UPPER OHIO VALLEY HISTORICAL REVIEW

Spring/Summer 1987

Price $1.50
The *Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review* is published twice a year by the Wheeling Area Historical Society. The *Review* is printed for the Society by West Liberty State College and is distributed free to Society members. The single issue cost to non-members is $1.50.

The *Review* publishes articles, documents, book reviews, and notes on the economic, political, social, and cultural history of the Ohio Valley area.

Authors should submit two, double-spaced copies of their manuscripts, prepared according to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Footnotes should be placed at the end of the manuscript. Materials should be addressed to Editor, *Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review*, West Liberty State College, West Liberty, West Virginia 26074. Neither the college nor the *Review* assumes responsibility for the facts and opinions expressed by contributors.

**CONTENTS**

West Liberty State College

1837-1987 ........................................................................................................ 2
by David T. Javersak

Prostitution and the Sporting Life
Aspects of Working Class Culture and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Wheeling ............................................. 7
by David W. Rose

Contributors ........................................................................................................ 32
West Liberty State College
1837 To 1987

by
Dr. David T. Javersak,
Dean of the School
of Liberal Arts

On March 30, 1837, the Virginia legislature granted a charter to establish an academy at West Liberty. A year later, in the home of Reverend and Mrs. Nathan Shotwell, the first class of sixty-five children met in a large basement room with boys and girls segregated by means of heavy drapes. Reverend Shotwell instructed the males, and his wife taught the females.

This substantial, ivy-covered house accommodated students until 1857, when the public-spirited citizens completed the three-storied, red brick Academy Hall, which was to serve as an administrative and classroom center until the late 1920s. Its capacious auditorium remained in use until 1950, and the building itself survived until the mid-1970's, when the Ohio County Board of Education, to whom it was deeded in 1941, razed it to make way for the West Liberty Elementary School.

The "First Annual Catalogue of the Officers and Students of the West Liberty Academy" appeared in 1859, and it described a school year which lasted from early September to late June. The male students, some from places as far removed as Natchez, Mississippi and Concordia Parish, Louisiana, studied classical subjects like Greek, Latin, and philosophy, and girls studied more mundane disciplines like literature, writing, and geography. All students attended daily chapel and public worship on the Sabbath. There were no dorms: West Liberty's first would not be built until 1920. Instead, students secured lodgings in private homes or boarding houses like Liberty House and the Great Western, both built by Academy trustees.

The outbreak of the Civil War signaled the beginnings of lean years. Enrollments declined as the area's young men joined the colors and went to war. By 1867, a debt of $6,000 forced the trustees to sell the school to the new state of West Virginia for the amount of the indebtedness. Along with the forerunners of Marshall University and West Virginia University, the West Liberty Academy was one of the original schools in the state's higher education system.

The legislature passed the "Act to establish a branch Normal School at West Liberty" on March 1, 1870. For the next 61 years, the school was a teacher preparatory institution, and until 1923, a high school. Its function was specific: "to train its students in the arts of the teacher, and to make them efficient and effective teachers." The Normal Course, cautioned in an early catalog, "should not be entered upon without due reflection and careful introspection, for it is not possible for any and all persons to teach..." As a five-year program, the Normal Course covered academic work from algebra through zoology.

The state provided free admission to "any white person of good moral character and of sufficient literary preparation," provided males were fourteen years of age and females were thirteen. What attracted students to West Liberty? Catalogs and advertisements stressed these benefits: healthful location (free of malaria and typhoid), free use of a reading room, literary societies, discipline, small classes, and moderate expenses. The physical isolation of the campus was seen positively: "West Liberty is free from saloons and other haunts of vice and has been for years. This, with the culture and refinement of the people, and the retirement of the situation, makes West Liberty a most advantageous place for successful student life."

Graduating classes were small. Before 1900, the largest class numbered 21; in 1882, George S. Biggs was Normal's only graduate. The first 50 graduating classes, 1872-1922, totaled only 730. As students, they adhered to strict social rules, attended daily chapel, and were required to attend a Sunday service of their choice. Although there was no physical education department or scholastic athletics before 1921, West Liberty encouraged students to engage in sports and exercises, for "much good is derived by the student and school." No activity, however, rivaled the literary societies, of which the best known were the Bryants and the Irwins, rivals from 1888 to 1925. During Commencement Week, these societies battled for oratorical supremacy of Academy Hill. The intensity of the competition and the spirit of the rivalry matched that now found in collegiate athletics.

World War I brought profound changes. Students were more worldly-wise, and they were older as the high school years of Normal began their phase-out. By the mid-1920's, the literary societies were also defunct, an educational relic of Victorian America out-of-place with the lifestyles of the Roaring Twenties.

The early Twenties were unsettled years for WLSN. In 1921, the headmaster of Linsly Institute proposed a merger of his school with West Liberty, with the new institution centered in Wheeling. This plan failed to materialize, but there were others who supported moving Normal to the Panhandle's largest city. State educational officials, concerned about low enrollments (134 in 1925) and weak community support, blamed the school's physical isolation, away from any transportation artery. Their solution was to move the campus to a location near modern-day Wheeling Park. The issue came to a head at a public meeting at Wheeling's Market Auditorium on January 23, 1925, when supporters of West Liberty debated the State Superintendent of Schools and members of the State Board of Control. In the end, defenders of WLSN won the day and reluctantly convinced the state to permit the school to remain on the hilltop.

A year later, John S. Bonar, Class of 1913, took the reins of power and undertook a program to foster the school's growth. His first task was to enhance the physical plant by securing money to erect Curtis and McCulloch Halls, the west and east wings respectively of today's Main Hall. They were completed on West Liberty's new campus, a 100-acre farm a short distance
The bombing of Pearl Harbor brought the war to American shores and affected every aspect of the nation's life. As young men volunteered for defense of American freedoms, college enrollments plummeted: West Liberty's dropped from 325 in 1939 to 212 in 1942 to only 118 in the fall of 1944. By V-E Day, only 100 students remained on the campus, and of these there were only eight men.

Joining his students, Coach Joe Bartell joined the Navy for “the duration.” No Hilltoppers raced onto gridirons, or baseball diamonds, or basketball courts in 1943, 1944, or 1945. Wartime shortages prevented publication of the College’s Bulletin between 1944 and 1948, and the College annual, The Trumpet, between 1944 and 1947. Fraternity Hall became a girl’s dorm and later closed for lack of occupants.

Collegiate life continued, nonetheless. Students attended classes under a new quarter system, The West Liberty Plan. They continued publication of the newspaper by which those who remained behind kept in touch with servicemen overseas. Young women pledged sororities, but they also joined the Campus War Workers, an organization affiliated with the Red Cross. Broadcasts from the college’s radio studio in the Wheeling Center went out over the airwaves of WWVA carrying the melodies of the Campus Reverie girls. In the spring of 1943, the state legislature changed the school’s name to West Liberty State College, a reflection of the institution’s offering courses in education, liberal arts, nursing, dental hygiene, and pre-professional areas.

The fall of 1945 opened with a class of 225, the largest since 1940. By the spring of 1946, The Trumpet reported the beginning of what was to become an avalanche: 52 vets attended classes. Ex-servicemen, taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, pushed enrollment figures to new record highs. The figure for the fall of 1946 was 640, of which 465 were men. For the rest of the decade the on-campus enrollment remained above 600. This population explosion taxed the college’s ability to provide basic services. Single men who could not find lodgings in reopened Shotwell Hall or in village homes, slept, barracks-style, in the gymnasium. A partial solution to this problem was found by securing five Army barracks from a closed Mississippi post. Married veterans lived in surplus Army trailers. These new Hilltoppers gave their new residences a proper appellation: Vetville. Characteristic of the wartime period, there were shortages of everything from textbooks to toilet paper. One place there was no shortage, however, was on the football field. These returning GIs were stars of the gridiron. From 1946 through 1950, Joe Bartell’s teams won four conference championships and two bowl games, compiling a record of 41-3-3, the best five-year period in West Liberty’s football annals.

Although enrollments leveled off in the early 1950’s, they rose again by the mid-decade, as another set of GIs from the Korean conflict took their places in West Liberty classrooms. Moreover, the 1950’s were prosperous times, years in which Americans saw a college degree as a necessary part of upward mobility, a status symbol. By 1960, West Liberty’s on-campus enrollment exceeded 1000 for the first time. In the College’s long history,
Prostitution and the Sporting Life
Aspects of Working Class Culture and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Wheeling

by
David W. Rose

I met my love by the gas works wall.
Dreamed a dream by the old canal.
I kissed my girl by the factory wall.
Dirty old town, dirty old town.

- The Pogues

On an April afternoon in 1836, a Steubenville man named Thomas Wintringer engaged a traveling salesman in conversation in a Wheeling tavern. Wintringer persuaded the man, Jesse Chrisman, a mechanic and sales agent for Fluke & Company of Pittsburgh, to join him for an evening at the theatre. Afterwards, Wintringer proposed visiting a house of prostitution in East Wheeling as the two had been friends since boyhood. Within minutes, the pair had murdered Chrisman in a dark byway of East Wheeling, robbed him of his money and watch, and right his body in Wheeling Creek. Wintringer and Long were later apprehended, tried, and executed at separate public hangings that summer, the first such executions in Ohio County. Complicating the affair were rumors that abolitionist mobs were poised to invade Wheeling and rescue Wintringer, and militia paraded city streets day and night giving Wheeling the appearance of an armed camp. Thousands witnessed the execution of Wintringer on the banks of Wheeling Creek, and, as William Cooper Howells observed, “the taverns and grogshops gathered their harvest.”

From its very inception violence and rude entertainments have been hallmarks of the underside of Wheeling’s social life. The rugged life of the first Ohio Valley pioneers, bound up as it was to the profligate use of liquors and the willingness to engage in sporting contests and gambling left an unrecognized legacy on the reputation of the city. Indian predations, the famous siege of Fort Henry, banditry, and river piracy, the presence of criminals and camp followers in the westward migration were all formative social influences which shaped the character of Wheeling before it grew to urban proportions, while it was yet a village settlement. Wheeling’s very name derives from the gruesome Indian practice of impaling a decapitated head on a sharpened post as a warning to whites. Later, in its industrializing phase, prostitutes, working in brothels or on the streets, catered to the sexual needs of workingmen, and economy of vice linking gambling dens, saloons, and whorehouses became a mainstay of a certain segment of lower class life. It is not surprising then that Thomas Wintringer’s propensity to prey on an unsuspecting traveling salesman included a trip to a “house of ill fame.”

This article is the sequel to an essay in Autumn/Winter issue entitled “The Trial of Alice Bradford: A Study in the Politics of Prostitution in Wheeling, W. Va.”
nor that other entertainments (e.g. the tavern, the theatre) were points of interest on that ill-fated itinerary. The complex of the entertainments that comprised the social life (apart from work and family) and leisure patterns of male laborers in Wheeling so often included the visit to the brothel that prostitution became an integral component of what was known as the "sporting life."

The intent of this essay is to review some of the ingredients of the sporting life of working class men at various moments in Wheeling's history and to reveal the role of prostitution in relation to this subculture. On the most superficial level sporting contests may seem to be merely fun and games, a description of which might provide a vivid entry to the customs of the city. In this case, however, sport is so laden with social and moral implications that we may see how deeply embedded it was in the social structure of nineteenth century urban living. What constitutes the sporting life surpasses the mere variety of sports but refers simultaneously to a lifestyle, a subculture, and an ideology. Furthermore, it was associated at various moments with the criminal underworld and with positive social pleasure patterns, with the liberation of (male) workers' physical and mental energies from the regime of industrial work and with subjugation of prostitutes to the demeaning labor of commercial sex. The sporting life divided a male domain of leisure (which included spectacle, athletics, gambling, drinking, and violence in varying degrees) outside the home from the domestic domain of women. Women entered the sporting life with very few exceptions only as prostitutes who became the objects of male sexual desire within an ensemble of sporting institutions whose spatial context was the racetrack, the saloon, and, of course, the whorehouse. In Wheeling and other urban districts prostitution became integrated into masculine ideology of the sporting life as it grew into an urban problem that symbolized moral decay. Wheeling's reputation as a "wide open town" developed apace with its sporting institutions; that one of these institutions was brothel prostitution is not an historical anomaly but the outcome of a male-oriented ideology that included prostitution as an aspect of sport. That brothels were called "sporting houses" and prostitutes "sporting girls" is a linguistic intimation of the extra-domestic social and sexual structure in which the masculine ethos of sport encompassed the occupation of prostitutes, just as the political-legal structure that inscribed the lives of these women perpetuated a sexual double standard through the unofficial municipal sanction of vice. But what particular historical forces made prostitution and the sporting life central features of Wheeling's social life for so long a time?

One of the most familiar instances of early prostitution occurs at port towns and at military camps. Urban historian Carl Bridenbaugh has commented that in mid-eighteenth century American cities "commercialized vice was a concomitant of both a maritime and wartime society."

A propositus the military connection to prostitution and the sporting subculture, John Robert Shaw, a well digger, describes a particularly lively "house of ill fame" near Lancaster, Pennsylvania during the American Revolution: "... there was a resort of all descriptions of men, from furnaces and forges; prisoners of war, and deserters both from the English and continental army; and men of diabolical principles and practices from almost all quarters, employed in card-playing, cock-fighting, horse-racing, billiard-playing, long-bullet-playing, fiddling and dancing, drinking and carousing, and almost every other wicked practice, no matter what day of the week, though Sabbath was more frequently chosen for such exercises."

If prostitution can be traced to the early days of Wheeling as a frontier settlement and military outpost, it would be through the women who provided domestic and sexual service as camp followers to the various militia and organized armies that operated in the Upper Ohio Valley frontier prior to the American Revolution. As early as the beginning of the French and Indian War, General Edward Braddock's army had particular problems as an organized force because of the detail of Indian camp followers that provided sexual entertainment for Braddock's men before their inglorious defeat on the Monongahela. Winthrop Sargent states that "there were constant and high quarrels among the Indians on account of the amours of the royal officers with their squaws and the largesses the latter received."

One author attributes Braddock's defeat to the desertion of Indian scouts piqued by the soldiers' treatment of their women. When Wheeling was little more than a frontier garrison ancillary to the Zane settlement in the 1770s, the inchoate social life of the outpost regularly manifested the un disciplined revelry of young soldiers thrown into violent confrontation with Indian warriors. Randolph Downes states: "Ever since 1772... frontier anti-Indian sentiment had increased, and the settlement had become more and more the center of disorderly elements that congregate in frontier towns on the eve of anticipated excitements." Incidents such as the Cresap affair in which the white proprietors of a riverfront grogshop near Steubenville murdered several Mingo Indians after a shooting contest precipitating Dunmore's War established the treachery of frontier settlements on the Upper Ohio as evidenced in a cultural pattern that included liquor, violence, and racism.

Yet after the era of military struggle on the Ohio frontier the civilizing process of westward expansion did not eradicate the raw and unsettled edge of the many urban settlements even as cities grew more industrial or sophisticated. First of all, absence of military strife did not imply the immediate absence of troops and their perceived demoralizing influence. In Cincinnati in the 1790s friction developed between military and civilian interests resulting from the "debauched" behavior of soldiers. William Henry Harrison complained that at Fort Washington in 1791, he "saw more drunken men in 48 hours succeeding my arrival in Cincinnati than in all my previous life." So it was that Wheeling too earned a reputation for the lively, if not rowdy, social life of unsettled men leaving military life behind to pursue their fortunes West. One author has written that excessive liquor consumption was "identified with Wheeling" and that its riverfront location in proximity to the famous whiskey economy of southwestern Pennsylvania consolidated its stature as a wild river town. Drinking, gambling, betting, and carousing with whores were all components of a male subculture associated with riverfront districts.
and the transient keelboatinmen who shipped goods downriver to New Orleans. Sporting centers and their attractions grew at the transportation nodes of such riverine economies, and Wheeling was an especially rough and unpolished pearl on the string of cities on the downriver journey where these rowdies holed up. Following Thomas Ashe, Herbert Asbury believed Wheeling and the northern panhandle of (then) northern Virginia to have been a veritable colony of outlaws, "the asylum of thieves and swindlers, and outlawed vagabonds of every description." While this judgement seems excessive it is true that river piracy on the Ohio flourished during the flatboat era (1790–1820), and that the hazards of river travel did not diminish with the subjugation of the Indians of the area. Bandits and cutthroats preyed on keelboatinmen and innocent travelers alike on the Ohio (especially on its lower courses); they were the nascent criminal underclass of the river that settled in the towns as river traffic increased and the towns grew in size. It is interesting to note that Samuel Mason, known for his bravery in the defense of Fort Henry in the siege of 1777, kept a tavern at Wheeling after 1780, and then went on to become a shrewd and successful bandit at the infamous Cave-in-Rock where he decoyed riverboats to the cave by advertising it as an inn where drink and sex were available. The sign he kept on the riverbank to lure unsuspecting travelers read: "Liquor Vault and House for Entertainment." Thus did the sporting life have its roots in the criminal subculture of the early western frontier.

The lifestyle of the keelboatinmen is a much romanticized facet of the Ohio frontier which contributed to the colorful life of western waterways before steamboats transformed river economy. However picturesque in their debauchery they may now seem, their violence, machismo, and anti-social behavior were not innate propensities, as Mike Fink was wont to boast, but the result of social and historical forces in which their lives were rooted. The river boatinmen, along with other unskilled physical laborers of this period, literally pushed the frontier westward at the forefront of a massive population dispersion across the continent. Lack of traditional social restraints and the rigors of physically demanding, dangerous, and isolating occupations fostered a social recklessness and loose sexual mores when the opportunities for leisure arose. The socially destabilizing forces set in motion by the subculture of vice along river routes west became one of the seeds of disorder that later became localized in urban vice districts inhabited by a criminal underclass. 

Among the laziest consumers of alcohol were stage drivers, lumberjacks, riverboatinmen, and canal builders. Men engaged in these occupations shared one common trait: they were members of a new, mobile class without customs, roots, or social ties. They lacked the means by which other, better organized men could lessen the impact of change... They were restless, rootless men who led lonely and unstructured lives. They had no way of joining together to help one another; they had no group identity; no social identity; they were

"nowhere men." As a consequence they expressed their frustrations outside social channels. This anomic existence, lawless and alienated from society, gave rise to acute drinking.

On the other hand, one historian of Wheeling portrays the rivermen as generous but over-indulgent victims of the "gambling fraternity" who were always ready to prey on transient workers "to deprive them of their hard-earned wages." Mike Fink, a near-mythic figure of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, stands as an emblematic example of the tough and belligerent boatman-braggart-pilot-adventurer who boasted a lifestyle of unlimited dissipation as part of his occupational subculture. Simon Girty, Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, and Lewis Wetzel all come to mind as antecedents of Fink whose life as a boatman and later a trapper was inseparable from the pleasures he took with whores, rowdies, and gamblers of the river. Born in Pittsburgh in 1780, Fink thrilled on such consistently outrageous and destructive behavior that accounts of his exploits are so saturated in hyperbole that his life stands more than as historical fact. Fink has links to Wheeling's history as well: in the winter of 1815 Mike laid up his boats at Wheeling at the home of a relative, Capt. John Fink; later, in 1818 or 1820, David W. Bell, a local manufacturer of keelboats, commissioned Mike for a run to Vincennes, Indiana. It comes as no surprise that the anti-social antics of this hellion remained unmitigated in his relations to women. Blair and Meine relate an incident illustrating Fink's relationship to his female companion, Peg, "who may or may not have been Mike's wife" in which he set her afire in a pile of leaves threatening to shoot her if she moved, this as a punishment for flirting with other men. (The unfortunate irony here resides in the authors' casual depiction of such a sadistic act as if it were a light, humorous example of river folklore). Cranmer relates another incident at Pipe Creek below Wheeling in which Mike compelled a woman - another "campagnon du voyage" - "to stand in the bow of his boat and hold a tin cup between her knees as a target for his rifle." When she fell overboard he prevented her rescue and she was swept away in the river's current. Fink and other keelboatinmen retained only fleeting ties to women in general: whether they whored in river towns or transported prostitutes downriver their relations to women were violent and misogynistic.

Though the rootlessness and ruthlessness of the boatmen and other transients alarmed the more stable and respectable elements of river communities, their lives, work, and leisure, rough as it was, did not exist in a complete cultural vacuum. Their sports: tomahawk and shooting contests, "crastin' and gougin'," and injurious practical jokes, were often primitive and violent, but even rude contests that measured physical prowess or celebrated treachery had other cultural elaborations. A shooting match was usually an occasion for betting as well as for drinking, with a "beeeve" or barrel of whiskey offered as a prize. Such contests often degenerated into drunken brawls, but this was an expected outcome of a sporting complex which already involved contest, betting, prizes, and drunkenness. Thomas Ashe's famous description of a fight in Wheeling in 1806 exemplifies both the violent excesses of
sporting matches at the beginning of the nineteenth century and hyperbole in the depiction of frontier disorder. In no small measure did Ashe’s description contribute to the formation of Wheeling’s unsavory reputation in the nineteenth century, for it has been cited on numerous occasions to illustrate the boisterous lifestyle of backcountry rowdies. Ashe blamed Wheeling’s “original settlers” for their lack of circumspection in the formation and management of the town: “had they attended to worthy commercial pursuits, and industrious and moral dealings, in place of rape on Indian property, drunkenness, horse-racing, and cock-fighting, their town would have rivalled Pittsburgh long since, and have now enjoyed a respectable name.” But Ashe also reflected that the influx of “all persons outlawed, or escaping from justice” to America’s first frontier constituted “a species of nefarious republic” which left a permanent mark on the character of the place. To illustrate his thesis that a profligate race had overrun Wheeling and the entire Ohio frontier he devoted several pages describing a “rough and tumble” brawl between a “Virginian . . . and a Kentuckyan” in which a bestial and bloody display of eye-gouging and nose-biting is raised to the level of myth. Some historians have found egregious lapses in the credibility of Ashe’s depiction of 1806 America, and one plausibly occurs here in his recounting of these two frontier titans whose manner of fighting resembles “beasts of prey and . . . carnivorous animals.” However, this frontier brawl which has impressed so many commentators for its sheer ferocity and mythical potentialities came only as an interlude between horse races on South Wheeling’s quarter-mile racetrack. Ashe continues by describing a populace single-mindedly dedicated to sport: “(t)his spectacle ended, and the citizens refreshed with whiskey and biscuit, sold on the ground, the races were renewed. . . . Blacksmiths, shipwrights, all left work: the town appeared a desert. The stores were shut.” However questionable the veracity of Ashe’s description of Wheeling, its accuracy is superseded by its mythification of Wheeling as a boisterous frontier town whose inhabitants were devoted to sport.

Horse-racing was the first popular spectator sport in the nineteenth century, having its roots in the gentry culture of colonial Virginia. Thomas Ashe correctly noted what was probably a quarter-mile track, “a small but excellent race ground,” on bottom land south of Wheeling Creek in 1806. Over the following twenty to twenty-five years horse-racing became more organized in Wheeling. Crammer states that the first race track near Wheeling was at Beech Bottom on a farm owned by Zachariah (or “Nick”) Pumphrey, “an old time peculiar individual.” The “Virginia Horse-Racing Club” leased the field for annual races held in the fall when “sporting men for miles in almost every direction” convened and openly gambled on the horses. Pumphrey sold the farm sometime in 1820 or 1825. From about this time Henry Echols’ race track at what later became Richietown or South Wheeling held annual or semi-annual (spring and fall) races until 1832 and was Wheeling’s premier four-mile track. Betting on the races and other games of chance always accompanied the main event, and “there would be as many as 20 or 30 faro tables in full blast at one time” in an adjacent field at the time of the races. Adolph Harman operated a “Refreshment Garden and Nine-pin Alley” near the track and in 1829 erected a scaffold and shelter in front of the track able to accommodate one hundred and fifty people. The cost of admission was fifty cents per couple. Urban expansion forced the removal of this track to a site at Edgington’s field 2½ miles from the city at the base of Chicken Neck Hill. Jospeh Bell described the races in 1832 in the last year of racing at Echols’ field:

The landed gentry of Ohio County indulged freely in the amusement of horse-racing. A four-mile course was at the lower end of town, reaching from what is now the upper end of South Wheeling, or Ford’s crossing, to the lower end, and was used at least once a year or oftener, proving an attraction potent enough to draw the greater part of Wheeling’s population.

Early on the morning of the races almost the entire population of the town might be seen scattered along from the bridge to the race course. The old road followed the bank, and I remember walking this distance, together with some other little tads, remaining the entire day, and feeling as much interest in the result of each heat as the owners of the horses themselves.

Later, in the 1850s, the Northwest Virginia Agricultural Institutionized horse-racing as an annual event when it first organized its annual agricultural fair in 1858. This later became the West Virginia State Fair which held horse races on Wheeling Island from 1881 to 1930.

Though interest in horse-racing crosscut class lines, the gentry culture of Virginia promoted this sport as a mark of gentility and means for displaying wealth and status. Horse-racing manifested competitiveness, individualism, and materialism just as gambling on races reflected economic uncertainty. Several members of Wheeling’s landed gentry were serious sporting men affiliated with a passion for horses. Samuel Spigg, Garrison Jones, Hugh Nichols, William Gregg, as well as Noah and Ebenezer Zane Jr. were enthusiastic practitioners of the sport. The seriousness and intensity with which men raced and bet is evidenced in an acrimonious public debate between Philip Fisher and Frederick Fogle in 1829. Both these gentlemen had bet $1000 in a “match race” held November 11, 1829 at Echols’ race track before a crowd of 500. Fisher favored the horse “Oscar” owned by “Jones and Rose,” Fogle bet on his own stud horse “Surprise,” which he had purchased from John McLure, president of the North West Bank of Virginia who officiated the race. Contending that Surprise had also bolted, Fisher refused to surrender his stakes charging that the race had not been completed and that the judges, James Forsyth, John McLure, and Alexander Mitchell, had met secretly to decide the outcome of the race in favor of Fogle. For several weeks in The Wheeling Compiler the two parties exchanged accusations in a heated debate replete with Shakespearean quotation and affidavits on the articles of agreement originally made in compliance with the rules and regulations of the “Western
Association for the improvement of the breed of horses." John McLure contributed a long letter on the details of the race with an addendum by James Forsyth who sentimentally insisted: "I hereby state that the Match Race between Oscar and Surprise ran on the 10th ultima, my opinion was, that Oscar lost his race by flying the track, which opinion I expressed on the stand at the time, and have not since changed." But while the landed proprietors of Ohio County grieved over the technicalities of their favorite sport, laborers and common people enjoyed it, gambled on it, and fought over it just as much, though more prone to use fisticuffs over legalism to settle disputes. United in this common interest in sport the community and its leaders perpetuated horse-racing as local tradition, though possibly ignoring its darker implications. In 1902 Cranmer pointed out: "The moral sentiment of the community of that day was not so keenly alive to the demoralizing effect of horse racing as that of the present" though he ironically claimed it was "carried on in a much more dignified manner." 35

Objection to the demoralizing effects of the sporting subculture was sporadically evident in the industrializing period of Wheeling's history and mounted into reform movements toward the latter decades of the nineteenth century. By the 1830s gambling indictments by the hundreds were issued in Ohio County and a legal response to brothel prostitution emerged in the 1840s. The first indictment on record for keeping a house of prostitution in 1828 charged Elijah and Amie Linsley and three customers with lewdness detrimental to the commonwealth. A growing male labor pool increased with the expansion of the town and an increasing demand for commercial sex grew in lieu of (and addition to) systematic martial attachments. Some workers objected to the pattern of vice inherent in the pattern of urban growth: in 1830 a Wheeling chapter of the Workingman's Party then sweeping the country formulated a plan to remove a segment of the populace to form a colony apart from the "vice-ridden" cities of the east. This "Democratic Republican Company" sought to reform economy, banking, and education but also sought to promote "every possible institution for rational amusement." There is no record that the Wheeling Workingmen's Party ever brought to fruition their plan for a model society of enlightened citizens, but they stood firm on what cultural practices they eschewed:

... we will not permit on any terms, the making or vending of alcoholic and intoxicating liquors, within our boundaries; nor gambling — no house of ill fame; no selling of lottery tickets; no banking establishments on the present system; no demoralizing practices — such as horse-racing, cock-fighting or bull baiting; or any such amusements as have a tendency to corrupt the morals of our youth and citizens. 37

Similarly, lotteries came under attack by community leaders and workers alike. In 1834 scores of people petitioned the General Assembly of Virginia to suppress lotteries as "the worst kind of gambling." William Lambdin, a minister and owner of a paper mill that employed many female operatives, signed the petition and later carried on a personal battle against prostitution in 1839 when he testified against William Frankhausen, the innkeeper of the

LaFayette Hotel at Main and Biddle Streets for conducting a house of prostitution. 39 But while no collective social movement against prostitution occurred at this time, the public reacted strongly to social disorder created by desperate men. Thomas Wintringer's murder of Jesse Chrisman aroused Wheeling's slave-owners to arm the city against invasion by abolitionists, though this appeared to cause as much disorder as it was meant to prevent. In 1885 Morris Borden and Ambrose Loomis startled the community by raping the wife of a tavern-keeper, Stephen Hershman. Borden and Loomis had stopped at Hershman's tavern for dinner and drink. They also asked for "lewd girls" but when denied the pleasure they beat Hershman and raped his wife. They were later apprehended, and one man testified that the community was so outraged that they could not hope to obtain a fair trial in Wheeling. 40

There thus existed a dangerous side to the sporting life that was primarily a function of the poverty and violence of working class social relations. In this regard, the familiar triad of evils — brothel, gambling house, and tavern (later saloon) — catered to itinerant workers and to locals who enticed travelers to disreputable areas to "show them the town" with their primary object being theft or personal injury. In one incident in 1857 young gang members induced a visiting youth, Joseph Tharp, to attend a "check apron dance" in an East Wheeling dive where they pried him with "three cent liquor." He awoke the following morning lying in an alley relieved of his money and clothes. 41 Prostitutes were common objects of male violence just as married women suffered their husbands' whipping and beating. In the 1850s volunteer fire companies hosed down brothels as a practical joke or sport, terrorizing the inhabitants and sending them fleeing into the street. 42 As public women on the outside of society prostitutes had little recourse to complain about such practices. Officials tolerated such hazing of prostitutes while drunken rows among other tenants of the same neighborhoods irked middle-class respectability and required the action of law. Certain ethnic groups of these neighborhoods received public stigma even when the prostitutes who lived there were not immediately responsible. In 1860 the Intelligencer editorialized: "No locality in the city is more notorious for female squabblers, drunken rows in the night, and bald-faced whiskey than the vicinity of the old jail. Here live the Skellys, the Manicks, the Finities, the Kennedys, the Lindens, O'Lafferty's and a host of others, and a row of some kind is eternally agitating the place. 43 And here would grow the redlight district known as Alley C.

A sensational example of violence toward homeless prostitutes of the street, the city's "abandoned women," occurred in 1858 with the murder of Mary Ann Montony by an iron worker, John Burns. 44 Burns worked as a feeder at the Missouri Iron Works (the Top Mill) and had a reputation for violent fighting — he had stabbed three men, including a slave of Hugh Nichols — and the constant companionship of prostitutes. Burns lived a dissolute life before he found work at the mill: he slept in the Market House, in alleys and gutters, and was given over to hard drinking, wandering, and whoring. In early April of 1858 he met Mary Ann Montony, a prostitute from Cincinnati, walking on a street in North Wheeling wearing a "yellow sun
bonnet (and ) a pair of scissors swinging around her neck. Montony had no home but lived in the hills above North Wheeling at Jonathan's Gut (or Ravine) where she met and slept with groups of men from the city. Burns, who claimed she was fluent in French and German, took her to Jonathan's Gut and later to an abandoned glass factory and "Dr. Hullihen's vacant old house" in company with other prostitutes and their customers. For some reason Burns became angry with another prostitute, Cind McDonald, and beat her. Burns confessed: "About two or three o'clock I had a fuss with Cind. I had an old grudge against her. I thought I had killed her once during a squabble. She pretended to be dead. I tore her clothes off her. She went and swore against me for this, and it was for this scrape that Ald. Hamilton fined me ten dollars and sent Cind, McDonald and Mary Ann Montony to jail for 30 days each. Burns also kept a grudge against Montony for taunting him at the trial. When she was released from jail, Burns joined her and "the same old crowd" in drunken revelry on the hill. Whatever contradictory emotions Burns felt for the woman were intensely experienced but distorted by jealousy and hatred, for he then had sex with her in the company of other men, protected her from being beaten by one of the company, but ended up violently beating her himself. Goaded on by his friend Oscar Myers and watched by another prostitute, Mary Ann Smith, Burns murdered the woman after a day of drinking at the mill. Wheeling authorities quickly apprehended Burns, and the crime startled the community not only for its brutality but for the picture of prostitution and debauchery it revealed. Judge Thompson sentenced Burns to death on June 7, and the condemned man twice tried to take his own life in the weeks before the execution. It is estimated that 10,000 to 20,000 people witnessed the execution of John Burns on September 3, 1858 as thousands flocked to Wheeling from the surrounding countryside to see the macabre spectacle of his public hanging. Visitors thronged the city's streets and surrounded the jail while spectators packed the hillside on either side of Jonathan's Gut where the gallows were erected to memorialize Montony's murder and expiate Burns' crime. Small wonder that Wheeling's reputation as a vice-ridden city remained permanently etched in the minds of the thousands who witnessed the searing image of John Burns dangling from the gibbet at the very site where he consorted with the prostitutes of the city.

As an anti-society the underworld of vice signified the effects of poverty and desperation which inscribed the lives of the working poor. The demoralization of brutal industrial labor, low wages, unemployment, and the lack of social institutions giving a sustaining structure to lives are all associated with social breakdown of industrial America. As evident in the case of John Burns, the social complex of whoring, drinking, and fighting existed as an anti-structure to the sense of order that urban society imposed on its subjects at mid-century. Itinerant men in search of work had similar experiences as Burns and often fared as well. The case of Mortimer Gibbon illustrates the situation of a rootless youth on the eve of the Civil War who lacked a stable family life and literally bounced from town to town working en route and indulging in a completely reckless life:

I was drunk most of the time . . . returned to Nashville but did not stay long but went to Louisville and stayed about five days at a house of ill fame and led an awful life. We left Louisville and went to Cana with two women who we passed off as our sisters until we came to St. Louis, where we kept them about twenty days, drinking, and doing everything that was bad. We then got the women drunk and left them, promising that we would return but never did.

We left St. Louis and went thirty miles to a little town . . . where we stayed about fourteen days, and drank all the time. From there we went to Yellowstone, where we stayed four days, when the women came to us. We all stayed here two days, then we took them to New Haven, Mo. and stayed with them a few days, when we left them and never saw them again. We then went to Cana, from there to Louisville, from there to Nashville where we stayed three weeks at another house of ill-fame, drinking pretty hard, we had two women with us. We left Nashville and went back to Louisville where we stayed a day and a night and then took a boat from there and went through to Parkersburg, where we took the cars and went to Harper's Ferry, where we stayed two weeks drinking all the time. We still had our women with us. From there we went to Grafton, from there to Moundsville, where we arrived in the morning and left the same evening for Covington, Ky. where we stayed two weeks. Here I enlisted in the regular army, when the woman that I had with me came and swore that I was her brother and not of age, and then they released me.

We then left and went to Louisville where we stayed about a month. I was very wild, drinking all the time and going to balls, theaters, shows, etc.

Gibbon enlisted in the Fourth Pennsylvania Cavalry and received a severe wound at the battle of Antietam, but resumed his profligate lifestyle after recuperating. He was finally implicated in the murder of Abram Deem, a Parkersburg man reported to be a Confederate news runner.

While particular accounts like those of Burns and Gibbon may reveal individual fates, the Civil War itself brought a wrenching and cataclysmic change to the country and to Wheeling. Troop movements and a military encampment on Wheeling Island brought thousands of soldiers through the city while Athenaems, an old theater on 16th and Market Streets, was used as a federal prison for Confederate soldiers and political prisoners. Wheeling city council passed an ordinance in the fall of 1861 prohibiting liquor sales to soldiers, but this did little to stem the tide of drunkenness and disorder. Loyalty oaths were enforced to counteract Rebel sympathies while window breaking, garroting, and "ghosting" increased the dangerous atmosphere of the city. The Civil War divided the nation and brought statehood to West Virginia making Wheeling its capital city for a short time: it was during this time that prostitution became firmly entrenched in the economy of the city. 

In 1870 the city health officer Dr. James E. Reeves published Wheeling's
first comprehensive health report which cited the growing problem of prostitution and its effect on the social life of the city. Reeves noted that there were several private brothels and assignation houses in Wheeling and estimated there were approximately 63 white and about the same number of black prostitutes working in the city but also suggested there were an "unascertainable number of clandestine prostitutes." In addition, he stated there were six to eight women who lived in "utter wretchedness" and survived by prostitution and begging. Reeves criticized the unhealthy work environment and lack of sanitary facilities as factors in the disease rates, ill health, and misery for all working class women, singling out "the several classes of sewing women" such as milliners and dress makers working on smoky days by gas light in small ill-ventilated houses. 50 Similarly, Rebecca Harding Davis noted in her classic work *Life in the Iron Mills* how a wretched work environment perpetuated the misery of the working poor and tacitly related it to prostitution when she wrote of "the masses of men... stopping all night over boiling cauldrons of metal, laded by day in dens of drunkenness and infamy..." 51

It was in a dingy, industrial section of East Wheeling bordering on Wheeling Creek east of Eoff Street that a well-defined prostitution district developed after the 1860s. Residents referred to the area as "the East end" or "the Eoff Street district." In this working class neighborhood prostitutes operated from private residences as well as rooms in back of or above saloons or confectionsary. The area was located a few short blocks away from West Virginia's state capitol building and was adjacent to the Wheeling Gas Works, tobacco manufacturers and machine shops. The proximity of prostitution houses to the Gas Works gave rise to the sobriquet "Gas House Alley" identifying a group of back alley brothels near Wheeling Creek. Fanciful names given to brothels and alleys, like the "Lava Beds" or "Bed Bug Row" suggest the squalor of tenement life. The neighborhood's male workers comprised most of the clientele; in 1879 the *Wheeling Register* complained "...the Central Glass Works, the Whitaker Iron Works, Hinge Factory, the Tack Factory and many other manufactories are located there (in district) and employ many hundreds of men and boys, who are more or less rough and uncouth in their manners, owing to that kind of discipline which obtains anywhere in our mills and factories." 52 On the opposite side of the creek was the small industrial suburb of Manchester, the namesake of the British city, locally famous for Neymann's brewery.

The creek itself often resembled no more than a mud flat, especially during summer months, and its brakish and stagnant waters were a breeding ground for contagious diseases. East Wheeling in the late 1870s was known as the "Diphtheria District" due to an outbreak of that disease in 1878 and 1879. Wheeling physicians, alarmed by the condition of the creek, petitioned council for immediate sanitary improvement of the area and abdicating responsibility for "the loss of life among the children of East Wheeling." 53 Dr. John Frissell observed: "a times all the water in Wheeling Creek could be run through one small sewer." 54 Seventeenth Street, through whose length ran a portion of the B & O Railroad, duplicated the stagnant condition of the creek. For several blocks the railroad track averaged 6 to 8 inches higher than street level, causing an obstruction that impeded travel as well as drainage, providing a muddy receptacle for the kitchen water of the area's residents. Over this thoroughfare carters hauled coal from the mines above Manchester past the grimy houses, saloons, and brothels. Despite disease and lack of drainage, daily social life, when not inscribed by work or home, was of the street: "Street idling" by prostitutes on summer evenings was a common sight on Fifteenth and Seventeenth Streets, where gangs of teen-age boys loasted and spat on corners and the traffic of workers was omnipresent. 55

The East Wheeling district's most well-known madam was Julia Chisnell who operated a brothel there in the 1880s and 1890s. Chisnell combined the entrepreneur interests both of a madam of a "parlor house" and a landlord renting to other madams and prostitutes. In 1877 Chisnell opened an alley brothel at 111 Alley 16; she alternated her residence between this location and 57 17th Street, another locally famous "resort" where she kept 2 to 5 prostitutes. This house was considered a cut above the other dives of the East End, thus traveling businessmen and other middle-class clients flocked there even though it was situated in the heart of a working class neighborhood. Although the Wheeling Police plagued her with periodic vice raids she maintained close ties with the Police Department and secured their cooperation in 1890 when a prostitute in her employ filched a $1200 pair of diamond earrings from her room and fled to Pittsburgh. Chisnell opened an additional house at 1810 Jacob Street and another in 1895 at 2210 Water Street near the burgeoning red-light district in Center Wheeling. In 1896 the State of West Virginia issued 41 indictments against her for renting houses of prostitution from 1892 through 1896, with two indictments dating from 1879 and 1889. After this she relocated to Washington, D.C. in 1898 only to return to Wheeling a few years later to purchase property at 2244-2246 Water Street in 1902, an address which would become a focal point of prostitution in Center Wheeling for most of the twentieth century. 56

Alley C between 10th and 11th Streets was another prostitution district that became locally important until 1904. Alley C paralleled the Second Ward Market House one-half block to the east; it was here that devotees of the sporting life found saloons, gambling, and commercial sex in a tight spatial conformation, for many Market Street saloons had rear entrances to the Alley and pokor or roulette rooms above. But while the Alley C/Market House area formed a nexus of activity for male leisure it was also more problematic, for when prostitutes crossed the symbolic boundary of the brothel door to solicit in the streets and saloons, many felt they contaminated those spheres of social life. Saloons adjacent to whorehouses were always suspect for casual sexual encounters easily became commercial transactions where workingmen drank and socialized. The public viewed the sexual Market Street saloons with rear entrances to the alley as doubly dangerous for the morals of the community for this reason. Because the economy of the brewing
industry and the social life of saloons was reciprocal and well-established, the problem of disengaging prostitution from saloons was often regarded as a more acute social problem than brothel prostitution itself.

The social segregation of Alley C prostitution perpetuated their consolidation into a district female subculture whose social organization was primarily of and by women. Though male saloon-keepers, procurers, and "fancy men" sometimes controlled their activity, brothels were most often run by women, and their daily social life was centered in this subculture. The prostitutes of Alley C employed youngsters from the neighborhood as lookouts in the alley; in the evenings they traveled in groups to dances to make pick-ups. Madams used traditional female occupations, such as dress-making, as fronts for their business activity. Mary Ship, who ran a brothel from 1877 to 1888 at 1923 Main Street, tactfully advertised her services in Wheeling City Directories using a confectionary as a front. Alley C also had its unofficial physician, Dr. A.J. Noome, whose office (and residence) at 1116 Market Street placed him within close reach for any medical problems. His wife, C.A. Noome, together with Margaret Maloney, operated the C.A. Murphie Company at the same address, advertising as "modistes." Prostitutes who visited Dr. Noome for medical treatment or prophylaxis could also purchase the latest fashionable dresses and hats from his wife. 57

Other business near the Market House catered to recreational as well as commercial interests: interspersed among notions and dry goods stores on either side of the market were saloons, billiard rooms, and gaming joints. Saloons catered to the thirsty folk, and market days generally meant very good business for them. Retail liquor stores also sold whiskey by the drink to farmers and market men, disregarding their need for a license to do so. In the Market House itself public lounging and loafing were common but generally regarded as a nuisance. Street corner loafers, young and old, hung about in the evenings so that "from the Market House...to the Market Street Bridge, it is almost impossible to pass along owing to the crowds of young men which are to be seen every night..." 58 Hobos and drifters swelled the ranks of transients as they found nightly shelter in the stalls and benches of the Market House. Cocaine users hung about the market as well. Though druggists at this time sold cocaine over the counter, its usage by prostitutes and black was inflated in the public imagination and became permanently associated with deviant and minority groups. During the 1890s Wheeling was a minor distributing center for cocaine; black users, called "cokes," peddled their "picnic powder" or "sausage" at railroad camps on the B & O line through the northern panhandle and eastern Ohio. 59 Rude entertainments always seemed to gravitate to the Market House area; in 1891 a greek caused a minor spectacle in the hall over the Market House, drawing crowds to witness his ingestion of live chickens and lamp chimneys. 60

The persistently raucous atmosphere of Market Street saloons contributed much to the dangerous edge of the Market House at night as fighting and brawling spilled into the streets.

In this setting the saloon held great importance for workingmen. A 1862-63 business directory of Wheeling lists 61 saloons in the city. By 1904 almost 200 saloons were spread from the business district to residential South Wheeling. 61 Saloons provided workingmen a social context through which beer became culturally and politically important. For working class male culture, among German-Americans and other ethnic groups, beer was a feature of leisure, of work, of strikes, of socialization, of ritual celebration, and of political life. The social importance of beer thus extended beyond the saloon through a variety of social customs. The traditional observance of "Bock Beer Day" at the end of March or beginning of April heralded the opening of the "beer drinking season" with the Schmidt and Reinick breweries opening their locally famous bock beer on the market. 62 Iron puddlers and other workers refreshed themselves at the mills at lunchbreak by ordering beer through "runners," children who "rushed" beer in buckets (or growlers) from nearby saloons. Workingmen's saloons provided a congenial setting for leisure hours after work. A large segment of men employed in the iron and steel industries found in this environment camaraderie, relaxation, excitement, and the social negation of heavy labor itself. Saloons were not simply for drinking, but for socialization through drinking.

Table 1: Number of Saloons by Year, 1875-1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saloons were also a forum for election politics wherein the endorsement of local political candidates found confirmation in drink. Municipal politics in Wheeling was often criticized for being overdetermined by the politics of saloon life. Candidates for local offices regularly found endorsement and popular solidarity by their generosity in the barroom and actively sought nomination for office by "setting 'em up to the boys." 63 Since much of men's leisure time was spent in this setting a political candidate could afford to ignore the opportunity to increase his popularity by socializing with his constituency at the bar. In this way the subculture of the saloon conflated ward politics with the sporting life. Some customs, such as betting on elections, in which odds on a particular candidate measured relative popularity (a sort of rudimentary public opinion poll), confirmed this interpenetration. A perfect symbol of this, one saloon at 1601 Market Street was named "The Senate." The economic powers behind the social use of beer and liquor resided in local brewers, saloon-keepers, and sympathetic city officials whose economic interests in saloons determined favorable legislation as well as
official and unofficial protection. The political influence of saloon-keepers and beer distributors elected as councilmen was fairly obvious, but the interrelatedness of this influence was complex and not always consistently aligned, depending upon the vagaries of public acceptance or disapproval and the actions of various pressure groups.

A predominating local figure who commanded great influence over saloon politics was Henry Schmulbach (1844-1915), a German immigrant whose Schmulbach Brewing Company in South Wheeling was the second largest brewery in the city, surpassed and rivaled only by the Reyman Brewing Company, headed by Anton Reyman. Though his brewery was his most popular and enduring enterprise, Schmulbach expanded his local empire to include public utilities (street railways, bridges, and a telephone company), real estate, iron, and steel. His biography has been related in a Horatio Alger, tracing a course from enterprise, a successful youth and philanthropist. In reality his achievements belie the ethics and mindset of a ruthless political opportunist. His stature as a member of the Board of Public Works (1892-1896) and delegate to the 1895 Republican National Convention launched him into the position of an unofficial political boss, promoter of "Schmulbachism" in city and county government. To his detractors the constellation of his interests as a capitalist and major figure in Republican politics was abhorrent; "Schmulbachism" was tantamount to "political bossism and gang politics." His personal life contributed much to his political style and was a factor in the cultural life of the community. A bachelor for most of his life, he was for many years a local mogul of the sporting element in Wheeling. An avid follower of the "turf," he owned a breeding farm for horses in Kentucky and training quarters in Cleveland. He was also a noted gambler (once arrested for playing poker in the McLaren House), and a frequent of the whorehouses. Beyond these personal sporting interests, his purchase of the John Frazier farm to create Mozart Park in 1893 brought a hilltop mecca of summer entertainment to Wheeling's citizens which included a dancing pavilion, casino, bandstand, bowling alley, and bicycle track. Labor organizations, German singing societies, fraternal, religious, and civic groups all used the park for picnics and outings in the summer months, while special events such as the July 4th fireworks display and scheduled operas, concerts, and vaudeville shows drew large crowds of people to drink Schmulbach Beer and enjoy the various entertainments. True to his Lutheran heritage, "German Sunday" for Henry Schmulbach called for amusement and beer drinking, and the public obtained these liberal, even on Sundays, at Mozart Park.

Cock-fighting was another sport with its primary focus in the saloon or the atmosphere of the saloon. A scheduled cock-fight drew sporting men to Wheeling from as far away as Pittsburgh, Chillicothe, or Athens, Ohio. A Wheeling Register reporter described a crowd of 250 men at one such event in April, 1891 in Martin's Ferry, Ohio across the river from Wheeling that is worth quoting in length:

Arrangements were made for fifteen fights between Wheeling and Ohio birds; for a purse of $100 on each fight, and $250 to the winner of the odd fight. A prominent Wheeling saloon-keeper was stakeholder.

The pit was arranged in a large room in the second story of a prominent saloon in the upper part of Martin's Ferry. A long line of hacks and vehicles of all kinds stood in front of the saloon. Inside, the commodious barroom was crowded, and three bartenders were dispensing popular beverages over the bar and were unequal to the task of supplying the thirsty throats of the two hundred sports. Chuck-a-luck and wheel of fortune games were in operation, to entice the almighty dollar from the pockets of the unwary. In one corner was a piano, which was being vigorously pounded, while from an old violin and rusty horn discord was being evoked, to add to the general din. The bar room was crowded before the fights, and all got comfortably full before the contests begun, yet the crowd was an orderly and good-natured one.

The pit, 14 feet square, was arranged in the centre of the room upstairs. The sides were padded and ropes stretched above, while the floor of the pit was covered with clay to a depth of several inches. Six tiers of seats were constructed in amphitheatre form, reaching from the pit to within several feet of the ceiling. The space between the seats and the walls of the room was reserved for the fowls and their owners.

During the evening it was feared that the main would have to be postponed, on account of the non-arrival of the Circleville chickens. Owing to a misunderstanding they were switched off and sent to Steubenville. Telegrams were sent to that city, and the fowls were sent down on the 9:07 o'clock train on the C & P.

In the meantime the spectators in the pit were giving vent to their impatience in various ways. The crowd was a motley one. Business men, artisans, and laboring men all pressed close to the rude seats, and at least three officers were present in civil attire. The large majority, however, were sports, who attended for the purpose of replenishing their decreasing financial condition, more than any real interest in the contests.

Similar scenes occurred regularly in the Wheeling area at "cocking mains" or "poultry shows" in Fulton and on Edington Lane. At one of the largest mains in Fulton before New Year's Eve in 1891 a man accidentally dropped a lighted match into four gallons of gasoline sending a sheet of flame up the wall and 200 sports rushing in panic from an over-crowded basement. Fortunately there were no serious injuries, and when the fire was extinguished, the cock-fight resumed.

Poker rooms and policy shops often operated in connection with saloons many of which were located on Market Street near the Market House. At the turn of the century the White Front Saloon, which advertised as "The Finest Equipped Saloon in West Virginia," drew scores of gamblers to its
second-floor casino at 1224-26 Market Street where its poker tables, faro
tables, and roulette wheel received police protection for years. In 1888 William
McLaughlin opened a “Baseball and Turf Exchange” on the corner of 12th
and Water Streets at Wheeling’s wharf where sporting men could place bets
on local and regional baseball teams and horse races. McLaughlin’s Turf
Exchange featured a restaurant, lunch counter, and “sample room” as well
as a segregated “Ladies Dining Room” on the second floor. Betting was
systematized by a wire service and McLaughlin boasted of “Reports received
on every ½ inning; direct Telegraph Communication and Special Wire; and
a Telephone Connection.” By 1904 McLaughlin had a capital investment of
$10,000 in the Turf Exchange with a monthly payroll of $1,675 for 14 employ-
ees and with two managers heading the baseball and turf divisions. 70

Wheeling was thus a major regional sporting and entertainment center for
most of the nineteenth century in the upper Ohio Valley. Its heyday was
probably in the 1890s if not the entire last quarter of the century. Streetcar
transportation, established in 1888, along with other railway lines, increased
the movement of people to, from, and within the city, and recreational “excursion
trips” to Wheeling brought hundreds of people to seek its amusements,
especially on weekends. Suburban parks like Schmulbach’s Mozart Park,
the annual West Virginia State Fair, and a host of informal sporting events
from baseball to dancing were positive features of Wheeling’s urban culture of
pleasure. Though women were by no means absent from leisure activities
per se — for instance, union picnics and other outings brought entire families
together — the sporting life was primarily a male working class preserve that
organized men’s social life in opposition to industrial work-time to domestic
life. Workingmen consciously organized their social life around sporting
events after work, on weekends, or when the mills were idle. Of such “loaf
days,” Robert Plummer has written: “There were bare knuckle prize fights,
foot races, and rowing races in which activities many professionals competed
for purses, and when championship event of this kind was staged it was
nothing unusual for business and industry to suspend. And plenty of money
changed hands on the results for Wheeling was known far and wide as a
sporting center.” 71

But the sporting subculture also had its darker side for brothel prostitution
was fully integrated into lower-class entertainments that attracted the city’s
workers, transients, and visitors. Wheeling’s stature as an entertainment
center would not have been the same had it lacked Alley C and other red-light
districts as amusement resorts. 72 Knowing this, city officials adopted an
unofficial policy of segregation to oversee the activities of prostitutes by
separating them into one or two delimited areas. This, however, was never
totally successful as prostitutes worked the streets and brothels were scattered
throughout the city. The Police Department rationalized the tacit regula-
tion of Alley C and the East End by insisting that regulation segregated
prostitutes from public visibility and expedited crime control. In reality, Alley
C became a virtual conduit for crime: inhabited by prostitutes, drifters, and
petty criminals, the police utilized it as a kind of underworld sump to attract,
manage, or trap lawbreakers of all kinds. This image of its function lay at

the root of a set of tactical reasons for police permissiveness toward prostitu-
tion.

Municipal regulation of prostitution was thus wholly congruent with the
sporting subculture that actively promoted in practice the sexual domina-

tion of women in the commercial exchange of the brothel. Political control of
women’s sexuality fused the masculine ideology of sport within a regulatory
system that perpetuated prostitution as an urban tradition. Though it was a
multi-faceted subculture, the sporting life had much more to do with what Tom
Wolfe has called “the uncultivated macho dandy . . . willing to turn loose all
the minor vices (gambling, lechery, glutony, proflanity, and blood sports)
that were leashed in the social sphere above him.” 73 The sporting life as
a culture of leisure was thus a male-oriented subculture associated with
saloons and racetracks where gambling was the obligatory form of risk-taking
and sexuality was manifested in liaisons with prostitutes. The prolongation of
bachelorhood among males who reached maturity in the 1880s and 1890s
was a demographic trend that also promoted a sexual reliance on prostitutes
for men whose family attachments were shifting or nonexistent. In Wheeling
as in other urban centers “the house of prostitution . . . was a cornerstone of
the bachelor subculture” 74 that was integrated into system of entertain-
ment that included saloons, dancing halls, and gambling dens. Wheeling’s
reputation as a wide open town stems from this articulated set of institutions
where sport, sex, drinking, and other related leisure activities converged.
NOTES

1. William Cooper Howells Recollections of Life in Ohio, 1813-1840 Gainesville, Fl.: Scholars Facsimilies and Reprints 1963 (orig. Cincinnati, 1895). See also Ohio County Records (hereinafter, OCCR), West Virginia Collection, WVU, Envelope 120-C; Wheeling Tri-Weekly Gazette, April 20, 25, 27, 1836; Niles Weekly Register, Aug. 27, 1863.

2. Delf Norona Wheeling: A Place-Name of Indian Origin Moundsville: West Virginia Archeological Society Publication Series No. 4 1958, p. 28.


8. ibid, pp. 162-4


12. For a biographical account of Samuel Mason, see Ottc A. Rothert The Outlaws of Cave-In-Rock Cleveland: Arthur H. Clarke Co. 1924, pp. 157-66, also p. 37, 47.

13. The standard account of the keelboattmen is Leland Baldwin The Keelboat Age on Western Waters Pittsburgh: Univ. Pittsburgh Press 1941.


15. Gibson Lamb Cranmer History of Wheeling City and Ohio County West Virginia and Representative Citizens Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co. 1902, p. 70.


23. ibid, pp.224-29.


26

27
1962), p. 191, calls Ashe “one of the most biased of the British travelers,” citing his plagiarism and “descriptions of river rapids and Indian mounds that did not exist.” Rothert, op. cit., p. 24 and p. 325 also finds Ashe unreliable.


26. ibid, p. 220.


28. Gibson Lamb Cranmer “Early Sports in Wheeling. The Prevalence of Card Playing, Horse Racing, & c.” Events, Nov. 1897, Vol. I., No. 3, pp. 75-79. Events was a Wheeling magazine published by Clement Storer Foster devoted primarily to short stories and society news. Cranmer apparently had extensive knowledge of the history of Wheeling’s sporting culture, as evidenced by this article. As a judge, Cranmer presided over many cases of prostitution and gambling and was a participant in the 1900 social reform group, the Committee of One Hundred. It is unfortunate he did not record more of what he knew.


30. Wheeling Compiler, April 28, 1830; August 12, 1829.


33. The information on the Fisher/Fogle debate can be found in the Wheeling Compiler, Nov. 18, 1829, Nov. 25, 1829, Dec. 2, 9, and 23, 1829, and Jan. 6, 1830.

34. Wheeling Compiler, Dec. 23, 1829.


36. OCCR, Envelope 109-B.


38. Wheeling Tri-Weekly Times, Feb. 1, 1834; see also Feb. 6, 1834.

39. OCCR, Envelope 148 C-2.

40. OCCR, Envelope 163.


43. Wheeling Intelligencer, July 13, 1860.

44. For information on John Burns, see OCCR, Envelope 219 B-2. This account is drawn primarily from Intelligencer articles throughout the summer of 1858. The major article which provides Burns’ account of the murder to Wheeling reporters, entitled, “Execution of John Burns for the Murder of Mary Ann Montony,” appeared Sept. 6, 1858. This may be a substitute for an “authorized pamphlet” of the crime and Burns’ biography customarily printed about sensational murders (see Wheeling Intelligencer, June 9, 1858). The existence of this pamphlet is not known.

45. Wheeling Intelligencer, Sept. 6, 1858.

46. ibid.

47. ibid.

48. C. E. Douglas The Murder of Abram Deem Parkersburg; n.p. 1957, pp. 3-4. This is apparently a reprint of a nineteenth century pamphlet, but no citation to the original is given.


50. James E. Reeves The Physical and Medical Topography, including vital, manufacturing, and other statistics, of the City of Wheeling Wheeling: Daily Register Book and Job Office 1870, pp. 28, 44. Reeves published a second edition the following year entitled The Health and Wealth of the City of Wheeling in which he revised his estimates to 75 black and 75 white prostitutes. In both estimates, these figures suggest a greatly disproportionate number of black women turning to prostitution as a way of making a living.


52. Wheeling Register, July 24, 1879.

53. Wheeling Register, Sept. 4 and 8, 1879.

54. Dr. John Frissell Epidemics in Wheeling and Vicinity Since 1832 Wheeling: Lewis Baker 1880, p. 12.

55. Wheeling Register, Oct. 11, 1879.
56. OCCR, Envelope 375 E-4; Wheeling Register, July 24, 1879. August 14, 1890.


58. Wheeling Register, July 24, 1879.

59. Wheeling Intelligencer, Aug. 15, 1903, Sept. 4, 1903, Sept. 23 and 30, 1903.

60. Wheeling Register, May 17, 1891. The man was Jeff Howard, a hod carrier, who was “occasionally . . . identified with circuses and museums.”


62. Wheeling Register, March 29, 1891.


64. Compiled from Callin's Wheeling City Directories for these years.

65. Wheeling Register, Dec. 14, 1890.

66. These groups included various union locals, such as the Wheeling Beer Driver’s Local, affiliated with the Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly, and a Saloon-Keeper’s Association, later known as the Knights of Fidelity, whose major economic opponent was the West Virginia Brewer’s Association, a consortium of brewers. See, for example, a controversy over the pricing of beer, Wheeling Register, Sept. 10, 1895.

67. Schmulbach’s obituary in the Wheeling Register, August 13, 1915, contains a brief survey of his life; see also George W. Atkinson and Alvaro W. Gibbens Prominent Men of West Virginia Wheeling: W.L. Callin 1890, p. 1000; Callin’s Wheeling City Directory, 1903-04, p. 512 lists some of Schmulbach’s holdings for 1904; on an attempt by the Republican party to eliminate his influence as a political boss, see Wheeling Intelligencer, Nov. 3, 1903; on Schmulbach’s legal difficulties see OCCR, Envelopes 356 and 372 E-3; he was also charged with a homicide in 1878 but not acquitted, see OCCR, Envelope 324 B-1; see also Montana X. Menard and Robert A. Lowe “Mozart Park and the Incline” Autumn/Winter 1981 Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review, 11(1): 10-16.

68. Wheeling Register, April 17, 1891.

69. Wheeling Register, Dec. 31, 1890; March 11, 1891.


72. See Howard Woolston Prostitution in the United States Vol. I, NY: Century 1921, p. 110: “Many men who visit the red light quarter do so merely to see the sights. They tramp the streets and look into the resorts or chaff the women, with no other purpose than diversion.”


74. John C. Schneider “The Bachelor Subculture and Spatial Change in Mid-Nineteenth Century Detroit” Detroit in Perspective 1978 3(1): 19-31. Schneider states that “demographic evidence points toward a peak in the prolongation of bachelorhood among those males who reached maturity in the 1880s and 1890s.” pp. 19-20. “The hey-day, in fact, of urban vice quarters came around the 1890s, when men entering adulthood were more likely than ever before to postpone marriage.” p. 21.
CONTRIBUTORS

David Rose is a frequent contributor to the Review. He earned his M.A. at New School of Social Research in New York City.

David T. Javersak, editor of the Review, is Dean of the School of Liberal Arts at West Liberty State College.