

CHAPTER 3

EARLY HISTORY OF RECREATION AND LEISURE



In the year A.D. 80, the Colosseum opened with what must stand as quite the longest and most disgusting mass binge in history. . . . Various sorts of large-scale slaughter, both of animals and men, were appreciatively watched by the Emperor Titus and a packed audience for 100 days. . . . Titus was quite happy footing the enormous bill just as he and his father, the imperial Vespasian, had already footed the bill for building this vast arena. Such payments were the privilege of power.¹

In the long run, industrialization brought the reduction of work-time. The hours per year committed to work have declined in the industrial West in a range from 3,000–3,600 to 1,800–2,000 from 1840 to the present. . . . This redistribution of time has been accompanied by a drastic “repackaging” of leisure hours making possible new forms of leisure time, including the typically modern notions of free evenings, the weekend, paid summer vacations, as well as a lengthy childhood and retirement.²



INTRODUCTION

To provide a meaningful background for the study of recreation and leisure in modern society, it is helpful to have a clear understanding of its role in the past. We can trace the origins of many of our contemporary views of leisure and related cultural customs to the traditions and practices of ancient cultures. The history of recreation and leisure is a rich tapestry of people, places, events, and social forces, showing the role of religion, education, and government and the customs and values of different cultures, their arts, sport, and pastimes. By becoming familiar with the evolution of our recreation and leisure, we are better able to understand and deal effectively with the present.



Tribal people do not make the same sharp distinction between work and leisure that more technologically advanced societies do. Whereas the latter set aside different periods of time for work and relaxation, a tribal, pretechnological society has no such precise separations. Instead, work is customarily done when it is available or necessary, and it is often infused with rites and customs that lend it variety and pleasure. In such tribal societies, work tends to be varied and creative, rather than being a narrow, specialized task demanding a sharply defined skill, as in modern industry. Work is often accompanied by ritual that is regarded as essential to the success of the planting or harvesting or to the building or hunting expedition. The ritual may involve prayer, sacrifice, dance, or feasting, which thus become part of the world of work.

THE PLAY OF EARLY SOCIETIES

One would expect a chronological study to begin by examining the play of prehistoric peoples during the Paleolithic and Neolithic epochs. However, relatively little is known about the nature of leisure and play in these early periods. Archaeologists have uncovered artifacts that provide some first-hand evidence of the creative, athletic, and recreation activities of primitive peoples from around the world. We also have extrapolated from the accounts of “primitive” societies written by missionaries and anthropologists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Origins of Games and Sport

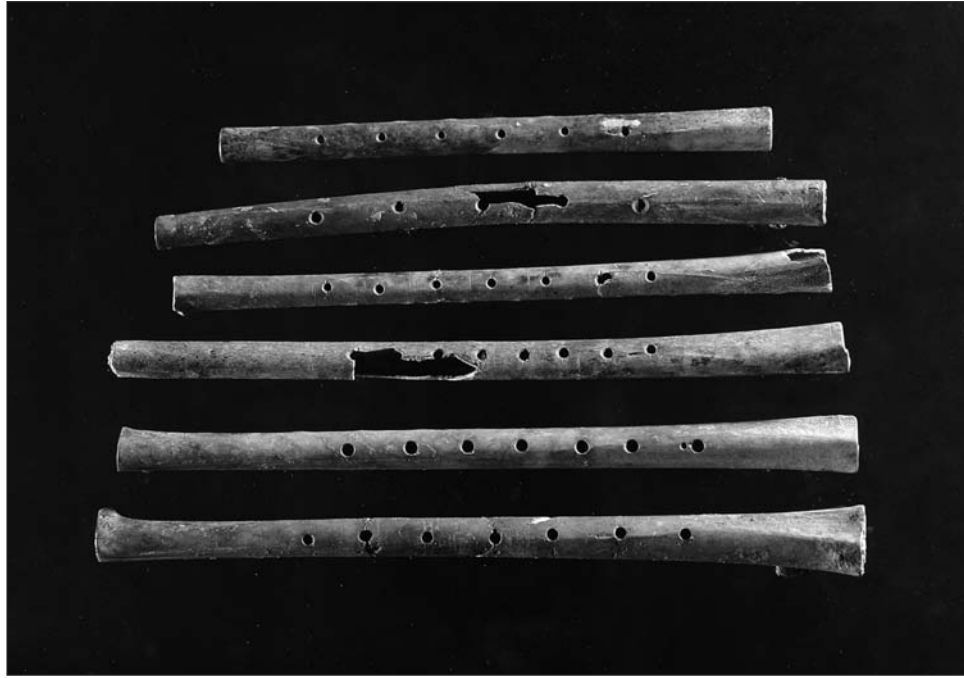
In primitive societies, play may have had many sources. Popular games were often vestiges of warfare, practiced as a form of sport. Musical instruments were likely created for use in religious rituals. Pottery, painting, drawings, and other early art provided a record of both daily life and cultural mythology. Beads and other types of jewelry were created as external symbols of individual status and group affiliations. When an activity was no longer useful in its original form (such as archery for hunting or warfare), it became a form of sport offering individuals and groups the opportunity to prove physical skill and strategy. Often, the origin was a religious ritual, in which games were played to symbolize a continuing struggle between good and evil or life and death.

The game of *tlachtli*, widely practiced in Central America centuries ago, is an example of such a contest. Tlachtli courts were about 200 feet long and 30 feet wide and were situated near temples. A stone ring was fixed about halfway up a wall at either end. The players struck a rubber ball with their knees or hips, the purpose being to drive it through one of the hoops. Blank writes:

The rubber ball used in the ancient game symbolized the sun, and by making it carom across the court, players hoped to perpetuate the daily arc of the heavenly sphere. . . . Mesoamerican ball was no schoolyard shoot-around: Win or lose, the athletes played for keeps. . . . [I]n pre-Columbian games, members of the losing team were commonly offered up for ritual sacrifice, their hearts cut out with blades of razor sharp obsidian. That's one way to shorten the post-game interviews.³

Other Play Functions

On the North American continent, play had similar functions among Native American tribes, helping to equip the young for adult life. Boys practiced warriors' skills and were taught to survive unarmed and unclothed in the wilderness. Girls were taught the household crafts expected of mature women. Through dancing, singing, and storytelling, both sexes learned the history and religion of their cultures. Among such southwestern Native American tribes as the Navajo, Zuni, or Hopi, shamans or medicine men practiced healing rites that made use of chanting, storytelling, dancing, sacred *kachina* dolls, and elaborate, multicolored sand paintings.



■ Six flutes dating back from 7000 to 9000 B.C. provide insight into the cultural habits of an ancient Chinese society.



In a period ranging from May 1986 to June 1987, archaeologists at the early Neolithic site of Jiahu in Henan province, China, uncovered 25 flutes between 7,000 and 9,000 years old. Most of the flutes were found at grave sites. Six of the instruments were intact and are now believed to be the earliest, playable multinode instruments. The flutes, which were made of bone, contain seven holes that correspond to a scale similar to the Western eight-note scale. This tone scale indicates that musicians living in 7000 B.C. could compose and play music. Archaeologists cannot be certain of why so many flutes were located in this part of China. Some believe that the flutes were part of religious rituals; others believe that music was simply a part of community life. In any case, the discovery of these flutes helps us recognize the very old tradition of using music as a means of personal expression and cultural celebration.⁴

RECREATION AND LEISURE IN ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

As prehistoric societies advanced, they developed specialization of functions. Humans learned to domesticate plants and animals, which permitted them to shift from a nomadic existence based on hunting and food gathering to a largely stationary way of life based on grazing animals and planting crops. Ultimately, ruling classes developed, along with soldiers, craftsmen, peasants, and slaves. As villages and cities evolved and large estates were tilled (often with complex water storage and irrigation systems) and harvested by lower-class workers, upper-class societies gained power, wealth, and leisure. Thus, in the aristocracy of the first civilizations that developed in the Middle East during the five millennia before the Christian era, we find for the first time in history a leisure class.

Ancient Egypt

The Egyptian culture was a rich and diversified one; it achieved an advanced knowledge of astronomy, architecture, engineering, agriculture, and construction. The Egyptians had a varied class structure, with a powerful nobility, priesthood, and military class and lesser classes of workers, artisans, peasants, and slaves. This civilization, which lasted from about 5000 B.C. well into the Roman era, was richly recorded in paintings, statuary, and hieroglyphic records.

The ancient Egyptians led a colorful and pleasant life; it is said that their energies were directed to the arts of living and the arts of dying. They engaged in many sport as part of education and recreation, including wrestling, gymnastic exercises, lifting and swinging weights, and ball games. Bullfighting was a popular spectacle and, at least at its inception, was religiously motivated. Music, drama, and dance were forms of religious worship as well as social entertainment. The Egyptians had complex orchestras that included various stringed and percussive instruments. Groups of female performers were attached to temples, and the royal houses had troupes of entertainers who performed on sacred or social occasions.

Ancient Assyria and Babylonia

The land known as the “fertile crescent” between two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, was ruled by two powerful empires, Assyria in the north and Babylon in the south. These kingdoms were in power for approximately 26 centuries, from about 2900 B.C. until the invasion by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. Like the ancient Egyptians, the Assyrians and Babylonians had many popular recreation activities, such as boxing, wrestling, archery, and a variety of table games.

In addition to watching dancing, listening to music, and giving banquets, Assyrians were also devoted to hunting; the nobles of Assyria went lion hunting in chariots and on foot, using spears. The chase was a daily occupation, recorded for history in numerous reliefs, sculptures, and inscriptions. As early as the ninth century B.C., parks were established as sites for royal hunting parties. They also provided settings for feasts, assemblies, and royal gatherings. On the estates of other monarchs during the ninth and tenth centuries B.C. were vineyards, fishponds, and the famed hanging gardens of Babylon.

Ancient Israel

Among the ancient Israelites, music and dancing were performed for ritual purposes as well as for social activities and celebrations. The early Hebrews distinguished dances of a sacred or holy character from those that resembled pagan ceremonies. Although there are no wall reliefs or paintings to tell of dance as performed by the ancient Hebrews, there are abundant references to this practice in the Old Testament. Dance was highly respected and was particularly used on occasions of celebration and triumph.

Like other ancient societies, the ancient Hebrews also engaged in hunting, fishing, wrestling, and the use of such weapons as the sword and javelin for both recreational and defensive purposes. As for leisure itself, their major contribution was to set aside the seventh day—the Sabbath—as a time for people to rest from work and to worship.

Ancient Greece

In the city-states of ancient Greece, particularly in Athens during the so-called Golden Age of Pericles from about 500 to 400 B.C., humankind reached a new peak of philosophical and cultural development. The Athenians took great interest in the arts, in learning, and in athletics. These pursuits were generally restricted to wellborn, aristocratic noblemen, who had full rights of citizenship, including voting and participation in affairs of state. Craftsmen, farmers, and tradespeople were also citizens, but had limited rights and less prestige. Labor was performed by slaves and foreigners, who outnumbered citizens by as much as two or three to one.

The amenities of life were generally restricted to the most wealthy and powerful citizens, who represented the Athenian ideal of the balanced man—a combined soldier, athlete, artist, statesman, and philosopher. This ideal was furthered through education and the various religious festivals, which occupied about 70 days of the year. The arts of music, poetry, theater, gymnastics, and athletic competition were combined in these sacred competitions.

Sport appears to have been part of daily life and to have occurred mainly when there were mass gatherings of people, such as the assembly of an army for war or the wedding or funeral of some great personage. There were also bardic or musical events, offering contests on the harp and flute, poetry, and theatrical presentations. Physical prowess was celebrated in sculpture and poetry, and strength and beauty were seen as gifts of the gods.

From earliest childhood, Athenian citizens engaged in varied athletic and cultural activities. Young children enjoyed toys, dolls, carts, skip ropes, kites, and seesaws. When boys reached the age of seven, they were enrolled in schools in which gymnastics and music were primary elements. They were intensively instructed in running and leaping, wrestling, throwing the javelin and discus, dancing (taught as a form of military drill), boxing, swimming, and ball games.

Greek Philosophy of Recreation and Leisure The Athenian philosophers believed strongly in the unity of mind and body and in the strong relationship of all forms of human qualities and skills. They felt that play activity was essential to the healthy physical and social growth of children.

Plato believed that education should be compulsory and that it should provide natural modes of amusement for children:

Education should begin with the right direction of children's sports. The plays of childhood have a great deal to do with the maintenance or nonmaintenance of laws.⁵



Women did not enjoy the leisurely pursuits of men in ancient Greece, although there are some historical accounts of women receiving modest education, and young girls participated in some athletic competitions. Citizens were, by definition, men.

Changes in the Greek Approach to Leisure The ancient Greeks developed the art of town planning and customarily made extensive provisions for parks and gardens, open-air theaters and gymnasiums, baths, exercise grounds, and stadiums. During the time of Plato, the gymnasium and the park were closely connected in beautiful natural settings, often including indoor halls, gardens, and buildings for musical performances. Early Athens had many public baths and some public parks, which later gave way to privately owned estates.

A gradual transition occurred in the Greek approach to leisure and play. At first, all citizens were expected to participate in sports and games, and the Olympic games were restricted to free-born Greeks only. Gradually, however, the religious and cultural functions of the Olympic games and other festivals were weakened by athletic specialization, corruption, and commercialism. In time, sport and other forms of activity such as drama, singing, and dance were performed only by highly skilled specialists (drawn from the lower classes or even slaves) who trained or perfected their skills throughout the year to appear before huge crowds of admiring spectators.

Ancient Rome

Like the Greek city-states, the Roman republic during its early development was a vigorous and nationalistic state. The Roman citizen, although he belonged to a privileged class, was required to defend his society and fight in its wars. Citizens participated in sport and gymnastics, intended to keep the body strong and spirit courageous. Numerous games held in connection with the worship of various Roman gods later developed into annual festivals. Such games were carefully supervised by the priesthood and were supported by public funds, frequently at great cost. The most important of the Roman games were those that celebrated military triumphs, which were usually held in honor of the god Jupiter, the head of the Roman pantheon.

Like the early Greeks, young Roman children had toy carts, houses, dolls, hobbyhorses, stilts, and tops and engaged in many sport and games. Young boys were taught various sport and exercises such as running and jumping, sword and spear play, wrestling, swimming, and horseback riding. The Romans, however, had a different concept of leisure than the Greeks. Although the Latin words for "leisure" and "business" are *otium* and *negotium*, suggesting the same view of leisure as a positive value (with work defined negatively as a lack of leisure), the Romans supported play for utilitarian rather than aesthetic or spiritual reasons. The Romans were much less



■ *The Roman Colosseum is perhaps the greatest architectural achievement of antiquity. Built over 1925 years ago, the Colosseum is a monument to the achievements of ancient Rome.*

interested than the Athenians in varied forms of cultural activity. Although they had many performing companies, usually composed of Greek and southern Italian slaves, the Romans themselves did not actively participate in the theater.

Even more than the Greeks, the Romans were systematic planners and builders. Their towns generally included provisions for baths, open-air theaters, amphitheaters, forums for public assemblies, stadiums, and sometimes parks and gardens. They developed buildings for gymnastic sport, modeled after the Greek *palaestra* and including wrestling rooms, conversation areas for philosophers, and colonnades where games might be held in winter despite bad weather. Wealthier Romans often had private villas, many with large gardens and hunting preserves.

As the empire grew more powerful, the simple agricultural democracy of the early years, in which all male Romans were citizens and free men, shifted to an urban life with sharply divided classes. There were four social levels: the *senators*, who were the richest, holding most of the land and power; the *curiae*, who owned more than 25 acres of land and were officeholders or tax collectors; the *plebs*, or free common people, who owned small properties or were tradesmen or artisans; and the *coloni*, who were lower-class tenants of the land.

The society became marked by the wealth and profiteering of businessmen and speculators, with the cooperation of the rulers and governing officials. In time, a huge urban population of plebs lived in semi-idleness, because most of the work was done by *coloni* and slaves brought to Rome. Gradually it became necessary for the Roman emperors and senate to amuse and entertain the plebs; they did so with doles of grain and with public games—in other words, “bread and circuses.”

As early as the reign of the Emperor Claudius in the first century A.D., there were 159 public holidays during the year, 93 of which were devoted to games at public

expense, including many new festivals in honor of national heroes and foreign victories. By A.D. 354, there were 200 public holidays each year, including 175 days of games. Even on working days, the labor began at daybreak and ended shortly after noon during much of the year.

As leisure increased and the necessity for military service and other forms of physical effort declined for the Roman citizen, entertainment became the central life activity of many citizens. The normal practice was for the citizen to be entertained or to follow a daily routine of exercise, bathing, and eating. Men were no longer as active in sport as they once had been. They now sought to be amused and to entertain their guests with paid acrobats, musicians, dancers, and other artists. Athletes now performed as members of a specialized profession with unions, coaches, and training schools and with conditions of service accepted and approved by the emperor himself.

Corruption of Entertainment Gradually, the focus on the traditional sports of running, throwing, and jumping gave way to an emphasis on human combat—first boxing and wrestling and then displays of cruelty in which gladiators fought to the death for the entertainment of mass audiences. By the time of Emperor Tiberius (A.D. 14–37), competitive sport in the Roman Empire had become completely commercialized. To maintain political popularity and placate the bored masses, the emperors and the senate provided great parades, circuses, and feasts.

The Roman games featured contests that were fought to the death between gladiators using various weapons, on foot, on horseback, or in chariots. Even sea battles were fought in artificially constructed lakes in the Roman arenas. Imported wild beasts, such as tigers and elephants, were pitted against each other or against human antagonists. Christians, in particular, were slaughtered in such games. Tacitus wrote that many

were dressed in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to be torn to pieces by dogs in the public games, were crucified, or condemned to be burnt; and at nightfall serve in place of lamps to light the darkness, Nero's own gardens being used for the purpose.⁶

Both animals and humans were maimed and butchered in cruel and horrible ways. Spectacles were often lewd and obscene, leading to mass debauchery, corruption, and perversion that profoundly weakened the Roman state.

EARLY CHRISTIAN ERA: DARK AND MIDDLE AGES

Under attack by successive waves of northern European tribes, the Roman Empire finally collapsed. For a period of several centuries, Europe was overrun with warring tribes and shifting alliances. The organized power of Rome, which had built roads, extended commerce, and provided civil order, was at an end. Gradually the Catholic Church emerged to provide a form of universal citizenship within Europe. Having suffered under the brutal persecutions of the Romans, the early Christians condemned all that their pagan oppressors had stood for—especially their hedonistic way of life. Indeed, the early church fathers believed in a fanatical asceticism, which in the Byzantine, or Eastern, Empire was marked by the Anchorite movement, with its idea of salvation through masochistic self-deprivation.



Many aspects of Roman life were forbidden during the Dark and Middle Ages. The stadiums, amphitheaters, and baths that had characterized Roman life were destroyed. The Council of Elvira ruled that the rite of baptism could not be extended to those connected with the stage, and in A.D. 398 the Council of Carthage excommunicated those who attended the theater on holy days. The great spectacles and organized shows of imperial Rome were at an end. The Roman emphasis on leisure was replaced by a Christian emphasis on work. The influential Benedictine order in particular insisted on the dignity of labor. Their rule read, “Idleness is the great enemy of the soul. Therefore, monks should always be occupied either in manual labor or in sacred readings.”

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the Catholic Church eliminated all forms of play. Many early Catholic religious practices were based on the rituals of earlier faiths. Priests built churches on existing shrines or temple sites, set Christian holy days according to the dates of pagan festivals, and used such elements of pagan worship as bells, candles, incense, singing, and dancing.

Pastimes in the Middle Ages

Despite disapproval from the church, many forms of play continued during the Middle Ages: Medieval society was marked by rigid class stratification; below the nobility and clergy were the peasants, who were divided into such ranks as freemen, villeins, serfs, and slaves.

Life in the Middle Ages, even for the feudal nobility, was crude and harsh. Manors and castles were little more than stone fortresses—crowded, dark, and damp. Knights were responsible for fighting in the service of their rulers; between wars, their favorite pastimes were hunting and hawking. Hunting skill was considered a virtue of medieval rulers and noblemen. The sport was thought to be helpful in keeping hunters from the sin of idleness. (A vigorous and tiring sport, it was also believed to prevent sensual temptation.) Hunting also served as a useful preparation for war. In a later era, the Italian Machiavelli pointed out that since the main concern of the prince must be war, he must never cease thinking of it. In times of peace, thoughts of war should be directed to the sport of hunting.

Other pastimes during the Middle Ages were various types of games and gambling, music and dance, sport, and jousting. The games played in castles and medieval manors included early forms of chess, checkers, backgammon, and dice. Gambling was popular, although forbidden by both ecclesiastical and royal authority.

As the chaos of the Dark Ages yielded to greater order and regularity, life became more stable. Travel in reasonable safety became possible, and by the eleventh century, commerce was widespread. The custom of jousting emerged within the medieval courts, stemming from the tradition that only the nobility fought on horseback; common men fought on foot. Thus, the term *chivalry* (from the French *cheval*, meaning horse) came into being. By the dawn of the twelfth century, the code of chivalry was developed, having originated in the profession of arms among feudal courtiers. (The tournament was a contest between teams, and the joust was a trial of skill between two individual

knights.) An elaborate code of laws and regulations was drawn up for the combat, and no one below the rank of esquire was permitted to engage in tournaments or jousting.

Games of the Common People Meanwhile, what of the life of the peasantry during the Middle Ages? Edward Hulme suggests that life was not all work for the lower classes. There were village feasts and sport, practical joking, throwing weights, cockfighting, bull baiting, and other lively games. "Ball games and wrestling, in which men of one village were pitted against men of another, sometimes resulted in bloodshed."⁷

There was sometimes dancing on the green, and, on holidays, there were miracle and morality plays (forms of popular religious drama and pageantry). However, peasants usually went to bed at dark, reading was a rare accomplishment, and there was much drinking and crude brawling. For peasants, hunting was more a means of obtaining food than a sport. Although the nobility usually rode through the hedges and trampled the fields of the peasantry, peasants were not allowed to defend their crops against such forays or even against wild animals. If peasants were caught poaching, they were often maimed or hanged as punishment.

Typically, certain games were classified as rich men's sport and others as poor men's sport; sometimes a distinction was also made between urban and rural sport. As life in the Middle Ages became somewhat easier, a number of pastimes emerged. Many modern sport were developed at this time in rudimentary form.

The people of the Middle Ages had an insatiable love of sightseeing and would travel great distances to see entertainments. There was no religious event, parish fair, municipal feast, or military parade that did not bring great crowds of people. When the kings of France assembled their principal retainers once or twice a year, they distributed food and liquor among the common people and provided military displays, court ceremonies, and entertainment by jugglers, tumblers, and minstrels.

An illustration of the extent to which popular recreation expanded during the Middle Ages is found in the famous painting of children's games by the Flemish artist Pieter Breughel. This painting depicts more than 90 forms of children's play, including marbles, stilts, sledding, bowling, skating, blind man's bluff, piggyback, leapfrog, follow-the-leader, archery, tug-of-war, doll play, and dozens of others, many of which have lasted to the present day.

THE RENAISSANCE

Historians generally view the first half of the Middle Ages in Europe (roughly from A.D. 400 to 1000) as the Dark Ages, and the next 400 to 500 years as *le haut Moyen Age*, or High Middle Age. The Renaissance is said to have begun in Italy about A.D. 1350, in France about 1450, and in England about 1500. It marked a transition between the medieval world and the modern age. The term *renaissance* means rebirth and describes the revived interest in the scholarship, philosophy, and arts of ancient Greece and Rome that developed at this time. More broadly, it also represented a new freedom of thought and expression, a more rational and scientific view of life, and the expansion of commerce and travel in European life.

As the major European nations stabilized during this period under solidly established monarchies, power shifted from the church to the kings and their noblemen. In Italy and France, particularly, the nobility became patrons of great painters, sculptors, musicians, dancers, and dramatists. These artists were no longer dominated by the ideals and values of the Catholic Church, but were free to serve secular goals. A great wave of music and literature swept through the courts of Europe, aided by the development of printing. Dance and theater became more complex and elaborate, and increasingly lavish entertainments and spectacles were presented in the courts of Italy and France.

Play as Education

Varied forms of play became part of the education of the youth of the nobility at this time. The French essayist Michel de Montaigne, in discussing the education of children, wrote:

Our very exercises and recreations, running, wrestling, music, dancing, hunting, riding, and fencing will prove to be a good part of our study. . . . It is not a soul, it is not a body, that we are training up; it is a man, and we ought not to divide him into two parts.⁸

The Athenian philosophy that had supported play as an important form of education was given fuller emphasis during the Renaissance by such educators and writers as François Rabelais, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau. In early sixteenth-century France, Rabelais advanced a number of revolutionary theories on education, emphasizing the need for physical exercises and games as well as singing, dancing, modeling and painting, nature study, and manual training. His account of the education of Gargantuan describes play as an exercise for mind and body. Locke, an Englishman who lived from 1632 to 1704, was also concerned with play as a medium of learning. He recommended that children make their own playthings and felt that games could contribute significantly to character development if they were properly supervised and directed. "All the plays and diversions of children," he wrote, "should be directed toward good and useful habits." Locke distinguished between the play of children and recreation for older youth and adults. "Recreation," he said, "is not being idle . . . but easing the wearied part by change of business."

INFLUENCE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The Reformation was a religious movement of the 1500s that resulted in the establishment of a number of Protestant sects whose leaders broke away from Roman Catholicism. It was part of a broader stream that included economic, social, and political currents. In part it represented the influence of the growing middle classes, who allied with the nobility in the emerging nations of Europe to challenge the power of the church.

Throughout Europe, there was an aura of grim dedication to work and a determination to enforce old codes against play and idleness. The "Protestant work ethic" that emerged during the Reformation led to periods of strict limitations on leisure and recreation throughout the history of many Christian cultures, including societies in North America. This same ethic has heavily influenced our contemporary Western views of the relative value of work and leisure.



The new Protestant sects tended to be more solemn and austere than the Catholic Church. Calvin established an autocratic system of government in Geneva in 1541 that was directed by a group of Presbyters, morally upright men who controlled the social and cultural life of the community to the smallest detail. They ruthlessly suppressed heretics and burned dissenters at the stake. Miller and Robinson describe the unbending Puritanism in Geneva:

“Purity of conduct” was insisted upon, which meant the forbidding of gambling, card playing, dancing, wearing of finery, singing of gay songs, feasting, drinking and the like. There were to be no more festivals, no more theaters, no more ribaldry, no more light and disrespectful poetry or display. Works of art and musical instruments were removed from the churches.⁹

Puritanism in England

The English Puritans waged a constant battle to limit or condemn sport and other forms of entertainment during the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Maintaining strict observation of the Sabbath was a particular issue. Anglican clergy during the Elizabethan period bitterly attacked stage plays, church festival gatherings, dancing, gambling, bowling, and other “devilish pastimes” such as hawking and hunting, holding fairs and markets, and reading “lascivious and wanton books.”

James I, however, recognized that the prohibition of harmless amusements such as dancing, archery, and the decorating of maypoles caused public anger. In 1618 he issued a Declaration on Lawful Sports, in which he asked, “When shall the common people have leave to exercise, if not upon the Sundayes and holy daies, seeing they must apply their labour and win their living in all working daies?” James stressed the military value of sport and the danger of an increase in drinking and other vices as substitute activities if sport were denied to people.

DEVELOPMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

During the Middle Ages, the need to enclose cities within protective walls necessitated building within a compact area that left little space for public gardens or sports areas. As the walled city became more difficult to defend after the invention of gunpowder and cannon, residents began to move out of the central city. Satellite communities developed around the city, but usually with little definite planning.

As the Renaissance period began, European town planning was characterized by wide avenues, long approaches, handsome buildings, and similar monumental features. The nobility decorated their estates with elaborate gardens, some of which were open to public use, as in Italy at the end of the thirteenth century. There were walks and public squares, often decorated with statuary. In some cases, religious brotherhoods built clubhouses, gardens, and shooting stands for archery practice that were used by townspeople for recreation and amusement.



Three major types of large parks came into existence during the late Renaissance. The first were royal hunting preserves or parks, some of which have become famous public parks today, such as the 4,000-acre Prater in Vienna and the Tiergarten in Berlin. Second were the ornate and formal garden parks designed according to the so-called French style of landscape architecture. Third were the English garden parks, which strove to produce naturalistic landscape effects. This became the prevailing style in most European cities.

In England, efforts at city planning began during the eighteenth century. Business and residential streets were paved and street names posted. Because it was believed that overcrowding led to disease (in the seventeenth century, London had suffered from recurrent attacks of the plague), an effort was made to convert open squares into gardens and to create more small parks. Deaths from contagious disease declined during each successive decade of the eighteenth century, and this improvement was believed to have been due to increased cleanliness and ventilation within the city.

Use of Private Estates

From 1500 to the latter part of the eighteenth century, the European nobility developed increasingly lavish private grounds. These often included topiary work (trees and shrubbery clipped in fantastic shapes), aviaries, fishponds, summer houses, water displays, outdoor theaters, hunting grounds and menageries, and facilities for outdoor games. During this period, such famed gardens as the Tuileries and the Luxembourg in Paris, as well as the estate of Versailles, were established by the French royalty; similar gardens and private estates were found all over Europe. Following the early Italian example, it became the custom to open these private parks and gardens to the public—at first occasionally and then as a regular practice.

Popular Diversions in England

Great outdoor gardens were established in England to provide entertainment and relaxation. Vauxhall, a pleasure resort founded during the reign of Charles II, was a densely wooded area with walks and bowers, lighting displays, water mills, fireworks, artificial caves and grottoes, entertainment, eating places, and tea gardens. The park was supported by the growing class of merchants and tradesmen, and its admission charge and distance from London helped to “exclude the rabble.”

Following the Restoration period in England, Hyde Park and St. James Park became fashionable centers for promenading by the upper classes during the early afternoon. Varied amusements were provided in the parks: wrestling matches, races, military displays, fireworks, and illuminations on special occasions. Aristocrats, merchants, and tradesmen all rode, drove carriages, and strolled in the parks. Horse racing, lotteries, and other forms of gambling became the vogue.

Among the lower classes, tastes in entertainment varied according to whether one lived in the country or city. Countrymen continued to engage vigorously in such sport as football, cricket, wrestling, or “cudgel playing,” and to enjoy traditional country or Morris dancing and the singing of old folk songs.

Concerns About Leisure: Class Differences

Gradually, concerns about the growing number of holidays and the effect of leisure activities on the working classes began to be voiced. In France, for example, in the eighteenth century, wealthy individuals had the opportunity for amusement all week long—paying social visits, dining, and passing evenings at gaming, at the theater, ballet, or opera, or at clubs. In contrast, the working classes had only Sundays and fête days, or holidays, for their amusements. La Croix points out, however, that these represented a third of the whole year. In addition to those holidays decreed by the state, many other special celebrations had been either authorized or tolerated by the Catholic Church. Many economists and men of affairs argued that the ecclesiastic authorities should be called upon to reduce the number. Voltaire wrote in 1756:

Twenty fête days too many in the country condemn to inactivity and expose to dissipation twenty times a year ten millions of workingmen, each of whom would earn five pence a day, and this gives a total of 180 million livres . . . lost to the state in the course of a twelve-month. This painful fact is beyond all doubt.¹⁰

In the larger cities in France, many places of commercial amusement sprang up. Cafés provided meeting places to chat, read newspapers, and play dominoes, chess, checkers, or billiards.

RECREATION IN AMERICA: THE COLONIAL PERIOD

We now cross the Atlantic to examine the development of recreation and leisure in the early American colonies. First, it needs to be recognized that when English and other European settlers came to the New World, they did not entirely divorce themselves from the customs and values of the countries they had left. Commerce was ongoing; governors and military personnel traveled back and forth; and newspapers, magazines, and books were exchanged regularly. Thus, there was a constant interchange of ideas and social trends; one historian has summed it up by saying that an Atlantic civilization existed that embraced both sides of the great ocean. Michael Kraus writes:

What came from the New World . . . was embedded . . . in the pattern of European life. The revolutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—political, scientific, religious, and commercial—make for a remarkable fertility of speculation and social reorientation. . . . The era of democratization was thus well begun, and this, truly, was in large measure the creation of the Atlantic civilization.¹¹

Despite this linkage, the North American settlements represented a unique and harsh environment for most Europeans who arrived during the period of early colonization. The first need of seventeenth-century colonists was for survival. They had to plant crops, clear forests, build shelters, and in some cases defend themselves against attack by hostile Native American tribes. More than half of the colonists who arrived on the *Mayflower* did not survive the first harsh winter near Plymouth. In such a setting, work was all-important; there was little time, money, or energy to support amusements or public entertainment. Without a nobility possessing the wealth, leisure, and inclination to patronize the arts, there was little opportunity for music, theater, or dance to flourish—but the most important hindrance to the development of recreation was the religious attitude.

Restrictions in New England

The Puritan settlers of New England came to the New World to establish a society based on a strict Calvinist interpretation of the Bible. Although the work ethic had not originated with the Puritans, they adopted it enthusiastically. Idleness was detested as the “devil’s workshop,” and a number of colonies passed laws binding “any rouds, vagabonds, sturdy beggars, masterless men or other notorious offenders” over to compulsory work or imprisonment.

Puritan magistrates attempted to maintain curbs on amusements long after the practical reasons for such prohibitions had disappeared. Early court records show many cases of young people being fined, confined to the stocks, or publicly whipped for such “violations” as drunkenness, idleness, gambling, dancing, or participating in other forms of “lascivious” behavior. However, despite these restrictions, many forms of play continued. Football was played by boys in Boston’s streets and lanes, and although playing cards (the “devil’s picture-books”) were hated by the Puritans, they were freely imported from England and openly on sale.

Other ordinances banned gambling, drama, and nonreligious music, with dancing—particularly between men and women—also condemned. There was vigorous enforcement of the Sabbath laws: Sunday work, travel, and recreation, even “unnecessary and unseasonable walking in the streets and fields,” were prohibited. Merrymaking on religious holidays such as Christmas or Easter was banned.

Leisure in the Southern Colonies

A number of the southern colonies had similar restrictions during the early years of settlement. The laws of Virginia, for example, forbade Sunday amusements and made imprisonment the penalty for failure to attend church services. Sabbath-day dancing, fiddling, hunting, fishing, and card playing were strictly banned. Gradually, however, these stern restrictions declined in the southern colonies. There, the upper classes had both wealth and leisure from their large estates and plantations, on which the labor was performed by indentured servants and slaves. Many of them had ties with the landed gentry in England and shared their tastes for aristocratic amusements. As southern settlers of this social class became established, plantation life for the upper class became marked by lavish entertainment and hospitality.

The lifestyles of slaves in the colonies were a stark contrast to the lavish lifestyles of their owners. The majority of slaves in the colonies were of West African ancestry. They were able to bring nothing with them to the colonies other than language and customs, both of which they were compelled to disregard upon arrival. The customs that thrived in the harsh life of the colonies included music, folktales and storytelling, and dance. Music and dance were an integral piece of the culture of most West African societies. Dance was associated with religious and cultural celebrations, as well as secular recreation. Storytelling was an important instrument for passing history from one generation to the next. In the colonies, and later in the southern states, slaves had very few opportunities for leisure. Most worked 14 hours a day or more, six days a week. Free time that was available was highly cherished and spent in the company of fellow slaves. Slave masters used free time as a “reward” to improve morale and often enforced strict rules about what could happen during that free time. Owners were especially interested in assimilating slaves into Western culture and, as a consequence, limited expression of African culture through music and dance and required practice of European customs, including Christian worship.¹²

Decline of Religious Controls

Despite the stern sermons of New England ministers and the severe penalties for infractions of the established moral code, it was clear that play became gradually tolerated in the colonies. The lottery was introduced during the early 1700s and quickly gained the sanction and participation of the most esteemed citizens. Towns and states used lotteries to increase their revenues and to build canals, turnpikes, and bridges. This “acceptable” form of gambling helped to endow leading colleges and academies, and even Congregational, Baptist, and Episcopal churches had lotteries “for promoting public worship and the advancement of religion.”

Even in the area of drinking, the climate began to change despite the very strong opposition of the Puritan magistrates in New England. Under Puritan law, drunkards were subject to fines and imprisonment in the stocks, and sellers were forbidden to provide them with any liquor thereafter. A frequent drunkard was punished by having a large *D* made of “Redd Cloth” hung around his neck or sewn on his clothing, and he lost the right to vote. Yet, by the early part of the eighteenth century, taverns were widely established throughout New England, providing places where gentlemen might “enjoy



Gradually, restrictions against play were relaxed in New England and elsewhere. Recreation became more acceptable when amusements could be attached to work, and thus country fairs and market days became occasions for merrymaking. Social gatherings with music, games, and dancing were held in conjunction with such work projects as house raisings, sheep shearing, logrolling, or cornhusking bees. Many social pastimes were linked to other civic occasions such as elections or training days for local militia. On training days in Boston, over a thousand men would gather on the Boston Common to drill and practice marksmanship, after which they celebrated at nearby taverns.

their bowl and bottle with satisfaction” and engage in billiards, cards, skittles, and other games.

By the mid-1700s, the stern necessity of hard work for survival had lessened, and religious antagonism toward amusements had also declined. However, the Sunday laws continued in many settlements, and there was still a strong undercurrent of disapproval of play.

Parks and Conservation in the Colonial Era

Compared with the nations of Europe, the early American colonies showed little concern for developing parks in cities and towns. With land so plentiful around the isolated settlements along the eastern seaboard, there seemed to be little need for such planning. The earliest planned outdoor spaces were “commons” or “greens,” found in many New England communities and used chiefly for pasturing cattle and sheep but also for military drills, market days, and fairs. Similar open areas were established in towns settled by the Spanish in the South and Southwest, in the form of plazas and large squares in the center of towns or adjacent to principal churches.

Beautiful village greens established during the colonial period still exist throughout Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, and New Hampshire. In the design of new cities, the colonists began to give attention to the need for preserving or establishing parks and open spaces. Among the first cities in which such plans were made were Philadelphia, Savannah, and Washington, D.C.

Early Conservation Efforts

Almost from the earliest days of settlement, there was concern for the conservation of forests and open land in the New England countryside. As early as 1626 in the Plymouth Colony, the cutting of trees without official consent was prohibited by law. The Massachusetts Bay Colony passed the Great Ponds Act in 1641, which set aside 2,000 bodies of water, each over 10 acres in size, for such public uses as “fishing and fowling.” The courts supported this conservation of land for recreational use. Pennsylvania law in 1681 required that for every five acres of forest land that were cleared, one was to be left untouched. Other laws prohibiting setting woods on fire or cutting certain types of trees were enacted long before the Revolution.

As early as the late seventeenth century, Massachusetts and Connecticut defined hunting seasons and established rules for hunting certain types of game. Although originally a means of obtaining food, hunting rapidly became a sport in the colonies. What appeared to be an inexhaustible supply of wildlife began to disappear with the advance of settlements and the destruction of the forests. Wildfowl in particular were ruthlessly hunted, especially in New England, and so unlicensed had the destruction of the heath hen become in New York that in 1708 the province determined to protect its game by providing for a closed season. Thus, before the Revolution, the colonists had shown a concern for the establishment of parks and urban open spaces and for the conservation of forests and wildlife.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY CHANGES: IMPACT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

During the nineteenth century, great changes took place in both Europe and the United States. It was a time of growing democratization, advancement of scientific knowledge and technology, and huge waves of immigration from Europe to the New World. More than any other factor, the Industrial Revolution changed the way people lived, and it also had a major effect on popular patterns of recreation and leisure. By the early decades of the twentieth century, leisure was more freely available to all, and a widespread recreation movement had begun in the United States.

The Industrial Revolution extended from the late eighteenth through the twentieth century. Science and capital combined to increase production, as businessmen invested in the industrial expansion made possible by newly invented machines. Industry moved from homes and small workshops to new mills and factories with mechanical power. The invention of such devices as the spinning jenny, the water frame, the weaving machine, and the steam engine (all during the 1760s) drastically altered production methods and increased output.

Urbanization

Throughout the Western world, there was a steady shift of the population from rural areas to urban centers. Because factory wages were usually higher than those in domestic industry or agriculture, great numbers of people moved from rural areas to the cities to work. Millions of European peasant families immigrated because of crop failures, expulsion from their land, religious or social discrimination, or political unrest. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, tens of thousands of African Americans, disillusioned by the failed reconstruction, emigrated to northern cities in search of a better quality of life.

The American population increased rapidly during this period. When Andrew Jackson became president in 1829, about 12.5 million people lived in the United States. By 1850 the total had reached 23 million, and a decade later America's population was 31 million. In the large cities, the proportion of foreign-born inhabitants was quite high: 45 percent of New York City's population in 1850 was foreign born, mostly Irish and German. About 85 percent of the population in 1850 was still rural, living in areas with populations of less than 2,500. However, as more and more people moved into factory towns and large cities along the eastern seaboard or around the Great Lakes, the United States became an urban civilization.

Rural townspeople and foreign immigrants moved into the congested tenement areas of growing cities, living in quarters that were inadequate for decent family life. Often a family lived crowded in a single room under unsanitary and unsafe conditions. The new urban slums were marked by congestion and disease. Their residents were oppressed by low wages and recurrent unemployment and by monotonous and prolonged labor, including the use of young children in mills, mines, and factories and at piecework tasks at home.

Reduction in Work Hours

Throughout this period, there was steady pressure to reduce the workweek, both through industry-labor negotiation and legislation. Benjamin Hunnicutt points out that the effort to obtain shorter work hours was a critical issue in reform politics in the United States throughout the nineteenth century and up until the period of the Great Depression:

It was an issue for the idealistic antebellum [pre-Civil War] reformers. It had a prominent place in the Populists' Omaha platform and the Bull Moose platform, and appeared in both the Democratic and Republican platforms as late as 1932.¹³

The eight-hour day had been a union objective for many years in the United States, paralleling efforts to reduce the workweek in other countries. In 1868, Congress established the eight-hour day by law for mechanics and laborers employed by or under contracts with the federal government. Following the 1868 law, labor unions made a concerted effort to obtain the eight-hour day in other areas, and in 1890 began to achieve success.



Overall, the average workweek declined from 69.7 hours per week for all industries (including agriculture) in 1860 to 61.7 hours in 1890, and to 54.9 hours in 1910. As a consequence, during the last half of the nineteenth century, concerns about increases in free time began to appear—including fears about the dangers of certain forms of play and the broader question of what the potential role of leisure might be in the coming century.

Religious Revivalism and Recreation

Fueled by a religious revival before the Civil War, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of “honest toil,” during the middle and latter parts of the nineteenth century. Many Americans believed, and continue to believe, that hard work alone is sufficient for an individual to improve his or her social and economic status. Clergy, policymakers, civic leaders, and scholars were particularly concerned that new immigrants and the urban poor develop appropriate social values through hard work and appropriate, disciplined use of leisure time.



Work was considered the source of social and moral values, and therefore the proper concern of churches, which renewed their attack upon most forms of play. The churches condemned many commercial amusements as “the door to all the sins of iniquity.” As late as 1844, Henry Ward Beecher, a leading minister, savagely attacked the stage, the concert hall, and the circus, charging that anyone who pandered to the public taste for commercial entertainment was a moral assassin.

GROWTH OF POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN AMERICA

Despite such antiamusement efforts, the first half of the nineteenth century saw a gradual expansion of popular amusements in the United States. The theater, which had been banned during the American Revolution, gradually gained popularity in cities along the eastern seaboard and in the South. Large theaters were built to accommodate audiences of as many as 4,000 people. Performances were usually by touring players who joined local stock companies throughout the country in presenting serious drama as well as lighthearted entertainment, which later became burlesque and vaudeville. By the 1830s, about 30 traveling shows were regularly touring the country with menageries and bands of acrobats and jugglers. Ultimately, the latter added riding and tumbling acts and developed into circuses.

Drinking also remained a popular pastime. At this time, the majority of American men were taverngoers. Printed street directories of American cities listed tavern keepers in staggering numbers. J. Larkin writes that as the nation's most popular centers of male sociability,

taverns were often the scene of excited gaming and vicious fights and always of hard drinking, heavy smoking, and an enormous amount of alcohol-stimulated talk. . . . Taverns accommodated women as travelers, but their barroom clienteles were almost exclusively male. Apart from the dockside dives frequented by prostitutes, or the liquor-selling groceries of poor city neighborhoods, women rarely drank in public.¹⁴

Growing Interest in Sport

A number of sport gained their first strong impetus during the early nineteenth century. Americans enjoyed watching amateur wrestling matches, foot races, shooting events, and horse races during colonial days and along the frontier. In the early 1800s, professional promotion of sport events began as well.

Professionalism in Sport Crowds as large as 50,000 drawn from all ranks of society attended highly publicized boating regattas, and 5- and 10-mile races of professional runners during the 1820s. The first sport promoters were owners of resorts or of commercial transportation facilities such as stagecoach lines, ferries, and, later, trolleys



Social class differences had a strong influence on sport involvement and attendance. George Will points out that professional baseball initially appealed to the brawling urban working classes:

The sport was so tangled up with gambling and drinking that its first task was to attract a better class of fans. This it did by raising ticket prices, banning beer, not playing on Sundays, and giving free tickets to the clergy. Most important, baseball replaced wooden ball parks with permanent structures of concrete and steel [with impressive lobbies and other architectural features].¹⁵

and railroads. These new sport impresarios initially made their profits from transportation fares and accommodations for spectators; later, they erected grandstands and charged admission.

Horse racing flourished; both running and trotting races attracted crowds as large as 100,000 spectators. Prize fighting also gained popularity as a professional contest. It began as a brutal, bare-knuckled sport that was often prohibited by legal authorities; by the time of the Civil War, however, gloves were used and rules established, and boxing exhibitions were becoming accepted. Baseball was enjoyed as a casual diversion in the towns of New England through the early decades of the nineteenth century (in the form of “rounders” or “townball”), and amateur teams, often organized by occupation (merchants and clerks or shipwrights and mechanics), were playing on the commons of large eastern cities by the mid-1850s.

CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD PLAY

During the last half of the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution was flourishing, with factories, expansion of urban areas, and railroads criss-crossing the country. Free public education had become a reality in most regions of the country, and health care and life expectancy were improving. As the industrial labor force began to organize into craft unions, working conditions improved, levels of pay increased, and the hours of work were cut back. Children, who had worked long, hard hours in factories, mines, and big-city sweatshops, were freed of this burden through child labor legislation.

Gradually, the climate grew more receptive toward play and leisure. Although the work ethic was still widely accepted and there was almost no public provision for recreation, leisure was about to expand sharply. The strong disapproval of play that had characterized the colonial period began to disappear.

By the 1880s and 1890s, church leaders recognized that religion could no longer arbitrarily condemn all play and offered “sanctified amusement and recreation” as alternatives to undesirable play. Many churches made provisions for libraries, gymnasiums, and assembly rooms.

The growth of popular amusements, such as music, vaudeville, theater, and dance, that characterized the first half of the century became even more pronounced. Popular hobbies such as photography caught on and were frequently linked to new outdoor recreation pursuits. Sport was probably the largest single area of expanded leisure participation, with increasing interest being shown in tennis, archery, bowling, skating, bicycling, and team games such as baseball, basketball, and football.

Athletic and outdoor pastimes steadily became more socially acceptable. Skating became a vogue in the 1850s, and rowing and sailing also grew popular, especially for the upper social classes. The Muscular Christianity movement—so named because of the support given to it by leading church figures and because sport and physical activity were thought to build morality and good character—had its greatest influence in schools and colleges, which began to initiate programs of physical education and athletic competition. In addition, the newly founded Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) based its program on active physical recreation.

College Sport

In the United States, colleges initiated their first competitive sports programs. In colonial New England, youthful students had engaged in many pastimes, with some tolerated by college authorities and others prohibited. The first college clubs had been founded as early as 1717, and social clubs were in full swing by the 1780s and 1790s. By the early nineteenth century, most U.S. colleges had more or less officially recognized clubs and their social activities. The founding of social fraternities in the 1840s and the building of college gymnasiums in the 1860s added to the social life and physical recreation of students.

Intercollegiate sport competition in rowing, baseball, track, and football was organized. The first known intercollegiate football game was between Princeton and Rutgers in 1869; interest spread rapidly, and by the late 1880s college football games were attracting as many as 40,000 spectators.

Amateur Sport

Track and field events were widely promoted by amateur athletic clubs, some of which, like the New York Athletic Club, had many influential members who formed the Amateur Athletic Union and developed rules to govern amateur sport competition. Gymnastic instruction and games were sponsored by the German *turnvereins*, the Czech *sokols*, and the YMCA, which had established some 260 large gymnasiums around the country by the 1880s and was a leader in sport activities.

Other Activities

Other popular pastimes included croquet, archery, lawn tennis, and roller-skating, which became so popular that skating rinks were built to accommodate thousands of skaters and spectators. Women began to participate in recreational pastimes, enjoying gymnastics, dance, and other athletics in school and college physical education programs. Bicycling was introduced in the 1870s, and within a few years hundreds of thousands of people had become enthusiasts. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, there was a growing vogue for outdoor activities. Americans began to enjoy hiking and mountain climbing, fishing and hunting, camping in national forests and state parks, and nature photography.

During the late 1800s, a number of economic factors also combined to promote sport interest. With rising wages and a shorter workweek, many workers began to take part in organized sport on newly developed sports fields in city parks. Cheap train service carried players and fans to games, and newspapers publicized major sporting events to build circulation.

GROWTH OF COMMERCIAL AMUSEMENTS

Particularly in larger cities, new forms of commercial amusement sprang up or expanded during the nineteenth century. The theater, in its various forms, was more popular than ever. Dime museums, dance halls, shooting galleries, bowling alleys, billiard parlors, beer gardens, and saloons provided a new world of entertainment for

pay. In addition to these, many cities had “red light districts” where houses of prostitution flourished. Drinking, gambling, and commercial vice gradually became serious social problems, particularly when protected by a tacit alliance between criminal figures and big-city political machines.

Amusement parks grew on the outskirts of cities and towns, often established by new rapid transit companies offering reduced-fare rides to the parks in gaily decorated trolley cars. Amusement parks featured such varied attractions as parachute jumps, open-air theaters, band concerts, professional bicycle races, freak shows, games of chance, and shooting galleries. Roller coasters, fun houses, and midget-car tracks also became popular.

Concerns About Leisure

Intellectual and political leaders raised searching questions about the growing amusement industry. The English author Lord Lytton commented, “The social civilization of a people is always and infallibly indicated by the intellectual character of its amusements.” In 1876, Horace Greeley, a leading American journalist, observed that although there were teachers for every art, science, and “elegy,” there were no “professors of play.” He asked, “Who will teach us incessant workers how to achieve leisure and enjoy it?” And, in 1880, President James Garfield declared in a speech at Lake Chautauqua, “We may divide the whole struggle of the human race into two chapters: first, the fight to get leisure; and then the second fight of civilization—what shall we do with our leisure when we get it.”

This new concern was an inevitable consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Americans now lived in greater numbers in large cities, where the traditional social activities of the past and the opportunity for casual play were no longer available.

THE BEGINNING RECREATION MOVEMENT

The period extending from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth century is referred to by recreation scholars as the *public recreation movement*. The period was characterized by the widespread development of organized recreation activities and facilities by government and voluntary agencies with the intent of achieving desirable social outcomes. There were four major streams of development during the public recreation movement: the adult education movement; the development of national, state, and municipal parks; the establishment of voluntary organizations; and the playground movement.

The Adult Education Movement

During the early nineteenth century, there was considerable civic concern for improving intellectual cultivation and providing continuing education for adults. Again, this was found in other nations as well; in France, workers’ societies were determined to gain shorter workdays and more leisure time for adult study and cultural activities, and they pressed vigorously for the development of popular lectures, adult education courses, and municipal libraries.

In the United States, there was a growing conviction that leisure, properly used, could contribute to the idealistic liberal values that were part of the American intellectual heritage. As early as the founding of the republic, such leaders as Thomas Jefferson and John Adams envisioned the growth of a rich democratic culture. Adams wrote of his children's and America's future as follows:

I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematicks and Philosophy. My sons ought to study Mathematicks and Philosophy, Geography, Natural History, Naval Architecture, Navigation, Commerce and Agriculture, in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry and Porcelaine.¹⁶

One of the means of achieving this dream took the form of the Lyceum movement, a national organization with more than 900 local chapters. Its program consisted chiefly of lectures, readings, and other educational events, reflecting the view that all citizens should be educated in order to participate knowledgeably in affairs of government.

The Lyceum movement was widely promoted by such organizations as Chautauqua, which sponsored both a lecture circuit and a leading summer camp program in upstate New York for adults and families, with varied cultural activities, sport, lectures, and other educational features. While the professed purpose of Chautauqua was education, it actually provided substantial entertainment and amusement to its audiences as well. By the twentieth century, circuit Chautauquas were formed, in a fusion of the Lyceum movement and independent Chautauquas, to provide educational programs, culture, and entertainment.



■ *Old Faithful and the geysers of Yellowstone have made this first national park a popular travel destination for over 130 years.*

A closely related development was the expansion of reading as a recreational experience, which was furthered by the widespread growth of free public libraries. This development was linked to the adoption of compulsory universal education and to the increasing need for better-educated workers in the nation's industrial system. As an example of the growing interest in cultural activity, the arts and crafts movement found its largest following in the United States in the beginning of the twentieth century. Between 1896 and 1915, thousands of organized groups were established throughout the country to bring artists and patrons together, sponsor exhibits and publications, and promote the teaching of art in the schools.

The Development of National, State, and Municipal Parks

Concern for preservation of the natural heritage of the United States in an era of increasing industrialization and despoilment of natural resources began in the nineteenth century. The first conservation action was in 1864, when Congress set aside an extensive area of wilderness primarily for public recreational use, consisting of the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees in California. This later became a national park. The first designated national park was Yellowstone, founded in 1872. In 1892, the Sierra Club was founded by John Muir, a leading Scottish-born conservationist who, along with Theodore Roosevelt, encouraged national interest in the outdoors and ultimately the establishment of the National Park Service.

All such developments did not lend themselves immediately to an emphasis on recreation. The primary purpose of the national parks at the outset was to preserve the nation's natural heritage and wildlife. This contrasted sharply with the Canadian approach to wilderness, which saw it as primitive and untamed. Parks, as in Great



■ *Central Park remains one of the great urban parks in the world. Each year over 25 million people visit the park.*

Britain and Europe, were seen as landscaped gardens, and intensive development for recreation and tourism guided early Canadian policy. Indeed, Banff National Park was initially a health spa, and early provincial parks were designed to be health resorts.¹⁷

State Parks As federal park development gained momentum in the United States, state governments also became concerned with the preservation of their forest areas and wildlife. As early as 1867, Michigan and Wisconsin established fact-finding committees to explore the problem of forest conservation; their example was followed shortly by Maine and other eastern states. Within two decades, several states had established forestry commissions. Between 1864 and 1900, the first state parks were established, as were a number of state forest preserves and historic parks.

Municipal Parks Until the nineteenth century, North America lagged far behind Europe in the development of municipal parks, partly because this continent had no aristocracy with large cultivated estates, hunting grounds, and elaborate gardens that could be turned over to the public. The first major park to be developed in an American city was Central Park in New York; its design and the philosophy on which it was based strongly influenced other large cities during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

There long had been a need for open space in New York City. During the first 30 years of the nineteenth century, plans were made for several open squares to total about 450 acres, but these were not carried out completely. By the early 1850s, the entire amount of public open space in Manhattan totaled only 117 acres. Pressure mounted among the citizens of the city for a major park that would provide relief from stone and concrete. The poet William Cullen Bryant wrote:

Commerce is devouring inch by inch the coast of the island, and if we would rescue any part of it for health and recreation it must be done now. All large cities have their extensive public grounds and gardens, Madrid and Mexico [City] their Alamedas, London its Regent's Park, Paris its Champs Elysées, and Vienna its Prater.¹⁸

When the public will could no longer be denied, legislation was passed in 1856 to establish a park in New York City. Construction of the 843-acre site began in 1857. Central Park, designed by landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, was completely man-made: "Every foot of the park's surface, every tree and bush, as well as every arch, roadway and walk has been fixed where it is with a purpose." The dominant need was to provide, within the densely populated heart of



There was concern about the reckless and haphazard course of urban growth in the nineteenth century, which had been guided almost exclusively by narrow commercial interests. Reformers were disturbed not only by the obvious "social failures"—the growing number of criminals, prostitutes, alcoholics, and insane—but also by the effects of the relentless commercial environment on the culture of cities. Large public parks came to be seen as "necessary institutions of democratic recreation and indispensable antidotes to urban anomie."

an immense metropolis, “refreshment of the mind and the nerves” for city dwellers through the provision of greenery and scenic vistas. The park was to be heavily wooded and to have the appearance of rural scenery, with roadways screened from the eyes of park users wherever possible. Recreational pursuits permitted in the park included walking, pleasure driving, ice skating in the winter, and boating—but not organized or structured sport. It also was designed to provide needed social controls to prevent misuse of the park environment or destructive behavior by the “lower” classes.

County Park Systems Planning for what was to become the nation’s first county park system began in Essex County, New Jersey. Bordering the crowded industrial city of Newark, it was outlined in a comprehensive proposal in 1894 that promised that the entire cost of the park project would be realized through tax revenues from increased property values. Set in motion in the following year, the Essex County park system proved to be a great success and set a model to be followed by hundreds of other county and special district park agencies throughout the United States in the early 1900s.

Establishment of Voluntary Organizations

During the nineteenth century, a number of voluntary (privately sponsored, nonprofit) organizations were founded that played an important role in providing recreation services, chiefly for children and youth. In many cases, voluntary organizations were the outgrowth of their founders’ desires to put religious principles into action through direct service to the unprivileged. The widespread establishment of voluntary organizations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries should be viewed as both a religious and a social movement. One such body was the Young Men’s Christian Association, founded in Boston in 1851 and followed by the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) 15 years later. At first, the Y’s provided fellowship between youth and adults for religious purposes. They gradually enlarged their programs, however, to include gymnastics, sport, and other recreational and social activities.

Another type of voluntary agency that offered significant leisure programs was the settlement house—neighborhood centers established in the slum sections of the East and Midwest. Among the first were University Settlement, founded in New York City in 1886, and Hull House, founded in Chicago in 1889. Their staffs sought to help poor people, particularly immigrants, adjust to modern urban life by providing services concerned with education, family life, and community improvement.

The Playground Movement

To understand the need for playgrounds in cities and towns, it is necessary to know the living conditions of poor people during the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

The wave of urbanization that had begun earlier now reached its peak. The urban population more than doubled—from 14 to 30 million—between 1880 and 1900 alone. By the century’s end, there were 28 cities with over 100,000 residents because of the recent waves of migration. A leading example was New York, where nearly five

of every six of the city's 1.5 million residents lived in tenements in 1891. Social reformers of the period described these buildings as crowded, with dark hallways, filthy cellars, and inadequate cooking and bathroom facilities. In neighborhoods populated by poor immigrants, there was a tremendous amount of crime, gambling, gang violence, and prostitution.

Boston Sand Garden: A Beginning Within poor working class neighborhoods, there were few safe places where children might play. The first such facility—and the one that is generally regarded as a landmark in the development of the recreation movement in the United States—was the Boston Sand Garden. The city of Boston had been the arena for many important developments in the park and recreation movement in the United States. The Boston Common, established in 1634, generally has been regarded as the first municipal park; a 48-acre area of green, rolling hills and shade trees, it is located in the heart of the city. Boston was also the site of the first public garden with the establishment of an outstanding botanic garden in 1838.

The famous Boston Sand Garden was the first playground in the country designed specifically for children. A group of public-spirited citizens had a pile of sand placed behind the Parmenter Street Chapel in a working class district. Young children in the neighborhood came to play in the sand with wooden shovels. Supervision was voluntary at first, but by 1887 when 10 such centers were opened, women were employed to supervise the children. Two years later, the city of Boston began to contribute funds to support the sand gardens. So it was that citizens, on a voluntary basis, began to provide play opportunities for young children.

New York's First Playgrounds In the nation's largest city, Walter Vrooman, founder of the New York Society for Parks and Playgrounds, directed the public's attention to the fact that in 1890 there were 350,000 children without a single public playground of their own. Although the city now had almost 6,000 acres of parkland, none of it was set aside specifically for children. Civic leaders pointed out that children of working parents lacked supervision and were permitted to grow up subject to various temptations. Vrooman wrote that such children

are driven from their crowded homes in the morning . . . are chased from the streets by the police when they attempt to play, and beaten with the broom handle of the janitor's wife when found in the hallway, or on the stairs. No wonder they learn to chew and smoke tobacco before they can read, and take a fiendish delight in breaking windows, in petty thievery, and in gambling their pennies.¹⁹

Gradually, the pressure mounted. Two small model playgrounds were established in poor areas of the city in 1889 and 1891 by the newly formed New York Society for Parks and Playgrounds, with support from private donors. Gradually, the city assumed financial and legal responsibility as many additional playgrounds were built in the years that followed, often attached to schools.

The period between 1880 and 1900 was of critical importance to the development of urban recreation and park programs. More than 80 cities initiated park systems; a lesser number established "sand gardens," and, shortly after, playgrounds. Illinois passed

a law permitting the establishment of local park districts in which two or more municipalities might join together to operate park systems.

EFFECTS OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION

Throughout this period, public and nonprofit youth-serving organizations often discriminated against members of racial or ethnic minorities. As late as the 1930s and 1940s, prejudice against those perceived as lower-class “undesirables” or those from less-favored European nations was evidenced in many organizations. Such practices reflected widespread attitudes of snobbery, as well as the nativist political agitation of the nineteenth century that opposed the flow of immigration from Europe, preached hatred against Catholics and Jews, and barred citizens of color from mainstream American life.

Prejudice Against Minorities

Generally, the most severe discrimination was leveled against African Americans, who, though no longer slaves, were kept in a position of economic servitude through the practice of sharecropping and were without civil, political, or judicial rights in the southern and border states. However, there was an extreme degree of prejudice against Mexican Americans and other Hispanics of mixed racial origins. For example, Anglo settlers in Texas regarded Mexicans as savage “heathens” who historically practiced human sacrifice, and saw them as a decadent and inferior people. Most prejudice was expressed in racial terms.

A popular journal, the *Southern Review*, expressed the dominant feeling of many white Americans at this time with respect to *mongrelism*, the term often applied to mixing among different racial groups. In time, intermarriage between whites and blacks or Native Americans was defined as *miscegenation* and forbidden by law throughout much of the country.

There was also widespread prejudice expressed against Asian Americans, mostly Chinese nationals who began to arrive in California in the mid-1800s and who worked on the transcontinental railroad. As the number of Asians grew, so did xenophobia. Americans viewed them as heathens who could not readily be assimilated within the nation’s essentially Anglo-Saxon framework, and condemned them as unsanitary, immoral, and criminal. Based on such prejudice, Chinese were often the victims of mob violence, particularly at times of national depression, and were barred from entry into the United States by the Oriental Exclusion Acts of 1882 and 1902.

Similar views were frequently expressed against Americans of African origin, who were increasingly barred from social contact, economic opportunity, or recreational involvement with whites by a wave of state legislation and local ordinances in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

RECREATION AND PARKS: EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

For the majority of Americans, however, the beginning of the twentieth century was an exciting period marked by growing economic and recreational opportunity. By 1900,

14 cities had made provisions for supervised play facilities. Among the leading cities were Boston, Providence, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Denver, and Minneapolis.

At the same time, municipal parks became well established throughout the United States. In addition to the urban parks mentioned earlier, the first metropolitan park system was established by Boston in 1892. In the West, San Francisco and Sacramento in California as well as Salt Lake City, Utah, were among the first to incorporate large open spaces in town planning before 1900. The New England Association of Park Superintendents, the predecessor of the American Institute of Park Executives, was established in 1898 to bring together park superintendents and promote their professional concerns.

Growth of Public Recreation and Park Agencies

Gradually, the concept that city governments should provide recreation facilities, programs, and services became widely accepted. By 1906, 41 cities were sponsoring public recreation programs, and by 1920, the number was 465. More and more states passed laws authorizing local governments to operate recreation programs, and between 1925 and 1935 the number of municipal recreation buildings quadrupled.

Municipalities were also discovering new ways to add parks. Many acquired areas outside their city limits, while others required that new real estate subdivision plans include the dedication of space for recreation. Some cities acquired major park properties through gifts. The pattern that began to develop was one of placing a network of small, intensively used playgrounds throughout the cities, particularly in neighborhoods of working-class families, and placing larger parks in outlying areas.

Federal Park Expansion

As president, Theodore Roosevelt, a dedicated outdoorsman, encouraged the acquisition of numerous new areas for the federal park system, including many new forest preserves, historic and scientific sites, and wildlife refuges. Thanks in part to his assistance and support, the Reclamation Act of 1902, which authorized reservoir-building irrigation systems in the West, was passed, along with the Antiquities Act of 1906, which designated the first national monuments. Establishment of the U.S. Forest Service in 1905 and of the National Park Service 11 years later helped place many of the scattered forests, parks, and other sites under more clearly defined policies for acquisition, development, and use.

EMERGENCE OF THE RECREATION MOVEMENT: THREE PIONEERS

As the recreation field developed during the first three decades of the twentieth century, several men and women emerged as influential advocates of play and recreation. Three of the most effective were Joseph Lee, Luther Halsey Gulick, and Jane Addams.

Joseph Lee

Regarded as the “father” of the playground movement, Joseph Lee was a lawyer and philanthropist who came from a wealthy New England family. Born in 1862, he took part in a survey of play opportunities conducted by the Family Welfare Society of Boston in 1882. Shocked to see boys arrested for playing in the streets, he organized a playground for them in an open lot, which he helped supervise. In 1898, Lee helped create a model playground on Columbus Avenue in Boston that included a play area for small children, a boys’ section, a sport field, and individual gardens. Lee’s influence soon expanded; he was in great demand as a speaker and writer on playgrounds and served as vice president for public recreation of the American Civic Association. President of the Playground Association of America for 27 years, he was also the president and leading lecturer of the National Recreation School, a one-year program for carefully selected college graduates.

Lee’s view of play was idealistic and purposeful. In *Play in Education*, he outlined a set of major play instincts that he believed all children shared and that governed the specific nature of play activities. He believed that play forms had to be taught and that this process required capable leadership. Lee did not make a sharp distinction between work and play, but saw them as closely related expressions of the impulses to achieve, to explore, to excel, and to master.

Luther Halsey Gulick

Another leading figure in the early recreation movement was Luther Halsey Gulick. A physician by training, he developed a special interest in physical education and recreation. He also had a strong religious orientation, as did many of the early play leaders. Beginning in 1887, Dr. Gulick headed the first summer school of “special training for gymnasium instructors” at the School for Christian Workers (now Springfield College) in Massachusetts. He was active in the YMCAs in Canada and the United States, was the first president of the Camp Fire Girls, and was instrumental in the establishment of the Playground Association of America in 1906. Gulick lectured extensively on the significance of play and recreation and taught a course in the psychology of play as early as 1899. He also vigorously promoted expanded recreation programs for girls and women.

Gulick distinguished play from recreation. He defined play as “doing that which we want to do, without reference primarily to any ulterior end, but simply for the joy of the process.” But, he went on to say, play is not less serious than work:

The boy who is playing football with intensity needs recreation as much as does the inventor who is working intensely at his invention. Play can be more exhausting than work, because one can play much harder than one can work. No one would dream of pushing a boy in school as hard as he pushes himself in a football game. If there is any difference of intensity between play and work, the difference is in favor of play. Play is the result of desire; for that reason it is often carried on with more vigor than work.²⁰



The Radical Women of Hull House

Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr were among the first college-educated women in the United States to dedicate their lives to public service. Addams and Starr opened the Hull House Settlement in 1889. Although Addams, Starr, and their colleagues were sometimes viewed as radical and dangerous, their work is a testament to the ability of women to collectively improve social conditions. The women of Hull House were directly involved in the establishment of the following social programs and movements of the Industrial Revolution:

- Immigrant aid and protection
- Public school nursing
- Labor reform
- Development of public playgrounds and kindergarten
- Industrial medicine
- Establishment of the juvenile court system
- Birth control
- Consumer advocacy
- Antialcohol and drug legislation
- Pure food and drug laws
- Public sanitation
- Elimination of child labor
- Infant and maternity health care
- Child day care
- Visiting nurses
- Public school lunches
- Industrial health and safety
- Peace initiatives
- Suffrage

Jane Addams

Jane Addams was a social work pioneer who established Hull House in Chicago. Her interest in the needs of children and youth, and in the lives of immigrant families and the poor in America's great cities, led her to develop outstanding programs of educational, social, and recreational activities. Beyond this, she was a leading feminist pioneer and so active a reformer that she was known as "the most dangerous woman in America."

Mary Duncan points out that Jane Addams, along with a number of other recreation and park leaders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was part of a wider radical reform movement in America's cities. Joining with muckraking editors, writers, ministers, and other social activists, they continually fought city hall, organized labor strikes, marched in the street, gave public speeches, and wrote award-winning articles deploring the living conditions of the poor. The issues and problems they faced were well defined: slavery, the aftermath of the Civil War, thousands of new immigrants, slums, child labor, disease, the suffrage movement, World War I, and a rapidly industrializing nation.²¹

Contrasting Roles of Recreation Pioneers

Although Lee, Gulick, and Addams were described as muckraking radicals, it is clear that they also were individuals who worked through the major societal institutions of government and voluntary agencies. Addams, for example, helped to found the Playground Association of America, encouraged the Chicago School Board's involvement in playground and recreational sport programs, and supported the early development of the Chicago Park District. Indeed, these early recreation pioneers often walked a tightrope between their desire on the one hand to promote individuality, to give youth the opportunity for creative development, and to overcome old barriers of prejudice and class distinction and the need on the other hand to maintain order and control and to indoctrinate youth with traditional social goals.

While these three fought to help the downtrodden and illiterate immigrant families living in crowded urban slums, they were also using recreation to maintain the status quo and enforce traditional values. Play was seen as a means of "Americanizing" foreigners and perpetuating and protecting the traditional small-town, moralistic, white Anglo-Saxon heritage that had dominated national culture over the past century. Recreation would be used as a way of repressing the "overwhelming temptation of illicit and soul-destroying pleasures."

EMERGING NEW LIFESTYLES

Such views of recreation, play, and leisure were not shared by the entire population. The early twentieth century was a time when the traditional Victorian mentality that had been taught and enforced by the home, school, and church was being challenged. For the first time, many young women took jobs in business and industry in cities throughout the country. With relative freedom from disapproving, stern parental authority, and with money to spend, they frequented commercial dance halls, boat rides, drinking saloons, social clubs, and other sources of popular entertainment. Kathy Peiss describes the new freedom for working-class youth in general:

They fled the tenements for the streets, dance halls, and theaters, generally bypassing their fathers' saloons and lodges. Adolescents formed social clubs, organized entertainments, and patronized new commercial amusements, shaping, in effect, a working-class youth culture expressed through leisure activity.²²

Part of what appealed to young people were the playgrounds, parks, public beaches, and picnic grounds. However, often these were considered too tame and unexciting, and more and more young people became attracted to commercial forms of entertainment involving liquor, dancing, and sex that were viewed by the establishment as immoral and dangerous. Increasingly, organized recreation programs were promoted by churches, law enforcement agencies, and civic associations in an attempt to resist the new, hedonistic forms of play. They sought to promote traditional, idealistic activities, such as youth sport, music, games, crafts, and dramatic activities, as a way to repress the urge for more "sinful" behavior.

PUBLIC CONCERNS ABOUT THE USE OF LEISURE

To some degree, the support for public recreation was based on the fear that without public programs and facilities, adult leisure would be used unwisely. Many industrial leaders and civic officials believed that the growth of leisure for the working classes represented a dangerous trend; when unemployment increased, they expressed concern about what idle men would do with their time. Similarly, when the eight-hour workday laws first came under discussion, temperance societies prepared for increased drunkenness, and social reformers held international conferences on the worker's spare time and ways to use it constructively.

The major concern, however, was for children and youth in the large cities and their need for healthful and safe places to play. Indeed, much "juvenile delinquency" arose from children being arrested for playing on city streets. Authorities during this period reported reduced rates of juvenile delinquency in slum areas where playgrounds had been established. A probation officer of the juvenile court in Milwaukee described "a very noticeable dropping off of boys coming before the court" and a disappearance of "dangerous gangs," concluding that playgrounds and social centers were "saviors" for American youth. Typically, the judge of the juvenile department of the Orange County Court in Anaheim, California, noted that after the opening of supervised playgrounds in the public park in the summer of 1924, juvenile delinquency decreased. During the first six months of 1925, it was 70 percent less than for the same period in 1924.²³

Concern About Commercial Amusements

At this time, there was also fear that unregulated and unsupervised places of commercial amusement posed a serious threat to children and youth. Commercially sponsored forms of entertainment and recreation had grown rapidly during the early twentieth century, with many new pool and billiard parlors, dance halls, vaudeville shows and burlesque, and other amusement attractions. In major cities such as Milwaukee, Detroit, Kansas City, and San Francisco, extensive recreation surveys scrutinized the nature of commercial amusements, the extent and kind of their patronage, and their character. There was much concern about movies and stage performances, with frequent charges that they were immoral and led to the sexual corruption of youth.

A high percentage of privately operated dance halls had attached saloons that were freely patronized by young girls. Dancing seemed to be only a secondary consideration. Pickups occurred regularly, often of young girls who had come to cities from the nation's farms and small towns with a presumed degree of innocence; so-called white slavers, who trapped or recruited girls and women into prostitution, appeared to ply their trade with little interference. Dance halls were often attached to disreputable rooming houses, and girls in their early and middle teens were easily recruited into prostitution.

The same studies that examined commercial amusements also surveyed the socially approved forms of recreation. They found that in many cities the schools were closed in the evening and throughout the summer, that libraries closed at night and on weekends, that churches closed for the summer, and that publicly provided forms of recreation were at a minimum. Jane Addams concluded that the city had "turned over the provision for public recreation to the most evil-minded and the most unscrupulous members of the community." Gradually, pressure mounted for more effective control of

places of public amusement. In city after city, permits were required for operating dance halls, pool parlors, and bowling alleys, and for the sale of liquor.

There was also a fear that Americans were moving away from the traditional active ways of using their leisure to pursuits in which they were passive spectators. Some critics commented that instead of believing in the wholesome love of play, Americans now had a love of being “played upon.” It had become wholly outdated to make one’s own fun.

Emerging Mass Culture

Such complaints and fears were the inevitable reactions of civic leaders to what they perceived to be a threat to traditional morality and values. The reality is that the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century was undergoing massive changes in response to changing economic and social conditions. These included the emergence of new middle-class and working-class people who had the time and money to spend on leisure, as well as a steady infusion of varied ethnic peoples who contributed new ideas and values to American society. Part of the change involved a growing rejection of authoritarian family structures and church-dominated social values, as well as a readiness to accept new kinds of roles for young people and women. All of these influences resulted in a new mass culture that emerged during the new century. John Kasson writes:

At the turn of the century this culture was still in the process of formation and not fully incorporated into the life of society as a whole. Its purest expression at this time lay in the realm of commercial amusements, which were creating symbols of the new cultural order.²⁴

Kasson goes on to point out that nineteenth-century America was governed by a coherent set of values—highly Victorian in nature and directed by a self-conscious elite group of ministers, educators, and reformers drawn chiefly from the Protestant middle class of the urban Northeast. These apostles of culture preached the values of character, moral integrity, self-control, sobriety, and industriousness. They believed that leisure should be spent in ways that were edifying and that had moral and social utility. They founded museums, art galleries, libraries, and symphony orchestras, and they lent moral sanction to the recreation and park movement. However, they were unable to exert a significant influence on the growing masses of urban working classes and new immigrant groups.

MAJOR FORCES PROMOTING ORGANIZED RECREATION SERVICES

At the same time that mass culture was providing new kinds of pastimes that challenged traditional community values and standards, the forces that sought to guide the American public in what they regarded as constructive uses of leisure were becoming active.



As a single example of the new craze for excitement and freedom in leisure, a host of amusement parks were developed close to various cities around the country. Typically, they put together a mélange of popular attractions, including bathing facilities, band pavilions, dance halls, vaudeville theaters, sideshows, circus attractions, freak displays, food and drink counters, and daredevil rides of every description.

Growth of Voluntary Organizations

In the opening decades of the twentieth century, a number of important youth-serving, nonprofit organizations were formed, either on a local basis or through nationally organized movements or federations. The National Association of Boys' Clubs was founded in 1906, the Boy Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls in 1910, and the Girl Scouts in 1912. Major civic clubs and community service groups such as the Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and the Lions Club were also founded between 1910 and 1917.

By the end of the 1920s, these organizations had become widely established in American life and were serving substantial numbers of young people. One of every seven boys in the appropriate age group in the United States was a Scout. The YMCA and YWCA had more than 1.5 million members in 1926. In contemporary society, voluntary organizations are a significant provider of community recreation services that are utilized by tens of millions of children and adults.

Playground Association of America

In the early 1900s, leading recreation directors called for a conference to promote public awareness of and effective practices in the field of leisure services. Under the leadership of Luther Halsey Gulick, representatives of park, recreation, and school boards throughout the United States met in Washington, D.C., in April 1906. Unanimously agreeing upon the need for a national organization, the conference members drew up a constitution and selected Gulick as the first president of the Playground Association of America. The organization had President Theodore Roosevelt's strong support.

A basic purpose of the Playground Association was to develop informational and promotional services to assist people of all ages in using leisure time constructively. Field workers traveled from city to city, meeting with public officials and citizens' groups and helping in the development of playgrounds and recreation programs. In order to promote professional training, the association developed *The Normal Course in Play*, a curriculum plan of courses on play leadership on several levels.

In keeping with its broadening emphasis, the organization changed its name in 1911 to the Playground and Recreation Association of America, and in 1926 to the National Recreation Association. It sought to provide the public with a broader concept of recreation and leisure, and to promote recreation as an area of government responsibility.

Recreation Programs in World War I

The nation's rapid mobilization during World War I revealed that communities adjacent to army and navy stations and training camps needed more adequate programs of recreation. The Council of National Defense and the War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities asked the Playground and Recreation Association to assist in the creation of a national organization to provide wartime community recreation programs. The association established the War Camp Community Service (WCCS), which utilized the recreation resources of several hundred communities near military camps to provide wholesome recreation activities for both military personnel and civilians.

At its peak, WCCS employed a national staff of approximately 3,000 paid workers who organized programs in 755 cities with the help of more than 500,000 volunteers. At other military bases in the United States and Europe, organizations such as the Young Men's Christian Association sponsored canteens and other morale-boosting services.

Role of the Schools

As indicated earlier, a number of urban school boards initiated after-school and vacation play programs as early as the 1890s. This trend continued in the twentieth century. Playground programs were begun in Rochester, New York, in 1907; in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1911; and in Los Angeles, California, in 1914. These pioneering efforts were strongly supported by the National Education Association, which recommended that public school buildings be used for community recreation and social activities.

With such support, public opinion encouraged the expansion of organized playground and public recreation programs in American communities. Between 1910 and 1930, thousands of school systems established extensive programs of extracurricular activities, particularly in sport, publications, hobbies, and social- and academic-related fields. In 1919, the first college curriculum in recreation was established at Virginia Commonwealth University.

In addition to playgrounds, other facilities of the schools that could be useful for recreational purposes were assembly rooms and gymnasiums, swimming pools, music and arts rooms, and outdoor areas for sport and gardening. Education for the "worthy use of leisure" was vigorously supported as an important goal for secondary schools throughout the United States.

Outdoor Recreation Developments

The role of the federal and state governments in promoting outdoor recreation was enlarged by the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916 and an accelerated pattern of acquisition and development of outdoor areas by the U.S. Forest Service. In 1921, Stephen Mather, director of the National Park Service, called for a national conference on state parks. This meeting made it clear that the Park Service was primarily to acquire and administer areas of national significance; it led to the recommendation that state governments take more responsibility for acquiring sites of lesser interest or value.

Park administrators began to give active recreation a higher priority in park design and operation. The founding of the American Association of Zoological Parks and

Aquariums in 1924 was an indication that specialized recreational uses of parks were becoming widespread in American communities.

The End of Shorter Hours

At the same time that the recreation movement continued to gain impetus, a reverse trend took place as the movement to shorten the workweek and provide workers with more free time gradually slackened. Benjamin Hunnicutt points out that the most dramatic increase in free time occurred in the period between 1901 and 1921, when the average workweek dropped from 58.4 hours to 48.4 hours, a decline never before or since equaled.²⁵

Since the mid-nineteenth century, shorter hours and higher wages had been a campaign issue for progressive politicians. Union pressure, legislation, and court decisions achieved the eight-hour day in jobs under federal contracts, sections of the railroad industry, and certain hazardous occupations. The policy was supported by the findings of scientific management experts such as Frederick Taylor, who argued that workers' efficiency declined significantly after eight hours. It also responded to a trend in other industrialized nations, such as France, Germany, Italy, and Belgium, to approve legal restriction of working time, based on the eight-hour day or 48-hour workweek.

New problems began to arise in the American economy, though, as overproduction and "economic maturity" left the nation with an excess of goods and services. Many leading businessmen and economists began to promote a "New Gospel of Consumption" during the 1920s. They argued that the way to stimulate the economy was not to provide more leisure, but to increase productivity and public spending on a broad range of consumer goods.

IMPACT OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Following the flourishing 1920s, the Great Depression of the 1930s mired the United States—and much of the industrial world—in a period of almost total despair. The Depression resulted in mass unemployment and involuntary idleness for American workers. By the end of 1932, an estimated 15 million people, nearly one-third of the labor force, were unemployed. Individuals who were employed also experienced greater free time as the average workweek declined. During this period, scholars and public officials became concerned that leisure had become too commercial and passive and would contribute to the decline of American culture. Furthermore, there was widespread concern that excessive free time was linked to crime.

In response to these concerns and in conjunction with a broad plan to combat the effects of the Depression, the federal government soon instituted a number of emergency work programs related to recreation. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration, established early in 1933, financed construction of recreation facilities such as parks and swimming pools and hired recreation leaders from the relief rolls. A second agency, the Civil Works Administration, was given the task of finding jobs for four million people in 30 days! Among other tasks, this agency built or improved 3,500 playgrounds and athletic fields in a few months.²⁶

Both the National Youth Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps carried out numerous work projects involving the construction of recreational facilities.

During the five years from 1932 to 1937, the federal government spent an estimated \$1.5 billion developing camps, buildings, picnic grounds, trails, swimming pools, and other facilities. The Civilian Conservation Corps helped to establish state park systems in a number of states that had no organized park programs before 1933. The Works Progress Administration allocated \$11 billion or 30 percent of their budget to recreation-related projects that spanned the nation and included 12,700 playgrounds, 8,500 gymnasiums or recreation buildings, 750 swimming pools, 1,000 ice skating rinks, and 64 ski jumps.²⁷ These programs initiated under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal had a beneficial effect on the development of the recreation and park movement throughout the United States: They made it clear that leisure was an important responsibility of government.

Sharpened Awareness of Leisure Needs

The Depression helped to stimulate national concern about problems of leisure and recreational opportunity. For example, a number of studies in the 1930s revealed a serious lack of structured recreation programs for young people, especially African Americans, girls, and rural youth. In the early 1930s, the National Education Association carried out a major study of leisure education in the nation's school systems and issued a report, *The New Leisure Challenges the Schools*, that urged the educational establishment to take more responsibility for this function and advocated enlarging the school's role in community recreation.

Shortly thereafter, the National Recreation Association examined the public recreation and park programs in a number of major European nations with nationalized recreation programs, and published a detailed report that included implications for American policy makers. The American Association for the Study of Group Work studied the overall problem and in 1939 published an important report, *Leisure: A National Issue*. Written by Eduard Lindeman, a leading social work administrator who had played a key role in government during the Depression, the report stated that the "leisure of the American people constitutes a central and crucial problem of social policy."²⁸

Lindeman argued that in the American democracy, recreation should meet the true needs of the people. Pointing out that American workers were gaining a vast national reservoir of leisure estimated at 390 billion hours per year, he suggested that the new leisure should be characterized by free choice and a minimum of restraint. He urged, however, that if leisure were not to become "idleness, waste, or opportunity for sheer mischief," a national plan for leisure had to be developed, including the widespread preparation of professionally trained recreation leaders.

A NATION AT WAR

World War II, in which the United States became fully involved on December 7, 1941, compelled the immediate mobilization of every aspect of national life: peoplepower, education, industry, and a variety of social services and programs. The Special Services Division of the U.S. Army provided recreation facilities and programs on military bases throughout the world, making use of approximately 12,000 officers, even more enlisted personnel, and many volunteers. About 1,500 officers were involved in the Welfare and

Recreation Section of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, and expanded programs were offered by the Recreation Service of the Marine Corps. These departments were assisted by the United Service Organizations (USO), which was formed in 1941 and consisted of the joint effort of six agencies: the Jewish Welfare Board, the Salvation Army, Catholic Community Services, the YMCA, the YWCA, and the National Travelers Aid. The USO functioned in the continental United States and outside of military camps and in clubs, hostels, and lounges throughout the western hemisphere. The American National Red Cross established approximately 750 clubs in wartime theaters of operations throughout the world and about 250 mobile entertainment units, staffed by more than 4,000 leaders. Its military hospitals overseas and in the United States involved more than 1,500 recreation workers as well.

Many municipal directors extended their facilities and services to local war plants and changed their schedules to provide programs around the clock. Because of the rapid increase in industrial recreation programs, the National Industrial Recreation Association (later known as the National Employee Services and Recreation Association) was formed in 1941 to assist in such efforts. Also, the Federal Security Agency's Office of Community War Services established a new recreation division to assist programs on the community level. This division helped set up 300 new community programs throughout the country, including numerous child-care and recreation centers, many of which continued after the war as tax-supported community recreation programs. The Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor developed guidelines for recreation and housing for women war workers, based on their needs in moving from their home environments into suddenly expanded or greatly congested areas.

By the end of World War II, great numbers of servicemen and servicewomen had participated in varied recreation programs and services and thus had gained a new appreciation for this field. Many people had been trained in recreation leadership (more than 40,000 people were in the Special Services Division of the U.S. Army alone) and were ready to return to civilian life as professionals in this field.

SUMMARY

This chapter shows the long history of recreation, play, and leisure by discussing their roles during the ancient civilizations of Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt; then in the Greek and Roman eras; during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Europe; and from the pre-Revolutionary period in the North American colonies to the mid-twentieth century.

Religion and social class were major factors that influenced recreational involvement in terms of either prohibiting certain forms of activity or assigning them to one class or another. Leisure, seen as an aristocratic devotion to knowledge, the arts, athletics, philosophy, and contemplation in ancient Athens, took a different form in Rome, where it became a political instrument devoted to perpetuating the rule of the Roman emperors by entertaining and placating the common people.

During the Dark and Middle Ages, the Catholic Church placed a strong value on work and worship and sought to prohibit forms of play that had descended from pagan sources. However, such activities as sport and games, music, dance, the theater, and

gambling persisted, even under the stern condemnation of the new Protestant sects that gained influence during the period of the Reformation. At this time, class distinctions in terms of appropriate forms of play became clearly evident in England, France, and other European nations. However, the value of play as a form of childhood education was championed in the writings of numerous educators and philosophers of that era.

In the pre-Revolutionary American colonies, New England Puritans were very strict in their condemnation of most recreational pursuits. After an initial conservative period, however, play and varied social pursuits flourished in the plantations of the southern colonies, which had been settled by members of the English gentry who used slaves and indentured servants to make their own leisure possible.

The chapter traces the influence of the Industrial Revolution, which brought millions of immigrants from Europe to America, where they lived in crowded tenements in large cities or in factory towns. It also led to increased attempts to impose the stern strictures of the Protestant work ethic on the nation's population.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, religious opposition to varied types of play and entertainment began to decline. Sport became more popular and accepted and, after reaching a high point at mid-century, work hours began to decline. Four major roots of what was ultimately to become the recreation and park movement appeared: (1) the establishment of city parks, beginning with New York's Central Park, and the later growth of county, state, and national parks; (2) the growing interest in adult education and cultural development; (3) the appearance of playgrounds for children, sponsored first as charitable efforts and shortly after by city governments and the public schools; and (4) the development of a number of nonprofit, youth-serving organizations that spread throughout the country.

Popular culture gained momentum during the Jazz Age of the 1920s, with college and professional sport, motion pictures and radio, new forms of dance and music, and a host of other crazes capturing the public's interest. Although the Great Depression of the 1930s had a tragic impact on many families, the efforts of the federal government to build recreation facilities and leisure services to provide jobs and a morale boost for the public at large meant that the Depression was a powerful positive force for the recreation movement in general.

By the early 1940s, organized recreation service was firmly established in American life, and both government officials and social critics began to raise searching questions about its future role in postwar society.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION OR ESSAY EXAMINATION

1. Contrast the attitudes toward sport and other uses of leisure that were found in ancient Greece with those found in the Roman Empire. How did their philosophies differ, and how did the Roman philosophy lead to a weakening of that powerful nation? Could you draw a parallel between the approach to leisure and entertainment in ancient Rome and that in the present-day United States?
2. Trace the development of religious attitudes and policies regarding leisure and play from the Dark and Middle Ages, through the Renaissance and Reformation periods, to the colonial era in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century North America. What

differences were there in the approach to recreation between the northern and southern colonies at this time?

3. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the roots of what was to become the modern recreation and park movement appeared. What were these roots (e.g., the adult education or Lyceum movement), and how did they relate to the broad social needs of Americans?
4. Three important pioneers of the early recreation movement in the United States were Lee, Gulick, and Addams. Summarize some of the key points of their philosophies and their contributions to the playground and recreation developments of the pre–World War I era. Describe the conflict between the traditional Victorian values and code of morality and the emerging popular culture, especially during the 1920s.
5. Trace the expanding role of government in terms of sponsoring recreation and park programs during the first half of the twentieth century, with emphasis on federal policies in wartime and during the Depression of the 1930s. What were some of the growing concerns about leisure during this period?

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