.<sup>387</sup>

Prep school administrators were involved in their schools’ organized athletics to a degree that many today would find astonishing. Kiski’s A.W. Wilson was so eager to see his “boys” succeed that for nearly eight seasons he played right alongside them and only “retired” after signing an agreement with other Eastern prep schools that banned faculty and staff from participating in such contests. (Kiski lost three other faculty players as a result.) Bellefonte Academy, which inaugurated its first season in 1891 with just two matches (one of which was against the freshman team at nearby Penn State College) and by cobbling together a mix of both “Bellefonte boys” and former college players, also routinely deployed faculty to fill positions. Headmaster Hughes played right end. Even after rules changes, headmasters and faculty at all three prep schools remained intimately involved with their schools’ football programs. Wyoming Seminary’s headmaster Levi Sprague traditionally hosted a “royal oyster supper” for the varsity football players at the end of each season. “To him the athlete was the embodiment of the dynamic spirit of life, which he so well exemplified in his life . . . After nearly every home game he would call on the coach and want to discuss some of the finer points of the game.”<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Nanney, *Kiski*, 18; “Bellefonte Academy,” *Commemorative Biographical Record of Central Pennsylvania* (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1898), 66-67. Kiski maintained close ties to the Presbyterian Church and declared that it was committed to the “moral and mental development of boys,” a task abetted by “20 Protestant churches within 8 miles.” Furthermore, thanks its location within a “beautiful agricultural region . . . the boys are entirely removed from the temptations of larger towns and cities.” *Catalog of 1888-1889, Kiskiminetas Springs School, Saltsburg, Pa.*, (Saltsburg, Pa: The Kiski School, c. 1888), 12. Dr. Levi Sprague served as headmaster and purveyor of athletics at Wyoming Seminary for over half a century, from his hiring in 1882 until his death in 1936. Bugbee, *Wyoming Seminary*, 547-548.

<sup>388</sup> Nanney, *Kiski*, 21; “1890-1891 School Year,” <http://academyhill.topcities.com/sports/1890/index.html>; Bugbee, *Wyoming Seminary*, 519, 559-560. “The Eastern preparatory schools have not played teachers or coach for a number of years and it seems eminently fitting that the two leading schools of Western Pennsylvania should accept a similar course,” the Kiski school newspaper noted that year.

It was a measure of the times that at no point was such enthusiasm perceived as incompatible with academic excellence or social grooming. If anything, a passion for athletics reaffirmed an institution's credentials as a serious preparatory school. When Kiski distributed its first catalog to prospective students, it underscored its intention to develop sports alongside academics. "While our first and chief aim shall always be the mental and moral culture of our pupils, we place a high estimate on . . . physical development . . . and will strive by judicious measure to encourage participation in all manly exercises." The same was true of Bellefonte Academy in Centre County. Like many private preparatory schools, Bellefonte touted its ability to prepare the best and brightest. It frequently boasted that it had "educated more governors, more senators, more judges, and more public men . . . than any other school in Pennsylvania." But it also had an exceptionally strong football program, thanks to the support and leadership of Headmaster Hughes. Wyoming Seminary inaugurated its football program in 1883. Although it had done so with the encouragement of the school's pro-athletics headmaster, Levi Sprague, the sport was enormously popular among students. "Football is *the* game among the boys," a Seminary student wrote in 1885. "More interest is manifest in this sport than was seen last year. Nearly every night the ball is kicked about in a promiscuous manner and the boys do not cease until the bell rings at seven o'clock." By the end of the decade, a student run Athletic Association imposed a "system of training" that set practice hours, a separate table in the dining hall, and other regulations.<sup>389</sup>

Athletics had been part of Kiski's mission from the beginning. A.W. Wilson, the school's founder, believed there was a market for a top quality preparatory school for social

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<sup>389</sup> *Catalog of 1888-1889, Kiskiminetas Springs School, Saltsburg, Pa.* (Saltsburg, Pa., 1888); Bugbee, *Wyoming Seminary*, 514-515, 519. Among other rules, football players at Wyoming Seminary were prohibited from eating "pie and cake" during the regular season.

elites in Western Pennsylvania outside of Pittsburgh. (Up to that point, the closest preparatory school was Shadyside Academy in Pittsburgh.) In 1888, Wilson and two business partners purchased the buildings and grounds of a defunct mineral springs resort on the Kiskiminetas River in Indiana County, about 50 miles east of Pittsburgh. Although the school opened the following year with very little advanced publicity, the new Kiski school had little problem drumming up business among wealthy, mainly Scots-Irish families who could afford the \$500 annual fees. Most of the student body came from relatively prosperous Western Pennsylvania towns such as Titusville and Greensburg. Although officially non-denominational, Wilson promoted the school as Presbyterian in character and, by dint of faculty affiliation, a feeder school for Princeton. By 1894, Kiski boasted 42 alumni in 11 colleges; over half were enrolled at Princeton.<sup>390</sup>

Football as an extra-curricular activity (and as a promotional tool) developed rapidly. The first property the school bought after its original building was land for a football field. It also hired a professionally trained coaching staff. In 1915, Wilson transferred head coaching responsibilities to James Marks, a Kiski alum who became a student of the game at Washington and Jefferson College (W&J), a small but up-and-coming football powerhouse in southwestern Pennsylvania. (In 1922, W&J represented the East in the Rose Bowl.) Under Marks, Kiski developed an intensive training program in football, staffed by “Princeton men” assigned as preceptors to small groups of student athletes. Two years after Marks assumed the program, Kiski won its first U.S. Prep School championship. It would earn a second national title in 1922. The 1915 team alone generated seven college captains and three first-team All Americans. From

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<sup>390</sup> Nanney, *Kiski*, 14,101; *Kiskiminetas Springs School Yearbook* (Saltsburg, Pa.: The Kiski School, 1918), 33, 35; *New York Times*, 2 April 1940.

that point until 1930, Kiski produced an average of two All Americans a year. It was no wonder that Marks was himself heavily recruited by college programs such as Dartmouth, offers which he consistently turned down.<sup>391</sup>

One key to the success of prep school programs was money. Kiski's well-funded sports program included not just coaches but a professional trainer and ample facilities. At Bellefonte, wealthy alumni lined up to support the program – not just in salaries for coaches, but also for uniforms, travel costs, and training tables that many public schools could not or did not support. Headmaster Hughes was also able to tap the schools' wealthy supporters to build some of the best athletic facilities in the region. The c. 1900 Hughes Athletic Field complex, which included a football stadium with grandstand, six tennis courts, two baseball fields and a large swimming pool, was so far advanced for the time that clubs from nearby Penn State used its facilities. In 1922, Wyoming Seminary played its first game at Nesbitt Memorial Field, a 5,000-seat stadium that was more commodious than those of most colleges in the area. Its headmaster, Dr. Sprague, was not only an enthusiast; he was also a "gifted fundraiser." By 1913, Sprague had raised close to \$100,000 for the school endowment, a figure which the Wyoming Conference of Methodists generously agreed to more than triple with a \$200,000 match.<sup>392</sup>

Wyoming Seminary presented an exception to another general rule: relatively small student enrollments. According to a 1917 survey, there were 500 students enrolled at Wyoming Seminary, but just 165 students at Kiski and a mere 80 students at Bellefonte Academy. What

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<sup>391</sup> Nanney, *Kiski*, 47-48, 52. In 1935, the *Pittsburgh Press* published a story on the school's barber, whom it speculated had likely cut the hair of each of Kiski's 72 first-team or honorable mention All Americans since his arrival in 1915. Nanney, *Kiski*, 86.

<sup>392</sup> *New York Times*, 29 July 1928; "Sports Facilities"

<http://www.acdemyhill.topcities.com/sports/facilities/index.html>; *Bellefonte: Fountain of Governors* (Bellefonte, Pa., c. 1976), 46; Denny Barber, "A History of Wyoming Seminary" (Pittston, Pa.: Wyoming Seminary, c. 2000) np.

would likely have been a hindrance for public schools, at least in terms of fielding athletic talent, proved an asset. Small schools could concentrate resources on athletic training. At Kiski, there were enough “preceptors” to provide individualized athletic skills training, a circumstance that would have been impossible in a larger school. One could have also argued that small enrollments and single-sex education – Wyoming Seminary was the only coed institution – reinforced a military-style training regimen. Football, in the words of Kiski authorities, was “king.” There were very few competing distractions, including girls.<sup>393</sup>

Another key to the success of Bellefonte and other private academies was flexible admissions. Compared to public high schools, prep schools had no age limitations, no tightly proscribed geographic districts from which they could draw and no dictated academic standards. The only admission (and continued eligibility) criterion was the ability to pay tuition. Headmasters chafed at the widely held belief that prep schools were “asylums for the dullard and the morally shipwrecked,” especially when compared against the sometimes more rigorous academic environment of large public high schools. Still, such academic autonomy gave prep schools enormous opportunities for assembling athletic talent. In 1920, Bellefonte Academy boasted an “unusually heavy and classy lot of players,” including one 240-pound tackle. It was small wonder. Before enrolling at the Academy, at least nine of its starting eleven had played football elsewhere. Two starters, including the team’s 200-pound right guard, described as a “tower of strength,” had played college football. The other seven starters had played at private preps or local public schools. So long as private boarding schools hewed to their mission of “preparing” students for college, they gave themselves considerable latitude in admissions. As a

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<sup>393</sup> Department of Public Instruction, *List of Secondary Schools in the State of Pennsylvania as Reported by Superintendents of Schools, 1917* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1917); Nanney, *Kiski*, 233-255.

result, ages ranged widely within the student population, with 14-years-olds enrolled in the same graduating class as post graduates in their mid or even late 20s. For many schools, the maturity of the football squad was a mark of distinction. Wyoming Seminary students became openly concerned one year after noticing that players' ages had dropped to "that of a common public high school."<sup>394</sup>

Tuition fees would have seemed to have been an obstacle to assembling athletic talent. During its first year of operation, Kiski charged \$80 tuition and \$400 for room and board, a considerable sum which would have seemed to place it beyond the reach of most households in Western Pennsylvania. But Kiski had little difficulty finding families seeking to enroll their sons there. By 1903, the school exhausted its rooming facilities and was forced to build a three-story addition to accommodate demand. From this strong base of paying customers, Kiski was able to cover costs for students who paid either no tuition or substantially reduced fees.<sup>395</sup>

Other prep schools used their ample endowments to subsidize scholarships. Wyoming Seminary gave its headmaster enormous discretion in dispensing tuition scholarships from its nearly \$300,000 endowment in 1910. Although the majority of its student body was drawn from upper-middle-class households, the Seminary under Sprague offered waivers to "worthy" students from poor families – a tradition which by the 1920s opened the door to football players. (Sprague purportedly combed the area's mining towns in search of deserving working-class Seminarians.) Room and board was "worked off" through sundry campus jobs. Interestingly, at Wyoming Seminary and other prep schools, financial assistance did not carry the same stigma as

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<sup>394</sup> Powell, *Lessons from Privilege*, 89; "A Resume of the Academy Football Season," *Democratic Watchman* (Bellefonte), 26 November 1920; Bugbee, *Wyoming Seminary*, 542. Prep schools eager to field competitive football teams enjoyed an enormous advantage over public high schools, where enrollment criteria was set by law, and even that of private colleges and universities, which after 1906 were guided by more stringent NCAA eligibility rules.

<sup>395</sup> Nanney, *Kiski*, 25; *Catalog of 1888-1889*, 11.

it often did at colleges and universities, likely because of the spirit of noblesse oblige which obtained at private prep schools. Even the most menial campus jobs were considered ennobling; in the words of one prep school official, such tasks helped instill in students a sense of “self sufficiency” and self worth.<sup>396</sup>

At some point, Pennsylvania’s sports-centric prep schools began to earmark financial assistance almost exclusively for athletes. Kiski clearly had some sort of work-study program in place by 1913, but it is not clear whether athletes were given preference over non-athletes. Neither Tom Davies nor Herb Stein, Coach Warner’s most notable Kiski products, strictly conformed to the profile of “scholarship” students. According to school records, both students were “self supporting” and not in need of assistance.<sup>397</sup> But it is unclear whether they paid full tuition or worked on-campus jobs. Harry Stuhldreher, one of the Fighting Irish’s original “Four Horsemen,” attended Kiski for a full academic year prior to entering Notre Dame. As the son of a small business owner from Masillon, Ohio, Stuhldreher may have had sufficient resources for Kiski, but he likely received an on-campus job to help with room and board.<sup>398</sup>

As the 1920s wore on, most if not all prep school footballers were on scholarship. Nearly all of Kiski’s varsity players held down some sort of on-campus job, whether ringing the morning bell, distributing mail, or waiting on tables in the student mess hall. James Bartlebaugh, who played three sports at Kiski, including football, earned his keep by ringing the school bell and picking up the mail in Saltsburg. In return, Bartlebaugh was given the opportunity to travel

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<sup>396</sup> Barber, “History of Wyoming Seminary”; Phone conversation with John Shafer, Wyoming Seminary, 10 April 1995.

<sup>397</sup> Nanney, *Kiski*, 43. Davies hailed from Washington, Pa. (by way of Aliquippa); his father worked as a mining engineer. Stein’s father worked as a clerk for a steel works in Ohio, but according to Kiski records, he was a contractor, which would have qualified him as a manager. Correspondence from Judy Jessup, Alumni Affairs and Development Office, The Kiski School, April 10, 1997.

<sup>398</sup> *The Repository* (Canton, Ohio) 19 January 2002.

to New England with the varsity squad where they defeated Dean Academy, the then-reigning prep school champs. Scholarship athletes were so well defined by the early 1920s that they routinely were assigned separate living quarters and segregated off from the rest of the student body. Most of those who held down jobs at Wyoming Seminary, which had been supporting student athletes as early as 1905, were also football players. Joe Donchess, a high school dropout but an otherwise outstanding athlete, hauled baggage and worked in the laundry to pay his room and board there.<sup>399</sup>

Hometowns and surnames were another marker of class background. Donchess stood out among the general student body at Wyoming Seminary because he was one of only two students from Youngstown, Ohio, where he had withdrawn from school to support his family. He came to Wyoming Seminary after attracting the attention of a Youngstown foundry executive who was impressed with “the young Donchess’s diligence” (and athletic ability). The Sem’s other Youngstown native, Andy Salata, also played football and, like most athletes there, held down a campus job. He was also of Slavic descent, a background that was becoming increasingly common among prep school footballers. In 1925, roughly a quarter of the players on Wyoming Seminary’s varsity team were Eastern European and most of these were starters. In 1929, three of the six Seminary grads on Pitt’s varsity squad were of Slavic descent, and all but one was Roman Catholic. At Kiski, where Presbyterian influence was still strong through the 1930s, hometowns were a less reliable indicator of social class than ethnicity. Among the athletes on its 1927 football squad was “Shorty” Petruzzi, a scholarship boy who waited tables in the main dining hall. Petruzzi was not alone: the names of Kiski football standouts from the mid to late

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<sup>399</sup> Nanney, *Kiski*, 43, 69; Bugbee, *Wyoming Seminary*, 543; “Joseph Charles Donchess, M.D.” (Wyoming Seminary Distinguished Service Award, May 31, 1974, Pittston, Pa.), np.



1920s included Pincura (Penn State), Jankowski (Duke), Vuchnich (Ohio State), Gailus (Ohio State) and Kadlic (Princeton).<sup>400</sup>

Another indication that Kiski and kindred prep schools were mutating into “football factories” was the proliferation of “one-and two-year men” – student athletes who attended for a single academic year or two, generally after graduating from a four-year public high school. Harry Stuhldreher, who attended Kiski during the 1920-21 academic year to prepare for Notre Dame, was typical of the “one-year men” who came to Saltsburg after completing public high school. But the trend deepened during the 1920s when it seemed that almost every football player matriculated for at most two years before moving on to college. The situation generated little comment among Kiski administrators during the 1920s and 1930s. But when the school hired a new headmaster in 1941, he was appalled by the paucity of traditional four-year students and vowed to put the school on track with boarding schools such as Andover.<sup>401</sup>

Still, for all of their potential liabilities, prep schools found it difficult to abandon or even curtail successful athletic programs. Kiski’s varsity was playing at such a high competitive level that the school created a second team in the early 1920s to compete against local high schools which by that time refused to play the varsity squad. Kiski’s varsity competed almost exclusively against freshmen teams and junior colleges. In the competitive world of the private (and for-profit) prep school, where each year’s student body had to be recruited, successful teams were an indispensable source of advertising. After World War I, Kiski administrators attributed the strong enrollments that continued even through the post-war recession to the success of its

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<sup>400</sup> O’Brien, *Hail to Pitt*, 83; “Dr. Andrew J. Salata – 1924” (Wyoming Seminary Distinguished Service Award, May 31, 1974, Pittston, Pa.) np; *The Wyoming* (Pittston, Pa.: Wyoming Seminary, 1923), 78, 87, 155; “Varsity Football ’24-’25” *The Wyoming* [1925]; Nanney, *Kiski*, 241.

<sup>401</sup> Nanney, *Kiski*, 110-111. In addition to contributing to the school’s tarnished image as a football factory, one-year students hampered the institution’s ability to develop a dedicated alumni base for fundraising. Few of the one-year men developed any school spirit or loyalty, according to the school’s new headmaster hired in 1940.

varsity football team, which won the U.S. Prep School championship two years earlier. Bellefonte Academy students were so enamored of their championship teams – Bellefonte won three national prep school titles during the 1920s – that the senior class agreed to buy “gold footballs” for each member of the squad. Football had become such a popular (and lucrative) preoccupation at Wyoming Seminary that the school built a 5,000-seat stadium to accommodate the throngs who watched the school as it played the likes of freshmen teams at colleges such as Lehigh. As with other schools, the stadium’s seating capacity was out of proportion to the student population.<sup>402</sup>

The relationship between prep schools and colleges was mutually advantageous. In return for nurturing (or as critics contended, sheltering) student athletes and helping them prepare academically through more focused instruction, prep schools received talented, college-bound athletes whose contributed to their own school’s glories on the gridiron. Their willingness to use scholarships, campus jobs, and other financial subsidies to maintain working-class students within an upper-class institution also presaged the system of recruitment and subsidization that would become commonplace at colleges and universities. But perhaps most importantly, schools such as Kiski, Bellefonte and Wyoming Seminary formed an important link in the chain of events that altered the social composition of college football teams during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Nanney, *Kiski*, 54, 58; “A Resume of the Academy Football Season”; Bugbee, *Wyoming Seminary*; phone interview with Mary Fraunces, Public Relations Director, Wyoming Seminary 18 September 1999.

<sup>403</sup> Howard J. Savage et al., *American College Athletics. Bulletin No. 23* (New York: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1929), 69. Athletic recruiting and subsidies at prep schools never generated nearly as much controversies as they did at colleges and universities. The muted reaction was partly the function of the way in which prep schools were administered. Whereas faculty resentment of athletic control fueled much of the backlash within colleges and universities, headmasters governed unilaterally, suffering little faculty dissent while controlling large endowments. Their institutional wealth obviously helped them absorb the expense of taking on working-class athletes who would have otherwise been unable to afford prep school fees.

Pitt had the most to gain from the relationship. Although there were other sources for athletes, from the late 1910s through the early 1930s, prep school farms were the most reliable, especially as competition intensified the talent search. Once a promising athlete was identified, private preparatory schools offered Pitt and other competitive colleges the only opportunity to bring such students up to speed, particularly in an era of tightened eligibility and admissions requirements. There is no question that Pitt's prep school products had been sent to the school to help them qualify academically for college. But many had attended public schools that were academically insufficient and simply needed the benefit of rigorous instruction without distractions. It was a service which private preparatory school traditionally provided for the wealthy. Football factory prep schools were merely extending that service to worthy members of the working class. One Pennsylvania prep school administrator (likely Bellefonte's James Hughes) defended the practice to Carnegie Foundation investigators on those very grounds: "[H]e believed his school was the better for admitting poor boys to fellowship with the well-to-do, even upon an equivocal status."<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Savage, *American College Athletics*, 69. The relationship between Pitt and Kiski Prep was driven by geographic proximity and nurtured by shared personnel. James Marks, Kiski's long-tenured head coach, enjoyed close ties with Pittsburgh's coaching staff and spanned both the Warner and Sutherland eras. For a time, Marks traveled with the team and worked as its statistician, and behind the scenes helped coordinate recruiting for Pitt. After Jock Sutherland stepped down at Pitt in 1939, Kiski, likely under Marks' direction, hired him as a preceptor for the next season. See Nanney, *Kiski*, 106; *New York Times*, 25 November 1921.

#### 4.5 Steel Town High: Public High Schools and Western Pennsylvania Industrial Communities as Sources of Football Material

Football factories such as Kiski continued to turn out their product well into the 1930s. In 1933, the *New York Times* reported on the dilemma faced by Coach James Marks regarding that year's Rose Bowl. With Kiski boys starting for both Stanford and Columbia, Marks was forced to remain neutral. But such stories belied a broader trend that was affecting product delivery to traditional outlets such as the University of Pittsburgh. Kiski's role as a supplier to public and less elite private schools such as Pitt dropped off markedly during the 1930s. In 1925, prep school products occupied 12 slots on the varsity roster, but over the course of the next five seasons, their numbers tumbled. In 1927, prep schoolers filled out eight slots, and by 1930, six.<sup>405</sup>

The Depression was partly to blame. At Kiski, the economic crisis weakened the school's financial position to the point where administrators could simply no longer afford to subsidize tuition for non- or partially paying students. The Depression also dried up the usually dependable sources of private "sponsorship" from formerly wealthy alumni and supporters. Bellefonte Academy fared worse than Pitt's other two feeder schools. The Academy's fabled football team, which had won a string of national prep school titles just a half dozen years earlier and had become Pitt's favored supplier, sputtered through three- and four-game seasons in 1932

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<sup>405</sup> "Kiski Coach Faces Dilemma," *New York Times*, 24 December 1933; *The Owl* [1927], 295, 296; *The Owl* [1929], 122, 123; *Official Football Publications* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh, November 8, 1930), 30 (Hereafter cited as *Pitt Football Program* with date indicated in brackets).

and 1933 before abandoning the program entirely in 1934. That year, the school shuttered its doors for good.<sup>406</sup>

The perceived complicity of prep schools in the professionalization of college football also encouraged many to de-emphasize athletics. In 1929, the Carnegie Foundation singled out Bellefonte Academy and Kiski Prep for trying to disguise athletics scholarships in the schools' advertising budgets. The charge precipitated a blunt rebuttal from Bellefonte Academy. In a letter to the study's principal investigator, Headmaster Hughes declared that the school had long since "abolished the practice of giving full scholarships. Very few athletic officials are paying the expenses of needy athletes in schools like Bellefonte." Some prep schools used the occasion to undertake genuine albeit gradual reform. In 1941, Kiski's new headmaster vowed to restore the school's reputation and cut back on the athletic scholarships which had contributed to the school's reputation as a "football factory." In 1947, the school declared that "the days of excessive distribution of scholarships, usually on behalf of athletes, are over."<sup>407</sup>

The biggest factor in the demise of prep schools was the growth of public high schools. Although some colleges and universities would continue to send top recruiting prospects to private boarding schools for finishing, most Big Time programs, including Pitt, turned to athletes from public high schools. By the 1930s, most secondary schools in Western Pennsylvania offered some sort of college preparatory track. Conversely, more and more colleges, including the University of Pittsburgh, accepted the academic validity of new public high schools. Perhaps

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<sup>406</sup> Nanney, *Kiski*, 106; "Football," <http://academyhill.topcities.com/sports/football/index.html>; *Bellefonte*, 46.

<sup>407</sup> J.R. Hughes to the Carnegie Foundation, May 14, 1929 cited in Savage, *American College Athletics*, 258; Nanney, *Kiski*, 128, 130. Although Kiski seemed to have informally severed its link with Pitt after 1939, the fact that it continued to supply student athletes to higher end schools such as Stanford and Columbia suggest that it simply became more selective and more socially homogenous as a result. It is revealing that Kiski's most celebrated student athlete recruit after World War II was Olympian Bob Mathias, a future Stanford standout and the son of a wealthy California surgeon.

most importantly, Pennsylvania's public high schools by the late 1920s were bursting at the seams with students. After decades of playing a marginal role in American public education, high schools were becoming center stage.

The sharp rise in the high school population during the first third of the twentieth century was unprecedented. In 1900, it was estimated that less than ten percent of high school aged youth were enrolled. But by 1930, the percentage was closer to fifty. In Pennsylvania, the numerical increase was meteoric. In 1900, the population of the state's secondary schools stood at about 27,000 students. Thirty years later, it had increased almost ten fold, to 270,152. The impact of this trend on scholastic football was palpable and would eventually force a shift in the locus of "football material" production from private boarding schools to large public high schools, especially those in Pennsylvania's coal regions and steel towns. By the 1940s, public high schools in Western Pennsylvania's industrial districts were producing a surplus of talent and contributing players to the rosters of college football programs not only in Pennsylvania, but across the country. This trend became even more pronounced after World War II.<sup>408</sup>

In their 1939 study of American sport, sociologists Frederick Cozens and Florence Stumpf underscored the importance of secondary education and physical education programs in introducing football to working-class youth. But since then, the role of public high schools in the democratization of college football has been largely oversimplified, perhaps because the appearance of high school football was considered axiomatic. In fielding football teams, high schools were in some ways merely emulating colleges. But the process was more complex than that. Although high school football would become firmly entrenched in places such as Western

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<sup>408</sup> Carter et al., eds., *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 2-435; Department of Public Instruction, *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1930), 19.

Pennsylvania by the middle of the twentieth century, its status during the interwar years depended on several concomitant social changes, including the demographic impact of immigration and industrialization; Progressive attitudes and policies regarding public secondary schools and “physical education”; and the development of a distinctive sports culture within ethnic, working class, single-industry communities which disproportionately supported it.<sup>409</sup>

On the most basic level, the growth of scholastic football in Pennsylvania resulted from the fortuitous convergence of people and places. The Commonwealth’s booming industrial economy at the turn of the century supplied the raw ingredient of population: Between 1900 and 1930, the state’s population grew from 6.3 to 9.6 million. Natural increases accounted for some of this, but most of Pennsylvania’s growth was the direct result of immigration, primarily from Southern and Eastern European. During one ten-year period, from 1900 to 1910, the state’s foreign-born population grew from 985,000 to 1.45 million. This new immigration understandably made its biggest impact within the state’s industrial districts, where demand for cheap, unskilled labor to make steel and mine coal was strongest.<sup>410</sup>

As the center of the nation’s steel industry and near the locus of an equally booming bituminous coal and coke economy, Pittsburgh and Allegheny County were strongly impacted by these trends. Between 1880 and 1930, the Iron City’s population tripled. Immigrants and their offspring accounted for between half and two-thirds of all city residents. Other industrial counties in Western Pennsylvania, such as Westmoreland, Washington and Cambria, experienced similar population surges during the same 50-year period. Although the percentage of foreign born in Pennsylvania dropped off after 1930, the numbers of second-generation ethnic

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<sup>409</sup> Cozens and Stumpf, *Sports in American Life*, 225-226.

<sup>410</sup> Carter et al., eds., *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 1-327.

Americans – the sons and daughters of new immigrants – increased. In the city of Pittsburgh, the percentage of foreign born in 1930 dropped to under 20%, but residents of foreign-born parentage comprised over a third of the city’s population. Roughly similar demographics obtained in outlying mill towns in the Monongahela and Ohio River valleys. Immigrants and children of immigrants were even more conspicuous in bituminous coal mining communities. Given these demographic trends, it is not surprising to learn that the children of foreign born buoyed the region’s high school enrollments by the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>411</sup>

In northeastern and Western Pennsylvania, immigration produced a demographic bulge in the second generation, similar to that of the fabled post-World-War-II baby boom, which reached adolescence at about the same time that public high schools began their expansion. Obviously, the relationship was partly symbiotic. As the population of high-school-aged students grew, public high schools opened or expanded to accommodate them. But the growth of public high schools was also predicated on changes which transformed them from finishing schools for the upper middle class to vocational and academic centers that emphasized “training for life” among heterogeneous populations. During the nineteenth century, many communities rejected publicly funded academies on the grounds that they benefited only a narrow segment of the population.<sup>412</sup> Most believed common schools, which typically terminated at the eighth grade, were sufficient. But the new industrial economy demanded a workforce with more differentiated skills that could only be acquired through more formal education. Public high schools were adapted accordingly. Although most continued to offer college preparation, they also added

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<sup>411</sup> John Bodnar, Roger Simon and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 187-188; Nora Faires “Immigrants and Industry” in Samuel P. Hays, ed., *City at the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 10.

<sup>412</sup> Kett, *Rites of Passage*, 127-129.



commercial and industrial courses to train future bookkeepers, clerks and tradesmen. In Pennsylvania, public educators believed that such diversified curricula better served the state's increasingly heterogeneous population, especially with the surging enrollments of children of "new immigrants" during the 1920s.<sup>413</sup>

This trend toward large multi-purpose public high schools was facilitated by Progressive-era educational reforms, most notably the expansion of state oversight (through the Department of Public Instruction). In 1895, for instance, the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed an amendment to the common schools code authorizing school districts to use state funds to build public high schools. Between 1892 and 1922, the number of public high schools across the country increased by close to 500%. Perhaps even more interestingly, the number of high school students in Pennsylvania increased by nearly 900% at the same time that the general population increased by just 68%. "Improved economic resources have made it possible for more of the people to postpone through the secondary period the necessity of financial contributions by their children," one Pennsylvania school official put it. That was partly true. But rising enrollments were also being driven by state policies that drew more school-aged adolescents into the new high schools. The Pennsylvania Public School Code of 1895 for the first time required compulsory attendance for all children between the ages of 8 and 13. The regulation had little impact on enrollments at public high schools, but in 1911 the law was extended to age 16. Enrollments at public high schools increased dramatically. At the same time, new child labor

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<sup>413</sup> Kett, *Rites of Passage*, 158, 235; Department of Public Instruction, *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1930), 19: "The program of studies offered is rapidly expanding to provide more adequately for the interests and needs of the heterogeneous group of boys and girls coming to the secondary school. This is evidenced by the extension of work in fine and practical arts, in vocational subjects and in commercial fields."

laws pushed many adolescents from workplaces into public high schools, although the laws did not compel them to graduate or take college prep courses.<sup>414</sup>

Football seemed to go hand-in-hand with public high schools. Pittsburgh's Central High School, Allegheny High School and New Castle High were all fielding teams, at least on an occasional basis, in the 1890s. Two public high schools were among the small group of secondary schools which met in 1902 to form the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League or WPIAL. As new public schools appeared, especially in the larger industrial towns of the region, interscholastic football soon followed. In 1902, recently established public high schools in Beaver, Carnegie, Greensburg, McKees Rocks, and the South Hills all offered football as an extracurricular activity. By 1910, according to Roger Saylor, high school football was being played in most of the larger industrial towns, including such future perennial WPIAL powerhouses as Beaver Falls, Aliquippa, Braddock, Duquesne, Homestead, McKeesport, Monessen and New Kensington.<sup>415</sup>

The attraction to football was not surprising. Much like the colleges which they often strove to emulate, high schools seemed instinctively drawn to organized sport and competitive athletics. But public school administrators – in contrast to prep school headmasters – were often ambivalent. In many communities where the sport had taken off, school officials were concerned that it monopolized the passions of townsfolk and distorted student priorities. “The

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<sup>414</sup> Department of Public Instruction, *Manual for High Schools* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1922) 9; *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1930), 19; General Assembly of Pennsylvania, *Laws of Pennsylvania, Session of 1895* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1896), 72-73; General Assembly of Pennsylvania, *Laws of Pennsylvania, Session of 1911* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1912), 309, 383-384.

<sup>415</sup> Saylor, *Southwestern Pennsylvania*, 1-5. Public high schools initially lagged behind private preparatory schools in both the depth and breadth of their athletic programs. When the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League (WPIAL) formed in 1900, it was dominated by private preparatory schools, including Shadyside Academy and Kiski Prep. But by 1920, most public high schools had joined the WPIAL, while prep schools were abandoning it for private school leagues.

high school team in too many places has become an agent of the group to satisfy community pride,” one public educator observed in 1926. “The sport patrons want to see a winning team.” Educators also decried the tendency of school boards to fund interscholastic sports over other activities, especially physical education. Lewis Wagenhorst, a Slippery Rock Normal School education professor who in the early 1920s surveyed the administration and cost of interscholastic athletics, bemoaned that trend, which seemed especially evident in Pennsylvania. “The greatest interest is manifested in and the most money spent for physical training upon those who need it the least. It is inconceivable that fair minded people will subscribe to such rank injustice.”<sup>416</sup>

But fair-minded people apparently did, and public school administrators soon realized that banning team sports would do nothing to deter either students or townspeople. Although there were other activities with “more desirable physical, educational, moral and social values,” educators also understood that “only those athletic sports . . . which the public will patronize . . . can be fostered.” The situation was aggravated by the fact that most schools depended on gate receipts to fund extracurricular athletic programs. Football’s popularity forced capitulation. “The skilled contest naturally attracts,” Wagenhorst concluded. The most that public high schools could hope to do is keep the contests clean and above board. “It is the business of the school to teach pupils to do better the desirable activities they are going to perform anyway,” a Columbia Teachers College professor advised. To that end, Wagenhorst and other like-minded

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<sup>416</sup> Lewis Wagenhorst, *The Administration and Cost of High School Interscholastic Athletics* (New York: Columbia Teachers College, 1926), 84, 86.

school officials recommended vigilance in everything from eligibility standards to the coaching staff.<sup>417</sup>

Progressive-era interest in physical education also helped legitimize football among public educators, although at times, their programmatic goals were at odds.<sup>418</sup> In the late nineteenth century, American physical education stressed technical proficiency in large-muscle-group activity, achieved not through sports but through gymnastics or calisthenics. The result was an often uninspiring routine of drills conducted in the sterile confines of the gymnasium or organized playground. Critics characterized the regimen as “a mixture of dry hygiene and toothbrush sanitation.” Physical educators during this period tended to regard interscholastic athletics with suspicion. Many contended that team sports catered to an elite core of specially trained student athletes and placed too much emphasis on “excitement” and winning at all costs – clearly much like the college game. Physical educators also believed the sport was simply too brutal and, like other contact sports, had a deleterious effect on maturing bodies.<sup>419</sup>

But by the early twentieth century, physical education began to warm to the idea of team sports as a means of promoting citizenship and assimilation. Football still had its down side, but it proved extremely effective at harnessing the “gang spirit” of concern to urban reformers. “If there is anything that competitive sports and games certainly do accomplish,” wrote one educator in 1922, “it is the taking care of the needs of youth at this stage.” Wagenhorst had his own reservations with high school football, but he found it no surprise that “team games should bulk

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<sup>417</sup> Wagenhorst, *Interscholastic Athletics*, 83; E.D. Mitchell, “Making Athletics a Bigger Part of Physical Education,” *APER*, 27/2 (February 1922): 51-58.

<sup>418</sup> Thorstein Veblen famously disparaged those who defended the educational value of football. “Football has as much relation to education as bullfighting to agriculture.”

<sup>419</sup> Wagenhorst, *Interscholastic Athletics*, 95; John H. Jenny, *Physical Education, Health Education, and Recreation: Introduction to Professional Preparation for Leadership* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1961), 128; Guy M. Lewis, “Adoption of the Sports Program, 1906-1939: The Role of Accommodation in the Transformation of Physical Education,” *Quest* 12 (May 1969): 34-46.

large in the modern physical education program.” Among other values, participation in team sports encouraged “loyalty, courtesy, truthfulness and fairness.” Physical education programs were adjusted accordingly. “Games must not be emasculated but must be filled with the spirit of vigor, of victory, of power, of clean, fair, noble endeavor.” By 1928, according to one report, instruction in physical education was “almost entirely devoted to the teaching of sports skills.”<sup>420</sup>

Support for team sports among public educators was critical to football’s future as a high school sport. Although it was an extracurricular activity, interscholastic football depended on public schools’ financial, administrative and even physical resources. On the most basic level, football teams needed a place to practice and play. With few exceptions, this would be provided through school-owned athletic fields and gymnasiums, which were increasingly included in school planning programs. In 1919, for instance, the Pennsylvania Education Congress drafted a series of resolutions intended to guide state policy on physical education and athletics, including recommendations on minimum play space for public high schools. The council recommended “not less than 40,000 square feet” of open field “to allow the playing of vigorous games and the practice of standard athletic events.” The council also reiterated the need for competitive athletics to be overseen by physical education departments, or in the very least, regular faculty.<sup>421</sup>

Because of the number of athletes required to play the sport, high schools with large student enrollments were more likely to field football teams than those with smaller enrollments. At the same time, many large high schools, especially big city schools, often had difficulty

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<sup>420</sup> Mitchell, “Making Athletics,” 53; Wagenhorst, *Interscholastic Athletics*, 83, 94.

<sup>421</sup> *APER*, 24/9 (December 1919): 522.

finding enough room to play. This was especially true of public high schools established in the nineteenth century and at a time when high schools were not expected to provide much if any physical space for extracurricular activities. By the time interscholastic sports arrived on the scene in the 1890s, older city schools in congested neighborhoods had difficulty finding the necessary open space. Conversely, small schools in rural districts usually had little difficulty finding parcels of land for playing fields. In his survey of interscholastic athletics, Wagenhorst noted that small schools were more likely than the largest schools to own athletic fields mainly because “real estate is cheaper.” Unfortunately, enrollments were insufficient – and locations too remote – to sustain football programs.<sup>422</sup>

The most conducive setting for high school football, according to Wagenhorst, was the small city. Here, “schools can secure sites for athletic fields without much difficulty and with but a comparatively small capital outlay.” At the same time, small cities yielded sufficiently large student bodies. The “industrial suburbs” of Western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio struck the ideal balance between population density and available (and affordable) physical space. Steel towns embodied the model: their typically large workforces generated consistently large enrollments – certainly sufficient to field 40-man teams. In 1930, Allegheny County alone boasted 47 third-class municipalities with populations between 5,000 and 30,000. Many of these were single-industry towns along the river valleys of the Monongahela and Ohio. Their close physical proximity to one another made it convenient to schedule games with similarly sized schools. The physical geography of Pittsburgh’s industrial valleys also nurtured intense rivalries,

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<sup>422</sup> Wagenhorst, *Interscholastic Athletics*, 75. Proportionately fewer college football players were drawn from East Coast cities such as New York or Philadelphia. In the five boroughs of New York, for instance, high school football programs were not feasible given the amount of space required for a football field, to say nothing of acreage for dedicated stadiums. As a result, player production rates in large cities such as New York were “incredibly low.” See Rooney, “Up From the Mines,” 482.

often between communities separated by a hillside or a bridge. At the same time, land values, especially outside the main physical plant of the mill, made real estate for stadiums and athletic fields relatively affordable.<sup>423</sup>

Mill town high schools also benefited from the largesse of the resident steel company. Of all team sports, football had traditionally been the most expensive to operate: financing was required for everything from uniforms and athletic fields and stadiums to salaries for coaching staff. (Even as early as the 1920s, high school football coaches commanded the highest salaries, despite overseeing the shortest season among scholastic sports.) Although steel companies paid notoriously low wages during the non-union era, their extensive property holdings contributed disproportionately to the local tax base. With public education funded entirely through property taxes, steel manufacturers became major albeit indirect sponsors of public high schools and their sports programs. In the Mon Valley, steel executives from U.S. Steel routinely sat on the school boards of communities such as Homestead, Duquesne, and Clairton and often had direct input over athletics budgets.

High school athletics was also a natural fit for steel companies. Sports had been a cornerstone of U.S. Steel's corporate welfare program since the turn the century. Particularly during the 1920s, company officials invested heavily in intramural sports leagues for their employees, partly in an effort to stem labor turnover and cultivate worker loyalty. Football had its own specific legacy. During the 1890s, executives at Carnegie Steel in Homestead, perhaps

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<sup>423</sup> Wagenhorst, *Interscholastic Athletics*, 75; Department of Public Instruction, *School District Population 1930* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1933), 4. From the perspective of steel manufacturers, the most valuable tracts of land were flat parcels abutting river banks. In the Monongahela Valley, steel companies owned most of the land adjacent to rivers, railroad tracks and other transportation networks. Particularly in the era before smoke control, the byproduct of steel manufacturing rendered much of the land in and around large mills undesirable. Mill town housing was considered substandard and the overall environment generally bleak. See Margaret Byington, *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910) and S. J. Kleinberg, *The Shadow of the Mills: Working-class Families in Pittsburgh, 1870-1907* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 65-99.

eager to re-stage the competitive football they had known as college men, recruited former Ivy League players for their own semi-professional football club. The Homestead Library Athletic Club supplied entertainment both for them and their employees. “[I]n an era when hours were long, pay small and work exhausting, it provided a concrete example of a job even tougher than the mines or the mills,” *Sport Illustrated*’s Tex Maule wrote. “The steel mill owners found that professional football provided a healthy release for their employees, whether they watched or played.” Although amateur rather than semi-professional, high school football complemented this tradition and was also easily integrated into the social and cultural infrastructure of mill towns. Some observers have also argued that football, with its emphasis on teamwork, group loyalty, and demanding physical play, inculcated qualities in young men (and in many case, future employees) which large industrial employers desired in their workforce. Although this is highly speculative, the parallels between football and heavy industry are compelling.<sup>424</sup>

One index of support for high school football was the resources schools were willing to devote to it. Wagenhorst found that many public high schools, particularly in Pennsylvania, went to great lengths to hire experienced head coaches. Like other public educators, Wagenhorst was concerned that professionalizing the position would lead to abuses and recommended that all high school coaches be regular members of the faculty and report to the head of the physical education department. The reality, though, was that coaching commanded high salaries, with football being the “most remunerative.” Wagenhorst also discovered that Pennsylvania high

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<sup>424</sup> March, *Pro Football*, 19-23; Tex Maule, *The Game* (New York: Random House, 1963), 5. Walter Camp brought a factory-like level of organization to the sport that was roughly comparable to the division of industrial labor. Among the parallels between football and industry was semi-skilled team work; an emphasis on clock-driven tasks; the risk of accident and danger; the stresses of manual labor, and more generally, the comparable specialization and standardization. In contradistinction to baseball, which has often been thought to mirror pre-industrial craft work, football play was strenuous but ultimately repetitive (especially for linemen) and thus very similar to industrial wage labor. Riesman and Denney, “Football in America,” 250-252, 255.



schools were willing to pay their football coaches, on average, approximately twice what New York high schools did. Some schools supplemented professional coaching with college-level training. Both Windber and McKeesport High School operated summer training camps by the late 1920s.<sup>425</sup>

Another index of support was the decision to finance high school football stadiums. During the 1930s, the borough of Windber, a company town in northern Somerset County founded by the Berwind White Coal Company, erected an 8,000-seat concrete stadium funded largely through voluntary subscriptions from residents, most of whom were coal miners. During the 1930s and 1940s, the stadium routinely overflowed capacity; games against local rivals, such as Johnstown, could draw as many as 18,000 spectators. Geographer Douglas McDonald calculated that the seating capacity of many high school stadiums in Western Pennsylvania exceeded student enrollments by five times or more. One scholastic stadium in Beaver County yielded 15 seats for every student. Although McDonald conducted his study in the mid-1960s, many of the stadiums he surveyed were built before World War II. Wagenhorst did not specifically enumerate stadiums for his own study, but he and others at the time recognized their significance. “Almost every place where a stadium has been built, receipts from the high school football games have increased to a marked degree. Teams have taken on a new spirit; there has been an augmented interest among citizens to witness the game; and the attractive surroundings have acted as a magnet.”<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> Wagenhorst, *Interscholastic Athletics*, 90, 92, 100; *1929 Yough-A-Mon* (McKeesport, Pa.: McKeesport High School, 1929) 128 (Hereafter cited as *Yough-A-Mon* with publication date in brackets); Interview with Phil DeMarco, Athletic Director, Windber High School, 25 August 1998. Local school boards paid salaries for coaches. But other costs were financed through gate receipts, alumni associations and various community groups.

<sup>426</sup> DeMarco interview; Michael Novak, *The Joy of Sports: Endzones, Bases, Baskets, Balls and the Consecration of the American Spirit* (New York: Madison Books, 1976), 232; Douglas B. McDonald, “Geographic Variation in

By the 1930s, most steel towns in the Mon Valley had built stadiums for their high school teams, many to the same standards as small colleges. North Braddock, a third-class municipality with a population of around 4,000 in 1930, erected a high school stadium equipped with lights for night games. High schools located in large urban centers without access to adjacent playing grounds frequently relied on municipal-owned stadiums. Windber's chief rival, Johnstown Central High School, played its home games at Point Stadium, a large concrete stadium that had been built by the city in 1925 to accommodate minor league baseball in the summer and high school football throughout the fall. The city of Erie built a 25,000-seat stadium on land owned and donated by the school board and worked with the Erie Chamber of Commerce to direct a bond drive to fund the \$150,000 stadium, which would also be used for other events.<sup>427</sup>

McKeesport High School typified the sport as it developed in the public high schools of many Western Pennsylvania mill towns. Situated along the confluence of the Youghiogheny and Monongahela rivers, McKeesport through the first half of the twentieth century was the second largest city in Allegheny County after Pittsburgh. But in most respects, it closely resembled the single industry mill towns that dotted the Monongahela River valley. Its largest employer, the National Tube Works, physically dominated the city's riverfront and loomed large in the social and cultural life of the community. McKeesport's status as a second-class city and its vibrant commercial downtown made it appear more metropolis than company town, but executives from

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Athletic Production: An Axiomatic or Accidental?" (Master's thesis, Southern Illinois University, 1969), 35; Wagenhorst, *Interscholastic Athletics*, 75.

<sup>427</sup> *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 6 September 1998; Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, *Educational Opportunities of Greater Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1931), 67; Daniel J. Casey, "A Stadium in the City-of-the-Average," *American City* (August 1924): 121-128. Densely settled steel towns surrounded by relatively open plots of land were ideal for stadium building. Property was cheap, and thanks to the gritty, industrial character of the region, not particularly desirable for other purposes.

National Tube exerted a strong influence on the local economy, and occupied seats on city council, as well as on the boards of the public library, hospital and school.<sup>428</sup>

McKeesport Senior High School opened in 1882 and up through 1900, carried an average annual enrollment of about 200 students. Beginning in 1902, enrollments began to climb steadily. By World War I, the school had over 1200 registered students. The number of graduates increased as well, from 377 for the period from 1882 to 1902, to 1100 graduates for the 1904-1918 period. The increasing size of the student body forced the district to increase the number of faculty, from 3 in 1882 to 45 in 1918, and expand the school's physical plant. A new high school building dedicated in September, 1900, absorbed much of this growth, but in 1916 the district was forced to open another building to accommodate students enrolled in the technical course. By then, the schools curricula included tracks in commercial, teacher training, and scientific, along with academic and college preparatory. "McKeesport High School is, without a doubt, the people's college," the 1919 yearbook editors declared.<sup>429</sup>

The school played its first football – a rugby-style match directed by the students themselves – in 1894. The senior class reportedly managed to sell 600 tickets for the first game. Over the next few decades, the program grew as the school population increased. In 1903, McKeesport played its first official interscholastic schedule and in 1916 joined the WPIAL. By 1918, its 24-member varsity football squad was being managed by two, part-time coaches (who, although identified as "professors" were apparently not members of the regular faculty). Most of the team, with the exception of two Jewish players, reflected the general student body's still largely homogeneous, middle- to upper-class demographics. Of the 138 members of the senior

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<sup>428</sup> John P. Hoer, *And the Wolf Finally Came: The Decline of the American Steel Industry* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988), 172-174, 177.

<sup>429</sup> *Yough-A-Mon* [1918], 10-11; *Yough-A-Mon* [1928], 116.

class that year, only six were clearly of Southern or Eastern European extraction. None of these students played on the football team.<sup>430</sup>

Enrollments continued to grow during the next decade. By 1928, the senior class boasted 310 students. But perhaps more importantly, sometime between 1924 and 1928, McKeesport High dropped its scientific course – a technical degree program intended to prepare students for college engineering – and replaced it with an “industrial course,” likely to accommodate working-class students, mainly of Southern and Eastern European stock, seeking mill trades. During the same period, the school football program continued to develop. In 1920, the school replaced its volunteer managers with a new, full-time faculty coach from the manual training school. Although the personnel would change over the years, for at least the next eight years head coaching duties resided with full-time faculty members.<sup>431</sup>

Half way through the 1927 season, McKeesport’s scholastic football program reached another milestone when it dedicated its new stadium. The following year, the school’s yearbook dramatically enhanced its coverage of the sport with photographs and individual game summaries. In 1929, more than 50 students turned out for the school’s first ever pre-season training camp, modeled along those sponsored by major colleges and universities. It also successfully recruited its first professional football coach – Ralph Chase, a first-team All American at the University of Pittsburgh under Jock Sutherland. With Chase’s hire, the position for the first time carried no teaching responsibilities or other faculty obligations.<sup>432</sup>

Another discernable change by the late 1920s was the team’s increasingly Slavic makeup. Of the 17 lettermen on the 1929 squad, seven had identifiably Eastern European surnames.

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<sup>430</sup> *Yough-A-Mon* [1920], 112; Saylor, *Southwestern Pennsylvania*, 27; *Yough-A-Mon* [1918].

<sup>431</sup> *Yough-a-Mon* [1928], 116; *Yough-A-Mon* [1920]; *Yough-A-Mon* [1924].

<sup>432</sup> *McKeesport Daily News*, 12 November 1927; *Yough-A-Mon* [1928], 127.

Alongside such old stock names as McBurney and Schultz, the McKeesport eleven now boasted a Vicnovic, Bunovich, Kavecich, and Spalla. The composition of high school football teams throughout the Monongahela Valley were changing along similar lines. The shift underscored another inherent advantage of high schools located in mill and mining districts: access to large populations of working-class adolescents, primarily of Southern and Eastern European extraction, increasingly drawn to scholastic sports.<sup>433</sup>

The new ethnic clustering in high school football can be partly explained by increased enrollments among second-generation ethnics. One had to be in high school to play high school football. This is also where the state played its most visible role in the democratization of college football. By providing for publicly funded high schools – and indirectly the facilities for and instruction in extracurricular activities such as interscholastic football – the state opened football, a traditionally scholastic game, to ordinary Pennsylvanians. Sensitive observers were keen to note this. In an editorial published in 1941, *The New York Times* attributed the broader distribution of ethnic minorities in college football to the “fellowship of the public high school.” “Even if we insist on being cynical and suggest that a fine running half[back] of Slav parentage finds it easier to get into college than if he were six inches shorter and sixty pounds lighter, it is still true that before he won the eye of the college scouts, the boy must have played football in high school.”<sup>434</sup>

But just being there does not explain why high schools students of Southern and especially Eastern European parentage were playing the game with such enthusiasm, or,

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<sup>433</sup> *Yough-A-Mon* [1930]. In 1936, the *New York Times* chose McKeesport as a reference point for an editorial on the social progress of Slavic Americans generally: “Next after the blast furnaces and the rolling mills the best place to look for Slavic, Hungarian, Croatian and Polish names is the college football gridiron. . . . The connection between ‘foreign’ names in the steel mills and foreign names on the football teams is not altogether whimsical . . .” *New York Times*, 10 July 1936.

<sup>434</sup> *New York Times*, 11 October 1941

apparently, such success. At the time, many were willing to believe such physical talents were innate. In a series of articles published in the *American Physical Education Review* in 1922, for instance, a prominent Michigan educator argued that adolescents of Russian and Slavic extraction were innately suited to team sports. While native-born Americans were predictably determined to be the best overall athletes, Poles were credited with being especially adept at sports such as football; “they are eager, attentive and grateful learners . . . very good in team work.” Even the *New York Times* puzzled as to why “Slavic names” stood out in football but less so in baseball. “The answer may be in the difference between football’s stress on bulk and strength,” the editors surmised.”<sup>435</sup>

A more persuasive explanation was environment. Johnstown native Michael Novak argued that a distinctive brand of high school football emerged in Western Pennsylvania that reflected the way people lived and worked there. Accustomed to long hours of hard physical labor, and industrial workplaces which “seethed with violence for generations,” the sons of Southern and Eastern European immigrants sacrificed their bodies on the football field in much the same way that their fathers exhausted themselves in the mills and mines. Desperation strengthened their resolve. “In a region of little upward mobility, young men played with a ferocity tutored by knowledge that, however violent football might be, the mines and mills were more violent still.” The sport also appealed to their competitive machismo. “The passion feeding football in western Pennsylvania was the passion of chargers and hitters who gloried in their endurance of pain and punishment. There is a strain of masochism in the western Pennsylvania character, almost a need to absorb punishment in order to prove ones self.” Such

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<sup>435</sup> Elmer D. Mitchell, “Racial Traits in Athletics,” *APER* 27/4 (April 1922): 150-151; *New York Times*, 30 April 1941.

values shaped regional styles of play. Coal and steel towns did not believe in the open offense. “The essence of the Pennsylvania game was physical aggression. Each team was trained to hit hard; desperate line plane was the rule. . . The formations usually were basic, punchy, organized for power rather than flash.”<sup>436</sup>

Novak’s characterization is corroborated in other accounts of high school football in industrial Pennsylvania, both real and in fiction. In *No Country for Old Men*, a novel set in the fictional Pennsylvania mill town of Nesquehon Foundry during the interwar years, novelist Warren Eyster captured the passionate but very pragmatic attitude toward high school football in the state’s steel and coal towns during the 1940s. In single industry communities such as Nesquehon Foundry, Friday night football games offered the only community-wide distraction from the dreary routine of everyday life. During one high school game which figures into the novel, Eyster described a “Mrs. Malancic, fifty-three” who “drew a big round of applause as she went to the end of the field and waved her umbrella.” “Her son pretended not to see her, then looked at the bench and finally trotted over, removing his head gear . . . [S]he turned to her son and said ‘You play hard. You don’t I get your brothers beat hell out of you. You hear you lazy sonofabitch, you hear your mother?’” Eyster may have been exaggerating for dramatic effect, but virtually every published biography of a Western Pennsylvania football great, whether George Blanda or Joe Namath, paints the same picture.<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> Novak, *Joy of Sport*, 231-234.

<sup>437</sup> Warren Eyster, *No Country for Old Men* (New York: Random House, 1955), 341-348; Wells Twombly, *Blanda: Alive and Kicking* (New York: Avon Books, 1972), 102-105, 250-254; Armen Keteyian, *Ditka: Monster of the Midway* (New York: Pocket Books, 1992), 31-40; Mark Kriegel, *Namath: A Biography* (New York: Viking, 2004), 1-24. “Players are named Stankovich, Kurowski, Stepko, Jurik, Puskarich, Ciereij, and Blanda, the sons of men who spend ten hours a day crouched over where the rain never falls and the sun doesn’t shine.” Twombly, *Blanda*, 104.

During the interwar years, “new immigrant” groups developed an interest in American sports that bordered on obsession. George Saxon, a labor organizer with first-hand knowledge of life in Pennsylvania’s bituminous coal fields, complained that sports were the preferred opiate of the immigrant working class. “Sometimes the speech of immigrant groups is distinguished by the fluency with which athletics can be discussed,” Saxon wrote in 1947. “Athletics, through the sports page and radio, became a mystical rite in which millions could vicariously receive the plaudits and admiration of a nation.” The gains made by particular immigrant groups in particular professional sports were impressive. In 1906, for instance, no Italian Americans were represented in major league baseball, but by 1941, they were appearing on major league rosters at a rate twice their proportion in the general population. During the early twentieth century, Italians along with Jews were also conspicuous among the ranks of professional prizefighters, as Irish immigrants had been in the late nineteenth century. Even though the numbers of individuals whose social positions were changed through sport were very small, when an ethnic American stepped into the ring or on to the diamond, he became a source of pride for all his fellow nationals.<sup>438</sup>

For new immigrant groups, football may have been an even more coveted yardstick of group achievement than professional sports. The game’s connection to American colleges and universities – and, by extension, its patrician class – enhanced its status among those who aspired to play the game. Through college football, sons of immigrants competed against old stock Americans not just on the field, but within the club of private higher education. During the 1920s, ethnic achievement on the college gridiron also helped counter an anti-Catholic and anti-

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<sup>438</sup> George Saxon, “Immigrant Culture in a Stratified Society,” *Modern Review* (1947): 113-126; Gary Ross Mormino, “The Playing Fields of St. Louis: Italian Immigrants and Sports, 1925-1941” *Journal of Sport History* 9/2 (Summer 1982): 7. See also the various essays collected in George Eisen and David K. Wiggins, eds., *Ethnicity and Sport in North American History and Culture* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1994).



foreign born sentiment which found expression in everything from the immigration restriction movement to the rise of the urban Klan and widely circulated scientific racism theories. The overwhelming popularity of Notre Dame among Catholic Americans and other so-called “subway alumni” who never set foot on its South Bend campus, has been explained by this. For many Catholic adolescent males, interest in football began as spectators (or avid listeners) of Notre Dame football. That enthusiasm carried over onto the local high school football field.<sup>439</sup>

Editors of ethnic language newspapers were quick to seize on the overrepresentation of children of immigrants on the football squads of American high schools (and later colleges). *Jaro*, a Pennsylvania-based Slovak-language weekly, pointed with pride to strong participation rates in high school sports, particularly football. “Slovak representation on various teams places our young men in a class by themselves,” a fact made even more noteworthy when one considered that “Slovaks represented less than 10% of the entire school population.” “That athletic blood courses through the veins of Slovak youth is ably expressed,” *Jaro* concluded. A subscriber from Barnesboro, Pennsylvania, reported on the gridiron success of a group of Slovak high school players there: “[T]he English people of our town stand by to see the ‘hunkies’ march on to victory.” Ethnic language newspapers followed those same players as they entered college. *Jaro*’s editors paid particularly close attention to schools with unusually high concentrations of Slovak Americans, including Pitt, Duquesne, Villanova, Georgetown, the University of Minnesota, and tiny St. Vincent College in Westmoreland County. In 1929, Father Paschal

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<sup>439</sup> Sperber, *Shake Down the Thunder*, 431; Wallace, *Notre Dame Story*, 175-177. Notre Dame’s following among American Catholics ensured that Fighting Irish almost never played an away game. Thanks to its subway alumni, Notre Dame generally outdrew opponents even when they played away games, including in Pittsburgh. Writing in the *New York Daily News*, Paul Gallico bemoaned the vocal enthusiasms of “that amazing den of self appointed Notre Dame alumni which will root and rage, and run through our town.”

Kavulic of St. Vincent Seminary announced the first “mythical” Slovak All-American team; the all-star list became an annual event.<sup>440</sup>

Ethnic leaders were not the only ones providing encouragement to young footballers. In almost every mill and mining town with a public high school, football during the 1920s had become a civil religion, and players had become local heroes. High school football routinely attracted the largest crowds, and invariably, conferred the most social status of any sport. “There was tremendous town pride, which peaked with the high school football team,” a player from Donora High School recalled. “If you were a football player, you were someone. Support came from all: U.S. Steel, the union, the churches, the store owners, men’s clubs, etc.” “This is gritty, drab bituminous coal country,” George Blanda’s biographer wrote of Youngwood, where Blanda played his scholastic ball. “High school football takes everybody’s minds off the low quality of their life styles. Crowds are large at the games. The entire town shows up. Stores close and houses empty for road trips. The traffic is bumper to bumper from Youngwood to Bentleyville and back. Only the police force remains.” Football in the anthracite region was taken just as seriously. During the regular football season, Pittston reserved its local theater for “Football Night” to channel community enthusiasm.<sup>441</sup>

High school athletes from Pennsylvania’s mill and mining towns were also drawn to scholastic football for a more tangible reason. Of all the competitive sports open to working-class youth during the interwar years, football was perhaps the most accessible – thanks to its administration and promotion through public high schools – and the most potentially rewarding,

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<sup>440</sup> *Jaro*, 25 December 1929; *Jaro*, 27 November 1929; *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, 29 August 1946, 45; “History of Football at St. Vincent,” *St. Vincent College Journal* 39/2 (November 1929): 43-45; *Jaro*, 14 December 1927; *Jednota*, 9 October 1991. According to *Jaro*’s editors, St. Vincent College in 1929 in Westmoreland County had the highest proportion of Slovak Americans of any team in the country, with 14 players of Slovak extraction

<sup>441</sup> Interview with Larry Duda, 12 January 2001; Twombly, *Blanda*, 103-104; *Wilkes Barre Journal*.

in that it could be parlayed into a college education. Football was not the only interscholastic sport with “scholarship” potential, but no other game offered the sheer volume of opportunities and chances for advancing one’s education (and social class), particularly as colleges and universities began competing for working-class athletes through systematic recruiting (and subsidizing) programs. The promise of a partially or wholly subsidized college education was sufficient motivation to draw many to the high school gridiron. For a select few, it was enough to propel them “up from the mines and out of the mills,” and on to college campuses.<sup>442</sup>

#### **4.6 Linking Supply with Demand: Systematic Recruiting and the Democratization of College Football**

By the late 1920s industrial Pennsylvania was flush with football material. The challenge was drawing them from public high schools, where attendance was compulsory, to American college campuses, where enrollment was still restricted, by dint of tuition fees and social tradition, to a privileged minority. If public high schools operated on an open admission policy, colleges and universities were strictly members-only. Public high schools could prepare football players to meet the academic requirements for college admission, but they could not help them with the financial expense. During the 1930s, the percentage of all high school students who subsequently matriculated at colleges and universities was still small. The percentage from working-class families was even smaller. Matching supply with demand would require the

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<sup>442</sup> Allen L. Sack and Robert Thiel, “College Football and Social Mobility: A Case Study of Notre Dame Football Players,” *Sociology of Education* 52 (January 1979): 60-66. Sack and Thiel conducted their survey in the 1970s, but based on my research, I would argue that their conclusions apply as well, and perhaps even more so, to 1930s and 1940s.

development of a system for recruiting players to colleges, and once there, providing financial and social support.

The problem would be solved not through state intervention but through the market. As colleges and universities began competing with one another for the most talented high school athletes, they instinctively developed more sophisticated recruiting practices. During the 1920s, prep school farms produced “material” for colleges and universities on consignment, and in relatively low numbers. Securing working-class athletes from public high schools forced college football programs to venture into the open market, and thus required more intensive, well-honed systems for both identifying future talent and underwriting their way into and through college. From the perspective of most critics, it was this very process which corrupted the amateur code in intercollegiate athletics. But it was also active recruitment and financial subsidization – the link between supply and demand – that permitted the democratization of college football. As David Reisman and Reull Denney correctly opined, “without such recruitment, the game could not have served as a career route for many of the second generation who would not have had the cash or impetus to make the class jump that college involved.” As much as this process transformed the lives of individual players, it also changed the face of college football itself.<sup>443</sup>

In the absence of professional recruiters and athletic departments, most universities turned to alumni to help with this task. Pitt had a long history of alumni involvement in its football program. In 1905, the alumni council underwrote the team’s first training table and athletic dormitory. Alumni periodically – and sometimes scandalously – dabbled in recruiting. In 1904, a group of alumni arranged for the transfer of at least a half dozen players from Geneva College to Pitt. The new recruits helped turn the season around. But the reforms which followed

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<sup>443</sup> Riesman and Denney, “Football in America,” 255.

in the wake of the scandal-filled 1905 season introduced eligibility requirements and other safeguards designed to eliminate “tramp athletes.” The increased competition for “material” during the stadium era also required new approaches to securing the best athletes.<sup>444</sup>

Sometime during the early 1930s, an alumni group calling itself the “College of the North” formed for the express purpose of supporting Pitt’s recruiting efforts. A forerunner to the Golden Panthers athletic boosters, the College consisted of alumni and long-time supporters whose occupation or hometown placed them in a unique position to identify up-and-coming talent. The group’s president, James Marks, coached at Kiski Prep. The second in command, Chet Smith, worked as the sports editor for the *Pittsburgh Press*. Another principal directed the football program at McKeesport Senior High, one of the largest public secondary schools in southwestern Pennsylvania. The College also included members based in Harrisburg and Philadelphia, locations which gave Pitt access to the football-rich coal towns of central and northeastern Pennsylvania. As a promising young football player for Nanticoke High School, Leon Shedlosky received several personal visits from Bill McClintock, the College of the North’s Harrisburg representative, and a wealthy businessman.<sup>445</sup>

By the 1920s, as competition for available talent intensified among major programs, many college and universities relied on similar networks of alumni – or near-alumni – to bring prospective student athletes to the attention of coaching staffs. Under Knute Rockne, Notre Dame relied on a dozen or so alumni recruiters scattered across the United States, but

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<sup>444</sup> Alberts, *Pitt*, 63-66. Pitt athletics, especially its football program, attracted the attention and support of several extremely wealthy alumni. Along with A.R. Hamilton, the Berwind White executive who established Pitt’s summer training camp, the Panthers also benefited from alumni such as Joseph Trees. A prominent oil and gas tycoon, Trees made “many and repeated substantial gifts” to the school’s athletic program, including Trees Gymnasium. He was also known for hosting sumptuous banquets for the varsity football squad at the close of each season. Both Hamilton and Trees were university trustees. “Alfred Reed Hamilton,” 163; *The Book of Prominent Pennsylvanians: A Standard Reference* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Leader Publishing Co., 1913), 93.

<sup>445</sup> O’Brien, *Hail to Pitt*, 86; Interview with Dr. Leon Shedlosky, 26 October 1995.

concentrated largely in the industrial Midwest. One of them, sportswriter Francis Wallace, routinely combed the coal fields of southeastern Ohio to “search for prospects.” Wallace was one of the few sportswriters with enough first-hand, insider experience to report knowledgeably on the rather clandestine practice of recruiting. In 1939, he drew on that experience for an expose on recruiting and subsidizing practices at Pitt, published in two parts in the *Saturday Evening Post*.<sup>446</sup>

The stigma which surrounded recruiting before World War II obscured its mechanics.<sup>447</sup> But based on reports filed by journalists, investigations conducted by the Carnegie Foundation, and accounts of former players and coaches, it is possible to ascertain some of the strategies used by college football programs after World War I. The systematic recruiting of student athletes from outside the general student body had been driven by dollars and cents, but the practice itself was more art than science. Recruiters used their instincts, experience, and personal judgment to identify and assess athletic talent and potential. (More objective assessments of athletic ability, such as measurements of speed and strength, would not become standard until well after World War II.)

Recruiting relied heavily on word-of-mouth and personal contacts, a fact which explains in part how players from the same relatively obscure home town often appeared simultaneously or in quick succession on the same college roster. In the early 1930s, for instance, Duquesne

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<sup>446</sup> Sperber, *Shake Down the Thunder*, 247; Wallace, “Test Case at Pitt” and “The Football Factory Explodes: The Climax in the Test Case at Pitt,” *Saturday Evening Post*, November 4, 1939.

<sup>447</sup> It is very difficult to find solid data on recruiting and financial assistance from this period. Athletic department records at Pitt have been purged of virtually all references to the practice. Surveys of similar record groups at Duquesne University, Carnegie Mellon, St. Vincent's College, and Washington and Jefferson yielded no documents. The archives of Penn State's athletic department contain only a few scattered references to recruiting during Rip Engle's tenure as head coach. The one exception is the University of Pennsylvania. Penn's athletic department records contain considerable correspondence from student athletes in the 1940s, most of whom were actively appealing to head coach George Munger for scholarship money.

University boasted three players from the same small town in Minnesota's Iron Range. The athletes presumably followed one another through personal recommendations. Leon Shedlosky, who played for Pitt under Jock Sutherland in the mid-1930s, grew up in the same small coal town in northeastern Pennsylvania as Eddie Baker, a standout on Sutherland's 1929 team and Shedlosky's first cousin. Future All-American Joe Donchess had been brought to the attention of Pitt recruiters through Andrew Salata. The two met during a summer league in their native Youngstown, Ohio. Impressed with Donchess's speed and agility, Salata referred him to the same wealthy patron who had sponsored him through Kiski a few years before.<sup>448</sup>

Another recruiting tactic was to target populations or regions perceived to be natural incubators of football talent. Reacting to the influx of players with Southern and Eastern European surnames, many sportswriters cynically assumed that coaches simply pulled players "off trucks, or out of boiler factories or the steel mills." Even observers who applauded the new faces on college football teams reluctantly concurred. "It is said that coaches comb the mining regions," Simeon Strunsky observed, in search of "husky young coal diggers, truck drivers and ice peddlers." Myron Cope and Chancellor Edward Litchfield observed that college coaches spent so much time in Western Pennsylvania coal towns that many carried United Mineworkers cards. That perception was increasingly reflected back by Hollywood. In *Trouble Along the Way*, John Wayne played a washed up coach hired to revive the football program at a small Catholic college in New York. Sizing up his competition – a group of large, intimidating linemen – Wayne remarks to his assistant: "It looks like they emptied out the Pennsylvania coal

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<sup>448</sup> "Duquesne University Squad Roster," *Duquesne Football Program* (Pittsburgh Pa.: Duquesne University, 1932), 24; Shedlosky interview; "Joseph Charles Donchess, M.D."

mines for that team.”<sup>449</sup> It was not too far from reality. Knute Rockne was said to have been particularly fond of Pennsylvania’s “fabled coal regions” and went there often in search of football material for the Fighting Irish. “When I recruit there I ask the farm boy how far it is to the next town. If he points with his finger, I drive on. If he picks up the plow and points with it, I stop and talk.”<sup>450</sup>

Rockne’s intuition had a rational basis. More so than any other team sport, football depended on physical strength and stamina – qualities which before the advent of modern weight training programs were best acquired through hard physical labor. During the 1890s, members of the Yale football team were assigned to work as tracklayers, wheat harvesters, or in other physically demanding jobs in order to “enlarge stamina, moral toughness and cross-class adventures.” During the 1930s, the Pitt athletic department arranged for players to work summer jobs at local steel plants to keep them in shape during the off season. Pitt rival Carnegie Tech relied on a similar training regimen; during the summer of 1934, a Pittsburgh newspaper reported on the “off season toilers” on the “Tech eleven,” most of whom worked in steel plants in and around Pittsburgh. “Young Coach Harpster should have no trouble getting that group of gridders into first class playing condition in a very short space of time.” The brute strength of gridiron legends such as Bronko Nagurski was frequently attributed to hard, physical day jobs; Nagurski

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<sup>449</sup> Strunsky, *Living Tradition*, 220; Edward H. Litchfield and Myron Cope, “Saturday’s Hero is Doing Fine” *Sports Illustrated* October 8, 1962, 67; Michael Curtiz (director) *Trouble Along the Way* (Warner Bros., 1953). Intimations of college football’s ethnic and social-class diversity permeated most college football films produced after 1930.

<sup>450</sup> Quoted in Jack McCallum and Chuck Bednarik, *Bednarik: Last of the Sixty-Minute Men* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1977), ix.



was known as the “ice peddler,” a reference to his pre-football occupation. Notre Dame’s Joe Savoldi “steeled” his muscles each summer by carrying “a hod of bricks.”<sup>451</sup>

College recruiters also believed that mill and mining districts inculcated a physical and mental toughness which helped inure athletes to the pain and physical sacrifice required of them on the playing field. Sometimes, per critics’ suspicions, recruiters pulled talent directly from the shop floor. More commonly, they relied on strategically placed contacts to identify the best local athletes. During the 1930s, Saint Vincent College hired a Latrobe beer salesman to bird-dog promising players. The salesman used his business contacts among tavern owners in Westmoreland County to identify the strongest and toughest athletes in the coal patch. “These were tough kids, many of them were working in mines and were physically strong.” Playing football was just “physical work of another kind.” Such attitudes were consistent with the popularly held belief that the lower classes were physically stronger than the middle and upper classes.<sup>452</sup>

By the late 1920s, Pennsylvania’s extensive network of coal patches and mill towns was already being recognized for its uncanny knack for producing tough football players. Elmer Layden, one of Notre Dame’s fabled “Four Horsemen,” attributed his coaching success at Duquesne University in the late 1920s to the school’s proximity to the bituminous coal fields. Layden recalled how the school’s first All American, Mike Basrack, “came to us as many boys did, right out of the coal fields.” Even after moving on to coach at Notre Dame, Layden maintained his contacts in the region’s mill and mining districts. Fordham’s Jim Crowley –

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<sup>451</sup> Riesman and Denney, “Football in America,” 251; *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 23 July 1934; Kevni Britz, “Of Football and Frontiers: The Meaning of Bronko Nagurski” *Journal of Sport History*, 20/2 (Summer 1993): 106-108; *Chicago Tribune*, October 11, 1930.

<sup>452</sup> Interview with William Rafferty, 22 November 1995; “St. Vincent Boasts of Best Team in History,” *Saint Vincent College Journal* 39 (October 1929): 31; Oriard, *Reading Football*, 201

another of the Four Horsemen – routinely “swept through the coal region” during the 1930s in search of material. “The school invested a great deal of money in the program and Crowley knew where to look for football talent.” Pitt seemed to have a particular advantage here, due mainly to the program’s regional exposure and Jock Sutherland’s long-standing ties to the region, where for nearly 25 years he had both played and coached. Sutherland was a frequent after-dinner speaker at high school athletic banquets and over the summer months hosted football clinics for promising scholastic athletes.<sup>453</sup>

Nothing better illustrates Pennsylvania’s reputation as an incubator of scholastic football talent than the lengths to which programs went, quite literally, to acquire it. In the late 1930s, the University of Georgia began actively recruiting from the Commonwealth’s mill and mining districts. Bill Hartman, Georgia’s assistant coach during that period, directed the Bulldog’s recruiting program in Pennsylvania. “We had to get players from somewhere” Coach Hartman recalled. “Pennsylvania was as good [a state] as any.” Hartman had become familiar with the region while managing a Coca Cola distributorship in Michigan; the soda pop business frequently took him through Pennsylvania. Hartman came to believe that Pennsylvania recruits had “better physical endurance” than Southern players and could also “take the discipline, hard work” better than native-born athletes. One of Hartman’s first Pennsylvania finds, McKees Rocks’ Frank Sinkwich, became an All American and led the Bulldogs to their first ever post-season appearance in the 1941 Orange Bowl.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> Elmer Layden with Ed Snyder, *It Was a Different Game: The Elmer Layden Story* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969) 91; *The Bloomsburg Press Enterprise* 30 March 2003; *Yough-A-Mon* [1930]. During the 1930s, Pittsburgh had three nationally competitive college football programs, more than any other city. Riess, “Social Profile,” 235.

<sup>454</sup> Hartman interview; “Frank Sinkwich” *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.com>

In Pennsylvania, the University of Georgia relied on Coca Cola distributors in much the same way that Notre Dame relied on Catholic priests. Most of the Georgia-based company's bottling plants were operated by individuals with ties either to Atlanta or the University of Georgia. Charley Trippi, a future Heisman Award winner and the most well known of Georgia's Pennsylvania recruits, was reeled in by Harold Ketron, a former University of Georgia standout. Ketron owned a Coca Cola bottling plant not far from Trippi's hometown of Pittston, Luzerne County. For added insurance, Georgia borrowed a page from Notre Dame's recruiting handbook. "We recruited local priests," Hartman noted. "We had a Catholic Church down in Georgia." After Hartman or another scout identified a potential recruit, "we would have the Catholic priest in Athens call up Momma and Daddy." The University of Georgia became so proficient at importing talent from the Keystone State, sportswriters quipped that the Bulldogs "had more Pennsylvanians than Fred Waring."<sup>455</sup>

Because they represented a large proportion of the high school population in Western Pennsylvania mining districts, players of Eastern European extraction developed a reputation among college football coaches and recruiters as prime stock. Frank Leahy, who succeeded Knute Rockne at Notre Dame, was once quoted as saying "If it sounds Polish, he's got to be good." Francis Wallace, who culled talent for the Irish in eastern Ohio, devised what he referred to as a "comic code" to throw off both rivals and investigators. A typical communiqué between Wallace and the South Bend athletic department read: "Please let me know when you expect to arrive in New York . . . I would like to talk to you about some . . . Polish natives of the great city

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<sup>455</sup> "Charley Trippi," *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.com>; Loran Smith, ed., *Between the Hedges: 100 Years of Georgia Football* (Atlanta, Ga.: Longstreet Press, 1992); Hartman interview. From the mid-to-late 1940s, the University of Georgia rosters averaged there were an average of eight Pennsylvania players on Georgia's rosters – by no means a majority, but a very visible minority. University of Georgia Football Rosters, 1940-1948, University of Georgia Athletic Association, September 9, 1997.

of Bellaire, Ohio . . .”<sup>456</sup> Beginning in the late 1920s and early 1930s, head coaches of major programs routinely arranged speaking engagements before Catholic and ethnic fraternal organizations to promote their program to potential recruits within specific ethnic populations. Sutherland and Coach Rip Engle at Penn State were both known to appear before local meetings of Knights of Columbus societies, a national Catholic fraternal organization with chapters in nearly every Pennsylvania mill and mining town. In 1927, Knute Rockne, intuiting the importance of Slovak-American athletes, addressed the annual meeting of the Catholic Slovak League in Chicago.<sup>457</sup>

Catholic colleges had an advantage over non-Catholic institutions when it came to recruiting the Catholic football players who massed heavily within Western Pennsylvania. Notre Dame was of course the main beneficiary. Along with its symbolic association with Catholic America, the school’s frequent appearances at Pitt Stadium helped cultivate regional interest. One Pitt-Notre Dame match-up in the early 1930s generated the largest crowd in the history of Pitt Stadium. Most of the 70,000 assembled spectators cheered for the visiting team. Murray Sperber attributed Notre Dame’s success in “mining this region’s rich seam of high school football players” to the fact that many future Irish recruits were “raised in rabid Notre Dame families.” The school also had the advantage of a “built-in” recruiting system: i.e., a national network of Catholic priests who voluntarily bird dogged for the Fighting Irish. Recruiting documents and personal anecdotes substantiate this oft-expressed claim. Leon Shedlosky’s home-town priest in Nanticoke tried repeatedly to persuade him to choose Notre Dame over Pitt.

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<sup>456</sup> Phone conversation with Ben Chestochowski, August 5, 1996; Quoted in Sperber, *Shake Down the Thunder*, 247.

<sup>457</sup> Box 1, Folder 27, Engle Papers, Special Collections, Penn State; *Jaro*, 14 December 1927.

When Shedlosky refused to break his commitment to the Panthers, the priest appealed to Shedlosky's parents.<sup>458</sup>

As a general rule, local universities such as Pitt, Carnegie Tech and Duquesne had an advantage over other schools when it came to tapping home-grown talent. John Chickerno, who came to Pitt in 1937, turned down a scholarship to play at Yale because his mother, a Romanian immigrant, thought New Haven was too far away from the family home in Warren, Ohio. Marshall Goldberg's roommate and fellow teammate Steve Petro traveled back to Johnstown on nearly every non-game weekend. Goldberg, a native of Elkins, West Virginia, was one of the few who stayed on campus. St. Vincent College discovered that its location and religious affiliation helped it to compete successfully against much larger programs. Because of its proximity to the bituminous coal fields of southwestern Pennsylvania, players were even able to live at home, a circumstance which many immigrant parents would have found reassuring. Of course, for some players, far flung campuses were equally attractive. One of Georgia's best recruiting weapons was a mild Southern climate. "[Pennsylvania players] were used to working in the mines and them [sic] mills. We got them to come out with this sunshine and nice weather."<sup>459</sup>

The promise of a college education and the enhanced social status which it conferred was something all schools offered. Even here, though, schools were able to customize their recruiting pitch. Pitt's professional schools, for instance, gave it a distinct competitive edge over

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<sup>458</sup> Huston, *Salesman from the Sidelines*, 78; Sperber, *Shake Down the Thunder*, 137; Wallace, *Notre Dame Story*, 176; Shedlosky interview. Competitors claimed that Notre Dame's emotional hold on millions of American Catholics gave it an unfair advantage over competitors. According to Sperber, head coach Frank Leahy admitted as much. When a Catholic recruit visited the campus, Leahy boasted that he would show him "Our Lady up on that Golden Dome and I didn't really have to say all that much." For such reasons, sportswriters quipped that "Notre Dame does not recruit, it gathers."

<sup>459</sup> Interview with John Chickerno, 21 June 1995; Interview with Marshall Goldberg, 13 July 1995; Rafferty interview; Interview with Bill Hartman, 9 September 1997.

Duquesne and Carnegie Tech, and even Ohio State and Penn State. During the 1920s and 1930s, Pitt operated professional schools in medicine, law, engineering and dentistry. Of these, dentistry was by far the most popular course of study among football players. Between 1910 and 1919, 20 varsity football players graduated from the School of Dentistry; the following decade, 28 players finished with dental degrees. During the 1930s, the number dropped to 20, but dentistry still remained the most popular course of study among varsity football players.<sup>460</sup>

One reason for that were the long-standing ties between the athletic department and the dental school. After graduating with a degree in dentistry, Sutherland was hired by Pitt's Dental School to teach in its Crown and Bridge department. After taking the head coaching job at Lehigh University in 1920, Sutherland retained his faculty position in Pitt's dental school so that he could resume teaching there in the off season. Perhaps more surprising is the fact that Sutherland kept the position even after being named Pitt's head coach in 1924. Dr. Sutherland's dual appointment was likely very advantageous for football players seeking admission to the dental school, and the school's dean, a long-time athletics supporter, seems to have approved and encouraged the relationship.<sup>461</sup>

Dentistry also dovetailed nicely with the professional aspirations of second generation ethnics eager to earn a practical degree. "We had one advantage," recalled former athletic director Frank Carver, "a long history of athletes making good in professional schools, particularly dentistry . . . The hope, the chance to be a professional man, was a lure, especially to youngsters coming out of mill and mining families, and [with] parents who wanted them to be

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<sup>460</sup> Pitt Dental School data; Shedlosky interview. Many Pitt football players who graduated with dental degrees scattered across Pennsylvania, where they became small businessmen in their own right.

<sup>461</sup> Dean H.E. Friesell of Pitt's dental school chaired the Athletic Committee during the pre-Warner era and dental students, whether players or not, were the athletic department's strongest on-campus allies. Alberts, *Pitt*, 66; *Pittsburgh Record: Alumni Magazine of the University of Pittsburgh* 1, 319.

something.” Dentistry was not the only degree program which held out the promise of upward social mobility, but it was one of the few which led directly to self employment. Given the prejudices of the day, applicants with ethnic sounding names could not be assured of white-collar positions in Pittsburgh’s business world during the 1920s and 1930s, no matter how impressive the degree. Dentistry also offered student athletes the best return on their investment; in exchange for three or four years of eligibility, student athletes were subsidized through a five-year academic program. “It was our only chance to cash in on our athletic abilities,” one former player who graduated in dentistry recalled.<sup>462</sup>

For working-class athletes, the attractions of college football were complex. Some played for the love of the game, but by the time they reached the college level, football, as compared to golf and hunting, occupied a gray area between amateur pastime and professional pursuit. Player motivations were commensurately mixed. The professional degree to which college football offered an entrée certainly allowed many working-class athletes to “skip an economic generation.” At the same time, it was not just about the money or the social mobility. College football offered respect through sportsmanship. Francis Wallace described the sport’s meaning for poor kids in the most American of terms: “They found it a place where a boy was never asked *who he was* but was judged and rated entirely upon *what he did*; where the valedictorian got there for exactly the same reason as the football star – because he could hit harder and think faster.”<sup>463</sup>

Interestingly, the same was not being said of professional football. Most college football coaches, including Rockne and Sutherland, discouraged “their boys” from playing the “post

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<sup>462</sup> Carter quoted in Alberts, *Pitt*, 159; Goldberg interview; Interview with Frank Souchak, 9 September 1997; Interview with Emil Narick, 4 June 1995.

<sup>463</sup> Wallace, *Notre Dame Story*, 73.

graduate game,” as it was often called, mostly because the “easy money” subverted the higher cause of amateur sport which colleges still professed. According to Wallace, few Notre Dame boys before World War II went into professional football; most instead followed Rockne into teaching. “He thought pro football made bums out of college men.” Rockne had himself played pro ball during the “harum scarum” days and had seen “too many men pick up the easy money during the season,” only to “drift along” until the next season. This situation would change during the postwar decades as the financial incentives of a pro career triumphed over the “respectability” conferred by a standard four-year or professional degree. Still, at Pitt, the appeal of dentistry continued long after Sutherland’s departure. Until around 1965, more Pitt football players graduated with degrees in dentistry – 130, to be precise – than in any other major.<sup>464</sup>

#### **4.7 Financing Supply: The Subsidization of Working-Class Athletes and the Democratization of College Football**

The prospect of a college degree worked extremely well as recruiting tool. One reason it did so was because to the working-class athletes whom recruiters increasingly encountered in the talent search, higher education was otherwise unobtainable. Those who recognized this circumstance generally approved. “I find nothing wrong with any system, properly regulated,” Francis Wallace wrote “that gives deserving boys a chance to pay for an education with their unique

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<sup>464</sup> Wallace, *Notre Dame Story*, 186-187; Curtis Miner, “From the Coal Mines to the Coliseums: Tales of Upward Mobility from Pennsylvania’s Mill and Mining Districts,” (Paper presented at the Oral History Association Annual Meeting, October 1996); Pitt Dental School data; Litchfield and Cope, “Saturday’s Hero,” 67. Dentistry still lured football players even after Sutherland’s departure. Aliquippa’s Mike Ditka initially committed to Penn State but changed his mind after a Pitt recruiter reminded him that Pitt had “a fine dental school and Penn State doesn’t.” “Well all right then,” Ditka purportedly replied. “I think I’ll go to Pitt.” See Keteyian, *Ditka*, 56.



talents [which] the university exploits for profit.” Even otherwise disapproving observers, including investigators working for the Carnegie Foundation, conceded this point. “In the United States the saying is common that ‘every athlete is a needy athlete.’ That football players . . . come from families whose means do not permit them to pay all of the expenses of a college course is generally accepted as fact and, indeed, is broadly true.” Paul Gallico summed it up more wryly: “It appears to be strangely axiomatic that only the sons of the poor seem to have real talent for football.” Strange, perhaps, but manifestly true.<sup>465</sup>

If the sons of the working class were to be admitted into the ivy-draped clubs of college campuses, schools needed a mechanism for defraying their membership dues. Most major programs had little trouble raising a war chest. Wealthy alumni were able and eager contributors. The trick was concealing the practice from competitors, conference officials, and journalists. With very few exceptions, most colleges and universities prior to World War II eschewed athletic scholarships. Only a handful of schools during this period openly awarded scholarships or financial aid to students based on athletic ability. Most officially did not, since any form of payment was likely to be construed as a violation of the amateur code which colleges and universities were compelled or professed to uphold. Schools which were caught cheating faced serious repercussions, including bans from league play and tarnished reputations.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> Wallace, *Notre Dame Story*, 186; Savage, *American College Athletics*, 227; Gallico, *Farewell to Sport*, 214.

<sup>466</sup> Watterson, *College Football*, 163-164; Savage, *American College Athletics*, 256-257. Competitors were often the first to blow the whistle. When Northwestern made an abrupt turnaround in its program during the mid-1920s, Amos Alonzo Stagg at the University of Chicago immediately cried foul. Stagg charged that Northwestern was actively recruiting from local high schools and supplying them with financial assistance. Sometimes, conference officials did the policing. In 1929, the Big Ten Conference expelled the University of Iowa after it was revealed that the school maintained an illegal slush fund for its athletes.

In order to absorb student athletes from working-class families, college football programs were forced to devise indirect financing. Such was the implicit conclusion of a report issued in 1929 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Founded in 1905 with the support of Andrew Carnegie, the Foundation positioned itself as a reform organization dedicated to raising academic standards in higher education. Its investigation into college football was launched as a “pre-emptive strike,” in the word of John Watterson, against what its director, Henry Pritchett, considered the corrupting influence of college athletics, particularly football. Pritchett was less concerned about the corruption within football itself than its impact on the academic mission of colleges and universities which sponsored the sport. An “unapologetic elitist,” Pritchett interpreted rising enrollments at American colleges to be the function of falling admission standards. College athletics were largely to blame for this, Pritchett believed, since many institutions were prospering not on academic quality, but “the attractions of athletic distinction.”<sup>467</sup>

The Foundation’s study was national in scope. During a three-year period beginning in 1926, its investigators made site-visits to more than 130 schools and uncovered a range of dubious practices along the way. But even within this broad national survey, Pennsylvania stood out, and not in a particularly flattering way. The Commonwealth was apparently home to an unusually large number of violators; almost all of its college football programs engaged in some level of recruiting and subsidization that was at odds with NCAA policy. The implicated schools ranged from Lehigh and Pennsylvania in the east to Dickinson and Lebanon Valley in the center, to Grove City, Washington and Jefferson, and Carnegie Tech in the west. Even the august University of Pennsylvania, which kept company with future Ivy League schools such as

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<sup>467</sup> For background on the Carnegie Foundation report, see Watterson, *College Football*, 159-164.

Princeton and Yale, only theoretically banned scholarships; in point of fact, Savage found that the Quakers simply were better at concealing them. Pennsylvania was also the only state where private preparatory schools, specifically Kiski and Bellefonte Academy, were flagged for their supporting role.<sup>468</sup>

Many likely interpreted these results as a sign that Pennsylvania schools as a whole were simply more tolerant toward breaking or bending the rules. But the unusual concentration of recruiting and “pay-for-play” violations among Pennsylvania colleges could just as reasonably be interpreted as an index of the class shift that was occurring in college football there. The Commonwealth was awash in football talent, but more so than in other states, its talent disproportionately resided in its ethnic, working-class populations. Recruiting in Pennsylvania required schools to be equipped with some system of financial assistance to defray the inevitable costs of room, board, and tuition for working-class athletes. By contrast, Savage noted with approval that in Canada “a far larger proportion of university athletes come from the more prosperous classes and are maintained entirely by their families. The needy athlete is comparatively rare.” In the United States, conversely, even the most prestigious institutions doled out financial assistance to student athletes; Savage found that four of the eight future Ivy League schools, including Penn, offered subsidies on par with large Midwestern schools.<sup>469</sup>

The Carnegie Foundation’s investigation identified at least four distinct methods of subsidization: overt athletic scholarships, whereby student athletes awarded waivers on tuition and room and board based on athletic ability; student employment, whereby athletes ostensibly

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<sup>468</sup> Savage, *American College Athletics*, 258-259. Johnny Lujack, the son of Slavic immigrants from Connellsville, was selected by a Pennsylvania congressman to receive an appointment to West Point. Notre Dame wooed Lujack away at the last minute. Jim Beach and Daniel Moore, *Army vs. Notre Dame: The Big Game, 1913-1947* (New York: Random House, 1948), 121.

<sup>469</sup> Savage, *American College Athletics*, 227.

worked off tuition and other associated fees through non-demanding on-campus jobs; loans, which Savage regarded as a compromise between outright grants and an absolute ban on financial assistance; and finally, a murky catch-all category described as “subsidies.” The latter was defined as money or other tangible goods and services channeled to student athletes. In some instances, subsidies entailed direct cash payments from alumni. At other times they took the form of meals, clothing, and other gifts given to athletes by benefactors, usually alumni boosters.<sup>470</sup>

According to the Carnegie Foundation report, Pitt relied entirely on subsidies provided directly by alumni. Wealthy benefactors loomed large in Pitt’s subsidization program, and given the proliferation of student athletes from working-class backgrounds, they were kept busy. Although the practice was officially off the books, the school was well known for its generous payouts. During the 1930s, for instance, Pitt was widely known among competitors as “the married man’s team.” The implication was that alumni grants to athletes were so generous that its football players could literally afford to set up housekeeping. (Some retorted that it was in fact the wives who were required to work to support their working-class husbands who would otherwise have been unable to cover college expenses.)<sup>471</sup>

Surprisingly, the Foundation’s revelations had little impact on the status quo at Pitt. Ten years later, when Chancellor Bowman fired Sutherland for his refusal to abide by a new “purity code,” Francis Wallace published his expose on Pitt’s past practices. The school’s athletic department took an astonishingly blunt, business-like approach to student athlete subsidization.

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<sup>470</sup> Savage, *American College Athletics*, 240-265.

<sup>471</sup> Savage, *American College Athletics*, 261; Sperber, *Shake Down the Thunder*, 446; Wallace, “Test Case at Pitt,” 49. Like other universities, Pitt’s delivered financial aid covertly, a fact which explains why information on athletic scholarships difficult to come by in official university records and archives. If records documenting such activities ever did exist, they were destroyed. Pitt alumni were also identified as being among a handful of university alumni who picked up the tab for athletes as preparatory schools.

Between 1924 and 1936, the program passed through five distinct phases, in which salaries and methods of distributions were finely calibrated to the changing market for football material. Between 1924 and 1927, for instance, players were paid an average of \$55 per month over ten months, and provided waivers on tuition and books. “In addition, there were probably individual gifts by alumni or businessmen to entertain players.” From 1929 to 1932, the compensation was raised to a flat annual payment of \$650. During the early years of the Depression, players “benefited from the deflation (to room and board). They found themselves comparatively well-to-do. Some of them married. Others grouped together in apartments and lived in comparative opulence.” A concern that “the boys were getting too much money for the welfare of the team” compelled Sutherland and other school athletic officials to reset the benefits to a more modest \$400 per year. “This was designed to put Pitt on the ‘BRT’ basis—board, room and tuition.”<sup>472</sup>

Although Wallace’s investigation detailed the financial particulars and the critical role of wealthy alumni and sponsors, much like Savage, he ignored the larger social context of “impecunious athletes.” Coaches, athletic officials and the student athletes themselves, on the other hand, were quite conscious of this, and often cited this fact in defending the practice. Jock Sutherland’s biographer concluded that most of Pitt’s players by the late 1920s “could never have had [a college education] without the financial aid given them on the basis of their athletic ability,” a circumstance confirmed in oral histories with former players. For Sutherland, the issue was personal; as a player, he had been one of the few working-class kids on Warner’s championship team. As a coach, he was especially sensitive to players who came from similar

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<sup>472</sup> “Code for the Conduct of Athletics at the University of Pittsburgh,” c. 1937, Athletic Department Records, University Archives; Wallace, “Test Case at Pitt,” 49. Wallace claimed to have received his information from “an authority which cannot be questioned,” presumably someone within Pitt’s athletic department. No documents have survived from Sutherland, the athletic department, or Chancellor Bowman’s office that shed any direct light on recruiting and/or athletic subsidies. Under instruction from the outgoing chancellor, Bowman’s secretary reportedly destroyed all of the chancellor’s personal files.

circumstances. “[Sutherland] especially liked working with poor boys from large families and then watched them develop into top notch players and men.” He was also said to have taken “particular joy” in selecting candidates for football scholarships. “He knew from first hand experience what such an award could mean to a boy.” Sutherland also made public statements justifying financial support on that basis. “These are deserving lads who can get themselves an education by contributing their football talent to the University who would otherwise not be able to obtain that privilege because of lack of funds to pay for it.”<sup>473</sup>

Writing in *Sports Illustrated* in 1962, even Pitt’s then-chancellor Edward Litchfield acknowledged that “we have . . . no way of knowing how many of these men would have lacked the means to enter college had it not been for the practice of granting aids to athletics. . . . [O]ld hands in our athletic department remember them coming from the mining towns and the mill towns and the city slums.” Athletes who played under Sutherland testified to Pitt’s well-financed system of alumni-derived subsidies. Emil Narick remembers picking up his monthly stipend of \$48 at a doctor’s office in Oakland; “there were always doctors around the game.” Leon Shedlosky met his alumni sponsor in a downtown hotel. Alumni also lavished players with gifts. “When Frank Souchak, All-American end, arrived from the coal fields with a battered overnight bag and patches on the elbow of his only jacket,” according to the *Pittsburgh Press*, an alumni supporter “marched him downtown and bought him his first suit and topcoat.”<sup>474</sup>

As this last example suggests, alumni support frequently extended beyond mere cash payments. Alumni also acted as cultural mentors and tour guides through the foreign lands of

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<sup>473</sup> Scott, *Jock Sutherland*, 61, 120, 188; Miner, “Coal Mines to Coliseums.” According to Sutherland biographer, “many of [Pitt’s] players were poor boys who wanted an education but, like Jock Sutherland could not afford one.”

<sup>474</sup> Litchfield and Cope, “Saturday’s Hero,” 78; Narick interview; Shedlosky interview; O’Brien, *Hail to Pitt*, 86.

Pittsburgh's upper-middle-class. Leon Shedlosky recalled an alumni supporter who not only paid for a new set of clothes, but treated him to dinner and, in Shedlosky's words, "cultivated" him by exposing him to classical music. Sometimes the inter-class experience could be jarring. Emil Narick recalled attending a dinner party with his alumni sponsor at the home of a Pittsburgh millionaire. "You really had to watch your Ps and Qs. It was an embarrassment . . . We were used to one pot meals, and here I had several forks to choose from." But the experience imparted a life-long lesson. "Try to associate with someone who's better than you are." For others, rubbing elbows with men of means inspired ambition. "I remember one time, traveling the train to a game and seeing a bunch of these wealthy alumni relaxing in the next car, drinking martinis, and me thinking, someday I'm going to have [a life] like that."<sup>475</sup>

#### **4.8 'Bohunkus College': Democratization and the "New Ethnology" of College Football During the 1930s**

The 1930s was a dismal decade for most Pennsylvanians but a very good one for Pitt football. During a ten-year period beginning in 1929, Sutherland's squads racked up six eastern championships and by some measures up to five national titles, including back-to-back championships in 1937 and 1938. The Panthers appeared in the Rose Bowl three times during that decade: in 1930, 1933 and again in 1937. Along the way, the University of Pittsburgh became an incubator of All-Americans. From 1924 to 1939, Sutherland averaged at least one

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<sup>475</sup> Shedlosky interview; Narick interview.

All-American a year. By the time he resigned in 1939, the Silent Scot had chalked up 111 victories and just 20 losses, for an impressive 82 percent winning average.<sup>476</sup>

Pitt's string of championship seasons during the Great Depression invited comparisons with Coach Warner's championship teams of the late 1910s. Squads from both eras dominated their competition in a similar fashion, but in most other respects, Sutherland's Panthers were as different from Warner's starting eleven as it was possible to be. The most obvious distinction, apparent from even the most cursory glance at the starting lineups, was the proliferation of players with Southern and especially Eastern European surnames by the mid-1930s. The trend began almost imperceptibly a decade before. In 1924, during Jock Sutherland's first season as head coach, there was just one identifiably Eastern European surname on the entire 45-man varsity roster. By 1929, there were six, three of whom including Coraopolis native and Wyoming Seminary grad Albert DiMeola were starters. During the next decade, the percentage of players from Southern and Eastern European backgrounds rose dramatically. In 1936, 47% of Pitt's players were of Southern or Eastern European extraction. By comparison, a nativity study of the general student population at Pitt, conducted six years earlier, revealed less than 10% of the general student population to be of new immigrant stock. At least in terms of ethnicity, Pitt's football teams during the 1930s were less like the rest of the student body than at any other time in school history to that point.<sup>477</sup>

Another revealing shift was the proliferation of student athletes from the Commonwealth's mill and mining towns. Under Coach Warner, very few players came from the

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<sup>476</sup> Alberts, *Pitt*, 138; Bynum, *Football's Greatest Teacher*, 193.

<sup>477</sup> *The Owl* [1926], 331; *Pitt Football Program* [September 9, 1929], 24; *Pitt Football Program* [September 26, 1936], 24; Table VI, "Nativity Study," University Archives. This study determined the ethnic composition of Pitt's football teams during the 1930s based on an analysis of players' surnames. It is therefore a conservative estimate, since this analysis excludes players of mixed parentage whose mothers may have been Southern or Eastern European, as well as players whose names may have been anglicized.



bituminous coal fields; in 1917, for instance, just one player hailed from a mining town (Nanticoke, in northeastern Pennsylvania). On the same squad, only four players came from single-industry steel towns such as Duquesne, Beaver Falls and Massillon, Ohio. By contrast, by 1933, fully one-third of Pitt's players came from coal towns in either southwestern or northeastern Pennsylvania. Players from steel towns were in even more abundance. By the mid-1930s, virtually every major public high school program in the Monongahela and Ohio valleys contributed at least one player to the Pitt squad. Some mill towns with especially strong scholastic football programs or links to the university, such as Jeannette, Tarentum, and North Braddock, routinely had two or three players on the roster simultaneously.<sup>478</sup>

Ethnicity offered another reliable proxy for social-class background. Profiles and biographies of individual players confirm the fact that most of Pitt's student athletes during this period were second-generation working-class ethnics. Three of the four players who comprised the Panthers' fabled "Dream Backfield" of the late 1930s were second-generation immigrants from working-class households. Marshall Goldberg was recruited to Pitt from Elkins, West Virginia, a small mountain town with 7500 residents; his father was a first-generation Russian Jew. John Chickerneo, who came to Pitt by way of Warren, Ohio, was Ukrainian and Romanian; his father worked in a Warren foundry. Although a native of Albany, New York, Dick Cassiano was the son of Italian immigrants. Curly Stebbins, the last member of Pitt's Dream Backfield, stood out for being neither of recent immigrant stock nor from a mill or steel town. (Stebbins hailed from Williamsport, Pennsylvania.) Elsewhere on the squad, players clustered from the same region and even same high school. Frank Souchack (Berwick) came from the hard coal

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<sup>478</sup> *The Owl* [1919], 324, 327; *Pitt Football Program* [September 30, 1933], 24; *Pitt Football Program* [September 26, 1933], 24.

regions, as did Leon Shedlosky (Nanticoke), Vincent Sites (Pittston) and Walter Balasia (Wilkes Barre). All four were sons of immigrant coal miners. Nick Kliskey, center, and Elmer Merkovsky, right tackle, were teammates at North Braddock. Both their fathers worked as the local mill. The oral histories of former players suggest that nearly all of the teams from the early 1930s boasted similar pedigrees.<sup>479</sup>

Student athletes from ethnic, working-class households played at nearly every position, but they were particularly visible on the offensive and defensive line. In 1936, for instance, roughly two-thirds of the Panthers' guards, tackles and ends were of either Southern or Eastern European descent and almost all hailed from single industry steel or mining towns. One could point to right end George Delich from Gary, Indiana; Frank Souchak from Berwick; Walter Raskowski from New Castle; or Elmer Merkovsky from North Braddock. Linemen from working-class, Eastern European backgrounds were so commonplace that they no longer attracted much attention. Instead, it was the rare WASP lineman who attracted publicity. Left tackle Averell Daniell, who played for Sutherland from 1934 to 1936, was one of the few players during Sutherland's tenure to have arrived without a scholarship. Daniell played high school football in Mt. Lebanon, an upper-middle-class Pittsburgh suburb, and had made the team as an un-recruited walk-on.<sup>480</sup>

By the 1930s, thanks to well-funded recruiting and subsidization programs, college football rosters across the country began to favor players of "new immigrant" stock. The rosters of nearly every major college football program in the country, from Fordham, to Notre Dame, to Minnesota, were weighted heavily with Southern and Eastern Europeans, many of them from

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<sup>479</sup> Chickerneo interview; Larry Eldridge et al., eds., *Great Moments in Pitt Football History* (Nashville, Tenn.: Athlon, 1994), 59-60; Miner, "Coal Mines to Coliseums."

<sup>480</sup> *Pitt Football Program* [September 28, 1935], 24, 19, 50; *Pitt Football Program* [September 26, 1936], 24, 37; *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 30 January 1999.

Pennsylvania. All but one of the fabled “Seven Blocks of Granite” at Fordham University were of Italian or Slavic ancestry. Fordham recruited so many players from the coal regions of eastern Pennsylvania – including Len Eshmont, the so-called “Fordham Flash” and the son of a Polish coal miner – that it was sometimes dubbed “Anthracite University.” As one commentator put it, “multi-syllabic Eastern European surnames became the means by which great universities were identified.” “No doubt the proportion of Slavic names and other ‘new Americans’ on the football teams is far beyond the social role which these newer arrivals have come to play in the national life as a whole.” Sportswriters mused that Camp’s All-American list might be more appropriately renamed the “All Nations.”<sup>481</sup>

Because of its high visibility with the national media, the composition of Notre Dame’s lineup received particular scrutiny. To some extent, the school had always reflected the diversity of Catholic America, but by the late 1920s, many were bemused by the school’s “Fighting Irish” moniker, given the range of nationalities now represented on its starting eleven. “Mohardt, Anderson, Stuhldreher, Vodesich, Leipig and Niemic . . . cannot be found on tombstones in the graveyards of Galway or Connemarra,” one Chicago journalist noted wryly. In 1943, the *New York Times* offered that the most remarkable aspect of a recent Notre Dame contest had been the fact that “a man named Kelly should have made the touchdown for the Irish team.” The school’s stock response to such commentary was that it represented “every European group trying to make it in America.” Further, after four years at Notre Dame, players inevitably became, like Knute Rockne, “Irish by environment.”<sup>482</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> *Jaro*, 4 December 1929; “Atlas Native a Football Star in College, Pros,” *Bloomsburg Press Enterprise* 30 March 2003; Sperber, *Shake Down the Thunder*, 262; Wallace, *Notre Dame Story*, 142.

<sup>482</sup> Quoted in Sperber, *Shake Down the Thunder*, 263; *New York Times*, 23 November 1943.

Some sports commentators pined for the pre-stadium, raccoon-coat-and-sweater days, “when your father was posing for his picture against a corner of a quad fence, wearing a big turtleneck sweater with his varsity letter a foot high on the chest.” James Thurber’s disgust with the state of athletics at his alma mater of Ohio State compelled him to satire. In the early 1930s, Thurber published a fictional story about an exceedingly dim-witted scholarship football player known as “One Blitz” Bolenciewicz. MGM Studios bought the rights to the piece and made it the basis for a college football musical in 1941 titled *Rise and Shine*, starring Jack Oakie as the “super dumb jock” of Eastern European heritage. For the most part, though, Americans accepted the new lineups, both in the spirit of New Deal fellowship, and later, during World War II, in the spirit of patriotic fraternity. Well before newsreels would praise the melting pot squadrons of the Armed Forces, promoters of diversity championed the ethnic football type as evidence of America's egalitarian potential.<sup>483</sup>

By the 1940s, college football had not entirely erased the class distinctions which it had originally sought to uphold. But most agreed it had come a long way. In *Saturday's Hero*, a 1951 Columbia release based on Millard Lampell’s semi-autobiographical novel, a blue-blooded player at the fictional Jackson University announces to his teammates: “I’m the fourth one in my family to wear this uniform.” In response, a scholarship athlete from Scranton named “Mestrovic” replies: “I’m the fourth one in my family to wear shoes.” Regardless of its commercial excesses – or in fact, in large measure, because of them – college football had managed to achieve a democratic ideal that countered social privilege. Commenting on the annual Army-Notre Dame contest, the editors of *Commonweal* lauded the fact that “worldly

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<sup>483</sup> Wiley Lee Uphlett, *The Movies Go to College: Hollywood and the World of the College-Life Film* (Rutherford, N.J.: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 72.

possessions” and class position mattered little. “Again, no blood lines . . . of a selected racial ancestry will further the ambition of the student and the player.” At least on the gridiron, merit and skill trumped class entitlement.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Dialogue from *Saturday’s Hero* (Columbia Pictures, 1951); Millard Lampell, *The Hero* (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1949); Herbert Reed, “Everybody’s Football Game,” *Commonweal* 4 December 1936, 150.

## 5 EPILOGUE: FROM STATE TO MARKET: THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF SPORT AND RECREATION IN PENNSYLVANIA AFTER WORLD WAR II

The trend in the United States is to public control and direction of recreation . . . . The organized recreation movement had taken up good activities formerly enjoyed only by the rich and made them available to the public through tax supported recreations systems, and with no taint of paternalism.

Herbert L. May and Dorothy Petgen, *Leisure and Its Uses*

The “challenge of leisure—1956” is a far cry from the “challenge of leisure—1906.”

Fred Coombs, “The Administrative Organization for State Recreation Services in Pennsylvania,” 1957

In 1957, the Pennsylvania State Planning Board commissioned the National Recreation Association (NRA) to survey the “state of the state” in public recreation. On every level – from local and state to federal – government since the turn of the century had come to play an increasingly more visible role in the organization and administration of recreation and sport. Pennsylvania’s extensive network of state parks, game lands and historic sites were just the tip of the iceberg. By the early 1950s, according to the report’s findings, 12 administrative departments, four independent commissions and at least 70 sub units of Pennsylvania state government had “some concern for recreation.”<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> Fred M. Coombs, “The Administrative Organization for State Recreation Services in Pennsylvania,” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1957), 1-4. National Recreation Association (NRA), *Public Recreation and Its*

The proliferation of recreation-related programs across such a wide spectrum of state government had its obvious downside. NRA investigators encountered numerous instances of duplicated services and inefficiencies and decreed overall conditions in the field to be “chaotic.” The administrative problems were so extensive that the NRA recommended the creation of an independent Department of Recreation to oversee the vast enterprise of public recreation as it had developed in Pennsylvania by the mid-1950s. No state to that point had “gone the whole way” in an effort to coordinate and combine the individual subunits charged with recreation. “Perhaps Pennsylvania will have the opportunity of establishing a pattern for other states to follow.” It seemed unlikely; within the previous three years, the state house had twice approved a measure creating a separate state agency to oversee recreation, only to have it rejected both times by the state’s upper chamber.<sup>486</sup>

Despite the present bureaucratic quagmire, the NRA report was careful to underscore the good news. Pennsylvania, and the United States more generally, was in the midst of a “sociological breakthrough” that was no less significant than the recent discovery of the atomic bomb. The rise of a new leisure society was “of enormous importance to human society, comparable only to that sociological breakthrough of some 10,000 years ago, when man was freed from fighting for bare existence.” “That sociological breakthrough gave some leisure to some men . . .” the report continued. “Today, our sociological breakthrough is giving a great deal of leisure to all men and the probability, not just a possibility, of a golden age is here.”<sup>487</sup>

The NRA report credited the state for the equitable distribution of leisure opportunities. Over the past half century, it either established or provided access to recreation and sport where

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*Administration in Pennsylvania: Prepared for the State Planning Board and the State Recreation Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (New York: National Recreation Association, 1957).

<sup>486</sup> NRA, *Public Recreation and Its Administration*, 14; Coombs, “Administrative Organization,” iv.

<sup>487</sup> NRA, *Public Recreation and Its Administration*, 1.

private sector or market-based approaches failed or worked only to the benefit of a small, privileged minority. “This does not mean that government should try to provide all the recreation opportunities people want and need. However . . . it is a function of government to provide certain basic recreation areas . . . which yield a maximum benefit to large numbers of people and which could not otherwise be made available to them . . .”<sup>488</sup>

In some ways, this was familiar rhetoric that dated at least as far back as the organized playground movement of the early 1890s and was reiterated during subsequent periods of reform, including most recently the New Deal. What differed a half century later was the scope of state involvement and the expansion of the target population for such programs. The “leisure problem” as defined by public officials and public recreation advocates had expanded to now include adults as well as the “street urchins” of an earlier generation. “The need then involved how and where children would spend their free time. The need now concerns all people, of all ages, and reaches deep into the complexities of human relations and individual growth.”<sup>489</sup>

Despite the growing acceptance of the state’s role, during the postwar years its fate became less certain – and more complicated – than the NRA findings revealed. To be sure, during the 1950s and 1960s, the democratization of amateur sports continued. Over those decades hunting, golf and college football continued to grow in popularity and attract more Pennsylvanians of ordinary means. During the second half of the twentieth century, the monopoly once enjoyed by social elites in all three sports was irrevocably broken. But two important trends qualified that general trajectory: the gradual (albeit by no means even)

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<sup>488</sup> NRA, *Public Recreation and Its Administration*, 13.

<sup>489</sup> Coombs, “Administrative Organization,” 4.



displacement of the state by the market; and the voluntary (albeit by no means complete) withdraw of elites from the playing fields which they had once dominated.

The more salient of these trends was the growth of the private sector within public recreation. The process was seen most clearly in golf. Municipal courses remained popular, especially with novice, city golfers, but they no longer dominated the public side of the game as they had done before World War II. Semi-public courses, which combined the accessibility of municipal links with the aesthetics of private courses, emerged during this period and became the dominant model of golf course administration during the second half of the twentieth century. (Company-built links and company sponsored leagues also helped satisfy the growing interest in golf among Pennsylvania's blue-collar workers.)

Something comparable occurred in hunting. During the postwar years, the state continued to preside over game management and the acquisition of public game lands. But as prime game real estate became more difficult to come by, especially near population centers, the state found itself working with private landowners in an effort to expand game habitat and hunting grounds. This trend, along with the proliferation of privately owned hunting grounds, combined to diminish public game lands, at least when compared to the monopoly they enjoyed before the war. In college football, the increased participation of working-class youth continued to be driven by market forces which compelled schools to recruit the best talent available. If anything, the commercialization of college football intensified during the postwar years, although not all schools chose to compete at the same level.

While all three sports continued to attract more and more working-class participants, elites themselves slowly withdrew. In golf, Pennsylvania's upper class simply retreated to the social enclave of suburban and metropolitan country clubs. Although private course construction

ground to a halt during the Great Depression and many private clubs struggled to survive, the return of prosperity after World War II allowed many to reopen or be rebuilt. Big Game hunting – all the rage among industrialists and “gentlemen sportsmen” during the early twentieth century – gradually passed out of fashion during the postwar years. Many upper-class sportsmen contented themselves with controlled “shoots” organized by private hunting clubs, leaving white-tailed deer and public game lands to the masses. The most pronounced withdraw occurred in college football. Beginning in the late 1940s, elite institutions which had once dominated competitive football chose to “de-emphasize” Big Time athletics and re-embrace (and reify) the amateur code. In so doing, college football experienced a bifurcation. Programs which abolished recruiting and athletic subsidies re-established their upper-class base; those which did not continued to draw student athletes from working-class backgrounds.

### **5.1 Semi-Publics and Industrial Courses: Private Sector Approaches to Public Golf**

The golden age of municipal golf, seeded during the Progressive era and fortified during the New Deal, slowly contracted in the decades following World War II. Publicly owned courses were still being built in the late 1940s. Between 1931 and 1955, the number of municipal courses more than doubled, from 300 to 750. They also continued to dominate play. Although “munys” comprised only 15% of all courses, as of 1955 they accounted for 40% of all golf played.<sup>490</sup> But ordinary Pennsylvanians’ access to the game, especially by the late 1950s and into the 1960s, no longer depended exclusively on publicly owned and operated courses. Much of this had to do

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<sup>490</sup> Verne Wickham, ed., *Municipal Golf Course: Organizing and Operating Guide* (Chicago: National Golf Foundation, 1955), 4.

with social changes that transcended the game but nonetheless directly affected it. Postwar suburbanization had dispersed a significant percentage of the urban working class which had been the target population for many public recreation programs. As suburbanization drained Pennsylvania's urban core, it siphoned off a segment of the population which traditionally filed onto municipal courses before the war.

Leaving the city for the "country" was not a postwar phenomenon, but the scale of the movement was.<sup>491</sup> Between 1950 and 1960, the population within Pennsylvania's "urban fringe" grew by 55%, while the physical boundaries of the Commonwealth's metropolitan areas expanded by an average of 110%. These new population and spatial patterns effected large cities the most. Philadelphia's urban fringe grew by 92%, for instance, and its metropolitan area increased by 155%. Pennsylvania was squarely caught up in a national trend, but its rate of suburban growth, especially when compared to its rate of urban growth, was distinctive. While urban areas in other states grew by about 20% during the first half of the 1950s, the population of Pennsylvania's urban core actually declined by 5%. One reason Pennsylvania's suburban fringe grew more rapidly relative to its metropolitan centers was the fact that it literally had more to lose. "Even now, our central cities have a population density over twice that of the national average," state planners noted in 1955. "As suburbanization continues, the growth in

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<sup>491</sup> The scholarship on postwar suburbanization is substantial. For overviews, see Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 231-271; Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream* (New York: North Point Press, 2000); and Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 240-261.

Pennsylvania's urbanized areas can be expected to occur largely in the fringes, while the central cities stabilize or thin out."<sup>492</sup>

Levittown exemplified the physical and social features of Pennsylvania's new, mass produced suburbs. Levitt and Sons began construction on the planned, tract-house development in southeastern Pennsylvania in 1952, applying the same building and design principles that had gone into its first "brand name" suburb on Long Island. In New York, Levitt targeted returning veterans. In Pennsylvania, the builder adjusted his sites to include blue-collar workers and their families. Already situated in the state's densely populated southeastern quadrant, the nine-square-mile expanse of real estate in lower Bucks County sat cheek to jowl with a new, state-of-the-art U.S. Steel facility in nearby Fairless Hills – the first and only "green field" facility built by the giant steel manufacturer after World War II. By the time Levitt's work crews completed the last of the development's 17,000-plus single-family units in 1958, it was already home to 70,000 residents. During the 1950s, Levittown was the state's fastest growing community and seventh largest "city."<sup>493</sup>

Levittown represented Pennsylvania's new suburban growth on steroids. No other development came close to reaching its scale or scope. Nonetheless, it was broadly representative of the many smaller tract-housing developments which filled out the state's emerging suburban corridors. Equipped with automobiles, good paying union jobs, and, in most cases, low cost federal mortgages, workers and lower-middle-class families eagerly snatched up

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<sup>492</sup> Pennsylvania State Planning Board, *The Population of Pennsylvania: A Social Profile* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1955), 28, 34.

<sup>493</sup> Curtis Miner, "Picture Window Paradise: A Social History of Levittown, Pa.," *Pennsylvania Heritage* 28/2 (Spring 2002):12-21. Had the development been incorporated as a separate municipality, Levittown would have been the seventh largest city in Pennsylvania. Bristol Township, the largest of the four municipalities which Levitt's new development overlapped, grew by a whopping 400% and was Pennsylvania's tenth largest municipality by the end of the decade.

such cheaply built – and affordably priced – houses. Roughly half of Levittown’s residents were drawn from row-house neighborhoods in metropolitan Philadelphia; the other half were refugees from mill and mining towns in northeastern and Western Pennsylvania. Although often characterized as homogeneous and, by extension, classless, Levittown and other mass housing developments exuded a strong, lower-middle-class character.<sup>494</sup>

It was within this physical and social milieu that new public courses most readily took seed. Ordinary Pennsylvanians still demanded and required public golf facilities, even within their new suburban setting. Courses operated by private country clubs were still well beyond their means, for both financial and social reasons. But by and large, “muny courses” did not satisfy that demand. Typically, municipal golf courses depended on an organized constituency of politically influential middle-class golfers, and a large swath of existing public land – namely, a city park – on which to build them. New suburban housing developments, most of which appeared in sparsely populated rural townships, rarely offered either.<sup>495</sup>

During the postwar decades, a curious hybrid filled the breach: “semi-public” or “daily-fee” golf courses. On the surface, semi-public courses approximated municipal courses. Indeed, after a time, both the National Golf Foundation (NGF) and the United States Golf Association (USGA) dropped the “semi” prefix and classified them together with “munys” as public courses.

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<sup>494</sup> Miner, “Picture Window Paradise,” 19. After decades of neglect, the history of Levittown and other manifestations of blue-collar suburbanization are finally getting their due. These new studies have helped counter the long standing assumption that new suburbs were socially homogeneous. In Levittown, for instance, surveys conducted in the 1950s revealed it to be more ethnically and socially diverse than the rest of the country. For studies of other blue-collar suburbs, see Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) and Richard Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs: Toronto’s American Tragedy* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). Greg Smith offers a glimpse of Pittsburgh’s blue-collar suburbs in “Moving to the Suburbs,” in Paul Roberts, ed., *Points In Time: Building a Life in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1996), 87-102.

<sup>495</sup> Pennsylvania State Planning Board, *Project 70: A Plan for Pennsylvania’s Outdoor Resources* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1963), 31. The State Planning Board argued that new suburban developments were particularly underserved. It believed one solution to this was to create more state parks within easy reach of suburban corridors.

As with municipal courses, semi-public links were open to the general public. One did not have to be sponsored for membership in a club or pay steep annual dues as was the case with private country clubs. Semi-public courses charged on a per-round, or “daily fee” basis. The one important distinction was that daily fees were privately owned and operated. This feature meant little to the average golfer and would likely have gone unnoticed; perhaps the only discernable difference was the fact that, on average, semi-public courses tended to charge more.

To most golfers, especially those able to afford the higher rates, semi-public courses offered the ideal balance between the superior quality of private courses and the accessibility of municipal links. Semi-public courses were still free of the membership restrictions that constricted access to private country clubs, but because of their location and higher fees, they were typically less congested, better maintained and frequently better sited than heavily used city-owned links, many of which were shoehorned into already crowded urban parks. The better semi-public courses were indistinguishable from those operated by private country clubs. Some daily fees even took to describing themselves as “country clubs for the day.”

Semi-public courses were not new to postwar Pennsylvania. They first appeared in the late 1920s, mainly to draw middle-class golfers whom private clubs could not or would not accommodate. But semi-publics were capital-intensive business ventures which relied almost entirely on income generated by greens fees. The Depression slowed but did not completely halt their construction. Between 1930 and 1940, Pennsylvania added nine new “semi-publics,” a figure which paled in comparison to the number of private courses built during the heady 1920s. What is interesting, however, is the fact that by 1940, 16 courses which before 1930 were classified as private reappeared as “semi public,” suggesting that they were either misclassified

by USGA officials, or that they had been converted from private courses into semi-public courses in response to Depression-era financial exigencies.<sup>496</sup>

Golf courses construction was slow to regain its momentum in the 1940s, but it was not for lack of demand. According to both the USGA and the NGF, returning veterans were eager to get out on the links. But new course construction faced several obstacles, including land competition from suburban housing developments, such as Levittown, fueled as they were by federal subsidies and an acute postwar housing shortage. But developments which gobbled land also stimulated the golf market; the more suburban housing tracts, the more business opportunities for golf course operators which opened their courses to the general public on a daily fee basis. During the first two decades after World War II, municipal golf courses were still carrying a disproportionate number of golfers. But semi-publics (referred to by the NGF as “semi-private”) were gaining ground. In 1955, semi-private courses accounted for 26% of all golf courses and attracted 28% of all golfers.<sup>497</sup>

Semi-public courses quickly outpaced municipal course construction and eventually came to outnumber private courses, which constituted the vast majority of courses in operation in Pennsylvania and the rest of the nation before the war. In 1940, the number of municipal and semi-public links was relatively even, but by 1955 there were already almost twice as many daily fees as munys. By 1960, there were two-and-a-half times as many; ten years later, nearly four times. Despite experiencing boom and bust cycles, privately owned public courses enjoyed an

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<sup>496</sup> AAGG [1940], 100-104. In some cases, semi-public courses were established on the site of private courses which had gone out of business during the Depression. Such courses, which had lain fallow through much of the 1930s and 1940s, were purchased by private operators and resurrected as daily fees.

<sup>497</sup> Wickham, *Municipal Golf Course*, 4. In 1930, between 81 and 85% of Pennsylvania’s courses were private. By 1940, thanks to the conversion of private courses to semi-publics and the steady growth of municipal courses, that percentage dropped to 71%.

overall upward trajectory. Of the nearly 500 publicly accessible courses in operation in Pennsylvania by the end of the twentieth century, less than 10% were municipal; the rest were classified as commercial daily fees. Conversely, the proportion of private courses to public courses continued to fall; by 1983, private country clubs constituted less than 40% of all courses in the Commonwealth. At about the same time, according to one state-wide survey, 74% of all Pennsylvania golfers played on commercial daily-fee and municipal courses, compared to a mere 26% which relied on private courses.<sup>498</sup>

One reason for their proliferation was a general postwar prosperity which made such market-driven ventures more feasible. During the interwar years, golf courses that depended on daily greens fees were risky ventures. There were simply too few golfers with sufficient resources and income to keep them afloat. But as leisure time and disposable income soared during the postwar decades, particularly the 1960s and 70s, more and more Pennsylvanians were in a position to afford semi-public daily-fee courses. During boom periods in the 1960s and again in the 1980s, commercial operators could not build them fast enough. A 1976 state recreation survey estimated that commercial courses were presently meeting only 75% of the demand. While the state “has not been in the business of building and operating golf courses,” the report urged the Commonwealth to “reduce needs by encouraging private enterprises.”<sup>499</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> J.F. Beditz, “The Development and Growth of the U.S. Golf Market” in A.J. Cochran, ed., *Science and Golf II: Proceedings of the World Scientific Congress of Golf* (London: E. & F.N. Spon, 1994), 547; National Golf Foundation (NGF), *The Economic Contribution of the Golf Industry to the Pennsylvania Economy* (Prepared for Play and State in PA; Pennsylvania Golf Course Owner’s Association, August 2002), 12; Mark Metcalf Miller, “A Spatial Analysis of Golf Facility Development in the United States, 1931-1970” (Master’s thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1972), 9; Robert L. A. Adams and John F. Rooney, Jr., “Evolution of American Golf Facilities” *Geographical Review* 75/4 (Oct. 1985): 431.

<sup>499</sup> Governor’s Office of State Planning and Development, *Pennsylvania’s Recreation Plan: Summary* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1976), 14. The implicit state policy on golf course construction after World War II was to allow the market to satisfy demand. Even though municipal owned links came to represent an increasingly smaller proportion of public golf course by the late twentieth century, commercial golf course operators became more shrill in their criticism that



The social geography of post-war Pennsylvania also played a hand. Before World War II, semi-public courses were largely inaccessible to industrial workers. Privately owned, publicly accessible courses were almost always situated on the metropolitan fringe and accessible only by automobile, which relatively few workers owned. After the war, though, location became less of an obstacle. Suburbanization pulled many workers closer to such courses. Increased rates of automobile ownership also meant that many more now had the means to convey themselves to courses located on the outskirts of town. If there was one defining feature of semi-public courses – which appeared in a range of styles and price structures – it was ample parking.

Company-built courses occupied a much smaller niche, but they too offered another means through which Pennsylvanians of ordinary means could hit the links after World War II. Like daily-fee courses, company courses had been around for some time. Many of Pennsylvania's larger manufacturing firms opened courses for their executives during the 1910s and 1920s. What made postwar company links distinct is that they were less often restricted to management or company execs. In 1958, for instance, the Danherst Corporation created the Fairless Hills Golf Course for residents of Fairless Hills, a housing development almost exclusively occupied by workers employed at the adjacent Fairless Works of U.S. Steel. The Fairless Hills course functioned as a *de-facto* company course before being converted into a county-owned facility in 1969. By the early 1960s, at least six Pennsylvania companies, including Bethlehem Steel, the Brockway Glass Company (Jefferson County) and the Philadelphia Electric Company, owned and operated courses open to all employees, regardless of

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municipal courses had an unfair competitive advantage. See, for instance, Jay Karen, "The Time and Need for Municipal Golf has Come and Gone," *Golf Course News* (November 2002).

job title. In some cases, as with the Brockway Glass course, even non-employees could play the links for a nominal fee.<sup>500</sup>

In 1964, the NGF tacitly acknowledged the growth of company courses with the publication of its first official planning guide for “industrial golf.” Since the end of World War II, the foundation had noted “a steady increase in requests for information from companies planning, building and operating employee golf facilities.” Just a fraction of American businesses offered company courses, but the number was growing. By the early 1960s, the NGF estimated there were 100 such courses in operation, representing 70 different companies. Curiously, this modest surge in course construction was not being driven by company executives. In the past, “progressive managements” had seen fit to add golf to company recreation programs. But since World War II, “the company golf program is of spontaneous origin.” The NGF noted many instances of employees “band[ing] together” to pursue their hobby; only later were they “assisted and encouraged by management.”<sup>501</sup>

According to the NGF, golf’s growing appeal to “the average American working man” presented companies with “tailor made opportunities to better employee-management relations.” Businesses that maintained golf courses for their employees kept “personnel turnover and absenteeism to a minimum. . . . Whatever the cost of each individual golf facility, it is a worthwhile investment in good employee-community-company relations.” Even if companies were not in a position to build courses, the NGF urged them to consider sponsoring golf leagues

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<sup>500</sup> *Bucks County Courier Times*, 23 March 1971; Ben Chlevin, ed., *Golf for Industry: A Planning Guide* (Chicago: National Golf Foundation, 1964), 50. The number of golf courses developed by companies for their blue-collar work forces was still small when compared to the vast network of private links built for company executives before and, in some cases, after the war. In Pennsylvania, such courses numbered under a dozen. But they represented a symbolic achievement for workers eager to claim their stake in a sport once regarded as the ultimate marker of social status.

<sup>501</sup> Chlevin, *Golf for Industry*, 1.

and tournaments for their employees. Both provided “congenial opportunities for management and employees to get together on a friendly, democratic basis, an otherwise difficult achievement in these days of extreme mechanization and mass production when the worker is often removed from the men at the helm.” Business executives were apparently already heeding the advice. Of the 30,000 American companies which offered some sort of employee recreation program, the NGF estimated that over three quarters of such programs “include some form of golf.”<sup>502</sup>

In cases where companies refused to open executive links to all employees, workers sometimes successfully pressured management to support initiatives for public courses. In Bethlehem, rank-and-file workers at Bethlehem Steel shamed corporate executives into donating land and professional expertise for that city’s first public golf course. Since 1920, executives at the company’s Bethlehem headquarters enjoyed golfing privileges at the posh Saucon Valley Country Club. The club’s championship course had proven so popular that in the 1950s Bethlehem Steel added a second course which it named for club “patriarch” and company president Eugene Grace. It was perhaps the company’s decision to underwrite this second course which prompted rank-and-file steelworkers to appeal to corporate officials for a public links. In 1965, and at Grace’s direction, the company agreed to a land swap with the city of Bethlehem which allowed it to build an 18-hole municipal golf course open to all.<sup>503</sup>

Similar worker-based initiatives appeared elsewhere around Pennsylvania. In 1957, for instance, steelworkers at the Aliquippa plant of Jones & Laughlin Steel petitioned management to create a course for plant employees “as was done for baseball teams in the Community.” The

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<sup>502</sup> Chlevin, *Golf for Industry*, 2, 6-7.

<sup>503</sup> Ralph Grayson Schwarz, *Saucon Valley Country Club: An American Legacy 1920-2000* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Saucon Valley Country Club, 2000), 59; John Strohmeyer, *Crisis in Bethlehem: Big Steel’s Struggle to Survive* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994), 30-33. As of 2004, the Bethlehem Municipal Golf Course was still being operated by the city, but in the late 1990s, the city renamed it the Bethlehem Golf Course, in part to avoid the perceived stigma of municipal courses.

move was prompted by the impending conversion of the Raccoon Golf Course – a daily-fee course on the outskirts of town – into a private, members-only country club. Writing on behalf of his fellow union brothers and golfers, union committeeman Babe Ludwico pointed to the success of the plant’s two-year-old golf league as evidence of rank-and-file interest. About 180 employees, drawn from 11 departments, belonged to the league, “more the any other sponsored by or representing J&L.” Ludwico made a personal appeal to the plant superintendent, not as the big boss, but as a fellow golfer. “It is our utmost hope that Mr. Devaney, being an avid sportsman and well known golfer himself, as are most of the ‘top brass,’ can see fit to promote such a project for which we Golfers will be eternally grateful and appreciative.” The campaign took time, but Aliquippa’s steelworkers prevailed. In 1964, Local 1211 sponsored its first golf field day at the Raccoon Golf Course.<sup>504</sup>

It is impossible to measure just how widespread golf was among industrial workers, but for every employee who played in an organized league, there was likely many more who played informally as individuals or in small groups. In the newsletter published by the United Steelworkers’ local at Clairton, for instance, one union member testified to his own conversion “after having been introduced to this game by two of our union brothers and co-workers.” “The game of golf was once considered to be only for the men of leisure and money. But now men and women of all walks of life have entered into this sport.” He then went on to cite about two dozen union men currently enrolled in the Clairton Works Golf League. “Try it soon and decide

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<sup>504</sup> *Aliquippa Steelworker*, July 1957; *Aliquippa Steelworker*, September 1964, USWA Locals Newspaper Collection, Historical Collection and Labor Archives, Special Collections Library, Penn State University (Hereafter cited as HCLA).

for yourself,” the enthused proselytizer concluded. “Equipment Needed: Balls and Clubs (which you can rent) and plenty of patience (which you must furnish).”<sup>505</sup>

In sections of the state where conditions discouraged daily fees and industrial courses, public courses were sometimes sponsored through county governments.<sup>506</sup> Such was the case in Clinton County in north central Pennsylvania. Although the county was overwhelmingly blue collar, its geography and rural character precluded the construction of municipal courses. With only 10,000 residents, the county seat of Lock Haven had an insufficient tax base to support a municipal golf course. For somewhat the same reason, Clinton County was likely perceived as too remote to attract a private concern willing to build and operate a daily-fee course. The Lock Haven Country Club served the needs of the area’s professional class, but whole segments of the area’s population, including workers from Hammermill Paper, Woolrich, and Piper Manufacturing, were excluded.

In 1966, in response to public demand, county officials agreed to seek state and federal funding to help underwrite the county’s first public golf course. Working through its newly created recreation authority, the county received a \$32,000 loan from the Farmer Home Administration to help finance the purchase of a tract of farmland just outside of Lock Haven and along a well traveled state highway. The Clinton County Recreation Authority made up the difference with a mix and match of state and federal funds, including a grant from the federal Land and Water Conservation program. The new Belles Spring Public Golf Course, opened in 1969, was immensely popular among workers from regional employers such as Piper Aircraft

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<sup>505</sup> *1557 Labor Journal* (Clairton USWA), April 15, 1964, HCLA.

<sup>506</sup> The state itself was reluctant to get into the golf course business. Although the NRA report recognized the fact that many state parks could be adapted to such purposes, it noted that state was “not inclined” to do so, believing golf courses to be an activity which is “municipal in character.” See NRA, *Public Recreation and Its Administration*, 83.

and Hammermill Paper. The recreation authority continued, but its primary responsibility was the operation and administration of the new public golf course.<sup>507</sup>

## 5.2 Co-Ops and Clubs: The Public-Private Dimensions of Postwar Hunting

The physical location of Pennsylvania's blue-collar population had little impact on the course of recreational hunting after World War II. Compared to golf, recreational hunting depended more on the location of game animals, particularly in the case of large game such as deer and bear, than on the location of hunters. During the postwar decades, that increasingly meant the Commonwealth's upper-tier counties. During the 1940s, Potter County, the state's leader, yielded over 20,000 deer, followed closely by McKean and Elk Counties. Northern-tier counties continued to dominate Big Game hunting in Pennsylvania well into the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>508</sup>

Improved access to the northern tier's remote game lands boosted the region's popularity among sport hunters. Increased automobile ownership and improved roads on which to drive them helped make junkets to Pennsylvania's northern most counties increasingly more feasible for more and more sportsmen. While middle-tier counties such as Clinton, Lycoming and Centre

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<sup>507</sup> Neathery-Norton Associates, *Clinton County: Past, Present, Future* (Erie, Pa.: Neathery-Norton Associates, Ltd., 1969), 249. Interestingly, the NRA's report specifically encouraged the creation of county recreation authorities for this reason. The NRA saw correctly that government services, especially with continued suburban expansion, would be better carried out at the county level. It also recognized that "a considerable percentage of the people in Pennsylvania live in localities that are too small at present to support a year round recreation program – many of them in scattered rural communities – organization of recreation service on a county basis offers the most promising means of serving . . . the recreation need of the people." See NRA, *Public Recreation and Its Administration*, 171.

<sup>508</sup> L. James Bashline, comp., *Data Book No.2: Old Material* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Game Commission, c. 1986). It was not until the 1970s that white-tailed deer populations began shifting to southern counties. By the end of the twentieth century, the state Game Commission had a full fledged deer nuisance problem on its hands. Owing to a wide variety of factors, deer were overrunning southern tier counties as never before. The overabundance forced the Commission to periodically reduce herd numbers in such unlikely places as residential subdivisions – and on golf courses.

continued to produce reasonably-sized deer herds and bear populations, new and improved highways made prime game territory further north equally accessible. Sometime between 1942 and 1947, for instance, the state paved Rt. 555, a well-known stretch of road referred to as “Big Game Boulevard” during the 1950s and 1960s. The route snaked its way through some of the state’s most game-rich forests in southeastern Elk County. The opening of Interstate 80, which bisected Big Game country, likely had a similar impact by the late 1960s, as did the general improvements to Rt. 6, the state’s northernmost east-west highway, and smaller but strategically placed state highways such as Rt. 219. Better roads meant that access to hunting grounds would no longer be limited to nearby rural residents, or the urban elite. Theoretically, anyone with an automobile – and enough vacation time – could now penetrate prime hunting country.<sup>509</sup>

The combined impact of highways and motor vehicles was especially evident in the days and weeks leading up to deer season. Opening day traditionally fell on the first Monday after Thanksgiving. As the open season approached, regional tourism promoters published maps, local newspapers issued special editions, and rural and small town businesses in northern-tier counties doubled or tripled their inventories. All of this was in anticipation of the thousands of hunters who routinely swelled the region’s normal population tenfold and more by late November. Many businesses in northern-tier counties depended on the weeks surrounding deer season for as much as 90% of their annual sales. During the postwar decades Opening Day became a lucrative Pennsylvania tradition, particularly in the state’s northern tier, but drawing on nearly all sections of the state, including the more populous southern half of the state which

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<sup>509</sup> Pennsylvania Game Commission, *Pennsylvania Deer Harvests and Road Kills* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1995); Road Map Collection, MG 11, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa.

contributed to the annual pilgrimage. Public schools across the Commonwealth routinely closed for the first day of buck season so that sons (and sometimes daughters) could join in the hunt.<sup>510</sup>

Positioned within easy reach of Elk, Cameron, and other game-rich northern-tier counties, DuBois was typical of the small towns whose economies came to depend on recreational hunting. Voluntary enlistees in the “Red Coated Army” invariably passed through town to stock up on last minute supplies before heading into camp. On the weekend before the big hunt, the *Dubois Courier Express* published a special circular that included advertisements aimed specifically at the visiting hunter, and entry forms for its annual Large Game Hunting Contest, which offered prizes for “the first person bringing to the *Courier Express* office” bucks ranging from four to eleven points. Cars with large bucks strapped to their hoods, most of them headed south, became a common sight on the highways and bi-ways of northwestern and northcentral Pennsylvania during the two-week open season on deer. In 1955, there were 93 deer killed for every 1,000 hunters, the highest rate of success to that point, especially if one excludes the unusual number of antler-less deer taken in 1940.<sup>511</sup>

Bountiful harvests helped sell hunting licenses. Between 1930 and 1960, the number of licensed hunters in the state nearly doubled. The rate of growth was particularly strong after World War II. In Allegheny County, which continued to lead the state in licensed hunters, the

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<sup>510</sup> One way to gauge the extent of the tradition is through the number and location of schools which observe the first day of deer hunting season as a school holiday. Even as late as 1998, most school districts in Pennsylvania, including those in urban centers (with the exceptions of the Philadelphia school district), remained closed the first day after Thanksgiving, in deference to the tradition. Survey of Pennsylvania School Districts conducted by Tiner LaMancusa, The State Museum of Pennsylvania, Spring 1998.

<sup>511</sup> Sample editions of the *Dubois Courier-Express*, November-December, 1946-1953; (Pennsylvania) Bureau of Statistics, *1961 Pennsylvania Statistical Abstract*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Harrisburg, Pa.: Department of Internal Affairs, 1961), 55. DuBois had been characterized as the “gateway to Big Game territory” as early as 1930. That year, the *Post Gazette* reported that some 20,000 hunters were streaming into the county by automobile or special train. *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 1 December 1930. During the 1940s and 1950s, the *Courier Express* tracked the annual migration of hunters to the northern tier like the movements of an advancing military division. A typical edition from the 1952 hunting season announced “Big Trek of Buck Hunters Gathering Momentum: Redcoat Army Pours through Gateway to Big Game Country.”



number of licenses issued between 1945 and 1955 grew by roughly 30%, from 50,000 to 72,000. In 1960, the number of licensed hunters settled at just under one million; the state's bureau of statistics that year estimated that roughly one out of every ten Pennsylvanians owned a license. Hunters seemed especially visible in heavily industrialized counties in northeastern and southwestern Pennsylvania. Westmoreland County issued the second largest number of licenses in the state during this period despite being just the sixth most populous county. Largely rural Lancaster County, which earned the third spot with 29,000 licenses, offered the one exception to this rule. Philadelphia, which comprised Pennsylvania's most populous county, barely managed to crack the top ten.<sup>512</sup>

As was true of golf, the growing popularity of recreational hunting owed much to the general prosperity of the postwar years. On average, most working Pennsylvanians enjoyed better wages, shorter work weeks, and more leisure time after the war than they had before. Such broad based social and economic changes were necessary prerequisites for the consumption of any form of recreation, but golf and hunting benefited perhaps more than other pastimes. Both required significant outlays of time and money. Steelworkers and coal miners hunted before the union era, for instance, but most industrial workers had neither the time nor the money for hunting junkets to the northern woods. This may help to explain the surge in camp building in northern-tier counties during the 1950s and 1960s. Workers during those decades were also in a better position to afford licenses, sporting goods, automobiles and hunting camps.<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>512</sup> "Resident and Non-Resident Hunting Licenses Issued by County," *Game Commission Data Book*.

<sup>513</sup> According to the U.S. Census of Business Manufactures in 1955, more money was spent on golf, per capita, than any other sporting activity. For a discussion of union-derived benefits among steelworkers, see Mark McCullough, "Consolidating Industrial Citizenship: The USWA at War and Peace, 1939-1946" in Peter Clark et al., eds., *Forging a Union of Steel: Philip Murray, SWOC and the United Steelworkers* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State University Press, 1986), 45-86. Serro Scotty Trailer, based in Irwin, Pennsylvania, and the manufacturer of an affordable camping trailer, direct marketed its product to steelworkers during the 1960s. Interview with Gary

To an even greater extent than golf, recreational hunting became an integral part of Pennsylvania workers' world during the 1950s and 1960s. One index of this was the amount of attention which industrial labor unions devoted to the sport. In newsletters published by union locals, hunting news appeared next to high school football round-ups and bowling league standings. The Aliquippa and Clairton locals of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) publicized upcoming game seasons and provided updates to members on changes in state game laws. The editors of the *1557 Labor Journal* (Clairton) announced: "We are certain we have in our membership many lovers of the outdoor life. Men that are contented in being released from the confinement of city life, with its crowds of pushing and shoving and a million noises." A typical entry in the January 1963 issue reported that "Frank Aldridge, a pipe fitter, bagged a 115 lb, 4 point buck" and that John E. Thomas, "ovens monitor room employee and a disabled veteran, shot an 8 point buck." Another member, Bill Chomas, managed to travel to Canada, where he bagged 700-pound moose.<sup>514</sup>

Aliquippa's local exhibited an especially strong interest in hunting. The *Aliquippa Steelworker* featured not one but two regular hunting columns penned by union brothers in the paper's two-page sports section: "Know the Law," by Matt Kostelic, which advised union members on changes in state game regulations, and "The Sportsman," a general-interest hunting column by John Stefanik. Brother Kostelic also served as co-chair of the Local 1211 Conservation Fishing and Hunting Club. Members met in the union hall on the third Monday of

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Pirschl, Serro Scotty Trailer, Irwin, PA, 17 September 1995. It would be interesting (but owing to the absence of records, impossible) to determine how many steelworkers took at least a portion of their 13-week vacations – the infamous "steelworker's sabbatical" – during hunting season.

<sup>514</sup> *1557 Labor Journal*, 15 January 1963; March 15, 1964, HCLA. For snapshots of the social world of blue-collar workers in one representative southwestern Pennsylvania steel town, see, in chronological order, Margaret Byington, *Homestead: The Households of a Mill Town* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910); Curtis Miner, *Homestead: The Story of a Steel Town* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 1989), and William Serrin, *Homestead: The Glory and Tragedy of an American Steel Town* (New York: Vintage Press, 1993).

every month to watch films with titles such as “White- Tailed Buck” and “Bullet Casting” and exchange information on local game conditions. It is uncertain how many unions across Western Pennsylvania sponsored similar clubs for their membership, but it would be reasonable to assume that Aliquippa was not unique, and that hunting was even more thoroughly embedded in coal miner culture.<sup>515</sup>

By the 1960s and 1970s, industrial workers from southwestern Pennsylvania had become a formidable presence in the state’s Big Game counties. In 1978, 41% of all hunting camps in Forest County were leased to Pittsburgh residents, many of them presumably steelworkers, according to geographer Deborah Che. Another survey conducted the previous year found that approximately 35% of all successful hunters – i.e., those who reported killing a buck – came from the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. Hunters from steel towns such as New Castle and Sharon were also well represented among these numbers. There is reason to believe this trend was not limited to Pennsylvania. According to a national survey of hunters conducted in 1965, 42% of all hunters were blue collar.<sup>516</sup>

Although the particulars of game management policy were the subject of heated public debates during the postwar decades, not even the most vocal critics of the state Game Commission questioned the appropriateness of state-directed game management. Popular

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<sup>515</sup> *Aliquippa Steelworker*, November 1965, 11; December 15, 1963, 4, HCLA.

<sup>516</sup> Deborah Che, “Going to the Mountains: Flatlander, Ohio-sian and Up-here, Deer Hunters in the Allegheny National Forest Region” in Kevin Patrick and Joseph Scarpaci Jr., eds., *A Geographic Perspective of Pittsburgh and the Alleghenies: From Precambrian to Post-Industrial* (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Geographers, 2000), 152; T.L. Hess, “A Spatial Study of Pennsylvania Deer Hunting,” (Master’s thesis, Penn State University, 1977); Malcolm I. Bevins et al., *Characteristics of Hunters and Fishermen in Six Northeastern States* (Burlington, Vt.: Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Vermont, 1965), 13-26. Most variables studied in the survey, including age, marital status, income, employment status, were broken down by state. Occupation, unfortunately, was not. Pennsylvania did not differ significantly from other states for the above mentioned variables, but there is reason to believe that the Commonwealth boasted a higher percentage of blue-collar hunters relative to other states. The disappearance of farmers as a significant group of hunters likely reflects the decline of farming as an occupation. By 1960, less than 10% of Pennsylvanians were involved in agriculture.

consensus – and court rulings – held that game animals were public resources best managed by the state rather than private interests. Public hunting grounds were another matter. By 1956, the state controlled approximately two million acres of land in the form of state forests, parks and game lands; public hunting was available on just under 85% of it. But when it came to their continued acquisition, the state increasingly found itself competing with private interests and overwhelmed with the sheer prospect of managing the some 500,000 acres which it had acquired by 1940. Land management increasingly took precedent over land acquisition.<sup>517</sup>

Real estate prices and the Game Commission's own manpower limitations forced the state to consider alternatives to outright ownership of game lands. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Commission hatched several new initiatives in hopes of extending game habitats and more evenly distributing public hunting grounds. During the late 1920s, for instance, the state leased six large tracts from private landowners for primary refuges. But the Commission found the arrangement unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons. Since there was no assurance that the lease would be renewed, private landowners frequently sold the property after it had been cultivated for game animals at public expense. The program was cancelled in 1933. The state launched an alternative program designed to encourage landowners to lease only the hunting rights. But the program immediately ran aground. Farmers were simply unwilling to give the general public the right to hunt on their land. "Almost any farmer is content to permit the Game Commission to

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<sup>517</sup> NRA, *Public Recreation and Its Administration*, 58-59; "Post War Planning," Box 6, Phillips Papers. As early as 1944, the Game Commission concluded that it had "reached the saturation point in the purchase of game lands" and recommended that the state "concentrate on management of our present holdings." Game officials pleaded with the state legislature to raise the amount of money it was permitted by law to spend per acre on new game lands, especially near urban areas where land prices were higher.

create a refuge on his farm, but to persuade adjoining farmers to agree to public hunting on these is an altogether different matter.”<sup>518</sup>

To meet the intense postwar demand, the Commission after World War II revisited public-private partnerships. Under the provisions of the “Cooperative Farm-Game Refuge” program, first authorized in 1936, state game officials selected ten farms in southeastern Pennsylvania, totaling just over 1,000 acres, for game propagation and public hunting. This time around, the state gave landowners concrete incentives: in exchange for hunting rights, the commission agreed to stock game birds, cull predators, and pay farmers for crops that were left to stand over the winter. The experiment proved reasonably successful. By 1940, 100,000 acres of farmland were enrolled in the program. After the war, the Farm-Game program became the primary vehicle through which game officials increased land for public hunting. Although the Commission acquired another 500,000 acres for game lands, over the next half century it enrolled nearly five times that amount in the cooperative farm-game program.<sup>519</sup>

Cooperative game programs – something of a public-private hybrid – helped extend the dwindling habitat for game animals, especially smaller game such as rabbits, squirrels and upland birds. But it was not enough to meet the demand, especially in areas close to population centers. By the 1960s, the state was forced to consider even more explicit private-sector alternatives. In 1968, as one of a series of recommendations made to the state planning board,

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<sup>518</sup> G. Ward Conklin, *Pennsylvania’s State Game Refuges and Public Hunting Grounds. Bulletin No. 14* (Harrisburg, Pa: Pennsylvania Game Commission, 1931), 19-21. During the original leased hunting rights program, farmers were not compensated monetarily in exchange for signing over hunting rights. The commission assumed that landowners would “gladly lease the hunting rights” and that “protection given by game officials and interested sportsmen would constitute ample compensation.” “Very few farmers” though were “willing to execute a written agreement [whereby] hunting would be permitted on all or part of their holdings.”

<sup>519</sup> “Post War Planning.” The internal report, issued in 1944, recommended that the cooperative program be radically expanded after the war. The commission followed through. In 1986, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the program, the Commission announced that 2.4 million acres of land were enrolled in the program. By comparison, the state owned roughly 1 million acres outright, a high point it reached in the early 1960s.

the Commission cautiously sanctioned “commercial shooting grounds and preserves . . . especially in areas close to urban centers and where private lands are closed to hunting.” Such a policy concession would have been unthinkable in an earlier era, but times were changing.<sup>520</sup> In part, Pennsylvania’s game management program was a victim of its own success. Game propagation had been so successful that the state found itself with a game surplus which invariably wandered onto private lands. Hunters went where the game was. Whereas in the 1930s most hunting had taken place on public land, by 1974, according to one state report, two-thirds of all hunting took place on private grounds.<sup>521</sup>

Shifting game populations were certainly one reason for this. Another was the tendency of hunters to abandon public hunting areas when more convenient alternatives presented. Amateur golfers had shown a similar tendency to forsake the tried and true municipal course for privately owned public courses (and less often, private country clubs). Most duffers were happy to pay higher fees in exchange for better maintained and less congested courses. A similar trend seemed to be taking hold in recreational hunting. Much like municipal courses, public shooting grounds – now referred to as state game lands – came to be regarded as places for day hunters. Depending on the availability of game, many sportsmen preferred privately owned or leased hunting grounds. Along with being less congested, private hunting grounds were more amenable to permanent hunting camps, which the Game Commission discouraged.<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> Pennsylvania State Planning Board, *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1971), 273-274.

<sup>521</sup> Governor’s Office of State Planning and Development, *Pennsylvania’s Recreation Plan* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1976) VI-A-5.

<sup>522</sup> State game lands did not permit hunting camps. Leased camp sites were only available on state forest lands, most of which were open to public hunting. Since the Game Commission had no jurisdiction over state forest land, it was forced to acquiesce in those circumstances. Otherwise, the Commission maintained its position that leasing space for private camps on public land gave such camp hunters an unfair advantage over other hunters.

Western Pennsylvania became a haven for the private sportsmen's clubs which were largely responsible for the growth in private hunting grounds, and for good reason. During the 1950s and 1960s, Allegheny, Westmoreland and Cambria were home to disproportionately large numbers of hunters, many of whom had considerably more leisure time, and more disposable income to spend on club-related expenses. Land in this section of the state was also relatively cheap and available, especially in hilly terrain unsuitable for farming and in areas which had been otherwise laid to waste by extractive industries. Many clubs were established during the Depression years, but it was not until after the war that they developed grounds and outfitted them with shooting ranges and permanent clubhouses. The Pitcairn-Monroeville Sportsmen's Club, founded in 1936, acquired its 160-acre property in North Versailles sometime after the war. Interestingly, the club was located only a few miles down Route 48 from the McKeesport Sportsmen's Association, which maintained rifle, trap and skeet ranges on 100 acres in White Oak borough. The Pitcairn and McKeesport clubs were just two of more than 50 such clubs registered with the Allegheny County Sportsmen's League.<sup>523</sup>

The proliferation of sportsmen's clubs during the 1950s and 1960s presented the Game Commission with vexing issues. Insofar as organized sportsmen were key partners in state conservation programs, private clubs were regarded as important allies. During the second half of the twentieth century, the Commission relied on the state's vocal and organized sportsmen's lobby to help sway the state legislature on game-related bills. But after World War II, game officials were concerned that the sheer number of private hunting clubs, and their tendency to acquire their own posted hunting or shooting grounds, threatened the foundations of public hunting. In much the same way that dwindling game populations at the turn of the century

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<sup>523</sup> [www.acspl.com](http://www.acspl.com). Website maintained by the Allegheny County Sportsmen's League.

threatened to consign the sport to the very rich, the Commission feared that the spread of privately owned or leased lands would undermine public game lands, and limit sport hunting to members of private clubs.

State game officials engaged in much public hand wringing over the issue. In 1950, the *Pennsylvania Game News* published a doomsday scenario unambiguously titled “The Day Public Hunting Ended.” Although game populations were booming, the writer blamed an outbreak of “bad manners” among hunters for causing more farmers to post their land. At the same time, more and more hunting clubs were leasing private lands and eschewing public game lands. If the two trends continued, the writer predicted there would come a day when game animals would be ruled “the property of the person on whose land it was found.” A vicious cycle would ensue: fewer hunters purchasing licenses would mean less money in the game fund for the acquisition and preservation of public land. The writer foresaw a time – September 13, 2055 to be exact – when the Game Commission itself would cease to exist, having been rendered obsolete.<sup>524</sup>

The scenario did not come to pass, but the postwar years did give rise to trends which posed other threats to public hunting, and to the basic tenets of sportsmanship. The most insidious of these was the rise of commercial, for-profit game preserves and game farms (as distinct from non-commercial game preserves maintained by private sportsmen’s clubs). During the immediate postwar decades, their presence was negligible. One of Pennsylvania’s first, the Tioga Boar Hunting Preserve in Tioga County, opened in the mid-1960s. But as both leisure time and game appeared to diminish during the 1980s and 1990s, commercial game farms prospered. According to one source, Pennsylvania by the end of the century was home to 21 commercial, pay-as-you-go hunting preserves, a statistic which placed it third behind Texas and

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<sup>524</sup> Bill Wolf, “The Day Public Hunting Ended,” *Pennsylvania Game News* (September 1950): 4-11.



Michigan. Some occupied only a few hundred acres; others rivaled state game lands in size. Cherry Ridge Game Preserve in Warren County advertised itself as the “largest hunting ranch east of the Mississippi.” The preserve encompassed 2900 acres, including an enclosed 1500-acre “trophy management area” open to valid Pennsylvania license holders.<sup>525</sup>

Commercial game preserves in Pennsylvania ran the gamut. Many specialized in large, antlered white-tailed deer, which could only be taken in accord with state gaming laws; others, such as Stony Fork Farms near Wellsboro, offered hunters a smorgasbord of non-native species, from wild boar to rams, elks and “exotic deer and sheep.” Since such animals did not fall under the jurisdiction of the state Game Commission, the state had no authority to impose seasons or bag limits. The only limitation was what one was willing or able to afford. In return for a “guaranteed kill,” commercial game preserves such as Stony Fork and Cherry Ridge typically charged hunters from \$500 to upwards of several thousand dollars per target animal, depending on species, size and “trophy rating.”<sup>526</sup>

Commercial game farms attracted a relatively small segment of Pennsylvania’s sport hunters. But the mere fact that they were gaining a foothold in Pennsylvania underscored the degree to which the popular consensus on what constituted public hunting – and “fair chase” – had eroded. In an effort to gain a market advantage over public game lands, commercial preserves engaged in every practice which the Commission traditionally dedicated itself to eliminating. Most featured high-fence enclosures and permitted dogs, bait stations, and in the case of non-protected, exotic game animals, unlimited kills and seasons. State officials,

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<sup>525</sup> Fund for Animals, “Number of Canned Hunts by State” (October 2003); [www.hunt-tioga.com](http://www.hunt-tioga.com) ; [www.cherryridge.com](http://www.cherryridge.com)

<sup>526</sup> Humane Society of the United States, *Canned Hunts: Unfair at Any Price*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (The Humane Society, 2005). According to the Human Society report, the Glen Savage Ranch located between Bedford and Somerset charged hunters up to \$9,000 for white-tailed deer at the top of the “Boone and Crocket” Big Game ratings scale.

including the game commission and state courts, were curiously silent. By acquiescing to the prerogatives of the market and “personal choice,” the state partially abandoned the populist policies which it had championed for most of the twentieth century.<sup>527</sup>

### 5.3 Working-Class “Professionals,” Upper-Class Amateurs: The Social Bifurcation of College Football

The democratization of college football continued into the postwar decades, as did Pennsylvania’s role in that process. As a supplier of football material, Pennsylvania had no equal, at least for a good twenty years. Between 1945 and 1965, the Commonwealth sent more players to the college and professional ranks than any other state.<sup>528</sup> In a 1956 feature story on Pennsylvania’s “football harvest,” *Sports Illustrated* unequivocally pronounced it “the most fertile football region in the country. . . . Probably in no other place in the county is the question, ‘Which offer shall I take’ asked or answered more often than in Pennsylvania.”<sup>529</sup> With working-class athletes from its mill and mining towns at the center of this harvest, Pennsylvania arguably played a national role in the democratization of college football of any state. Western

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<sup>527</sup> Because commercial game farms were not regulated by the state, usage statistics are difficult to come by. According to one survey conducted in the mid-1970s, commercial hunting constituted less than 2% of the total hunting market in Pennsylvania. Since more commercial game farms were established in the 1980s and 1990s, it is likely that percentage grew. Pennsylvania Office of State Planning and Development, *Pennsylvania Recreation Survey: Principal findings and Recommendations* (Prepared by Ide Associates, Inc., April 1975), 8.

<sup>528</sup> John F. Rooney et al., eds., *This Remarkable Continent: An Atlas of the United States and Canadian Society and Culture* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A & M University Press, 1982) 275; and *A Geography of American Sport: From Cabin Creek to Anaheim* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1974), 122-126.

<sup>529</sup> Booton Herndon, “The Harvest That Comes in the Spring” *Sports Illustrated*, 18 June 1956, 70. The popular literature on Pennsylvania as a football region is vast. For another contemporary account of Western Pennsylvania’s fertile athletic crescent, see Jimmy Breslin’s profile of Donora, “The Town That Spawns Athletes” *Saturday Evening Post*, 15 October 1955.

Pennsylvania also continued as an epicenter of high school football. In 1961, close to 96% of high schools in a nine-county area of southwestern Pennsylvania were engaged in interscholastic football, well above the already impressive state-wide average of 80%.<sup>530</sup>

The basic formula which had forced the social class shift in college football did not change. Market competition in Big Time college football continued to stimulate demand for working-class athletes. If anything, the commercial pressures to field competitive football teams intensified during the postwar decades, despite growing spectator interest in professional football.<sup>531</sup> At the same time, by the mid-1950s the NCAA capitulated to athletic scholarships. Some believed that the ruling body had caved in to pressure from the Big Ten and Southern schools. Others contended that by finally recognizing the practice, the NCAA could now begin to closely regulate it and thus eliminate the abuses. The state also continued to play its supporting role through public high schools and interscholastic sports.<sup>532</sup>

What clearly did change was the social complexion of the general student body. Up until 1945, the demographics of the student population in Pennsylvania's and elsewhere held steady.

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<sup>530</sup> 1961 *Pennsylvania Statistical Abstract*, 56. As had been the case before the war, Pennsylvania's surfeit of athletic talent made its mill and mining districts a source for one-stop shopping. When the University of Maryland in 1950 decided to turn itself into a national contender, the school's athletics-focused president directed its coach to mine "football rich" Western Pennsylvania. Promising athletes were offered automatic admission and instant scholarships on the sport. By the opening of the 1950 season, the Terrapins had assembled a cadre of working-class Pennsylvania recruits, including the Modzelewski brothers of Tarentum. "Maryland, the gag goes, has almost as many [Pennsylvanians] as Fred Waring," a reporter observed in 1954. (A decade before, sportswriters used the same line to describe the University of Georgia.) Tim Cohane, "How Maryland Became a Football Power" *Look Magazine* 2 November 1954, 50-51+; Sperber, *Onward to Victory*, 238.

<sup>531</sup> Many college administrators were hopeful that the growing popularity of professional football during the 1950s and 1960s would ease the pressure on college football. With more spectators getting their "football fix" through the professional game, colleges and universities would be free to return to the golden days of amateur sport. What such optimists overlooked was the fact that many universities were dependent on gate receipts and few were willing to turn down revenue sources.

<sup>532</sup> Allen Sack and Ellen Stauroskey, *College Athletes for Hire: The Evolution and Legacy of the NCAA's Amateur Myth* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998). The NCAA's decision to acknowledge scholarships based on athletic ability did allow it to regulate athletic subsidies. Before then, payments to athletes could and did take any form, from tuition remission to monthly stipends to unspecified "gifts." After 1956, the NCAA limited scholarships to tuition fees and limited monthly stipends. The advantage of the ruling is that it put colleges and universities on a more even playing field.

State normal schools were somewhat more representative of the state as whole, but by and large, higher education still equated with privilege and wealth. The percentage of the college-aged population which attended university in 1940 still hovered at around eight percent. But after the war, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, better known as the G.I. Bill of Rights, altered that. Under the provisions of the bill, the federal government agreed to defray the cost of tuition for any veteran who wished to enroll in an accredited American college or university.<sup>533</sup>

The mass federal subsidy of higher education had an immediate and widespread effect. Millions of returning veterans, eager for upward social mobility, inundated college campuses, including those in Pennsylvania. In 1945, there were just 88,000 veterans on college campuses; by the following year, their numbers had ballooned to over a million. By 1947, returning veterans accounted for half of the American college student population.<sup>534</sup> Along with inflating enrollments, the influx of adult veterans changed the culture of higher education, particularly at large state universities and private colleges near major population centers. Many campuses lost their air of privilege and exclusivity and were no longer the bastions of upper-class manners and mores that they had been before the war. A "traditional" student at Lehigh University complained that serious-minded veterans were taking all the fun out of college: "They're vets . . . All they care about is their school work."<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> Pennsylvania Department of Instruction, *Survey of Higher Education/State Normal Schools* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1925); Susan B. Carter et al., eds., *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present. Millennial Edition, Volume 2* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 441. For broader historical context on higher education in America, see Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962) and Lawrence Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

<sup>534</sup> Michael Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The G.I. Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1996), 18.

<sup>535</sup> Quoted in Bennett, *When Dreams Came True*, 20. Traditionalists feared that the G.I. Bill was undermining academic and social standards in American colleges and universities and accused veterans of "vocalizing" higher education. "The very concept of mass higher education is anomalous," one critic complained. Under the G.I. Bill, "men were being admitted to college who instead should be hod carriers."

Many veterans also cared about college football. In the span of one year, from 1945 to 1946, the number of colleges and universities fielding football teams nearly tripled, from 220 to 650.<sup>536</sup> This did not put an end to recruiting or subsidies, but the availability of G.I. Bill benefits diluted its impact. Football in the late 1940s was still the ticket to higher education for working-class athletes, but it was no longer the primary means through which working-class males – especially those who had served their time in the military – entered college. At the same time, as the college student population expanded and diversified after World War II, initially with help of the G.I. Bill and later, through federal grants or low-cost student loans, college football lost some of its symbolic cache for youth from ethnic working-class households. Participation in college football was no longer the benchmark of ethnic group achievement that it had been before the war.<sup>537</sup>

The populist breeze blowing through American higher education may have also helped change popular attitudes toward recruiting and athletic subsidies. Before the war, educators and even most football fans regarded open compensation to football players as an affront to academic standards and the amateur code. But after World War II, as colleges and universities opened their doors wider – and perhaps lowered their social standards – even university administrators (albeit not all faculty) made peace with the concept of the “student athlete.” Increasingly, athletic talent became regarded as just another means through which Americans of ordinary circumstances got their foot in the door. “This country won’t lose anything by encouraging sports-minded young men to go to college,” one sports journalist argued in 1947. “The boy who

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<sup>536</sup> Sperber, *Onward to Victory*, 170.

<sup>537</sup> Working-class ethnic athletes continued to play high school football in the hopes that it would get them to college, but it was no longer the only route there. Low interest loans helped to continue what the G.I. Bill had started. The “massification” of higher education was especially evident at land grant universities such as Penn State, which preferred to be thought of as “people’s colleges” rather than “gentlemen universities.”

is a trained athlete goes into life with a deep rooted desire to win. . . . If such men were prevented by lack of money from educating themselves, the United States would lose out on something big.”<sup>538</sup>

Not all colleges agreed. Indeed, after 1950, the decision to recruit and subsidize working-class athletes became an institutional, social-class litmus test. The more exclusive the institution, the more likely it was to “de-emphasize” college athletics, a position which invariably translated into a ban on recruiting and athletic subsidies. Few schools went as far as the University of Chicago, which in a bold about-face abolished its football program and hastily withdrew from the Big Ten. But many like-minded schools after the war gradually retreated from the competitive whirlwind of Big Time college football. Although their actions were presented in the spirit of reform, the decision to end recruiting and athletic scholarships had a negative impact on the diversity of college football rosters. Under the amateur code, athletes were to be selected from the general student body; at schools that drew heavily from upper-class households, the amateur code indirectly re-established college football’s upper-class base.<sup>539</sup>

The most dramatic retreat occurred among schools in the recently formed “Ivy League.” In 1945, in reaction to the latest round of scandals within college football, eight schools

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<sup>538</sup> Harry Wismer, “Should Athletes Be Paid? Yes!” *Sport* (May 1947), 74. Wismer spoke for many when he argued that athletic scholarships should only be awarded in cases where financial need was demonstrated. “I believe that if all our colleges were to adopt” such a plan, Wismer predicted, “the increase of so-called ‘tramp athletes’ would be cut short.”

<sup>539</sup> This bifurcation was partially precipitated by the NCAA. In 1947, faced with increased pressure to control the “black market” in college football players, the organization drafted a stringent “Sanity Code” requiring member schools to wean themselves of recruiting and subsidies. The code reiterated the “Principle of Amateurism,” which defined an amateur sportsman as “one who engages in sports for the physical, mental and social benefits he derives [sic] therefrom.” “Any college athlete who takes pay for participation,” it went on to say, “does not meet this definition of amateurism.” NCAA member schools ratified the 1947 Sanity Code by a vote of 77 to 23. One editorial declared it to be “the strongest effort to date to eliminate the cutthroat competition among its members for student athletes.” Schools found to be in violation of the code would be punished with fines or even expulsion. Although the code banned scholarships, schools were permitted to continue “jobs programs” which exclusively benefited student athletes. Colleges which voted against the ban complained that the NCAA’s ruling advantaged Big Ten schools which used on-campus jobs to sustain athletes. For institutional and conference-level reaction to the Sanity Code, see Watterson, *College Football*, 209-219 and Sack, *College Athletes for Hire*, 43-50.

representing the nation's most prestigious East Coast institutions formally agreed among themselves to "de-emphasize" intercollegiate sports, especially football. Although the soon-to-be Ivy League was not in perfect alignment, member schools agreed with the basic premise that college sports were out of hand. They especially bemoaned the then-current "black market" in college athletes which they argued undermined the high academic standards and the amateur ideal their institutions represented. The schools agreed to abolish recruiting and the distribution of financial aid based on athletic ability, and also pledged to discontinue training camps, commercial endorsements and post-season bowl games. "Players themselves should be *truly representative* [my emphasis] of the student body and not composed of a group of specially recruited and trained athletes." According to Allen Sack, this measure appealed not just to faculty critics, but also to "amateur aristocrats" disturbed by the changing social composition of their alumni institutions.<sup>540</sup>

As the state's only Ivy League representative, the University of Pennsylvania found itself in a difficult position. On the one hand, Penn craved the academic (and social) respect which such an alliance promised to confer; on the other, it had a proud, winning tradition on the gridiron which it wished to uphold and tempting sources of home-grown talent which could help it do so. During the interwar years, the Quakers managed to compete on a relatively equal playing field with many national powerhouses, including the University of Pittsburgh. Although it did not recruit or subsidize athletes as intensively as Pitt, Penn was one of the strongest schools on the East Coast during much the 1920s and 1930s and the most competitive, along with Cornell, among the future Ivies. Football was also still a lucrative enterprise. Between 1938 and

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<sup>540</sup> Sack, *College Athletes for Hire*, 49. The adoption of such bans anticipated by three years the NCAA's own efforts to impose a membership-wide Sanity Code, an experiment in enforcement of the amateur code that ended after only a few years.

1942, Franklin Field attracted larger crowds than any other college football stadium in Pennsylvania. Penn exploited the G.I. Bill as well as any school. In 1945, for instance, Coach George Munger recruited a group of athletically gifted but academically marginal war veterans, including future All-American Chuck Bednarik, the son of a Slovak steelworker from Bethlehem.<sup>541</sup>

By the late 1940s, Penn faced a tough choice: pursue Big Time college football, or de-emphasize the sport according to the Ivy Group agreement of 1945. For several years, Penn equivocated. From 1950 to 1952, with the endorsement and encouragement of university president Harold Stassen, Penn effectively ignored its fellow Ivies and engaged in recruiting and subsidizing at a level that fell within the parameters set by the NCAA's 1948 Sanity Code. (Stassen referred to this middle ground as "Victory with Honor.") The result was a string of successful seasons, including in 1952 an impressive 7-7 tie with perennial national powerhouse Notre Dame. The game against the Fighting Irish drew the largest crowd – and produced the largest gate receipt – in years. But Quaker victories against top powerhouses prompted other Ivy League schools to scratch Penn from their schedules.<sup>542</sup>

In 1953 the Ivies threatened to expel Penn if it continued to "emphasize" college football through active recruiting and subsidizing. Faced with the shunning of his academic peers, President Stassen reluctantly returned the school to the fold. Predictably, Penn's football program entered a slide from which it did not recover. Supporters of the agreement viewed the Quakers' subsequent non-competitiveness as proof positive that the school had repudiated

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<sup>541</sup> McCallum, *Bednarik*, 55-56.

<sup>542</sup> Rules governing recruiting and athletic subsidies in the NCAA's 1947 Sanity Code were considerably more liberal than those imposed by the Ivy Group on its own schools in 1945, and later 1954. Between 1947 and 1955, the NCAA rules permitted scholarships based on athletic ability and in cases of "demonstrated financial need." Most student athletes from Pennsylvania's mill and mining towns had little difficulty passing that test. Sack, *College Athletes for Hire*, 47.



recruiting and embraced the amateur code. Left unspoken was the fact that as the Quakers slipped from the national football radar, the social profile of its varsity rosters returned to aristocratic levels. By the mid-1950s, the Chuck Bednariks of the late 1940s had given way to players such as team captain and quarterback Bernard Berlinger, Jr. Berlinger's father, Bernard Sr., owned a large manufacturing company in suburban Philadelphia and was both a Wharton grad and an avid amateur sportsman.<sup>543</sup>

Pitt had experienced its own internal struggle over a dozen years before. After years of contentious relations with the athletic department, Chancellor Bowman in the late 1930s succeeded in imposing his own Sanity Code over the vocal objections of Coach Sutherland, alumni boosters, and most of the student body. Known officially as the "Code for the Conduct of Athletics," but shortened to Bowman's Code, the new policy strictly prohibited subsidies and recruitment in athletics, especially football. Bowman argued that the athletic department's cavalier policies had embarrassed the university and compromised its academic integrity. Sutherland resisted, arguing that such a stringent policy was impractical and would irrevocably hobble the school's athletic competitiveness. "A team that did not compete for high school talent and was forced to depend on its regular student body for its football material was on the way to athletic disaster." Bowman and his supporters believed otherwise: "We think we will get enough good athletics without such plans [for recruiting] . . . ." the school's newly installed

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<sup>543</sup> David L. Goldberg, "What Price Victory, What Price Honor? Pennsylvania and the Formation of the Ivy League, 1950-1952," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (April 1988): 227-248; Rottenberg, *Fight on Pennsylvania*, 49-50; "Bernard E. 'Barney' Berlinger, Sr. W '31," *Penn Gazette* 101/6 (July/August, 2003). The decision to abolish recruiting and athletic subsidies, coupled with the declining population of veterans on the G.I. Bill, effectively curtailed working-class representation on Penn's football team, and in the general student body. It was not until the mid-1960s, when Penn and other Ivy League schools embarked on a concerted campaign to recruit underprivileged students that the situation reversed itself. Up until that point, the demographics of Penn's student body, and that of its football team, tended to favor "the mediocre student of high economic standing" rather than the "excellent student with modest financial means."

athletic director declared. “We think we can handle our usual type of football schedule without recruiting.”<sup>544</sup>

Per the prediction of Jock Sutherland, who tendered his resignation in 1939, the fortunes of Pitt’s once formidable and seemingly impregnable football program plummeted. In 1940, the Panthers turned in their first losing season in more than 25 years. Over the next decade, as recounted by historian Robert Alberts, Pitt ran up an ignoble record on the gridiron. The 1940 losing season was the first of twelve such seasons the Panthers endured over the next 14 years. Against Big Ten opponents Pitt lost 24 straight games. Rivals which Pitt had once played competitively under Sutherland and his working-class warriors – schools such as Ohio State, Minnesota and Michigan State – racked up lopsided victories against Pitt over multiple seasons. During the 1940s, with Code Bowman in full force, Pitt lost 13 out of 14 games to Ohio State, and ten out of 11 to Notre Dame.<sup>545</sup>

But it was unclear who or what was to blame. The first losing seasons could reasonably be chalked up to Sutherland’s sudden and traumatic departure. While the Panthers were forced to navigate without their long tenured head coach, most of the team until the 1942 season consisted of pre-Code players recruited under Sutherland. The advent of World War II, and the mass enlistments which followed, wreaked even more havoc with the school’s traditional sources of material. At Pitt as elsewhere, mass enlistments deprived universities of the best student athletes. Forced to play with “inferior material,” most schools, including Pitt, saw gate receipts drop.

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<sup>544</sup> “Code for the Conduct of Athletics” Athletic Department Records, University Archives, University of Pittsburgh; Alberts, *Pitt*, 164.

<sup>545</sup> Alberts, *Pitt*, 168.

For those reasons, the impact of Pitt's self imposed ban on the social composition of its subsequent varsity squads was ambiguous. Without subsidies and active recruitment, the social profile of Pitt's football teams would have been expected to revert to its pre-Coach Warner levels. Only those student athletes able to pay their own way would have been eligible to play. But by the time the new code had taken effect, World War II had entered into the picture, and it was difficult to distinguish between changes resulting from the war and those resulting from the Bowman Code. If anything can be said conclusively of Pitt's football teams during the early to mid-1940s, it is that they were filled with players who were either too young or medically unfit for military service. In 1943, for instance, nearly two-thirds of the players on the varsity team were freshmen.<sup>546</sup>

The end of the war similarly complicated team demographics into the late 1940s. This time, the circumstance was not a scarcity of athletes, but an overabundance of them, thanks to the waves of returning servicemen who enrolled at Pitt under the G.I. Bill. During the 1947-1948 academic year, enrollment climbed to just under 26,000; over half of that number were recently returned veterans. By the late 1940s, Pitt's football teams were more working class and ethnic than they had been before the war, but the results were deceptive and more likely the result a large, federally subsidized local student body. Had the G.I. Bill not enabled so many ex-servicemen, many from working-class backgrounds, to enroll on college campuses, Pitt's football teams under "Code Bowman" would likely have looked more middle class.<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> Like other schools, the University of Pittsburgh was forced to rely on pre-draft freshman and "4-Fs." Of the eight sophomores on the squad, only two were identifiably ethnic, a rate well below that of Sutherland's teams from the pre-Code days. "University of Pittsburgh Varsity Roster," *The Pitt Panther* (University of Pittsburgh, 1943). According to Bob Alberts, another large category of male students enrolled at Pitt during World War II were those exempted from service because of "war-related studies." Alberts, *Pitt*, 221.

<sup>547</sup> Alberts, *Pitt*, 194; Interview with Walter Cummins, 14 October 1997; "Pitt Football Roster," *The Pitt Panther* (1946); "University of Pittsburgh/1948 Roster" (Typewritten mss. In author's possession); "University of

As it turned out, it would be impossible to know. By the late 1940s, Pitt was already on its way to gutting Code Bowman. In 1945, Rufus Fitzgerald, the schools' new chancellor, announced his intention of returning Pitt's athletic programs, especially football, to a more competitive status. The following year, Fitzgerald authorized the school's athletic director to resume a partial recruiting program within permissible NCAA guidelines. Fitzgerald hoped to assemble sufficient material to allow Pitt to win at least half of its games. A year later, again with Fitzgerald's encouragement, the university created a special scholarship fund for the controlled distribution of partial athletic grants. (Alumni contributed but no longer had direct contact with the athletes who would be recipients of the rewards.) Finally, in 1948, Fitzgerald announced that "Code Bowman" would be placed under review and charged a new athletic review committee to come up with a more "liberal code."<sup>548</sup>

By 1949, Pitt was almost fully recovered from what historian Robert Alberts characterized as its "long experiment in self flagellation." The reinstatement of recruiting and subsidies the previous season corresponded with the Panthers first winning season since Sutherland's resignation in 1939. The following year, it was revealed that most of the 55 men on Pitt's new-and-improved squad were benefiting from scholarships. Some athletes received money plus tuition; the majority received tuition only. It was a far cry from the incentives provided during Sutherland's tenure, but free tuition was still sufficient incentive for non-veteran, working-class athletes who would have been unable to afford college otherwise.

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Pittsburgh/1949 Roster" *The Pitt Panther* (1949). During these years, the athletic department publicity identified players by the military branch in which they served during World War II, not by their high school. Just under two-thirds of the players on the 1946 squads were veterans who had presumably applied their G.I. benefits to cover the cost of college tuition. Whether they would have attended Pitt without the benefits of the G.I. Bill is a case for speculation. As it was, the subsidy helped offset what would have otherwise likely been even poorer athletic talent and a more socially privileged student body.

<sup>548</sup> Alberts, *Pitt*, 224.

Interestingly, a faculty subcommittee, eager to see Pitt emulate Penn's academic and social ambitions, submitted a proposal urging the school to follow a course similar to that of the Ivies.<sup>549</sup>

The percentage of players on athletic scholarship suggests that Pitt's team had returned to its pre-war working-class base. Most of Pitt's football squad hailed from public high schools in working-class steel towns; prep school talent was completely absent. In an effort to gain a competitive edge over rival schools, Pitt began taking a new angle in its recruiting clearly designed to appeal to ambitious, working-class student athletes in Western Pennsylvania. Knowing that most student athletes perceived football as a ticket out of the mines and mills, the schools athletic department began promoting the advantages of the home-town university. "Get your education and your football publicity in the section where you are going to live and work. What good will it do you to get your name in the paper out West or down South? Everybody back here will have forgotten you by the time you get out of school."<sup>550</sup>

In 1949, the *Saturday Evening Post* detailed Pitt's return to Big Time football in an article unambiguously titled "Purity Dies at Pitt." After a decade of struggling to accommodate both athletics and academic standards, Code Bowman had unofficially been scrapped. As evidence, one only needed to take a look at the 1949 squad: most of the team was now on scholarship of one form or another. Most players were also, once again, locals. "The great majority of the boys on Pitt's improved squad come from within a sixty-mile radius of the university. . . . All they ask, Pitt football boosters say, is a fair share of these native sons. But . . . you must get out and interest them in attending your institution. Then you have to make it

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<sup>549</sup> Harry T. Paxton, "Purity Dies at Pitt," *Saturday Evening Post* 19 November 1949; Alberts, *Pitt*, 223-224.

<sup>550</sup> Quoted in Alberts, *Pitt*, 225.

financially possible for them to do so.” Under Code Bowman, Pitt was unable to do that; under Chancellor Fitzgerald it was.<sup>551</sup>

Most large public universities and private colleges followed Pitt’s course of action.<sup>552</sup> The Penns and Swarthmores represented a distinct minority. But within the larger social and historical context of college football, the decision of elite schools to abandon the playing fields which they had once dominated represented an important turning point in the social history of the sport. In much the same way that elites after the war returned to the confines of the private country club and private hunting preserve, they had returned the game of college football to the socially exclusive confines of a privileged student body.<sup>553</sup>

## 5.4 Conclusion

As the twentieth century wore on, the National Recreation Association’s remarks, issued in the context of its Pennsylvania study, proved prophetic. By nearly every measure, leisure had in fact

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<sup>551</sup> Paxton, “Purity Dies at Pitt,” 29.

<sup>552</sup> Before World War II, the incentives for playing college football were often significant but still within the context of what the university provided for all students: a college education and the opportunity for social advancement which it implied. After World War II, though, the promise of a college degree paled in comparison to the prospect of a career in professional football. Mike Ditka, who grew up in Aliquippa and was recruited by the Panthers in 1956, embodied the transition. Ditka’s original intention was to play football at Pitt and thereby earn a degree in dentistry. But according to his biographer, Armen Keteyian, Ditka abandoned dental studies for “the less strenuous liberal arts education.” His goal was to devote more time to football, in the hopes of being drafted into the NFL, and less time to a degree which would have allowed him to earn a living as a professional. Ditka did not graduate, but he did receive a \$6,000 signing bonus with the Chicago Bears. See Keteyian, *Ditka*, 66-70.

<sup>553</sup> In college football, the code word for working class was “professional” and “scholarship athlete;” conversely, the code word for elites was “amateur.” The more “professional” and competitive college football programs became, the more likely they were to fill their rosters with athletes from working-class backgrounds. Upper-class traditionalists lamented these “vocational” student athletes: “The withdraw of the amateur emotion from football playing is the condition of a certain type of honesty in relation to the game . . .” Reul Denney noted wryly. “At this point, his play becomes redefined as total work, and what an educational system originally defined as a means becomes an end.” See Denney, *The Astonished Muse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 32.

undergone a “sociological breakthrough.” Thorstein Veblen’s theory was losing its interpretive value. In the most general sense, an amorphous “leisured mass” had replaced a discreet “leisure class.” Sports which at the turn of the century reliably helped maintain social distinctions had lost their ability to do so. As proof, one needed only to visit one of Pennsylvania’s state game lands on Opening Day, tee off on one of its semi-public or municipal golf courses, or scan through players’ names and hometowns in nearly any college football program. Working-class Pennsylvanians, especially those from its industrial heartland, now crowded the playing fields once confined to the power elite.

Still, as this study has illustrated, the trend toward broader public participation in amateur field sports was not a uniform process, nor for that matter an inevitable one. One could argue that the changes which created opportunities for working-class athletes in college football would have happened with or without the state; the market was a sufficient engine of change. But in sports where the state played an early, active and critical role in creating the infrastructure for public access, it is less clear whether the invisible hand of the market would have achieved the same results. Pondering what might have occurred had the state not been authorized to superintend game management, for instance, is an exercise in counterfactual history. But sportsmen-conservationists such as John Phillips clearly believed that had the state not done so, sport hunting would have been relegated to men of wealth. Likewise, one can only speculate whether the market would have on its own developed an alternative to private country clubs and, if so, when. In the very least, the absence of municipal courses would have likely deferred broader public participation until after World War II.

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that expanding the social base of amateur sport was rarely if ever the original goal. Many commentators, whether ideological

New Dealers or no-nonsense sportswriters, often believed otherwise. During the 1930s, for instance, they applauded the social makeup of Pitt's "Dream Backfield" and embraced Andy Szwedko's victory in the National Public Links Tournament as examples of democracy in action. But the changes which leveled the playing fields during the first half of the twentieth century were often set in motion by elites acting in their own self interest. In hunting, affluent sportsmen harnessed the power of the state initially to satisfy their own desire to preserve the "thrill of the chase" for themselves. Likewise, college football did not consciously open its gates to working-class athletes; rather, it was compelled to do so as universities and influential alumni strove to raise their competitive profile. Colleges recruited and sponsored working-class athletes to help them win games, not to make football rosters and college campuses more socially diverse. Rather than democracy functioning, it might be more accurate to regard this as an object lesson in the law of unintended consequences.

Still, as this study has also shown, efforts to democratize elite sports in time developed their own social and political momentum. This was especially true by the 1920s and the 1930s. In hunting, the shift in emphasis from game propagation to public hunting grounds underscored the state game commission's commitment to hunters of ordinary means. For working-class sportsmen, participation in sport hunting depended just as much on public "shooting grounds" as on bountiful supplies of game. In golf, a second generation of public courses, fortified by New Deal public works programs, created more opportunities in more Pennsylvania communities. Municipal golf also won the respect and official recognition of the golfing establishment, as evinced by the Amateur Public Links championship. The commercialization of college football still sparked heated debates, especially regarding its impact on the amateur code. But even the sport's most trenchant critics were forced to acknowledge the opportunities which Big Time



college football offered working-class student athletes who would have otherwise remained on the sidelines.

After World War II, the market continued what the state had in most cases begun. The sheer number and diversity of participants drawn to golf and hunting now made it nearly impossible for such sports to continue to function as social markers. One of the questions this study raises is the ways in which mass participation altered the character of these sports. Golf had by the end of the century developed such a broad following that its former ability to convey social distinctions had all but disappeared, replaced by an amorphous, ill defined sense of “middle class-ness.” In other sports, class associations became inverted. Big Game hunting, once the purview of elites, had by the end of the century become almost entirely identified as blue collar. Football was, as always, more ambiguous. Tradition, and the implicit reward of a college scholarship, still drew many working-class athletes to the gridiron, but by the end of the century, wealthy suburban high schools were playing the game at a higher competitive level than gritty mill towns.

This study also raises questions about the response of elites to the erosion of class boundaries in these sports. Did upper-class sportsmen simply acquiesce or did they establish new barriers to distinguish themselves from the masses? One response was to withdraw and refocus. This clearly seemed to occur in college football, as the Ivies and other socially exclusive academies “de-emphasized” college athletics after World War II. Something similar also appeared to be occurring in hunting and golf. Wealthy sportsmen may have abandoned deer hunting, but they continued to patronize private hunting clubs, most of which focused almost exclusively on bird shooting. Most of their activities, especially their organized shoots, remained hidden from public view, unless of course they were exposed by the media hype which

occasionally attended a high-profile guest.<sup>554</sup> And while almost any golfer with enough money could now buy a round of golf at a top-notch public course, the Commonwealth was still home to many tony country clubs which were closed to non-members. Elites, in other words, continued to stake out their own section, even if they no longer controlled the entire field.

Finally, it is worth pondering the ways in which the democratization of amateur sport dovetailed with other trends. This study has focused on the ways in which three elites sports effectively trickled down to the masses. But sports were also capable of moving up the social scale. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, bowling was largely identified with a male, working-class subculture. Typically, bowling alleys were dank, darkly lit places which clustered in urban neighborhoods alongside taverns and billiard halls. But after World War II, the pastime climbed out of the basement, literally in many cases, and reemerged in bright and clean automated bowling centers near new tract-house suburbs. Here, bowling attracted both white and blue-collar participants, both male and female, and for a time became generically “middle class.”<sup>555</sup>

This erosion of class boundaries clearly altered the world of sports, but what about its impact on society? One area to consider is its effect on social class itself, or perceptions of the same, especially when factored alongside other social changes such as postwar suburbanization and the continued democratization of consumption. The failure of the United States to develop a

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<sup>554</sup> In December 2003, Vice President Dick Cheney’s visit to the Rolling Rock Club for a pheasant shoot generated an avalanche of unwanted publicity for the exclusive Westmoreland County hunt club. The vice president’s visit, and reports that he and his ten-person party had shot more than 400 farm-raised pheasants over the course of a single morning, triggered calls from the Humane Society for bans on this form of “canned hunt.” *New York Times*, 15 December 2003.

<sup>555</sup> Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in the Postwar Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Miner, “From City Alley to Suburban Lanes: The Suburbanization of Bowling in Post World War II Harrisburg” (Paper presented at Redefining Suburban Studies: Searching for a New Paradigm Conference, Hofstra University, March 2001).

discernable class consciousness has long been considered a hallmark of American exceptionalism. To what degree did increasingly permeable boundaries in leisure and sport contribute to Pennsylvanians' inability, per Benjamin DeMott, to "think straight" about class?<sup>556</sup> If rank-and-file steelworkers had as much opportunity to play golf as steel executives, in other words, to what degree did that mute or temper or complicate identities that within the workplace seemed clearer?

Such questions are beyond the scope of this study, but they are worth considering. At the turn of the last century, the German economist Werner Sombart famously observed that socialism in America had "come to grief on the shoals of roast beef and apple pie." Perhaps it could also be said that by the late twentieth century, class consciousness foundered in part on the public golf courses, football fields, and state game lands of Pennsylvania.

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<sup>556</sup> Benjamin DeMott, *The Imperial Middle: Why Americans Can't Think Straight About Class* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1990).

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