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Raising the Bar: Consumption, Gender, and the Birth of a New Public Drinking Culture

Adam Blahut

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**RAISING THE BAR:
CONSUMPTION, GENDER, AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW
PUBLIC DRINKING CULTURE**

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the history of public drinking extending a rich historiography of U.S. drinking establishments into the twentieth century by examining the creation of the heterosocial bar. It has only been socially acceptable for respectable men and women to drink alcohol together in public since approximately the 1930s. The transition from the saloon to the bar, from a single, undivided space that emphasized large groups, physical mobility, and homosociability to a compartmentalized space emphasizing small groups, privacy, and heterosociability, shows how public drinking and the places where it occurred were microcosms of society that reflected and constituted that society over the course of the twentieth century. The history of the bar helps us understand the historiographies of public drinking, male and female gender identity, and consumer culture.

The bar emerged from the saloon as a result of changes in consumption and gender identity during the twentieth century. Public drinking was one of the customs by which men and women constructed and reinforced their identities, and a reciprocal relationship existed between how they viewed themselves and how they created and

recreated the establishments where they drank. Drinkers influenced the formation of the new public drinking culture of the bar by using the space of public drinking establishments to perform their gender identities. Men tried to use the saloon and then the bar to struggle against changes that threatened their status and self-conception as males. Meanwhile, middle-class women increasingly emerged into public, changing the norms of female gender identity by claiming access to alcohol in public settings in a way that both reflected and reinforced their new status. Prohibition and the conflicts surrounding the heterosocialization of public drinking influenced the new model for drinking establishments and fostered a less gendered, more private drinking culture. The saloon-to-bar transformation also depoliticized these businesses, which contributed to the deradicalization of the working class. The saloon-to-bar transition represented not only the creation of a new public drinking culture but also the emergence of new standards for gender and consumption.

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INTRODUCTION

Eighty-five degrees. It is midafternoon on July 9, 1938, and the temperature in New York City is already eighty-five degrees. As the sun hammers down, you realize that the heat radiating from the bricks and the concrete, combined with the humidity, makes it feel warmer.¹ Not even the clouds that were moving in help reduced the heat. You read the *New York Times* this morning, but wiping sweat from your forehead, you suddenly wish you had remembered to look at the weather. You recall parts of the articles about the Chinese air fleet attempting to halt the Japanese advance and how Franklin Roosevelt is campaigning for New York Democrats, but in your preoccupation with the news, you forgot to check the weather.² Instead, happy to have the day off, you rushed out this mostly sunny Saturday to attend to a few errands before enjoying a day downtown. With all the walking you did today, you are now hot, thirsty and wishing you could have planned your day a little better.

Coughing from the exhaust that a passing car belched, you notice the street sign reads East Seventh Street. You realize that that you are close to McSorley's Old Alehouse, just off Third Avenue. You have never been there but have heard good things about it. Open constantly since 1854, it has become something of a landmark. The men who told you about it said it was a quiet place to sit and enjoy a glass of ale. According

¹"The Weather over the Nation and Abroad," *New York Times*, 10 July 1938.

²[No Title], *New York Times*, 9 July 1938.

to them, John McSorley, the Irish immigrant who opened the place, created this ambiance. Although Old John (as the regulars called him) had died in 1910, William, his son, and Daniel O'Connor, the current owner, had kept McSorley's exactly the same. Prohibition had not even managed to close it; the story is that the policemen and politicians who drank there gave it protection.³ Although you are not fond of ale, your thirst wins out. Within a few minutes, you are standing outside 15 East Seventh Street, a red brick tenement just off Cooper Square. You have found McSorley's.

You enter through one of the oval-windowed double doors and stop momentarily to study the place. You smell the aroma of pipe tobacco and something else. It hits you—raw onions. You suddenly remember hearing that the traditional free lunch at McSorley's is crackers, hard cheese, and raw onions. The sawdust-covered floor is wood, the varnish wearing off from thousands of feet walking over it. The old chairs creak with age as the men in them turn around to see who entered. You see there are three old wooden tables, each with four old wooden chairs. The bar, which appears to be mahogany, is to your right. No stools line the bar, but the men at it appear content to drink standing with a foot atop the rail along the floor. An archway opposite the doors reveals a back room with more tables. An old potbelly stove sitting in the middle of the main room appears to provide heat for the entire first floor. Old John's memorabilia collected over the course of his life covers the walls.⁴

³Joseph Mitchell, "Old House at Home: McSorley's Café," *The New Yorker*, 13 April 1940, 20–24.

⁴Berenice Abbott, *McSorley's Ale House, 15 East 7th Street, Manhattan* [Interior Facing Door], Photograph, November 1, 1937, New York Public Library, New York City; Berenice Abbott, *McSorley's Ale House, 15 East 7th Street, Manhattan* [Interior Facing Bar], Photograph, November 1, 1937, New York Public Library, New York City.



Figure 1: McSorley's Ale House, November 1937



Figure 2: McSorley's Ale House, November 1937

Throughout your day, who you are has affected where you can go and how others treat you. McSorley's is no exception. If you are black, you probably leave immediately. All the other customers are white men, and your health or dignity is not worth a drink. If you are a woman, O'Conner rushes over, takes you by the elbow, and says, "Madam, I'm sorry, but we don't serve ladies" and hurries you out the door.⁵ Old John started this tradition. He believed that men could not relax and enjoy their ale with women around, so he had never let a woman drink in his saloon. Bill McSorley so idolized his father that he kept everything exactly the same, including the no-women rule. Rumor has it that Bill made O'Connor agree to keep McSorley's exactly the same as a condition of the sale. Once outside, you now see a sign that reads, "Notice: No Back Room in Here for Ladies."⁶

Let us imagine for the moment that you are a white man. You quickly realize that McSorley's caters more to its regulars than to strangers off the street.⁷ You buy yourself a mug of ale and keep to yourself. While waiting for your ale, you notice a painted portrait of a man. Curious, you ask the bartender about the portrait. He replies that it is Peter Cooper, former president of the North American Telegraph Company and founder of Cooper Union. With the Union being just half a block away, Cooper often came in for a drink. In his last years, he spent so many afternoons in the backroom talking to workingmen who patronized McSorley's that Old John gave Cooper his own chair with an inflated rubber bladder. Cooper died on April 4, 1883, and Old John draped the chair

⁵Mitchell, "Old House," 20.

⁶Mitchell, "Old House," 20.

⁷H. Hapgood, "McSorley's Saloon," *Harper's Weekly* 25 October 1913, 15.

in a black cloth on that day for years afterward. Nodding, you quietly drink your ale as you admire Old John's memorabilia.⁸

When you leave McSorley's (willingly or unwillingly), you decide to walk up Third Avenue. The buildings lining the street stand as monuments to an earlier era, an age in which your neighborhood contained nearly everything you needed in everyday life. The edifices, each several decades old, resemble McSorley's: four and five stories, constructed of brick, a business on the ground floor, and tenement apartments on the rest.⁹ You think it strange that McSorley's has remained the same while all of the enterprises around have changed over the decades. You stop in at several stores, and each time you leave one of them, you cannot help but notice the skyscrapers that tower above. If these brick buildings represent community, those taller structures symbolize the current period in which business is more impersonal and further separated from residential areas.

The rattle of the elevated train going by snaps you out of your thoughts. You notice that you are standing on the corner of Third Avenue and Forty-Fourth Street. Suddenly, your stomach grumbles, and you realize that you are hungry. Checking your watch, you realize that it is 5 p.m.; you have not had anything to eat since that sandwich you purchased around noon, and you cannot wait until you get home. You look around, hoping a restaurant is nearby, and you notice that 701 Third Avenue has a sign reading Costello's Bar and Grill. Before entering, you stop for a moment to take in the building. It is a two-story brick structure that stands out amidst its four- and five- story neighbors.

⁸Mitchell, "Old House," 21.

⁹*Manhattan: 3rd Avenue–44th Street*, Photograph, c. 1920, New York Public Library; *Manhattan: 44th Street (East)–3rd Avenue*, Photograph, 1927, New York Public Library.

A picture window occupies the space immediately to the right of the door.¹⁰ You pull open the door and enter, hoping for a decent meal.



Figure 3: Manhattan: 3rd Avenue–44th Street, c. 1920



Figure 4: Manhattan: 44th Street (East)-3rd Avenue, 1927

¹⁰“Old Haunt of Literati, Costello’s, Is Closing,” *New York Times*, 3 October 1973.

Once inside, you see that this establishment is more bar than grill. The room has the faint smell of tobacco, and the aroma of food cooking wafts out from the kitchen. Someone has simply written the menu on a chalkboard near the kitchen door. The bar sits along one wall, while about six or eight booths line the other. You immediately notice that, unlike McSorley's, a line of stools sit in front of the mahogany bar, with a rail along the floor on which to rest your feet. Suddenly, you take notice of something on the wall above the booths: drawings. Someone has filled the beaverboard panels above the booths with drawings; the subject appears to be the battle of the sexes. The topic immediately identifies the artist as James Thurber, but you cannot figure out how those cartoons got on the wall.¹¹

Moving further into the room, you notice that both men and women occupy the booths. You see that some of the women have liquor or cocktails in front of them, indicating that the owner will serve alcohol to people regardless of their gender. You decide to eat at the bar, seeing it has only a few people, so you move to sit near a man at the far end. You notice that despite this being a bar he is drinking tea. You sit down just as the evening bartender, who is just starting his shift, finishes saying hello to all the customers sitting at the bar. When he sees your confused expression, he says bartenders in this part of the city traditionally greet each customer at the bar when coming on duty.¹²

After ordering something to eat and drink, you ask the bartender, whose name is Paddy, about the illustrations on the wall. Suddenly, the tea-drinking man speaks up and says James did not have a lot of money when he first came to New York. Whenever

¹¹“Thurber Creatures ‘Live’ Again in Bar Here,” *New York Times*, 9 April 1972.

¹²John McNulty, “A Man’s Going into the Army What Can You Do About It?,” *Third Avenue, New York* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1946), 76.

James came into the bar, he, the tea drinker, would give the struggling artist something to eat. James repaid this kindness with the drawings. The tea drinker then introduces himself as Tim Costello, the owner of the bar. Curious, you decide to press him for a little more information about who drinks here. Not expecting an answer, Tim surprises you by listing writers you have heard at least a little about. Joseph Mitchell, Ernest Hemingway, A.J. Liebling, John Steinbeck, Walt Kelly, and John Groth are all regulars. Oliver St. John Gogarty answers the phone when he is here; John McNulty, another regular, has started to base short stories about Third Avenue on Costello's.¹³ Dinny, the waiter, arrives with your food, and as you start eating, it sinks in that the literati, both famous and rising, hang out at this place you entered on impulse.

A walk of slightly less than two miles separated McSorley's and Costello's when they both existed, but the journey in the above story to patronize both places in one day would have taken a person through history. McSorley's, a saloon, was an anachronism by the 1930s, one of the last survivors of a past age in which public drinking establishments had swinging doors, nickel beer, and free lunch. Saloons were homosocial, only partially profit-driven businesses that sold alcohol by the glass for consumption on the premises. Owners actively sought to make men the primary clientele of these businesses, and saloon-going men, as the customers, at best tolerated women in the backroom. Meanwhile, Costello's was a bar, the retail business that succeeded the saloon. Bars are heterosocial, profit-driven businesses. Unlike the saloon, the bar also sells food, and both men and women patronize these establishments, using these places as equals.

¹³Joe McCarthy, "Costello's: The Wayward Saloon," *Holiday*, October 1959, 110, 112.

From a historical perspective, respectable men and women drinking alcohol together in bars is a relatively new affair; it has been socially acceptable only since approximately the 1930s. It also represents a significant departure from the norms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From 1870 to 1920, the saloon was the place outside the home where men drank alcohol. These places were so common that historians who study this era call it the saloon period. Saloons also functioned as community centers at times. People held wakes there; unions commonly used them as their first lodge headquarters; and politicians stopped by to campaign because local men gathered there nightly. This made the saloonkeeper a valued member of political machines, and he sometimes became a politician. According to historians, single working women occasionally used these places, while married working-class women drank only in the home. Then, historians claim Prohibition destroyed the saloon, but they say almost nothing about how the saloon became the bar, the transition from homosocial to heterosocial drinking, or how these changes reflected and constituted society at the time.

This study delves into an unexplored area of American history by chronologically extending the history of U.S. drinking establishments beyond the first third of the twentieth century. Historians have consistently used drinking establishments to explore the larger societies in which they existed. Scholars who study the tavern have shown how it changed with the rise of democracy and equality in the colonial and early republic periods. Kym S. Rice's *Early American Taverns: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* highlights the tavern's importance as a meeting place in the everyday life of

eighteenth-century men.¹⁴ David W. Conroy's book, *In Public Houses: Drink & the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts*, studies how the tavern reflected the early public sphere and the transition from a hierarchical social structure to a more egalitarian one, including how elites attempted to fight this change.¹⁵ In *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing & Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia*, Peter Thompson argues that the tavern's popularity and significance resulted from its clientele's recognizing it as a public space.¹⁶ Sharon Salinger examines how taverns helped preserve traditional culture rather than changing it in *Taverns and Drinking in Early America*.¹⁷ The tavern acted as a gathering place for primarily men in the colonial era, which made it a microcosm for the development of public life and culture in America.

Saloons also have their own historiography. Due to the number of men who gathered in saloons on a nightly basis, historians have used these places for a purpose similar to that of the tavern. These authors contend that the saloon constituted a crucial part in the growth of cities and in the formation of an industrial working class. They study this business from one of three different perspectives. First, historians use the saloon to examine the common experiences of people. They show that saloons in the same region or set of places had similar characteristics and histories, leading scholars to

¹⁴Kym S. Rice, *Early American Taverns: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983).

¹⁵David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink & the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

¹⁶Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing & Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

¹⁷Sharon Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

conclude that the people who used these places had related experiences in them. For example, Elliott West, in *The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier*, performs a regional study to show that people in mining boomtowns shared comparable experiences.¹⁸ Perry R. Duis's *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880–1920* uses the activities surrounding public drinking in saloons to demonstrate that cities in the United States shared a common urban experience.¹⁹ Another approach to using the saloon as a window into common experience is to examine working-class customs there. In *Faces along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman's Saloon, 1870–1920*, Madelon Powers studies saloons to show how they promoted the development of urban communities during the period of her study. She is the first historian to study saloons nationally, which she justifies by using the analogy of a schoolyard to explain the reason for a national scale.²⁰ For these authors, the shared experiences of people extended through all aspects of their lives, including where they drank.

Second, historians who use saloons as windows into society focus on a particular socioeconomic group (the working class in this case) and how they perceived their role in society. In “The ‘Poor Man’s Club’: Social Functions of the Urban Working-Class Saloon,” Jon M. Kingsdale believes historians can gain a better understanding of the working class by studying the saloon. He argues that “the saloon . . . was a community center tending to give some coherence to neighborhoods by focusing the attention of

¹⁸Elliott West, *The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), xiii.

¹⁹Perry R. Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 14.

²⁰Madelon Powers, *Faces along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman's Saloon, 1870–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3–4.

male residents upon the people and events in the area.”²¹ Roy Rosenzweig, in *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920*, proposes that “the study of working-class recreation . . . provides a building block for more general theorizing about the nature of working-class life in America” and argues that workers “successfully protected their leisure time and space from outside encroachment.”²² Working-class men, with this framework, did not leave their identities, their problems, and their culture at the door of the saloon; they brought everything in with them and flexed their identities there. Finally, historians use the saloon as a window into socio-cultural problems. This type of analysis is similar to the Prohibition literature in that the authors concentrate on problems related to alcohol but do not blame the saloon for these issues. The trouble was simply most apparent there. For example, Elaine Frantz Parsons’s article, “Risky Business: The Uncertain Boundaries of Manhood in the Midwestern Saloon,” shows how the saloon reflected the instability of gender definitions after the Civil War. She argues that these places were significant in the construction of manhood but did not offer men a stable ideal.²³ This historiography shows that historians have consistently used drinking establishments to explore the larger societies in which they existed.

The bar, like its predecessors, also says something about the society in which it emerged. This dissertation addresses a variety of questions. One of these queries asks how the cultural work of drinking establishments changed as the saloon became the bar.

²¹Jon M. Kingsdale, “The ‘Poor Man’s Club’: Social Functions of the Urban Working-Class Saloon,” *American Quarterly* 25 (October 1973): 488.

²²Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4–5.

²³Elaine Frantz Parsons, “Risky Business: The Uncertain Boundaries of Manhood in the Midwestern Saloon,” *Journal of Social History* 34 (Winter 2000): 283–307.

The saloon, with the aid of alcohol, had performed the cultural work of helping to define masculinity for working-class men. The important underlying concept here is that people enjoyed each other's company in a setting with a particular commodity. This indicates that a relationship existed between sociability, consumption, and space. A gradual change in one of these factors could change the entire relationship and the place's culture work in the process. During the saloon-to-bar transition, heterosociability surrounding the consumption of alcohol emerged. One of the main questions I ask is why this happened. During this transformation, mores changed enough to allow respectable women to use these places with few negative social repercussions, suggesting a new kind of social equality. What public drinking and its establishments meant to people also underwent a transformation due to these changes. Similar to Duis, I will discuss the ebbing of the political power of drinking establishments, asking how the saloon-to-bar transition affected the role of drinking establishments in politics. I will specifically question to what degree the alcohol-politics relationship changed after the bar's emergence and what role Prohibition played in this relationship's change over time. These questions will point to the characteristics of the saloon that carried over into the bar, what changed, and why.

The saloon-to-bar transformation will also speak to other questions concerning drinking establishments and society. Five key questions serve as touchstones for the saloon-to-bar transition. The question of when men and women began drinking together in public sets the earliest possible date for the transformation to begin. The queries of when the term *bar* acquired the meaning of "drinking establishment" and when the popular media began using the word *bar* to identify drinking establishments will indicate

when a majority of people began to shift their thinking from the homosocial saloon to the heterosocial bar. Asking when the bar emerged as a distinct business will show around what year the transition ended. Finally, determining how the bar compared to the saloon architecturally and in terms of material culture will help establish how these two businesses were different.

Another area this project will speak to is consumer culture, which was in the process of forming when the bar began to emerge. Although typically not studied from the perspective of consumer culture, drinking establishments were commercial places designed as sites of consumption, similar to amusement parks, dance halls, or department stores. This dissertation asks, “How did the bar constitute contemporary practices of consumption?”

The examination of commercial space has served two purposes in the history of consumer culture. First, it has helped scholars to understand the relationship between consumers and their goods, because the places where people purchased their commodities helped determine the products’ meaning. Second, commercial space has helped historians understand the public sphere and its relationship to civil society.²⁴ This study of drinking establishments—a type of commercial space that had had a longstanding role in the public sphere—speaks to both of these purposes. For example, I ask how consumer culture contributed to the depoliticization of drinking establishments. One of the key transformations from the saloon to the bar was that the bar was no longer a

²⁴For more information on the rise and fall of the public sphere, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence, (Cambridge, Mass., 1989); Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1997).

political site. For centuries, drinking establishments served as loci of political activity. By the time the bar emerged as a distinct business, municipalities had stopped using drinking establishments as polling places and politicians rarely campaigned there actively. This suggests that the formation of consumer culture may have changed the political meaning of alcohol and public drinking. This question allows me to explore the idea that consumption takes place in particular settings, and that the way people viewed the commodities they consumed changed as the places did. In order to fulfill these goals, historians use questions like how the people who mediated the consumer-commodity relationship (i.e., advertisers, department store owners and managers, and window dressers) attempted to affect the buyer's perception of the items. They also ask how the commodities people purchased affected their everyday lives, especially in terms of the way they understood their society and their role in it.

I also consider how a limited view of consumer culture has excluded products and locations for immediate consumption, such as alcohol and public drinking establishments. Historians have narrowly defined the type of products that qualify to be part of the consumer culture and who purchased and used these products. The authors in classic works such as Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears' *The Culture of Consumption* and Simon Bronner's *Consuming Visions* concentrate almost entirely on nonperishable, durable goods—things that people used away from the point of sale and over the long term, such as clothing, furniture, and appliances. Another category of products historians sometimes study is the selling of concepts for consumption, such as the images of politicians or the space program.²⁵ So for example, Lizabeth Cohen

²⁵Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880–1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983); Simon Bronner, ed.,

examines the politics surrounding mass consumption after World War II in *A Consumers' Republic* by focusing mainly on durable products, with the exception of part of chapter 4, where she looks at race and public accommodation.²⁶ The study of commodities for on-the-spot consumption (such as alcohol, food, hotel rooms, amusement park tickets, or any number of other products) changes this historiography by expanding the fundamental definition of what historians consider to be consumption. Drinking alcohol is one of the most obvious—because it was both massively a popular product and a hugely controversial one—and least studied types of consumption in American history. The saloon-to-bar transformation reveals that the purpose of public drinking changed over the course of sixty years. These changes, in turn, influenced the attempts to maintain a specific vision of the public drinking culture and its establishments before Prohibition, and the efforts to restructure them after repeal.

Questions of consumption also invariably involve questions of gender. One issue that the consumer culture literature explores is how consumption reflected and determined the way people defined their identities. Historians of consumption believe that modern consumer society began to emerge around the 1890s.²⁷ By 1900, many people used commodity consumption to define and express who they were. Consumption was transformed into something not just necessary but acceptable and even admirable.

Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America, 1880–1920 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989).

See also, Roger Horowitz and Arwen Mohun, eds., *His and Hers: Gender, Consumption and Technology* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998).

²⁶Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 173–191.

²⁷T.J. Jackson Lears, “From Salvation to Self-Realization: Advertisement and the Therapeutic Roots of the Consumer Culture, 1880–1930,” in *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays In American History, 1880–1980*, ed. Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 3, 10.

This new attitude created a recursive relationship between identity and consumption. The new generation used consumption to demonstrate that its way of life, and therefore its identity, was virtuous. As this cohort increasingly purchased goods, consumption acquired a positive connotation. This development created a cycle of reinforcement between behavior and meaning, marked by a shift in notions of morality. As children of the Victorian era came of age, they began to reject the popular ethos of salvation through self-denial to which their parents had adhered and instead began to accept the idea of self-realization through therapeutic consumption. The salvation ethos involved working hard, being civically responsible, and saving money, making consumption (with its negative connotation of to use up or destroy) a bad thing. Historians of consumption also have almost invariably utilized a paradigm in which men produced household goods like clothing and furniture while women consumed them, turning this aspect of consumer culture in the United States into a largely feminine activity from around the late 1880s to sometime in the twentieth century.²⁸ Although Mark Swiencicki tries to address this imbalance by showing how men were also consumers of these goods, neither he nor any other historian of consumer culture examines products that both men women had had access to and desired to use.²⁹

²⁸T.J. Jackson Lears, "From Salvation to Self-Realization," in *The Culture of Consumption*, ed. Lears and Fox, 26–27; William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993); Mark Swiencicki, "Consuming Brotherhood: Men's Culture, Style, and Recreation as Consumer Culture, 1880–1930," *Journal of Social History* 31 (1998): 773–774, especially endnote 2; T.J. Jackson Lears, "Beyond Veblen: Rethinking Consumer Culture in America," in *Consuming Visions*, ed. Bronner, 87; Jean-Christophe Agnew, "A House of Fiction: Domestic Interiors and the Commodity Aesthetic," in *Consuming Visions*, ed. Bronner, 133–155; Steven Lubar, "Men/Women/Production/Consumption," in *His and Hers*, ed. Horowitz and Mohun, 7–37. See also, Jennifer Scanlon, ed., *The Gender and Consumer Culture Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

²⁹Swiencicki, "Consuming Brotherhood," 773–808.

Historians have implied, but have not fully examined the idea, that certain everyday commodities that initially had highly gendered uses eventually came to possess few gendered connotations. Alcohol and its consumption in public was the clearest example of such a product and best demonstrated the impact gender had on the activities and ideas surrounding this product—and on the people who used it to express their identities. Contrary to the current historical narrative and sometimes popular perception, men and women throughout the twentieth century had increasingly equal access to alcohol and consumed it in what were increasingly the same kinds of settings. Before 1920, men and women kept their own homosocial drinking spheres, in which public drinking had different meanings for each gender. The emergence of a heterosocial drinking culture and a setting for it after 1920 became possible, in part, because both men and women had both been able to drink in public for at least the previous twenty years. This study of public drinking thus better demonstrates the ways men were consumers and the influence men and women had on the changes surrounding a commodity when they both increasingly used it.

Through this relationship between consumption and identity, the transformation of gender during the twentieth century became an important influence on public drinking and its establishments. Men, for example, used the saloon and then the bar in an effort to struggle against changes in male gender identity. Peter Filene in *Him/Her/Self* and Michael Kimmel in *Manhood in America* both assert that men, throughout most of the twentieth century, lacked a stable measure for their gender identity. In order to remedy this situation, they created organizations and took part in activities as part of an effort to recapture the social dynamics of the nineteenth century, when they felt themselves to be

the undisputed masters of both society and their own lives.³⁰ Elliott Gorn argues that men's enthusiasm for prizefighting was an example of this phenomenon.³¹ In one sense, this dissertation offers another constitutive example of this trend, but it adds to the current historiography by demonstrating how men attempted to create the situations they needed in which to act out their gender identity, both by preserving older drinking traditions, and even to the point of writing an invented past for these traditions. Drinking in the saloon of the early twentieth century provided men with an activity and a place they could act out the dying ideal of manhood, this despite the fact that such use of the saloon caused this business type to decline in importance. This trend escalated after Prohibition when some men successfully rewrote the past to give themselves a historically uncontested control over public drinking and even attempted from the 1930s to the 1960s to recreate the homosocial environment of the saloon. Rather than just looking to history for inspiration, some men actively attempted to revive or revise the past to match their view of their gender identity.

Meanwhile, women changed female gender identity in ways that increasingly brought middle-class women into public and gradually altered people's attitudes toward public drinking. The existing general narrative of female gender historiography states that these women became increasingly politically active during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and steadily began to assert themselves in activities and spaces once thought to be exclusively men's domains. Sharon Wood, for example, uses efforts to

³⁰Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

³¹Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prizefighting in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

address urban prostitution in order to examine the relationship between the increasing numbers of women working in the late nineteenth century and their growing political activity.³² To take another very prominent example of middle-class women's activism, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women led much of the crusade to ban alcohol and destroy the saloon, indicating they wanted to put an end to this space or activity, *not* to be included in it. Catherine Gilbert Murdock studies how women's political activity during this period led to them having access to beverage alcohol in the home.³³ In part, the emergence of women into public drinking was a constitutive example of the emergence of the New Woman into public, but this historiography does not adequately address the change in attitudes represented in the saloon-to-bar transformation. After all, by the 1960s and 1970s, women struggled to fully establish in law their right to drink alcohol publicly in the same space as men, a dramatic change from what their mothers and grandmothers had sought earlier in the century. This study of public drinking shows that the change in attitude towards alcohol began no later than the early twentieth century with the transformation of female gender identity, and that it influenced the struggle to create a heterosocial drinking environment.

The emergence of the bar from the saloon occurred as a constitutive part of changes in consumption and gender identity during the twentieth century. The advent of heterosocial leisure options like amusement parks, dance halls, vaudeville houses, and movies theaters signified the development of a consumer culture in which the use of

³²Sharon E. Wood, *The Freedom of the Streets: Work, Citizenship, and Sexuality in a Gilded Age City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

³³Catherine Gilbert Murdock, *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870–1940* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

certain products and services increasingly had similar meanings for men and women. The saloon was the only one of these places that exclusively sold alcohol, and the contentiousness of this commodity created a different kind of recursive relationship between the setting and society than existed in other businesses. Public drinking had a longer history than most other recreational choices, allowing it to act as a window into long-term changes in American society and culture better than most of its competitors. Drinking establishments reflected and reinforced the way men and women viewed themselves, and these businesses, as commercial spaces, sold a commodity that allowed men and women to participate in the customs that reinforced these identities. The resulting activity and setting were microcosms of society that changed as these factors transformed over the course of the twentieth century. The saloon-to-bar transformation represented not only the creation of a new public drinking culture but also the emergence of new standards for gendered consumption.

PART 1

PUBLIC DRINKING, C. 1900 TO JANUARY 1920

McSorley's Old Alehouse had become a testimonial to permanence by 1900, thanks primarily to John McSorley. He followed the same routine each day during his ownership of the establishment. He woke up at five a.m. every morning and walked to the Battery and back. At seven, he opened the saloon, swept the floor, and sprinkled new sawdust. Around noon, he laid out a free lunch consisting of soda crackers, raw onions, and cheese. Old John managed a racehorse for years, which he kept in a stable around the corner. On nice days, he had the sulky brought to the saloon in the afternoon, so he could groom the horse when business was slow. Customers wanting service while Old John was outside tapped on the front window to get his attention.¹ Even though he could have stayed open until one a.m., Old John closed McSorley's around midnight, so he could go to bed.² Old John created the atmosphere, the rules, and the customs specific to his saloon. Patrons either acceded to his decisions or they drank elsewhere.

Old John died in 1910, and an event that transpired shortly after his funeral represented the effort, even the necessity, of keeping McSorley's the same. Although Old John did not consider himself retired until a few years before his death, he had turned

¹Joseph Mitchell, *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1943), 5–7.

²H. Hapgood, "McSorley's Saloon," *Harper's Weekly*, 25 October 1913, 15.

the day-to-day duties over to his son William, Bill for short, in 1890 by making him head bartender. Bill idolized his father, “but no one was aware of the profundity of his worship until Old John died.”³ Shortly after the funeral, Bill locked himself away in the tavern’s building for an entire week. One day during this period, he went downstairs to the saloon with a screwdriver and a hammer. Old John had collected a significant amount of memorabilia over the course of his life. He had hung them haphazardly on the walls with wires and nails, and customers had frequently taken down items to look at them. Bill, on this day, firmly secured everything to walls. From that point forward, he did his best to “keep McSorley’s exactly as it had been in his father’s time.”⁴ Bill had decided to tie McSorley’s to the traditions his father had created rather than remake it into his own business.

The above story represents the long-standing belief that the saloon possessed a cultural and historical continuity untouchable by change. Historians studying the saloon infuse this place with a sense of stability for a period of forty to fifty years, asserting that it was a stable, well-established institution that catered to a male, working-class clientele. Perry Duis, in *The Saloon*, states that his “study contrasts the saloon as a semipublic institution in two important American cities, Boston and Chicago . . . [which] by their similarities, help form the notion that a shared urban experience is crucial part of the nation’s history.”⁵ He also shows, perhaps unintentionally, that the social uses, business

³Mitchell, *McSorley’s*, 8.

⁴Mitchell, *McSorley’s*, 8.

⁵Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 6.

practices, and illegal activities of the saloon did not change during the forty-year period of his book.⁶ Roy Rosenzweig's *Eight Hours for What We Will* uses the saloon to investigate working-class leisure and middle-class attempts to control it from 1870 to 1920. He states, "This study of working-class recreational patterns in Worcester, Massachusetts . . . attempts to contribute to a more comprehensive history of the American working class in its broadest social, economic, and political context."⁷ Although he demonstrates that patron's attitudes toward and use of the saloon changed over time, he inadvertently reveals that the place itself remained the same.⁸ Madelon Powers explores saloon customs and traditional entertainments from 1870 to 1920 in her book, *Faces along the Bar*. She states that "[s]uch a sweeping approach is feasible because of the peculiar nature of barroom culture in which tradition plays such a central and stabilizing role. . . . [T]he barroom was (and still remains) an intensely conservative and traditional place in many respects. . . . This tenacity of tradition makes it possible to study fifty years of saloongoing as a reasonably consistent whole."⁹ The problem with this historiography is the assumption that the saloon remained the same during an era of major transformations in the United States. This particular matter of a seemingly unchanging saloon, however, did not originate with historians; saloongoers around 1900 began this issue.

⁶Duis, *The Saloon*.

These endeavors included selling alcohol by the glass, acted as local gathering places, offered services (such as check cashing and free lunches), played a role in local politics, and were sometimes involved in criminal activities. See, *ibid*.

⁷Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers & Leisure In An Industrial City, 1870–1920* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 3.

⁸Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours*.

⁹Madelon Powers, *Faces along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman's Saloon, 1870–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4.

Men in the early twentieth century made the saloon into a unique place of leisure by trying to reconcile the traditional elements of public drinking with the demands of a changing society. Similar to the way Bill McSorley fastened his father's memorabilia to the walls of the alehouse, male drinkers had fixed in their minds a vision of the way these businesses needed to be. They believed the saloon had to be homosocial, offer certain services, and reflect their dominance over the public drinking. During this period, however, men and the saloon encountered enormous pressure from both internal and external sources. Culturally, a female homosocial drinking sphere began to challenge the male one. In addition, the emergence of mixed-gender leisure enterprises promoted changes in sociability while offering recreational alternatives to the saloon. In an era where it faced competition from the new heterosocial entertainments, it was one of the only places where patrons followed a well-established culture in the course of their leisure. This link to a time-honored tradition made it difficult for these places to adapt to a changing environment. Economically, the tied-house system, the high-license movement, and bottled beer strained the unprofitable business model under which saloonkeepers operated. These concerns drove many owners to find additional, often illegal, ways to make money, practices that provided prohibitionists with an ever-increasing list of reasons why the saloon be destroyed. The continuity of the saloon during the first two decades of the twentieth century concealed the tensions that were beginning to change the character of public drinking.

CHAPTER 1

THE ILLUSIONS OF THE SALOON

The saloon's continuity during the first two decades of the twentieth century stemmed from a drinking culture that had not changed for at least a century and a business model that was very difficult to modify. As a center of leisure, the saloon appeared to offer a not unusual, type of recreation when compared to its competition, but a closer examination of drinking establishments reveals the uniqueness of these places. The saloon housed a public drinking culture of which the major features were in place no later than 1800. In addition, saloons were the only places of public entertainment that had a physical layout reflecting and reinforcing the drinking tradition, yet failing to incorporate the changing conditions of society. As a business, the saloon appeared to be a profitable enterprise, but saloonkeepers faced obstacles at virtually every turn in their pursuit of operating a successful establishment. Although saloons were designed for the efficient sale of alcohol, governments and brewers made more money from these places than did the owners, who faced probable bankruptcy if they obeyed the law. Meanwhile, all effort by any group to alter the model under which these businesses operated often met resistance from customers and some owners. This sword of Damocles forced proprietors to use devious and illicit practices just to remain solvent. Observers of the

saloon failed to acknowledge that changes in society had begun to transform its leisure and consumption roles by 1900.

An Illusion of Mainstream Leisure

The traits that defined the saloon and public drinking during the first two decades of the twentieth century made this place and activity an increasingly unique leisure option. The saloon's traditional characteristics had originated decades, if not centuries, before this particular version of the basic drinking establishment actually emerged. This helped to create a situation where these establishments faced pressure from a changing society but were unable to adjust to a new urban environment. To begin with, the saloon was a homosocial environment at a time of increasing options for heterosocial entertainment. Consequently, although saloons shared some elements with the establishments that competed with them for the public's patronage, the single-sex drinking tradition provided these places a truly distinctive character. Moreover, saloons were the recreational setting that by the twentieth century served by far the most important role in electoral politics. The reasons social commentators identified as to why working-class men drank in these places reflected a modern urban and industrial society. Yet, at the same time, the saloon was one of the only leisure settings that preserved a great many longstanding and increasingly outdated characteristics of sociability.

The characteristics that seemed to define the saloon and public drinking from 1870 to 1920 appeared in society as early as the founding of the British North American colonies. The most important feature in the drinking tradition, the one that gave men

control over this activity for centuries and had the largest influence on the space in which it occurred, was homosociability. British and Dutch colonists brought the idea of a single-gender environment from Europe when they began settling North America. This practice was so common in English pubs that any man not participating in it lost some of the respect of his fellows. Steve Pincus, in “‘Coffee Politicians Does Create,’” asserted that “[j]ust as puritans were vilified for their failure to participate in traditional English pastimes, so coffeehouse denizens were ridiculed for the abstention from traditional masculine recreations,” indicating that drinking in public houses was a vital exercise of early manhood.¹ Popular images from England and Holland from around the same time also depicted homosocial drinking. The illustrations in *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* by Sharon Salinger that showed alcohol consumption as an orderly social activity also had the groups composed overwhelmingly of men, suggesting that they dominated this pastime in Europe.² European men brought these notions to the colonies and continued to find them attractive throughout the seventeenth century, as demonstrated by their attempt to control access to taverns through legal means. Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia all enacted legislation that prevented servants, slaves, minors, and apprentices from drinking in these places without the permission of their masters. These laws rarely mentioned women, but Salinger argues that this legislation probably affected them too. Virginia justified its law by claiming that the prohibited groups, those dependents, could not be held legally responsible for their actions. This injunction probably included married women, who at the time were the

¹Steve Pincus, “‘Coffee Politicians Does Create’: Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture,” *The Journal of Modern History* 67 (December 1995): 823.

²Sharon Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 12.

legal dependents of their husbands. Salinger also maintains that such a ban would be consistent with society's belief that "good wives" should labor continually for the wellbeing of their families and not waste time with things like drinking alcohol.³ By perpetuating homosociability in public drinking, British and Dutch colonists entrenched a practice that shaped perceptions about alcohol consumption for approximately the next three hundred years.

Male dominance of public drinking was unabated throughout the eighteenth century and into nineteenth, demonstrated by men's near exclusive participation in this activity. Peter Thompson, in *Rum Punch and Revolution*, argues that men were the predominant participants in the public drinking culture by the eighteenth century. He claims, "Timeserving clerks, master craftsmen, artisans, laborers, and occasionally their wives and sweethearts visited taverns. . . . Awakened Protestants and 'respectable' women . . . used taverns rarely, entering public houses on special occasions or when no other meeting place or site of accommodation was available."⁴ Respectable women used taverns so rarely that they felt uncomfortable when they did enter one.⁵ When Katherine Farham Hay stopped in New York City in 1778, her escort felt "'very uneasy' about leaving her alone in a tavern. 'I was in great distress,' the lady wrote her sister, 'but what could I do in a publick House.'"⁶ Her comment intimated that the number of men drinking and the lack of privacy prevented her from acting like a proper lady, causing her

³Salinger, *Drinking in Early America*, 22–23.

⁴Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing & Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 75.

⁵Kym S. Rice, *Early American Taverns: For the Entertainment of Friends and Strangers* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1983), 21.

⁶Rice, *Early American Taverns*, 75.

distress. By the 1790s, “almost all men who worked for a living . . . put aside their labors for a few minutes to enjoy what they called the ‘eleven o’clock bitters,’ a cross between . . . the modern coffee break and happy hour.”⁷ In terms of hard liquor alone, this practice meant that men publicly consumed more alcohol than women. W. J. Rorabaugh, in *The Alcoholic Republic*, asserts that by the 1820s “half the adult males—one-eighth of the total population—were drinking two-thirds of all the distilled spirits consumed.”⁸ By the nineteenth century, men sustained their dominance over public drinking through a process of cultural induction. They learned to drink as children, Rorabaugh explains, and turned “drinking at a public house . . . [into] a mark of manhood The male drinking cult pervaded all social and occupational groups.”⁹

The homosocial nature of public drinking helped to determine the other elements of the public drinking culture, as demonstrated by eighteenth-century Philadelphia taverns. For example, men’s dominance over this activity and the physical layout of taverns prompted the formation of large groups in the public consumption of alcohol. A significant volume of the activity in the average tavern took place in one or two public rooms on the first floor. This space generally had one table with either benches or chairs on which patrons sat.¹⁰ Thompson has discovered that “[t]he single oblong table around which patrons of Three Tuns sat was typical of the furnishing of bar space in

⁷Eric Burns, *The Spirits of America: A Social History of Alcohol* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 12.

This book is, at best, only a semi-scholarly source. Burns cites all the direct quotes and provides a selected bibliography, but he does not cite all the information he uses.

⁸W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 11.

⁹Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 14.

¹⁰Rice, *Early American Taverns*, 24–25, 34.

Philadelphia's taverns during the colonial period."¹¹ This arrangement prevented patrons from finding any significant privacy in these places. "During this period few taverns offered private meeting rooms. Booths and banquettes were unknown," leading to large groups of men all gathering together.¹² In addition, this crowd consisted of men from all classes of society using the tavern for a variety of purposes, including club meetings, business, politics, judicial proceedings, and recreation.¹³ Men who shared similar occupations, social standing, or interests sometimes attempted to dominate particular taverns, but the heterogeneous composition of the crowd limited the success of their efforts.¹⁴ Homosociability and the design of taverns encouraged large drinking groups, the composition of which sustained the idea of general male equality in public drinking.

The single-gender environment assured that it was only intended for men to drink in the tavern, but the gradually emerging class differences among the patrons created an underlying tension that men diffused through using alcohol as a facilitator of sociability.¹⁵ Until the advent of establishments that catered to specific groups beginning around the 1770s, men used a variety of devices to create sense of equality among drinkers and dispel class pressures.¹⁶ One method was the formation of clubs, both formal and informal. Any man who proved himself worthy could normally join one of these companies, many of which met in taverns despite their need for a measure of

¹¹Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 83–84.

¹²Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 83–84.

¹³Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 83–86.

¹⁴Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 77.

¹⁵Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 76, 83.

¹⁶Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 93.

privacy.¹⁷ These societies found that meeting in taverns allowed the members to interact with each other without the constraint of women. In addition, they were able to drink heavily and talk without restraint. Their behavior led to the inaccurate perception on the part of women and excluded men that the purpose of these clubs was only to drink.¹⁸ Another custom involved the observance of certain drinking traditions (such as treating, singing, and toasting) to generate at least a temporary equality.¹⁹ Thompson asserts, “The act of drinking and conversing in shared premises implied a measure of equality between men upon which the mores of taverngoing in colonial Philadelphia sought, with some success, to elaborate and build.”²⁰ Toasting, for example, “promoted a style of drinking that identified and built upon what a company had in common, and created stylized conversational exchanges between men drawn from various ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds. . . . As with songs, sharing the sentiments of a toast and being able to join in bound a drinker to the group in which he drank.”²¹ Through these customs, men of different classes and backgrounds created a temporary sense of equality upon which they based their interaction the tavern.

The single-gender environment of the tavern and the large number of men who regularly patronized these places also gave public drinking a political component. The utility of public drinking establishments in symbolic politics was a well-established convention by the end of the seventeenth century. This characteristic began in Europe as

¹⁷Salinger, *Drinking in Early America*, 80; Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 84.

¹⁸Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 84–85.

¹⁹Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 77.

²⁰Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 78.

²¹Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 99.

a symbolic measure to demonstrate loyalty to the current monarch and probably allowed men to measure the worth of their companions, like it did in the colonies.²² In England, “[d]rinking English ale and English beer . . . proved the ultimate litmus test for royalists. At the Restoration, Gilbert Burnet remembered, drinking ‘healths, particularly the King’s’ was ‘set up by too many as a distinguishing mark of loyalty.’”²³ According to Pincus, such a display was a “traditional English practice of political loyalty,” suggesting the connotation associated with the toasts to the king’s health was centuries old by the Restoration.²⁴ The colonists continued practicing these traditions to demonstrate their allegiance to crown. In late-seventeenth-century Massachusetts, any man who did not drink a series of “healths” to the king risked his fellows suspecting him of disloyalty.²⁵ Similarly, the people of Rappahannock County, Virginia spent ten thousand pounds of tobacco on alcohol in 1688 to celebrate the birth of James II’s son.²⁶ The public consumption of alcohol allowed men simultaneously to display their political loyalties and to reinforce their membership in the group.

In the British North American colonies, taverns transformed from centers of symbolic politics to centers of electoral politics during the eighteenth century. According to Thompson, politicians in England commonly used techniques like treating for political mobilization and electioneering by the eighteenth century, although he does not say when

²²Salinger, *Drinking in Early America*, 70.

²³Pincus, “Coffee Politicians Does Create,” 825.

²⁴Pincus, “Coffee Politicians Does Create,” 825.

²⁵David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink & the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 24–25.

²⁶Salinger, *Drinking in Early America*, 68.

the trend started.²⁷ In the colonies, this practice, according to Rorabaugh, “had more subtle symbolic functions. An office seeker who furnished strong beverages to the voters was expected to drink freely with them and, by his drinking, prove the soundness of his democratic principles, that he was independent and egalitarian,” and increase his attractiveness as a candidate to the men.²⁸ By the 1740s, Conroy has noted, selectmen and other elected officials in Massachusetts towns used the tavern “as an instrument for the cultivation of electoral support. When licensed selectmen drank with their customers, the distance between ruler and ruled narrowed.”²⁹ When George Washington lost an election for the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1758, he feared that his election agent, who had only purchased one hundred and forty-four gallons of liquor for the voters, had “spent with too sparing a hand,” making him look stingy.³⁰ Philadelphia politicians in the 1764 election bought so many drinks for voters that some residents worried that their political system had begun to assimilate the worst features of campaigns in London.³¹ In terms of electoral politics, the tavern served as a campaign spot for politicians wanting to reach all classes of voter.

In the larger structure of the public drinking culture, the use of large groups, alcohol as a facilitator of sociability, and the political features of alcohol consumption all reflected and reinforced the dominance of men over this activity due to its homosocial nature.

²⁷Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, 137.

²⁸Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 154.

²⁹Conroy, *Public Houses*, 195.

³⁰Rorabaugh, *Alcoholic Republic*, 152.

³¹Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 137.

Thus, in most respects the major features of the public drinking culture that men practiced in the saloon after its emergence around 1870 were virtually identical to what had developed during the colonial period. Historians have not studied public drinking establishments between 1800 and 1870, preventing a full account of these places, their drinking traditions, and the anti-liquor crusade's impact on them during this period.³² However, the similarities between these places in terms of drinking culture suggest very little change.

The saloon, like the tavern, was a male, homosocial environment. Madelon Powers, in *Faces along the Bar*, asserts that "salooners were mostly males seeking the fellowship of other men of similar age and marital status. They were also linked by their working-class status and often by their particular occupation as well."³³ The class-based drinking in the saloon (on the surface, a new development) probably resulted from the creation of taverns that catered to specific classes of clientele after 1770s.³⁴ The treating, the toasting, and the singing (although probably using different songs and toasts) that Powers attributed to drinking in the saloon also originated with the tavern and served exactly the same purpose: to facilitate sociability through the use of alcohol and thereby augment a sense of commonality among the drinkers.³⁵ Politically, the only difference between these places was that politicians, through their machines, utilized the saloon far

³²In *The Alcoholic Republic*, Rorabaugh takes his narrative to approximately 1830, but he examines patterns of alcohol consumption, not the places where it occurred. See, Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*.

³³Madelon Powers, *Faces along The Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman's Saloon, 1870–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 27–28.

³⁴Thompson, *Rum Punch*, 93.

³⁵Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 93–136, 180–206.

more effectively than their predecessors had the tavern.³⁶ Consequently, saloongoing men were the inheritors of a public drinking culture that they had neither created nor made much effort to change significantly.

The architectural features of the saloon might appear to reflect a more modern leisure establishment, but the setting inside the swinging doors revealed it as a throwback to the centuries-old public drinking culture. The available evidence suggests that saloons followed a layout that appeared to allow for the most occupancy possible but little else beyond being a business focused on a recreational activity. Figures 5–8 show four different saloons from different parts of the country between the 1880s and 1910s. Each one had a nearly identical floor plan and features, suggesting that users of these spaces imbued them with similar purposes and meanings.³⁷ Although only partially visible in figure 8, each saloon probably had a set of swinging doors (the reasons for which contemporaries never made clear). The main rooms of these establishments were longer

³⁶Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 114–143.

³⁷The Grecian Bend Saloon, Floor Plan, HABS WYO 7-SOPAC 10, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; The Diana Saloon, Floor Plan, HABS CAL 34 SAC 8, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.; *Homicide 2/6/16 #1042. Saloon 272 Bleeker Street Where Connar(?) 156 W 10th St. Was Stabbed to Death By Samueleo Razzuoli, Proprietor of Saloon*, Photograph, 6 February 1916, New York City Online Municipal Archives, [The Diana Saloon sketch does provide a date of construction or operation. In all likelihood, this place opened around the 1870s. The Diana Saloon, HABS CAL 34 SAC 8.](http://nycma.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~19~19~545417~110121:pde_0090?qvq=q;pde_0090;lc:RECORDSPHOTOUNITMAY~7~7,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~22~22,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~29~29,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~30~30,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~32~32,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~13~13,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~37~37,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~17~17,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~6~6,RECORDSPHOTOUNITMAY~8~8,RECORDSPHOTOUNITBRO~4~4,RECORDSPHOTOUNITBRK~1~1,RECORDSPHOTOUNITMAN~2~2,RECORDSPHOTOUNITQUE~1~1,RECORDSPHOTOUNITSTA~1~1,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~36~36,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~20~20,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~35~35,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~16~16,RECORDSPHOTOUNITMAY~1~1,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~5~5,RECORDSPHOTOUNITMAY~2~2,RECORDSPHOTOUNITMAY~6~6,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~15~15,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~24~24,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~9~9,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~19~19,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~21~21,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~34~34,RECORDSPHOTOUNITMAY~5~5,RECORDSPHOTOUNITMAY~9~9,RECORDSPHOTOUNITMAY~4~4,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~26~26,RECORDSPHOTOUNITMAY~3~3,RECORDSPHOTOUNITARC~25~25&mi=0&trs=1; Leadville, Colorado Saloon, Photograph, c. 1883–1889, Denver Public Library.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

than they were wide, with a bar running at least a portion of the length of one wall. The bar was normally made of wood and often had at least a small amount of carving or decoration. Each one also had a rail running along the base of the bar, either to protect it from damage or to be used as foot rest. The floors of these places were wood, with a layer of sawdust on them to help absorb spills and spittoon misses. Commonly, saloons had a back room, as seen in figures 5 and 6, but contemporary observers did not mention how often men used this particular area. These features suggest that owners wanted to make a profit by leaving as much space as possible for customers. In reality, the floor plan of the saloon reflected and reinforced a public drinking culture created over a century earlier that, like the tavern, “had been constructed for a different function but . . . subsequently adapted to a new use.”³⁸

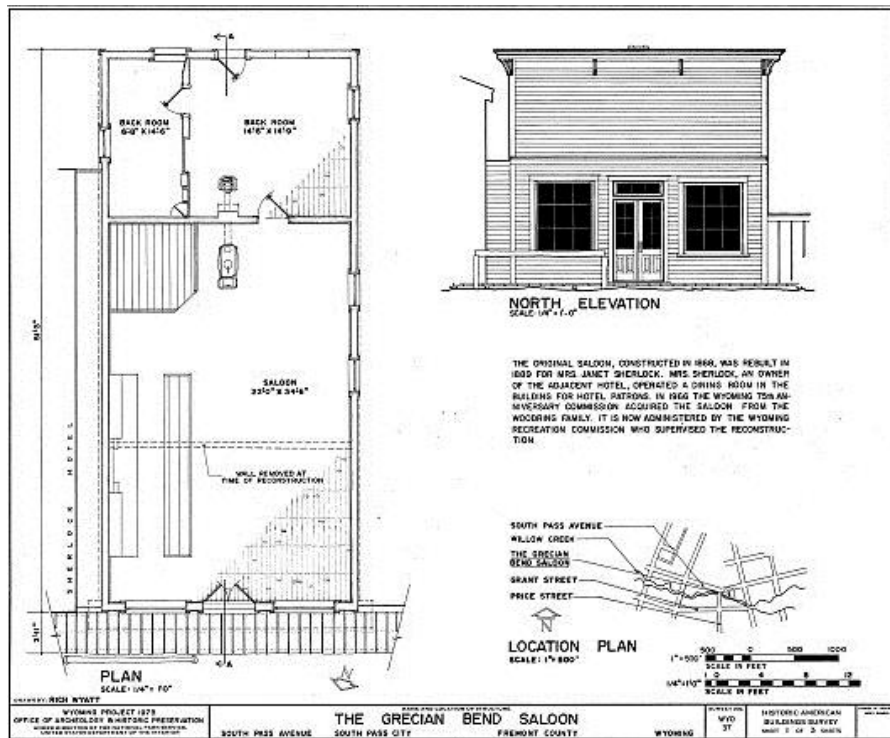


Figure 5: The Grecian Bend Saloon, South Pass City, Wyoming, Constructed 1868

³⁸A.K. Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 16.

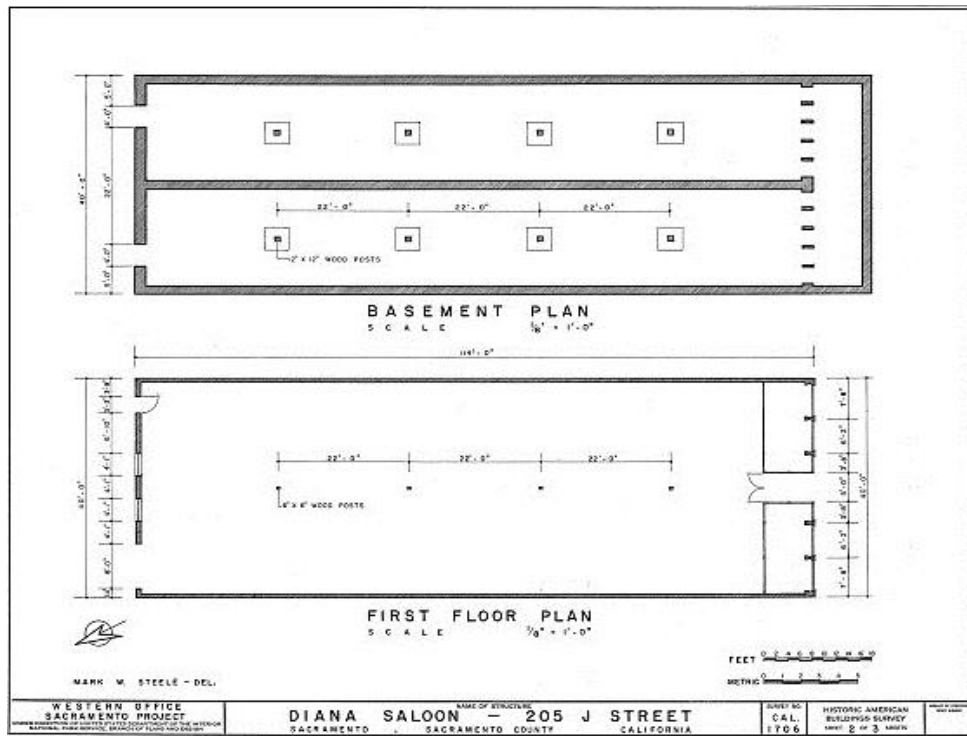


Figure 6: The Diana Saloon, Sacramento, California, Date of Construction Unknown



Figure 7: Saloon 272, Bleecker Street, New York City, 1916



Figure 8: Saloon Located at Leadville, Colorado, c. 1880s

The most noticeable, and probably most important, feature of public drinking as demonstrated by the saloon's layout was the emphasis on the group over the individual. The measurements of the Grecian Bend Saloon's back rooms (Figure 5) indicated that the building was between twenty and thirty feet wide and of indeterminate length, with the bar occupying about a third of the area in the room.³⁹ Both walls of Saloon 272 (Figure 6) were visible in the picture's field, and the mirror in Figure 7 revealed that the photographer managed to capture approximately half of the room's width from his vantage point.⁴⁰ These dimensions, probably due to the standardization of lot sizes in cities, fostered an environment for a few large parties, indicating the designers expected

³⁹The Grecian Bend Saloon, HABS WYO 7-SOPAC 10.

⁴⁰*Saloon 272*, New York City Online Municipal Archives; *Leadville, Colorado Saloon*, Denver Public Library.

nearly constant interaction among the users. In contrast, the dance hall, whose physical layout and customs were created during the late nineteenth century, was a modern place of leisure designed for the interaction of groups and individuals and demonstrated a combination of spaces for public display and private interactions. Randy McBee provides a photograph of the interior of the Aragon Ballroom, which shows a single large area for dancing with space along the periphery for more intimate activities.⁴¹ He asserts that young adults found attractive “the opportunities [the dance hall] offered couples to experiment sexually, play with flirtation, and ‘put on style.’”⁴² This particular floor plan indicated the expectation of a large number of people using this space at any given time, but it also suggested how patrons wanted to interact with one another.

Saloons, according to observers during the first two decades of the twentieth century, were refuges for working-class men, offering them social opportunities that their homes simply did not provide. Although patrons of a saloon also had similar occupations or ethnicities, observers believed that working-class men went to these places primarily to escape their tenements and interact with each other. Sociologist Royal Melendy, in his 1900 article for *The American Journal of Sociology*, declared that “when the . . . laborer returns from his day’s work, go with him . . . into the room or rooms he calls ‘home.’ Eat with him there, in the midst of those squalid surroundings and to the music of crying children, a scanty, poorly cooked meal served by an unkempt wife. Ask yourself if this is just the place where he would want to spend his evenings . . . if here he will find the

⁴¹Randy D. McBee, *Dance Hall Days: Intimacy and Leisure among Working-Class Immigrants in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), figure four of photograph insertion between page 102 and 103.

⁴²McBee, *Dance Hall Days*, 53.

mental stimulus as necessary to his life as to yours.”⁴³ Felix Adler, in his 1901 article for *Municipal Affairs*, echoed Melendy’s sentiments about the tenements and the saloons. Adler wrote, “It is very easy to understand that people who live in such quarters should seek places of recreation—places in which they can be comfortable, and, above all, places where they can meet their fellows.”⁴⁴ An anonymous contributor to the *New York Times* in April 1906 also mentioned this feature, even though the article advocated for the creation of church-operated community parlors where the working-class might “receive the visits of their friends, can enjoy social pleasures in surroundings more safe than are supplied by the ever-hospitable saloon.”⁴⁵ The author thought “it would remain to be proved whether the people who now go to the saloons would be content with gentler joys of a carefully supervised sociability,” suggesting that the saloon’s environment would be difficult to compete with.⁴⁶ Thus, the saloon was a haven for many men, a place where they escaped their cramped homes and families in order to find fellowship with each other.

An underlying reason why men believed the saloon possessed certain social advantages was its efficiency in maintaining the shared beliefs of the patrons. The bar concentrated the sale of alcohol to a small area, making it “the model of efficiency as a means of serving drinks. One bartender could serve dozens of patrons,” but this

⁴³Royal L. Melendy, “The Saloon in Chicago,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 6, no. 3 (November 1900): 292

⁴⁴Felix Adler, “Social Function of the Saloon,” *Municipal Affairs*, December 1901, 877.

⁴⁵“Parlors in Churches,” *New York Times*, 10 April 1906.

⁴⁶“Parlors in Churches,” *New York Times*, 10 April 1906.

arrangement also encouraged customers to circulate around the establishment.⁴⁷ The visible lack of tables and chairs seen in figures 6 and 7 indicated that as Perry Duis has indicated, “the mobility of the customers was also an important factor. Tables allowed drinkers to face each other and encouraged them to tarry. That practice was important in neighborhood places, but it was less successful for those that drew upon massive streams of mobile people.”⁴⁸ In addition, the narrowness of the saloon was a feature of these places across the nation. Figures 5 through 8 show drinking establishments in New York, Wyoming, Colorado, and California, and each possessed this trait.⁴⁹ The limiting of space encouraged customers to form a few large groups, while confining the sale of alcohol to one small area forced saloongoers to circulate in order for everyone to buy drinks. Meanwhile, the focus among contemporary observers on saloons in tenement house districts suggests that the men in a particular saloon probably lived in similar circumstances and held similar beliefs, ideas, and opinions, creating a reciprocal relationship between the space, the customers, and the views they shared.

The resulting social intercourse fostered by the saloon demonstrated alcohol’s role as a facilitator of sociability in the public drinking culture. Powers asserts that drinking “was not the only attraction that tempted [men] to become saloon regulars, nor even the most important,” a phenomenon also noted by observers around the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁵⁰ In 1897, sociologist E. C. Moore argued that “it is use, not abuse,

⁴⁷Duis, *The Saloon*, 53.

⁴⁸Duis, *The Saloon*, 177.

⁴⁹The Grecian Bend Saloon, HABS WYO 7-SOPAC 10; The Diana Saloon, HABS CAL 34 SAC 8; *Homicide 2/6/16 #1042. Saloon 272*, Photograph, 6 February 1916; *Leadville, Colorado Saloon*, Photograph, c. 1883–1889.

⁵⁰Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 12.

that [the saloon] stands for. . . . It unites the many ones into a common whole which we call society, and . . . intemperance is but its accident.”⁵¹ Melendy implied the same thing, writing that the “term ‘club’ applies; for though unorganized, each saloon has about the same constituency night after night. Its character is determined by the character of the men who, having something in common, make the saloon their rendezvous. . . . Intercourse quickens the thought, feeling, and action.”⁵² Adler more clearly states the same thing about drinking establishments in New York City. He declared, “There are a great many saloons as those who have carefully investigated the conditions in this city . . . where drunkenness is a rare occurrence, where people meet quietly, take a glass of beer without indulging to excess, and to which they go chiefly, if not wholly, for the purpose of social intercourse.”⁵³ As chapter 3 will demonstrate, however, this pattern would soon change with the onset of national prohibition, making drinking in and of itself the goal of a socially acceptable leisure activity. But before the disruption occasioned by Prohibition, sociability was as important as drinking to the working-class man’s experience in the saloon.

The entertainments and social practices men participated in while drinking in the saloon reflected and reinforced the principal characteristics of a longstanding public drinking culture. Powers also found that “the role of the saloon as a popular forum for the exchange of news and views was a continuation of a centuries-old function of tavern

⁵¹E.C. Moore, “The Social Value of the Saloon,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 3, no. 1 (July 1897): 4.

⁵²Melendy, “The Saloon in Chicago,” 293–294.

⁵³Adler, “Social Function of the Saloon,” 877.

culture dating back to medieval England and before.”⁵⁴ Singing was another primarily group activity in which salongoing men participated while drinking. Powers found that “what salongoers chose to sing was also significant, for their eclectic repertoires revealed how profoundly they were influenced both by the urban marketplace and by their traditional community loyalties.”⁵⁵ These amateur vocalists sang pieces involving violence to express their appreciation of personal honor and courage.⁵⁶ They sang ethnic songs, such as “Ach du lieber Augustin” and “Hi-lee! Hilo!” to demonstrate their relationship with particular ethnic groups.⁵⁷ Reinforcing the idea that men tended to stay in parties while in the saloon, these pursuits both represented and strengthened the primary characteristics of the public drinking culture.

Certain saloon practices, such as treating, not only reinforced the drinking tradition but also helped public drinking act as a facilitator of socialization by giving men the power to control their perception of themselves and others.⁵⁸ The custom of treating was a material manifestation of a man’s dedication to the public drinking culture and to his cohort’s ideals, goals, and rules. The practice of treating required everyone who accepted a drink to reciprocate and purchase the other participants a round. No one could buy a drink more expensive than that of the person treating. Although considered bad manners, a man could accept a cigar if he could not drink anymore. Accepting a drink

⁵⁴Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 163.

⁵⁵Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 205.

⁵⁶Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 187.

⁵⁷Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 190–192; George Ade, *The Old-Time Saloon: Not Wet–Not Dry–Just History* (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), 120.

⁵⁸*Sociability* is defined as “the quality or state of being sociable,” while *socialization* is defined as the process of making a person “social; *esp*: to fit or train for a social environment.” See, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., subverb sociability, subverb socialize.

For more information on socialization and what drinkers wanted to accomplish, see chapter 2.

and not treating in turn was extremely rude.⁵⁹ For example, Jack London, while working as an oyster pirate, went into a saloon for a drink and started talking with a fellow sailor. The man purchased London six rounds, while London bought his colleague nothing. London's oversight tremendously insulted the man and caused the other fishermen to delay his acceptance into the group.⁶⁰ Men also used treating to demonstrate another salongoer's status within the party. Returning the treat indicated acceptance into the group, while club snub was a "nonverbal and symbolic way . . . the barroom gang . . . informed [a man] that they did not think him qualified for full membership in their drinking circle."⁶¹ For example, Steven James, while working in reclamation camp in Idaho around 1905, attempted to curry favor with his fellow team hands through treating. However, his colleagues accepted his drinks but did not buy him any, an indication they considered him too young to be an equal.⁶² Through the drinking culture, salongoers informally but powerfully regulated the membership of the group and their status.

Despite this obvious monitoring of the group through the public consumption of alcohol, observers still believed the saloon to be a place of unconditional equality. Melendy wrote that "untrammelled by rules and restrictions, it surpasses in spirit the organized club. That general atmosphere of freedom, that spirit of democracy, which men crave, is here realized; that men seek it and that the saloon tries to cultivate it is blazoned forth in such titles as 'The Freedom,' 'The Social,' 'the Club,' etc. Here men

⁵⁹Travis Hoke, "Corner Saloon," *American Mercury*, March 1931, 319.

⁶⁰Jack London, *John Barleycorn* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 76–90.

⁶¹Powers, *Faces Along the Bar*, 99.

⁶²Powers, *Faces Along the Bar*, 99–100.

‘shake out their hearts together.’⁶³ Charles Stelzle’s 1915 *Ladies Home Journal* article suggested it was the sense of equality these businesses fostered that attracted men. He proclaimed “a workingman places a five-cent piece on the edge of the bar, and, presto! without any apologies he is on a par with every other man in the place. He can look every other chap in the eye and feel that he is just as good as the other fellow. It is this democratic spirit which is universally found saloons that helps them win workingmen.”⁶⁴

This sense of equality among men in the saloon became a key underlying reason why and determinant of how they interacted with each other in this place. Outside the saloon, these men faced growing economic inequality in an increasingly industrial workplace, but inside the saloon, the customs and traditions they followed generated a temporary sense of equality, a feeling that manifested itself in the continuation of homosociability in public drinking and the identity that this type of interaction helped create. In his September 1919 piece for *The Independent*, F. Gregory Hartswick contended that the homosocial environment of drinking establishments appealed to men, intimating that a single-gender situation somehow constituted equality. He wrote that these places “give to the people the two sides of leisure life: the side upon which the sexes are segregated, and the side on which they mingle. There are moments when man wishes to commune with man, and woman with woman.”⁶⁵ Although flawed, these assessments of the saloon demonstrated continuity of public drinking from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries; the situation these commentators described might in many respects fit the tavern of the 1700s as well as the saloon of the 1900s.

⁶³Melendy, “The Saloon in Chicago,” 293–294.

⁶⁴Charles Stelzle, “Why Do Men Go Into Saloons?” *Ladies Home Journal*, October 1915, 22.

⁶⁵F. Gregory Hartswick, “Why the Saloon Will Stay,” *The Independent*, 24 May 1919, 291.

Yet the public drinking culture influenced two other issues that made the saloon an exceptional place of leisure during the first two decades of the twentieth century. First, the reciprocal relationship between the public drinking culture and the saloon provided these places with a political component that other leisure establishments lacked. The combination of the group nature of public drinking, the primarily male environment, and drinking as a facilitator of socialization made the saloon an ideal place to act as a center of electoral politics, the efforts to disseminate a political party's platform and getting voters to the polls. Working-class men comprised a huge group of voters, and it was not uncommon for salongoers to be of the same ethnicity or occupation, a similarity that extended to politics. The fact that working-class men often patronized one of their neighborhood saloons made these places excellent campaign spots and the saloonkeepers good choices for ward leaders for political machines.⁶⁶ For example, proprietors displayed a particular candidate's poster to signify their political stance to customers and to suggest an intolerance to differences in political opinion.⁶⁷ Finally, the saloons themselves acted as rallying points for the followers of specific candidates. For example, the supporters of John C. Sheehan accused Chief of Police Devery of campaigning against their candidate during New York City's Ninth Assembly District primary in August 1900. Devery closed the saloon of William Kenny, a Sheehan supporter, on the day of the election. Patrick Flynn, one of Kenny's employees, claimed that "[Devery's] action was caused by the fact that the boss, Kenny, and everybody who is around here are for Sheehan. . . . Why doesn't [Devery] close up the places of his friends on the

⁶⁶Duis, *The Saloon*, 126–127.

⁶⁷Duis, *The Saloon*, 130.

corner.”⁶⁸ In the hands of politicians, treating often became a way to obtain votes. Candidates or their agents would offer to buy men drinks in exchange for their votes on election day.⁶⁹ The political utility of the saloon was, in fact, a consequence of the public drinking culture.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, the saloon remained homosocial in an era where potential customers had an increasing number of inexpensive heterosocial leisure options. Around 1900, three different mixed-gender entertainments had started to become popular, thereby coming into competition with the saloon for some of its patrons. One of the most important differences between these leisure options was the type of consumption they represented. The saloon symbolized homosocial, class-based consumption; men designed this business primarily for working-class men. The rest of society, however, was increasingly moving toward a culture of mass consumption, demonstrated by the new heterosocial entertainments created for people of all classes during the late nineteenth century. The amusement park offered people a place of escape from their neighborhoods. For example, the advent of the five-cent trolley ride in New York City allowed people of all socioeconomic classes to go to Coney Island, where the amusement parks “accommodated purses of varying sizes. . . . Indeed, some who could afford no more than carfare still came to Coney “merely for the joy with the crowds on the public street and catching the live sense of humanity and of good humor that is everywhere.”⁷⁰ The dance hall, a diversion found in many working-class neighborhoods,

⁶⁸“Sheehan Men’s Charges,” *New York Times*, 30 August 1900.

⁶⁹Duis, *The Saloon*, 130–133; Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 107–111.

⁷⁰John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill & Wang), 1978, 37, 38–39.

also offered young adults an option closer to home. In tenement houses, attached to saloons, as a part of Raines Law hotels in New York City, or in their own buildings, dance halls offered customers a chance for both fun and unchaperoned intimacy, often with easy access to alcohol, for a low price.⁷¹ The movie theater, first created in 1904, was another inexpensive neighborhood entertainment.⁷² For a five cents, a person had the opportunity to watch a motion picture, a marvel of modern industrial technology that often drew large crowds.⁷³ The increasing choices for mixed-gender entertainment during the early twentieth century indicated a growing preference for heterosocial recreation.

The saloon, by contrast, housed a public drinking culture that had originated over a century earlier. In one sense, the saloon was modern; the intended clientele for these places were working-class men who lived in industrial urban centers. Social commentators described the reason why saloongoers went to the saloon and why they drank, but these men made their observations as outsiders looking in on an interesting social phenomenon. Yet, the saloon and the drinking tradition also faced pressure from a changing society. The saloon, by 1900, faced competition from inexpensive entertainments accessible to both men and women, while men set the saloon apart from its competitors by continuing to use this place as a center for politics. Despite these

⁷¹McBee, *Dance Hall Days*, 54–56.

⁷²David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusement* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 159.

⁷³Nasaw, *Going Out*, 159–160.

issues, patrons made little effort to alter any of the recreational characteristics of the saloon, resulting in a center for leisure that was unable to adapt to new urban conditions.

An Illusion of Adaptability

The new tensions that affected the saloon emerged during the 1870s and 1880s and continued to influence drinking establishments until the mid-1930s. Saloonkeepers, with no other options than keeping their business largely the same or closing, fought a losing battle to make drinking establishments legitimately profitable enterprises. Politically, the revival of the Prohibition movement in 1873 increasingly cast saloons in a negative light, shaping how people viewed these places. Economically, the high-license movement and the tied-house system changed how these businesses operated. Although cheap beer and free lunches attracted customers, these features also added to the economic pressures saloonkeepers faced, further encouraging them to violate local regulations to make a profit. The owners who did break the law used techniques that ran the spectrum from violating Sunday-closing ordinances to hosting prostitution rings, behaviors which only reinforced what prohibitionists said about these places. However, saloon proprietors had no choice but to use these schemes if they wanted to stay profitable. Every time saloonkeepers organized and attempted to change how drinking establishments functioned as businesses, they failed. Some owners, including members of the new trade associations, simply refused to raise prices or abolish the free lunch. Meanwhile, patrons who did not like the changes simply went to the drinking

establishments where they could obtain what they wanted. As a business, the saloon was, as Duis put, a “function of failure.”⁷⁴

The saloon, beginning with its inception around 1870, encountered pressures that affected how people viewed these places and the way they operated.⁷⁵ The revitalization of the Prohibition movement in the 1870s increasingly held drinking establishments responsible for society’s problems. The Women’s Crusade of 1873 to 1875, inspired by preacher and social reformer Dioclesian Lewis’s teachings, directly attacked the saloon.⁷⁶ Lewis, a large two-hundred-pound man and a temperance advocate, believed in maintaining a healthy body, which overindulgence in alcohol threatened.⁷⁷ The women who embraced his ideas prayed outside saloons for weeks in Ohio and Indiana, enduring physical and verbal abuse, until they closed.⁷⁸ Although attacking alcohol itself, the crusaders made the saloon just as responsible for the problems drinking caused. Similarly, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) assaulted drinking establishments in their effort to ban liquor. Founded in 1874 and leading the Prohibition movement until the 1890s, the WCTU attempted to educate people, especially children in the public schools, about the evils of drinking. One lesson, published in the popular schoolbook *McGuffey’s Reader*, attacked the saloon licensing systems that states used.

⁷⁴Duis, *The Saloon*, 46.

⁷⁵Historians have not studied the creation of the saloon, leaving a gap in the historiography. They generally agree that the saloon existed by the late 1860s, with it being fully formed no later than 1880. See Elliott West, *The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 1. Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, passim. Duis, *The Saloon*, passim.

⁷⁶Edward Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1996), 35–36.

⁷⁷Burns, *The Spirits of America*, 99–100.

⁷⁸Behr, *Prohibition*, 36–37.

The WCTU attributed violence to the consumption of alcohol, making the state an accomplice to these crimes by licensing these places.⁷⁹ As retailers of alcohol, public drinking establishments became at least partially responsible for the issues reformers thought alcohol consumption caused.

Men made the saloon directly responsible for all the problems prohibitionists attributed to drinking when they assumed leadership of the movement in the 1890s. The Anti-Saloon League of America (ASL), established in 1893, cast these businesses as “the acme of evil, the climax of iniquity, the mother of abominations, and the sum of villainies.”⁸⁰ Their efforts led to one-third of Americans living in dry territory by 1903 and half of the population (approximately 46 million people) by 1913.⁸¹ Male prohibitionists portrayed saloons as dirty places that harbored prostitutes, housed illegal gambling, and kept decent husbands away from their respectable and loving wives and children, in addition to causing the violence and crime cited by the WCTU. With the saloon depicted as unremittingly evil, the ASL strove to destroy these businesses by banning alcohol. To achieve this goal, it financially contributed to any politician willing to support prohibition at any level of government.⁸² Even groups trying to approach the liquor issue more evenhandedly ultimately blamed the saloon for the problems associated with alcohol. The Committee of Fifty, for example, from its inception in 1893 until 1903, studied the physiological, economic, and legislative problems alcohol supposedly

⁷⁹Burns, *Spirits of America*, 115–120.

⁸⁰Thomas R. Pegram, *Battling Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800–1933* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998), 91.

⁸¹Burns, *Spirits of America*, 151–152.

⁸²Burns, *Spirits of America*, 151–152.

caused.⁸³ The fourth part of its report implicitly condemned the saloon for these matters by examining its appeal and recommending replacements for it.⁸⁴ The Prohibition movement, its growing influence, and its consistently negative views about the saloon, had made these places into immoral dens of wickedness in the minds of many Americans.

Meanwhile, the economic changes surrounding the saloon immediately and dramatically affected how these places operated. Starting in 1880, proprietors struggled with two problems. First, the high-license movement made it steadily more difficult for independent saloonkeepers to make a profit. Advocates of this measure believed that a sharp increase in the fee for a saloon license would benefit cities as a whole. They thought that the higher cost of the permit would give owners a larger stake in their businesses, because proprietors, in order to avoid losing their expensive licenses, would obey all the laws and stop selling alcohol, for example, to minors who bought liquor for adults. In addition, the increase in revenue would allow cities to defray the cost of police and welfare programs while funding badly needed public works programs.⁸⁵ By 1883, the high-license movement had become a national phenomenon, which had succeeded in bringing more money into city coffers. Boston, Massachusetts doubled the fee for a license from \$500 to \$1,000 in that year.⁸⁶ In Chicago, Illinois, fees rose from between \$125 and \$250 in 1883 to \$500 in 1885.⁸⁷ By 1901, Chicago's controller estimated that the city would make \$3,162,170 from the license fees alone. The *Chicago Daily Tribune*

⁸³The Committee of Fifty, *The Liquor Problem: A Summary of Investigations Conducted by the Committee of Fifty, 1893–1903* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1905), 3–5.

⁸⁴Committee of Fifty, *The Liquor Problem*, 145–182.

⁸⁵Duis, *The Saloon*, 26–27.

⁸⁶Duis, *The Saloon*, 27.

⁸⁷Duis, *The Saloon*, 27.

reported that “almost one-third of the revenue for Chicago for 1901 will be derived from those who sell intoxicating liquors over bars.”⁸⁸ Arthur Gleason, in an April 1908 *Colliers* article, claimed that brewers paid the state of New York \$18 million per year in fees, with half going to the state and half to the county.⁸⁹ While the high-license movement did bring cities more money, it also became a force that drove saloonkeepers to break the law.

Concurrent with the high-license movement, breweries began taking control of saloons by imposing the tied-house system. Before 1880, the saloonkeepers were in a business position superior to the brewer in the retail sale of beer, a position they admittedly did abuse to some extent. Each proprietor demanded special discounts for purchasing kegs of beer, while breweries began giving potential customers free samples and free gifts (such as signs, posters, postcards, and pocketknives), a practice saloonkeepers quickly came to expect.⁹⁰ In addition, the wholesale price of beer around 1880 was \$8.00 per barrel, while taxes and materials alone cost brewers \$3.88. Saloonkeepers, wanting to make one-hundred-percent profit on each keg they sold, refused to buy beer from anyone who did not keep the wholesale price low.⁹¹ The growing popularity of bottled beer also resulted in saloonkeepers often selling one brand on tap and another in bottles, an arrangement beer manufacturers thought unfair.⁹² These

⁸⁸“Saloonkeeping as a Business in Chicago,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 January 1901.

⁸⁹Arthur H. Gleason, “The New York Saloon,” *Colliers*, 25 April 1908, 17.

⁹⁰Duis, *The Saloon*, 21–23.

⁹¹Duis, *The Saloon*, 20.

⁹²Duis, *The Saloon*, 24–25.

actions led brewers to believe that they were at a disadvantage when dealing with saloonkeepers and persuaded them that they needed to change the relationship.

The advantage shifted in favor of the breweries after 1880 when they decided to take more direct control of saloons, essentially turning saloonkeepers into employees. They based their decision, in part, on the growing impact of the high-license movement. Independent proprietors found it increasingly difficult to afford the cost of licenses every year, forcing them to turn to the breweries for help. A brewer paid the license fee for a saloonkeeper, but in exchange, the owner had to sell only that manufacturer's beer. Brewers also offered prospective saloonkeepers all the fixtures and equipment necessary for their businesses at a price.⁹³ Thus, the saloonkeeper found himself owing the brewer a mortgage payment for the equipment, a ten-dollar-per-week charge for the license, and obliged to buy beer from one company—which in turn threatened not to pay next year's license fee unless the proprietor maintained a certain level of sales.⁹⁴ This arrangement, although disadvantageous for saloonkeepers, became increasingly common over time. The number of establishments under the tied-house system in Chicago skyrocketed from 200 in 1884 to 4,679 out of 7,000 saloons in 1916.⁹⁵ Of New York City's 11,000 establishments, 85 percent of them were under brewery control by 1908.⁹⁶ By 1900, the average saloonkeeper was the virtual employee of a brewery, to whom he was chronically in debt, and he operated a business that was besieged by a reform movement.

⁹³Duis, *The Saloon*, 25–26. Duis calls this model the tied-house system. For more information, see Duis, *The Saloon*, 15–45.

⁹⁴Duis, *The Saloon*, 34–35.

⁹⁵Duis, *The Saloon*, 25.

⁹⁶Gleason, "The New York Saloon," 25 April 1908, 16.

To complicate these problems further, the law-abiding saloonkeeper found that the intricacies of running his business all but prevented him from making a profit. In his articles for *Colliers*, Gleason estimated that the average New York saloon ran a weekly expense of \$177.75 to \$189.75, not including expenditures like the cigar and liquor tax, the cost of bond, and the water bill. Meanwhile, the sales of these places totaled between \$105 to \$154 per week.⁹⁷ The crux of this problem lay in the price for which saloonkeepers sold their beer, a decision most had no control over by 1900. Male patrons expected proprietors to sell a ten ounce glass of beer for five cents and a pint for ten cents.⁹⁸ At these rates, a ten ounce beer yielded a return of three to four cents per mug, but each pint resulted in a one cent per glass loss.⁹⁹ In addition, Gleason admitted that these profit and loss estimates depended upon brewers keeping the cost of kegs below a certain level.¹⁰⁰ Duis asserted, “Every time the brewers threatened to raise it, the saloon owner was faced with earning less on each barrel he sold or reequipping the place with smaller glasses for his nickel beers,” but neither option was practical.¹⁰¹ Saloonkeepers using the tied-house system received everything from the brewers, who were unlikely to buy new glasses specifically for one establishment, while any proprietor, independent or

⁹⁷Arthur H. Gleason, “The New York Saloon,” *Colliers*, 2 May 1908, 12.

⁹⁸Gleason, “The New York Saloon,” 2 May 1908, 12.

⁹⁹Gleason, “The New York Saloon,” 2 May 1908, 12. Although Gleason wrote that saloonkeepers lost a cent for each pint they sold, he neither gave the size of a pint nor explained how saloonkeepers lost money on them. Mathematically, saloonkeepers would have made more money per ounce on pints than on ten ounce glasses.

¹⁰⁰Gleason, “The New York Saloon,” 25 April 1908, 16.

¹⁰¹Duis, *The Saloon*, 48.

not, probably could not afford to gamble on buying smaller mugs.¹⁰² In a way, the price of beer helped to determine the success or, more likely, the failure of a saloon.

Related to the first problem and demonstrated in part by the price of beer, saloonkeepers also had to struggle with an inability to rid themselves of unprofitable business practices. The retail price of beer, for example, became more important after 1900. The movement of urban populations away from crowded tenement districts and the advent of a beer bottle that was easy to open at home provided the saloon with a rival it did not previously have, making the retail price of beer more important.¹⁰³ At the same time, some saloon owners formed organizations in an effort to change how their businesses operated. But in every case, these attempts failed, normally due to resistance from their own members.

In 1903, some New York City proprietors created the Wine and Liquor Dealers Central Association. This group required its associates to charge fifteen cents for a pint of beer and to eliminate the free lunch, but not everyone complied. One member argued “that the agreement was all right in the ‘high-toned’ localities, but that in the tenement districts ten-cent beer and free lunches were [basic] drawing features, and that independent saloon keepers—those not in the association—were keeping to the old prices and were likely to run the opposition out of business.”¹⁰⁴ In 1908, the Brewers Board of Trade in New York City had its constituent businesses raise the prices on barrels of beer, probably in an effort to raise the retail price, only to have its own members cut prices in

¹⁰²Duis, *The Saloon*, 25–26.

¹⁰³Duis, *The Saloon*, 288–290

¹⁰⁴“Cut Rate on Beer by Pint,” *New York Times*, 13 May 1903:

order to increase sales.¹⁰⁵ Faced with the real probability of bankruptcy under a business model they were unable to change, a constant stream of customers at least gave proprietors the hope of a profit in the long run under different circumstances.

As we have seen, the only custom of the public drinking culture that potentially increased a saloonkeeper's profit was treating. The rules of treating required that all participants purchase a drink for the person who bought the initial round.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, a bartender giving a round on the house basically compelled the customers to buy more drinks than they might have otherwise. Meanwhile, the bartender, rather than risk becoming drunk and losing his job, often took a cigar instead of a drink, all of which he promptly returned to the case at the end of the day; he might also accept a snit, a small glass of beer that was mostly foam.¹⁰⁷ In his March 1931 *American Mercury* article, Travis Hoke remembered the saloon of decades past that "it was [the bartender's] judgment of the psychological moments when a free drink would start a lot of buying that made a bartender successful."¹⁰⁸ Saloonkeepers encouraged their employees to use this tactic in order to make more money without driving away customers. According to Powers, M. E. Ravage, a Rumanian immigrant who became a bartender, received instructions from his employer that "'it was my duty to his firm to accept every treat that was offered me It pleased the customer . . . and it increased the sale.'"¹⁰⁹ However,

¹⁰⁵Gleason, "The New York Saloon," 25 April 1908, 16.

¹⁰⁶Hoke, "Corner Saloon," 319.

¹⁰⁷Ade, *The Old-Time Saloon*, 94–95.

¹⁰⁸Hoke, "Corner Saloon," 315.

¹⁰⁹M. E. Ravage, *An American in the Making: The Life Story of an Immigrant* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1917), 127; quoted in Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 106.

neither Hoke nor Powers provided any indication of how much more money a proprietor might make using this technique.

The free lunch was another example of an unprofitable practice that saloonkeepers proved unable to abolish. Duis detailed the degree to which some saloonkeepers went in producing their free lunches. He pointed out that “one large saloon near the Chicago Commons settlement on the near northwest side reputedly spent thirty to forty dollars each day on: ‘150–200 pounds of meat, 1½–2 bu. Potatoes, 50 loaves of bread, 35 pounds of beans, 45 dozens of eggs . . . 10 dozen ears of sweet corn, \$1.50–\$2 worth of vegetables.’”¹¹⁰ Two other Chicago proprietors used their free lunches to compete with each other to such an extent that they both went bankrupt in same week of 1913.¹¹¹ Owners also needed someone to serve these meals and to ensure that only paying customers took advantage of it, which did not stop travelers, boys, and “deadbeats” from sneaking in for food.¹¹² Powers asserts that the free lunch was “one of the most successful public relations schemes of the era [1870 to 1920],” but it did not attract enough customers to compensate owners for the cost of setting the scheme up.¹¹³ From a business standpoint, the free lunch was both a hassle and an economic liability for saloonkeepers to maintain.

Yet people objected to any effort to eliminate the free lunch, regardless of who supported the move. Attempts to ban the free lunch in both Chicago and Los Angeles from 1900 to 1912 met with resistance from either the customers or the proprietors of

¹¹⁰Duis, *The Saloon*, 55.

¹¹¹Duis, *The Saloon*, 55.

¹¹²Duis, *The Saloon*, 187; Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 219–220.

¹¹³Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 207–208, 224.

drinking establishments. In April 1900, in response to the Chicago City Council's proposed ban on the free lunch, a person wrote an opinion piece for the *Chicago Daily Tribune* describing the lunch's utility to the city's homeless. He declared, "The free lunch also has the advantage of cheapness, and its abolition will be a really serious blow to the tramp. At present, when he needs both food and drink and gets a nickel or a dime . . . he can go to a saloon and supply both his wants. One of the [committee members opposed to the bill] asked whether there would be any doubt as to which the tramp would spend his money for if the anti-free lunch bill [became law]." ¹¹⁴ In March 1903, saloonkeepers united to fight a state anti-free lunch bill, responding with the declaration of "our liberty and free lunch forever. . . . We alone shall say whether free lunch shall be abolished in saloons." ¹¹⁵ In June 1908, a Los Angeles saloonkeeper asked the City Council to ban the free lunch, but "the drinkers [threatened] that, if the saloons asked for prohibition of the food, they would ask that it extend to the booze as well." ¹¹⁶ When Los Angeles saloonkeepers tried again 1912, the same thing happened. In June 1912, the City Council passed a bill forbidding the free lunch, and "according to [Councilman] Topham, 75 per cent. of the saloon proprietors are in favor of the amendment, and action was first brought about by a petition with the Public Welfare Committee signed by 60 per cent of the saloon-men." ¹¹⁷ This ordinance outraged so many people that John Steel, a local man, submitted by August a petition with twenty-five thousand signatures to the city

¹¹⁴"Crusade against Free Lunches," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 April 1900.

¹¹⁵"Beer Lunch a Blessing," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 March 1903.

¹¹⁶"Must Protect Free Lunch," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 June 1908.

¹¹⁷"Hand of the Mighty Falls on Free Lunch," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 June 1912.

clerk to place the issue on the ballot as a referendum.¹¹⁸ Despite the fact it lost the saloonkeepers money, the free lunch had too many defenders for anyone to easily abolish it.

Unable to make their businesses legitimately profitable, many proprietors had little choice but to violate the law in order to remain open. The struggle to stay in business, drove proprietors to use the devices for which prohibitionists (and later repealists) condemned them. Owners could choose to make money in contravention of any number of ordinances, from running illegal card games to forming syndicates with prostitution rings, but the most common practice was violating the Sunday closing laws.¹¹⁹ Customers expected saloonkeepers to break the law to be open on Sunday; according to Gleason, any owner not open on Sunday could expect to see a drop in business the other six days of the week.¹²⁰ One technique saloon men used to circumvent Sunday closing laws was simply to lock the front door but leave the backdoor open. The screen partially seen in figure 7 served to hide the main room from outside observers, especially on Sunday.¹²¹

Another practice, which violated the spirit but not the letter of the law, involved owners transforming their saloons into businesses that could legally serve alcohol seven days a week. In New York, for example, owners of drinking establishments used a loophole in the Raines Law and transformed their businesses into spurious hotels. This law permitted hotels with ten beds or more and restaurants to sell alcohol on Sundays.

¹¹⁸“Thousands Favor the Free Lunch,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 August 1912.

¹¹⁹Gleason, “The New York Saloon, 2 May 1908, 12, 27; Duis, *The Saloon*, 230–273.

¹²⁰Gleason, “The New York Saloon,” 2 May 1908, 12.

¹²¹Duis, *The Saloon*, 234.

The proprietors who wanted to evade the Sunday-closing laws for saloons partitioned their back rooms and second floors to create new rooms and purchased enough beds to satisfy the requirement in the Raines Law to qualify as a hotel. Owners, to fulfill the condition that they serve meals with the drinks, then placed a bowl of pretzels or a sandwich on each table, legally enabling them to serve alcohol on Sunday.¹²² In Los Angeles, meanwhile, saloon men obtained restaurant licenses and put food out to achieve the same end.¹²³ Unlike New York, at least one owner acknowledged the deception to the Los Angeles Police Commission. Adolph Ramish, at his hearing “appeared before the board and admitted what has long been known, that the restaurant liquor-license is used by saloon men merely as a subterfuge to sell liquor on Sunday.”¹²⁴ These techniques probably increased revenue, but this money came at the cost of a worsening public reputation for all saloons, regardless of their origins.

The best illustration of the difficulty saloonkeepers had in remaining solvent when they attempted to operate a law-abiding business after 1900 is provided by New York City’s short-lived Subway Tavern. In *Dry Manhattan*, Michael Lerner notes, “Progressives and dries alike regarded [the saloon] as a unique threat to American life. As one muckraking reporter of the era declared, ‘There is but one large temperance problem now waiting to be solved in America—the problem of the city saloon.’”¹²⁵ These reformers excoriated these places by claiming they flagrantly broke the law, sold to

¹²²Michael Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 25–26.

¹²³“Mayor’s Annual Message,” *Los Angeles Times*, 3 January 1900; “Sunday Tippling in Saloons,” *Los Angeles Times*, 19 November 1900.

¹²⁴“Ramish Says He Knew It Was a Sham,” *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1901.

¹²⁵Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*, 22.

minors, sold to drunks, and got involved in politics.¹²⁶ In New York City, a group of civic-minded individuals formed a trust in 1904 to create a saloon without what they felt to be its five most objectionable characteristics.¹²⁷ First, the owners wanted to reduce intemperance by selling soft drinks in addition to alcohol. Second, they only offered food that did not increase a patron's thirst for more alcohol in order to reduce drinking between meals. Third, the trust felt the saloon's single-gender setting was a cause for concern, so they made the Subway Tavern into a heterosocial environment, although women were not permitted in the barroom section of the establishment. Fourth, they limited their profits to five percent in order to avoid the saloon's heedless drive for revenue. Finally, the saloon's lawlessness prompted the trust to create a space that conformed to public law and order.¹²⁸ When it opened on August 2, 1904, New York City seemed to have a new, more reputable type of drinking establishment for people.

Despite its promising start, the Subway Tavern eventually closed. In its first month of operation, the owners claimed to have earned \$600 per week and spent \$450, resulting in a weekly profit of \$150. *The Washington Post* estimated in a September 1904 article that "figuring only 300 days in the year (of course the subway tavern will observe the Sunday closing law and will close on holidays), the promoters could declare a dividend of 150 percent on their first year's business, the initial investment being, approximately \$5,000."¹²⁹ Yet this place could not escape its saloon origins; many of the

¹²⁶Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*, 22.

¹²⁷The members of this trust created the Subway Tavern based on Earl Grey's public house principles. For more information on this system, see "Saloon Trust Proposed," *New York Times*, 11 March 1902; "The Subway Tavern: An Experiment," *Outlook*, 13 August 1904, 873–874.

¹²⁸"The Subway Tavern: An Experiment," 13 August 1904, 873–874.

¹²⁹"Tavern Big Success," *The Washington Post*, 11 September 1904.

same issues that affected saloons in general also impacted the Subway Tavern. Dr. Dean Richmond Babbitt, an episcopal minister and opponent of drinking, went undercover to investigate the Subway Tavern and other saloons in the area on August 8, 1904. He declared that he “found the Subway Tavern to be a veritable saloon . . . and its order and decency of environment was no better than many of the other saloons I visited the same night . . . it is open to all the objections which may be made against the 13,000 other saloons in Greater New York.”¹³⁰ By September 1905, the combination of obeying the law and refusing to sell to people already drunk had cost its owners enough money that they were forced to close.¹³¹ The proprietors lost both customers and money by obeying the law, while reformers still criticized them for running a saloon. Saloonkeepers were caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, saloonkeepers had little real choice in the way they ran their businesses. As the owners of saloons, they inherited the social and economic pressures that transformed these enterprises during late nineteenth century. The Prohibition movement depicted them and their enterprises as evil, even if they obeyed the letter of the law. More fundamentally, many proprietors could not afford high license fees, and in order to cover the cost, turned to the breweries, which forced owners to sell only their beer in exchange. The saloonkeepers who then chose to follow the law did not make enough money to cover operating expenses. These men also found themselves burdened by unprofitable practices that they were unable to eliminate. Cheap beer and the free lunch attracted patrons but did not contribute to a successful business.

¹³⁰“Dr. Babbitt Visited Model Saloon ‘Incog.,’” *New York Times*, 8 August 1904.

¹³¹“Failure of the Subway Tavern, New York,” *Outlook*, 16 September 1905, 104.

Any time one group of proprietors tried to abolish these practices, their competitors increased their clientele by keeping them. In the end, most saloonkeepers who wanted to operate a successful enterprise had to break the law. The saloon had become a business trapped in illegality and frozen in time.

Conclusion

By 1900, the saloon's status in society stemmed from its inability to keep pace with the changes that were occurring around it. The saloon's role as a unique place of leisure resulted from its growing dissimilarity with other, more recently created forms of entertainment. People based the saloon on old traditions that they had neither created nor seriously attempted to alter. The major features of the public drinking culture had remained largely the same for at least a century before the saloon's emergence, helping to define it as a place of recreation. However, these characteristics also prevented the saloon from adapting to a new urban environment, which put this business under increasing pressure. The public consumption of alcohol was homosocial, but a growing number of heterosocial entertainments competed with drinking establishments for some of their clientele in the late nineteenth century. The drinking culture emphasized large groups and alcohol as a facilitator of sociability and a facilitator of socialization, but in the saloon, it did so primarily for working-class men. This class-based consumption was increasingly out of place in a society moving toward mass consumption, including in its leisure options. This business also had a long-standing role in electoral politics, a feature not found in other forms of entertainment by the late nineteenth century. As an option for

recreation, the continuity of the public drinking culture masked the increasingly outdated nature of both the activity and the places where it occurred.

No one noticed at the time, but by 1900, changes in society had already begun to transform the public drinking culture, rendering the saloon open to a revolution in its recreational and consumer-culture features. While outdated, the drinking tradition defined the boundaries of this activity and the places where it occurred. Within these confines, people confronted the questions of who could acceptably participate in this activity, what the consumption of alcohol meant to the participants, and how they viewed it as a leisure pursuit. These issues reflected and reinforced larger trends in consumer culture and gender identity, both of which were undergoing changes by 1900. The conflict that developed from the tension between the dated drinking culture and the transformation of two of its fundamental elements helped people renegotiate the structure of this activity. The resulting struggle to bring public drinking into harmony with new urban and social circumstances shaped the creation of a new archetype for drinking establishments. Hidden behind the continuity that public drinking appeared to embody, the internal and external pressures that affected the saloon during the nineteenth century began to transform it.

CHAPTER 2

THE HOMOSOCIAL ORIGINS OF HETEROSOCIAL DRINKING

John McSorley epitomized the idea that men designed and operated saloons for use by other men. He believed that men needed a woman-free environment to enjoy their ale, so he established a no-woman policy. He thought this gave men the freedom to discuss or contemplate anything they desired. He went so far as to place a sign on the front door that read, "Notice: No Back Room In Here For Ladies." It could not be any clearer that he served only men. Yet, there was a story of a lone exception. The men, not knowing her real name, called her Mother Fresh-Roasted. Claiming her husband died of a lizard bite during the Spanish-American War, she sold fresh-roasted peanuts from the pockets of her housecoat as she walked the lower East Side. She sometimes stopped at McSorley's for a mug of ale, and Old John, surprisingly enough, would occasionally admit her. She stopped at McSorley's simply to drink; after all, Old John's idea of a free lunch was soda crackers, raw onions, and cheese.¹ Except for this single irregularity, Old John catered only to men.

The story of John McSorley and Mother Fresh-Roasted represents the accepted historiography of public drinking before 1920: a male homosocial drinking culture that

¹Joseph Mitchell, "Old House at Home: McSorley's Café," *The New Yorker*, 13 April 1940, 20.

at best occasionally tolerated certain women in the saloon.² These women, according to historians Kathy Peiss and Madelon Powers, were primarily employed, single, working-class women, but they remained segregated in the back room.³ This narrative also makes the advent of heterosocial public drinking a tangential occurrence to the increase of heterosocial entertainments in the early twentieth century. Books like Randy McBee's *Dance Hall Days* and Lewis Erenberg's *Steppin' Out* detail how mixed-gender groups went to dance halls or attended cabarets and only coincidentally began drinking together.⁴ This analysis makes heterosocial drinking appear as a byproduct of the intended purposes of these places. This early heterosocial drinking had no effect on early twentieth-century public drinking or the saloon, the institution of mainstream public drinking. This situation, according to historians, dominated in society until 1920.⁵ Histories of Prohibition argue that the Eighteenth Amendment had the largest influence on public drinking: men and women began drinking alcohol together as a result of the national Prohibition, with a fully formed heterosocial drinking culture emerging before 1933.⁶

The problem with this historiography is the assumption that women had no active role in shaping the nature of public drinking in places like the saloon prior to 1920.

²Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 28–29; Madelon Powers, “Women in a New World: Women and Public Drinking, 1890–1920,” *History Today*, February 1995, 46–52.

³Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 53; Madelon Powers, *Faces Along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman's Saloon, 1870–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 210–211

⁴Randy B. McBee, *Dance Hall Days: Intimacy and Leisure among Working-Class Immigrants in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890–1930* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981).

⁵Michael A. Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 171; Norman H. Clark, *The Dry Years: Prohibition & Social Changes in Washington*, rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Seattle Press, 1988), 55.

⁶Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*, 171–178.

Undeniably, the male homosocial drinking environment dominated public drinking until 1920, when the Eighteenth Amendment ended its reign. Any heterosocial public drinking that occurred during the first two decades of the twentieth century did not change the most important institutions of public drinking. However, women had begun to create a separate female homosocial drinking culture by 1900. They continued to construct this distinct sphere of public drinking throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century. As the dominance of male public drinking in the saloon declined, female public drinking became increasingly important for women. The existence of these distinct homosocial drinking situations created the conditions for the bar's heterosocial drinking environment. The question then becomes, how did homosocial public drinking before 1920 influence the creation of heterosocial public drinking?

This chapter will explore the origins of the bar's heterosocial drinking environment by examining homosocial public drinking from 1900 to 1920. Homosocial public drinking served two interrelated purposes during the early twentieth century. First, it constituted an aspect of and reinforced gender identity. Historians have primarily examined either the practice or the ideology of gender identity and public drinking. But both approaches provide an incomplete picture. Etiquette and advice manuals show that people still believed in the Victorian gentleman and lady as the ideal man and woman. Second, it acted as a facilitator of socialization by inculcating in its participants certain ways of thinking about themselves. The consumption of alcohol in a public place encouraged people to accept a certain way of viewing themselves, one which did not always coincide with American society at large. Comparing the ideals and practices of gender identity in the area of public drinking reveals a disconnect between what people

believed their gender identities should be and how they expressed them. Although admittedly Victorian gender ideals lost influence in society during this period, public drinking shows that the everyday emergence and ideological acceptance of new gender ideals and practices failed to keep pace with each other.

The foundation for heterosocial public drinking, laid during the first two decades of the twentieth century, corresponded to the struggles between gender ideal and practice, which, by 1920, had brought the male and female homosocial drinking environments closer to a state of parity. Men used public drinking and the saloon to reinforce the increasingly outdated ideal of the gentleman and the practice of manhood. In an ever-expanding urban and industrial society, men had trouble distinguishing themselves as individuals through their jobs or accomplishments alone. Drinking establishments became the place where they could measure themselves against a common standard. However, the standard they adhered to belonged to a world before mass wage labor in heavy industry, one that was fast becoming a memory. Consequently, men only hastened the growing irrelevance of their homosocial drinking environment by continuing to insist on its single-sex purity.

Women, by contrast, used public drinking as a recreational activity. Women confronted and created a changing society in which they successfully won more freedom in terms of social activities; but in the process, they had to reconcile the differences between the gender practice of the New Woman and the ideal of the lady. Public drinking was something fun and exciting, a new activity previously closed to them. As women constructed their own homosocial drinking sphere, they helped the ideal of the Victorian lady give way to the New Woman. By reflecting (and in part creating) the

emerging gender practices rather than the old ideal, the female public drinking situation became increasingly more important to women. Under these circumstances, homosocial public drinking was an important constitutive element of the changing nature of gender identity in society.

A Last Round for the Men

The dominant culture and male public drinking still mirrored each other around 1900. Society stressed male dominance, and the Victorian ideal of separate spheres, although already in decline, maintained that only men should operate outside the middle-class home. Similarly, public drinking catered to men and was homosocial. Twenty years later, the practice of male public drinking still looked largely the same. However, male gender identity was changing in these years, with the United States continuing to industrialize and women obtaining equal rights. Men had trouble dealing with these shifts, because society had privileged them above women for centuries. Historians Peter Filene and Michael Kimmel suggest that men, although having some trouble coming to terms with these transformations, generally accepted and adapted to what was happening.⁷ Yet in practice, the transition was not so smooth; the way men treated the institution of the saloon demonstrates that for two decades they struggled against these transformations.

Public drinking in the saloon socialized the men who patronized these businesses into a gender ideal that was becoming less of a constituent element in male gender identity for boys reaching maturity, causing male public drinking to lose its place as one

⁷Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996); Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 74–99.

of the dominant male leisure activities. According to Roy Rosenzweig, the saloon catered to an aging clientele throughout the twentieth century. The men who regularly patronized the saloon in the 1880s still went there in the 1910s but were thirty years older. Younger men “favored the more active recreation offered in the poolroom or the opportunities for meeting women offered in the dance halls.”⁸ Even the movie theater offered a more attractive possibility for amusing men in the early twentieth century. A 1910 survey of the leisure activities of one thousand New York workingmen showed that sixty percent frequented the movie theater while only thirty percent regularly went to the saloon. Meanwhile, a Worcester, Massachusetts saloonkeeper estimated that the movie theaters had drawn away twenty-five percent of the saloon business in his city.⁹ As these new entertainments attracted young men away from the saloon, older men retreated into public drinking establishments in an effort to retain the aspects of male gender identity they valued most. In doing so, however, men forced the saloon to reflect the characteristics they wanted it to and not what manly society was moving toward, dividing between male public drinking from the larger American society.

The gender identity that men chose to preserve through homosocial public drinking can be described as the nineteenth-century man of action. By 1900, this conceptualization of manhood consisted of the practice of the Self-Made Man and the ideal of the gentleman. Kimmel argues that the Self-Made Man originated around the time of the American Revolution. He asserts “Being a man meant being in charge of

⁸Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers & Leisure In An Industrial City, 1870–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 188.

⁹Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours*, 191.

one's own life, liberty, and property."¹⁰ This independence, the Self-Made Man's core value, distinguished him from women, children, and slaves, who were all dependent on him. He made something of himself by working hard and making the correct choices.¹¹ His achievements made him a man in both his eyes and the eyes of his fellows, but "his sense of himself as a man was in constant need of demonstration. Everything became a test—his relationships to work, to women, to nature, and to other men."¹² The gender ideal became the Victorian gentleman during the second half of the nineteenth century. While independence and control remained important to the gentleman, how he conducted himself became the defining aspect of his identity. He was "[not] too fond of personal liberty. A rein and curb help a fellow go straight," he was "a gentleman at home," and he did not "forget that a burst of anger is a vulgarity. Learn to control your temper."¹³ These traits dictated that a gentleman was always a gentleman, even in the privacy of his own home. The problem was that only the preindustrial and patriarchal structure of American society allowed this earlier practice and paradigm of male gender identity to function.

Unfortunately for men, the Industrial Revolution caused American society to change rapidly during the last third of the nineteenth century. The Self-Made Man, asserting his independence through making decision about his life (and those under his direct control), was an integral part of manhood. Ideally, the Self-Made Man became a yeoman farmer, an independent businessman, or a skilled craftsman. In 1800, eighty

¹⁰Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 18.

¹¹Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 18–19.

¹²Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 43–44.

¹³*Don'ts For Boys: Or Errors of Conduct Corrected by an Old Boy* (Philadelphia, Henry Altemus Company, 1902), 6, 17, 23.

percent of men worked in agriculture, and four-fifths of all men were self-employed. By 1880, only one-third of men were self-employed and only fifty percent worked on farms.¹⁴ The dramatic surge in wage labor during the last third of the nineteenth century made men increasingly dependent on someone else for their survival, removing the vital component of independence from manhood.

To complicate matters, women began to undermine the patriarchal structure of society. According to Filene, “suffrage was a door from the domestic sphere into the world. Higher education and careers were two other doors,” opening two areas previously controlled by men.¹⁵ Meanwhile, working-class women began to enter the work force in previously unheard-of numbers.¹⁶ The growing trend toward wage labor, the rising equality of women, and the closing of the frontier threatened the independence of men. Kimmel writes, “They were fretting that the new crowds surrounding them would put them in a straightjacket.”¹⁷ This sense of confinement and loss of importance in society led men to think that manhood “could be vicariously enjoyed by appropriating the symbols and props that signified earlier forms of power and excitement.”¹⁸ This belief helped cause a shift from manhood to masculinity, “a set of behavioral traits and attitudes [It] was something that had to be constantly demonstrated, the attainment of which was forever in question—lest the man be undone by a perception of being too

¹⁴Kimmel, *Manhood in American*, 82

¹⁵Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 40.

¹⁶Kimmel, *Manhood in American*, 86–87.

¹⁷Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 87.

¹⁸Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 118.

feminine.”¹⁹ Masculinity made how a man behaved more important than his actions, work identity, or material circumstances.

The change from manhood to masculinity had begun to affect the rhetoric of male gender identity by the turn of the twentieth century. Older generations probably found Theodore Roosevelt’s *Strenuous Life* more compatible with the individualistic nature of the gentleman and manhood. Roosevelt’s idea, in reality, reflected the transition from manhood to masculinity. Roosevelt declared that he wanted “to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life . . . to preach that the highest form of success . . . comes . . . the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph.”²⁰ These activities required a certain amount of independence, but the fact that Roosevelt had to tell other men what to do in order to be manly signified the shift toward masculinity.

The action itself had become less important than the meaning that men saw behind it. Woodrow Wilson, in 1901, thought that men best expressed their gender identity through helping others. He posited that when a man “has begun to realize that he is part of a whole, and to what part, suitable for what service and what achievement” he has come into himself.²¹ Wilson’s comment suggested that how others viewed a man reaffirmed his identity, a purely masculine trait.

The ideas of masculinity gained widespread acceptance by the second decade of the twentieth century. The *Ladies Home Journal* in 1915 proclaimed that “the standing

¹⁹Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 120.

²⁰Theodore Roosevelt, “The Strenuous Life,” in *The Strenuous Life* (New York: The Century Company, 1902), 1; Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 76, 79.

²¹Woodrow Wilson, *When a Man Comes To Himself* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1901), 2, 32.

of a man in the world of men has entirely changed within the last few years, . . . today he is beginning to be judged . . . not for the application of his capacities . . . but in proportion as he applies those abilities to the betterment of his fellow men,” suggesting that other people had to recognize his accomplishments before he was truly a man.²² This transformation in male gender identity affected all aspects of men’s lives, especially their sense of independence. With the change from manhood to masculinity, the generations of men who had grown up with the prospect of cheap land or business competition without large corporations faced a society in which they had fewer ways to exercise control over their lives.

This loss of independence changed the fundamental purpose of public drinking and its establishments for men. Historians have shown that public drinking in America had a reciprocal relationship with society since at least the seventeenth century.²³ Taverns and saloons reflected and reinforced aspects of the community; the same relationship existed for public drinking and gender identity. Until approximately the end of the nineteenth century, public drinking reflected and reinforced manhood, “an inner quality, the capacity for autonomy and responsibility.”²⁴ According to Powers, a man following the rules of treating visibly demonstrated his character to his fellows.²⁵ “On such occasions, ‘[I]t was no time to make invidious distinctions—to drink with this

²²“The Man and the Woman,” *Ladies Home Journal* October 1915, 7.

²³See, Duis, *The Saloon*; David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink & the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing & Public Life in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Sharon Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

²⁴Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 119.

²⁵Powers, *Faces Along the Bar*, 94–99.

shipmate and to decline to drink with that shipmate,' explained [Jack] London. 'We were all shipmates So we drank with all and all treated . . . and knew one another for the best fellows in the world.'²⁶ Treating reflected and reinforced manhood when all men had, in theory, equal chances to be yeoman farmers or independent businessmen. They knew they were men from their actions and were simply practicing their manhood along with everyone in the saloon.

As society changed, men inadvertently made public drinking an activity that created and reinforced their gender identity, a performative action necessary to the maintenance of their manhood. By 1900, the Industrial Revolution and the end of the frontier increasingly confined men publicly and limited their opportunities for independent social and economic advancement.²⁷ Kimmel posits that in order to retain their manhood "many men . . . retreat[ed] to a bygone era."²⁸ Kimmel uses this idea to examine how men excluded others based on race, sexual orientation, and gender to retain their sense of self.²⁹ This concept is also applicable to older institutions like the saloon, which emerged during the middle of the nineteenth century.³⁰ As male gender identity began to change, men retreated into the saloon. They also began to use alcohol consumption to compensate for what they were losing in the community, but these saloongoers unintentionally changed the relationship between public drinking and gender.

²⁶Powers, *Faces Along the Bar*, 94.

²⁷Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 83–85, 87.

²⁸Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 89.

²⁹Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 89–100.

³⁰Robert E Popham, "The Social History of the Tavern," in *Research Advances in Alcohol and Drug Studies*, ed. Ydedy Israel et al., vol. 4 (New York: Plenum Press, 1978), 277–278.

This resulted in men starting to use these places to simulate the aspects of male gender identity they could no longer execute in society.

As public drinking became an increasingly performative act for male gender identity, the connotations of drinking customs like treating assumed new meanings. Men who violated the rules of treating under the old interpretations simply lost the respect of their fellows. Travis Hoke wrote in 1931 that “it was insulting to refuse to be treated—so much so that a weak (or hardy) soul who could not endure the thought of more liquor down his gullet would order a cigar, even if he put it in his pocket. Taking a cigar was looked upon with the disgust with which one views bad manners in a child.”³¹ If someone failed to reciprocate, his status decreased in the judgment of other saloongoes. Anyone who could not return the drink lost standing in at least his own eyes.³² A man who did not participate or went Dutch treat indicated he disliked the group or was unsociable, resulting in a loss of reputation.³³ In each instance, a man did not cease being a man because he violated custom; he just was not equal to everyone else in the room.

As society changed, men needed a way not only to create and demonstrate their manhood but also to socialize their peers into this identity. This transformed treating from a custom that reflected who a man was already, to creating a sense of identity for himself. McTeague, the protagonist in Frank Norris’ 1899 novel *McTeague*, was broke and found himself unable to reciprocate when treated to a drink. Reflecting the attitudes of saloongoes by 1900, “McTeague knew enough . . . to sense that both his honor and

³¹Travis Hoke, “Corner Saloon,” *American Mercury*, March 1931, 319.

³²Hoke, “Corner Saloon,” March 1931, 319.

³³Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 79

manhood were diminished by his breach.”³⁴ A man in this situation, like the character, was quite literally less of a man for having violated saloon etiquette. At the same time, a man had to choose to participate in buying rounds, allowing him the freedom to control his actions and, by extension, his character. In addition, he had the ability to choose which saloons he patronized, allowing him to select the place that best reinforced his sense of self.

In a society with dwindling options for independent economic and social advancement, public drinking establishments became one of the last places where men seemingly had unlimited control over their own lives and identities. However, men’s use of the saloon to reinforce an increasingly outdated idea of male gender identity prevented these businesses from adapting to the changing consumer culture. Figures 9, 10, and 11 show different places, with the images created between the 1880s and 1919. Despite the technological and social changes, the saloon remained virtually same for almost forty years.³⁵ This assertion held true no matter the location of these places. Figure 11 was an establishment in Telluride, Colorado, but it looks similar to the two New York City saloons. The space of the saloon forced a majority of the activity within to take place around the bar and in a large group, providing social reinforcement of the men’s gender identity. Men, by refusing to allow drinking establishments to change, symbolically enshrined ideals like personal prerogative and courage.

³⁴Powers, *Faces along The Bar*, 95.

³⁵George Augustus Sala, Engraving, 1882, New York Public Library; Kurtz, *The Bar-Room of “The Corner,”* Print, 1892, New York Public Library; Joseph E. Byers, *The Cosmopolitan*, Photograph, c. 1905–1915, Denver Public Library.



Figure 9: *A New York Drinking Bar, 1882*



Figure 10: *Bar-Room of "The Corner," 1892*



Figure 11: *The Cosmopolitan*, c. 1905–1915

These ideals were often expressed in saloon decorations, which reinforced the homosocial aspects of the public drinking culture. The pictures shown on the walls of saloons in these images show a similarity in terms of what was on the walls: animal heads, sports, and nude women. Each embellishment represented an activity that reflected and reinforced specific aspects of manhood. These kinds of decorations made saloons shrines to the aspects of manhood that their customers found most attractive. The symbolization of the traits of manhood essentially froze male gender identity for saloon-going men. For example, the décor of the average saloon indicated that working-class men valued courage as a trait of manhood. These places typically had pictures of different sporting activities, such as boxing or horseracing. Both sports involved a man risking his life and health to prove himself. Pictures of body builders also adorned the

walls, but a number of these men were also pugilists.³⁶ The Budweiser print *Custer's Last Fight* (figure 12) reflected a different type of courage; it was the courage to stand against overwhelming odds.³⁷ By the first decade of the twentieth century, these methods of demonstrating one's courage were a thing of the past. The average working-class man could not afford the monetary costs of a racehorse nor the injuries from boxing that could get him fired from his job. For the working-class man, the saloon became a haven for past manly glories that he could no longer directly perform.



Figure 12: Budweiser's *Custer's Last Fight*, 1896

As working-class men froze their version of manhood, the middle and upper classes froze the ideal of the gentleman. The well-bred man was firm but gracious with women. He did not “put [his] foot down too hard [on his] sweetheart's will. Girls are

³⁶Jon M. Kingsdale, “The ‘Poor Man’s Club’: Social Functions of the Urban Working-Class Saloon,” *American Quarterly* 25 (October 1973): 475; Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours For What We Will*, 55.

³⁷*Custer's Last Fight*, Lithograph, 1896, Digital Reproduction, Google Images.

shy of autocrats,” but he also did not “try to buy a girl’s favor nor permit [himself] to be sold by a pretty maiden.”³⁸ According to a 1906 etiquette manual, the gentleman was still courteous, treated women with a certain respect, and allowed his dress and manner to reflect the fact he was a gentleman.³⁹ Meanwhile, the society in which middle-class men existed had changed. Their wives and daughters might participate in reform movements or actively seek leisure activities outside the home. These pursuits contradicted what etiquette manuals said was the proper role of a lady. Women’s actions gradually diminished the control middle- and upper-class men had over society.

Similar to the working-class saloon, the drinking establishments of middle- and upper-class men reflected the gentleman’s most important trait: power, including over women. These men owned and managed the nation’s industry and controlled the country’s banks, among other professions, but they were losing their power and position socially due to growing instability of the patriarchal system. These men, like their working-class counterparts, drank at places that helped them hold onto the fading ideals of the gentleman. Albert Crocket, writing in 1931, recalled one particular decoration of the bar at the old Waldorf Hotel: “At one end . . . stood a good-sized bronze bear, looking as if it meant business; at the other end, a rampant bull. Midway between them was placed a tiny lamb, flanked on either side by a tall vase of flowers. The whole decoration was a more or less delicate compliment to the heaviest patronage . . . wags claiming that the flowers were all the lamb—the innocent public—got after Wall Street’s

³⁸*Don'ts For Boys*, 103, 104.

³⁹Eleanor B. Clapp, *The Courtesies: A Book of Etiquette For Everyday* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1906), 144–146

bulls and bears had finished with him.”⁴⁰ Representative of their profession, the men who drank at the Waldorf were bankers and stockbrokers, who controlled the economy. A more obvious example was at the Knickerbocker Hotel. This hotel bar had a painting of Old King Cole sitting on his throne.⁴¹ Being an upper-tier hotel, the wealthy and powerful drank there, making the painting emblematic of their power to control people and society. Public drinking and the places where it occurred had ceased to reflect the changes in society or male gender identity, resulting in a fixed ideal of men inside of drinking establishments that were in many respects unchanging.



Figure 13: Maxfield Parrish's *Old King Cole*, 1895

The representation of these traits of manhood helped cause the decline of male homosocial public drinking. Similar to the department store, the saloon was a place of consumer culture, but the saloon, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, became a static institution. It increasingly became relevant only to the men who used it and sent a message different than that of a dynamic business such as the department store, which according to William Leach, catered in substantial part to women. By 1910,

⁴⁰Albert Stevens Crocket, *Old Waldorf Bar Days* (New York: Aventine, 1931), 23.

⁴¹Maxfield Parrish, *Old King Cole*, Watercolor, 1894, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA.

department stores often created mock houses, Wanamaker's the House Palatial being one of the most famous, on their display floors in order to entice people to purchase various products.⁴² These displays sent customers the message that they could have similar lifestyles if they only purchased the correct items. The atmosphere of the saloon performed a similar purpose for men. While department stores reflected a constantly changing and heterosocial ideal life, the saloon went from reflecting elements of manhood to constituting it. For example, saloon-centered bloodsports prior to 1900 reinforced aspects of manhood, like honor, loyalty, prowess, and courage, but white men possessed other ways to demonstrate these same values, such as going to the frontier or fighting in the Indian Wars.⁴³ After 1900, when these other options had vanished, these saloon-centered bloodsports became similar to the décor of the saloon. Both the décor and activities like boxing packaged the ideals of manhood and sold them to men with their mugs of beer, preventing them from choosing who they were. Men had unknowingly traded some of their independence for the stability in identity that these places offered. The result of this exchange was the saloon's resistance to change seen in chapter 1; too many alterations to the saloon would have forced men to acknowledge that their gender identity, and therefore their roles in society, had dramatically changed over the previous generation or so.

These efforts to keep the saloon and male gender identity unchanged, and thus directly relevant to all men, manifested themselves in the rhetoric used to defend these places from the Prohibition movement. The defenders of the saloon used the male gender

⁴²William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 79–81.

⁴³Elliott J. Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prizefighting in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 181.

qualities of independence and self-control in an effort to make the saloon a vital institution to the development of boys. They said parents could teach a boy only so much morality and decision making, but needed a place like the saloon to put these lessons into practice. C. A. Windle, during a 1914 anti-Prohibition rally, argued: “Prohibition is . . . a menace to the development of true manhood. It is only by exercising freedom of choice that one can develop the faculty of self-control. . . . You can no more develop the faculty of self-control without freedom of choice than you can develop mental power without exercising your brain.”⁴⁴ This defense turned the saloon into a vital training ground in the ways of manhood for boys. However, this rhetoric only demonstrated the obsolescence the older generations’ ideas of gender identity. Windle’s argument, based on the assumption that manhood remained the undisputed practice of male gender identity, made the saloon the only place where men, regardless of age, could define themselves. But the actions of young men suggested otherwise. Rosenzweig has argued that young men preferred more active entertainments, such as dance halls or pool halls, to spending time in the saloon.⁴⁵ The decreasing popularity of the saloon indicated that the generations of men who came of age during the twentieth century held different gender ideals than their elders and that the saloon did not reflect these new beliefs.

⁴⁴“Windle on Prohibition,” *The Western Brewer and the Journal of the Barley, Malt, and Hops Trade*, 15 June 1914, 261.

⁴⁵Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours*, 188.

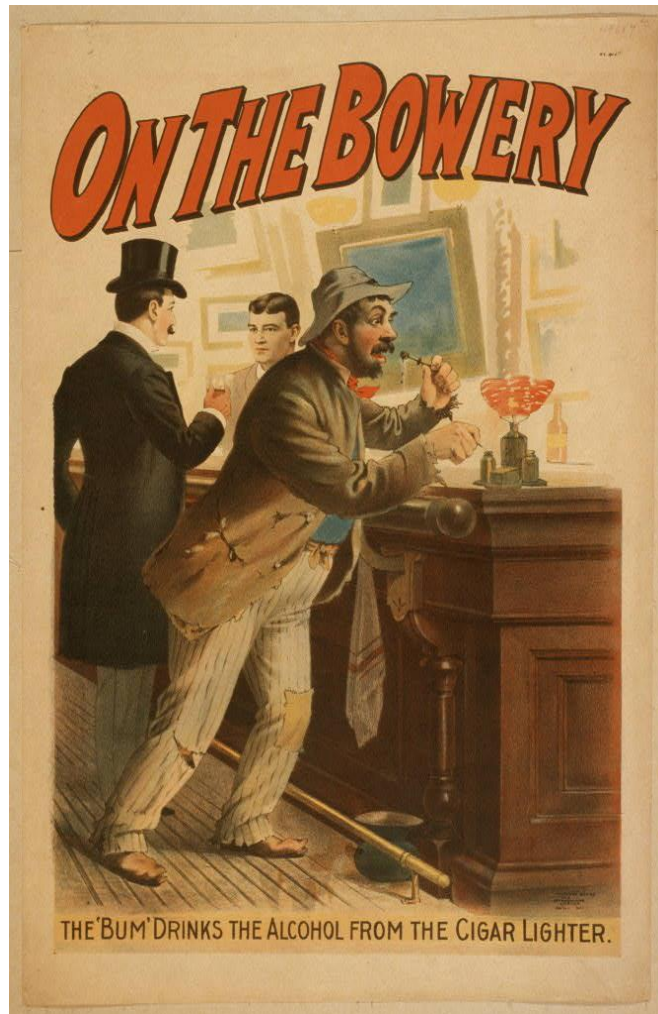


Figure 14: Theatrical Poster entitled *On the Bowery*

This generational shift highlighted a problem within and the root cause of the decline of male homosocial public drinking: the differences in gender identity prevented men from being a single united group under the standard of public drinking. Figure 14 shows a gentleman in evening attire having a drinking while the bum next him attempts to imbibe the alcohol from the lighter. The presence of the gentleman and the bartender's outfit suggests that the place depicted in the poster was a middle- or an upper-class establishment.⁴⁶ This poster represents the ideal of male public drinking: men of all

⁴⁶*On the Bowery*, Lithograph, 1894, Library of Congress; George Ade, *The Old-Time Saloon: Not Wet—Not Dry—Just History* (New York; Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, 1931), 95.

classes coming together in a saloon as equals. The illustration, however, was predicated on a situation that never would have occurred. The gentleman associated only with his social equals, meaning other gentlemen and their families. Walter Germain, author of an advice book for men, went so far as to say, “The terms ‘lady’ and ‘gentleman’ are distinctive. Your friends and acquaintances are all supposed to be ladies and gentlemen. To distinguish them as such implies a doubt. . . . The person who speaks of ‘a lady or gentleman friend’ has a defined social position—on the Bowery.”⁴⁷ Germain also instructed a gentleman not to “‘queer’ the old folks by associating with questionable characters. You have no right to disgrace the family name.”⁴⁸ Middle and upper-class men, consequently, drank in hotel bars or clubs, where they associated only with other gentlemen. Mingling with working-class men in the saloon (or anywhere else) was beneath a gentleman who was not slumming. This prevented public drinking from having the same meaning for different classes of men. Working-class men saw it as a way to reinforce their social independence and manhood, while middle- and upper-class men thought it reinforced their social position and power. This separation weakened the overall structure of male public drinking, decreasing its importance in society.

When people began to question the relevancy of the gentleman, their comments also reflected the status of male public drinking. H. B. Marriott Watson, contributing to *Harper’s Weekly* in 1910, wrote: “Napoleon would never have conquered Europe and founded dynasties had he been a gentleman. Would the wild West have been brought

⁴⁷Walter Germain, *The Complete Bachelor: Manners of Men* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896), 197–198

⁴⁸*Don’ts For Boys*, 54.

under the plough and harrow by men professing those habits of conduct?”⁴⁹ Watson’s idea suggests that the gentleman could not exist in societies undergoing a dramatic transformation, such as places on the frontier or industrializing nations. W. L. George, writing for *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* in 1920, argued that “the gentleman has allowed himself to be separated from his period,” making him a tradition-bound ideal that belonged to a preindustrial world.⁵⁰ The same things were true about the saloon. Older generations of men used it to create their gender identity, which many young men found unappealing. With fewer new patrons every year, male public drinking started to become less important to the younger generations. By 1920, male public drinking no longer dominated male leisure time as it once did. The older men who used public drinking to create the qualities of manhood were fast becoming a minority of the population, making the saloon an increasingly obsolete institution. By the time the Eighteenth Amendment had taken effect, male homosocial public drinking was simply one activity among many in which a man could participate and be inducted into a specific kind of gender identity.

Make Room For The Women

A common thread in the historiographies of public drinking and heterosocial entertainment is that specific groups of (mostly young) women drank in public but remained on the fringes of the male public drinking environment until Prohibition. Women drank alcohol only as a result of another activity according to historians. Single working women, in Powers’ *Faces along the Bar*, drank in the saloon to get the free

⁴⁹H. B. Marriott Watson, “The Passing of the Gentleman,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 26 November 1910, 20.

⁵⁰W. L. George, “Exit the Gentleman,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, January 1920, 265.

lunch. Peiss has the same group drinking in the saloon for the same reason, but she also has young working-class women drinking alcohol in public while on dates with men. McBee has young, working-class immigrant women drinking alcohol outside the dance halls they patronized. According Catherine Murdock in *Domesticating Drink*, middle-class women drank at places like cabarets with their husbands.⁵¹ These narratives reinforce the idea that men were the primary influences on the structure of public drinking before 1920, making women largely passive recipients of a male-dominated activity.

In reality, women had started to develop their own homosocial public drinking environment by 1900, creating new situations that helped socialize them into their emerging gender identity. The female drinking situation around 1900, similar to that of men, helped constitute changes to female gender identity. Unlike men, women used public drinking to demonstrate their newfound freedom. Although the amount of power a woman had in the realm of public drinking depended upon her class, public drinking had the same purpose and meaning for all female drinkers. They believed public drinking was a leisure activity with no implications other than having a good time. The dominance of men, both in terms of public drinking and in society, did limit where and when women could drink. Initially secondary in importance to the male public drinking sphere, female homosocial public drinking quickly became an important leisure activity for women.

⁵¹Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 210–211; Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 111–112; Catherine Gilbert Murdock, *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in American, 1870-1940* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 70–87; McBee, *Dancehall Days*, 74–75, 77–78.

During the last third of the nineteenth century, as with men, a conflict developed between the ideal and the practice of female gender identity. The ideal was the Victorian lady, whose primary role was to support the gentleman. According to Margaret Sangster's 1900 *Winsome Womanhood*, the lady "takes a pledge to sustain [her husband] and forward all that is best for him, to make herself the light of his home, and the blessing of his days for all the years to be. No pink and white tyranny shall this be on her part, no despotism of a weaker nature over a stronger, but the rich devotion of a lofty womanhood unstintedly outpoured."⁵² Minna Thomas Antrim, in her 1902 advice book *Don'ts For Girls*, described the characteristics necessary for a woman to carry out her responsibilities. She declared that ladies "don't dress like a man," told them, "don't be mean" and "don't disregard social conventions."⁵³ In theory, the lady "governed the domestic half of the middle-class world while men did economic, political and military battle beyond the door step."⁵⁴ This ideal, found in etiquette and advice manuals, stayed largely the same throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Meanwhile, a new practice of female gender identity emerged ahead of a new ideal in the form of the New Woman. First appearing around 1880, these young women went to college, attended matinees alone, or went shopping alone. This new practice emerged partially from the rise of consumer culture in the nineteenth century, but it also came about due to deliberate social challenges. These young women, sometimes at their mothers' encouragement, found the ideal of the lady unfulfilling, and they came of age

⁵²Margaret E. Sangster, *Winsome Womanhood: Talks on Life and Conduct* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900), 94.

⁵³Minna Thomas Antrim, *Don'ts For Girls: A Manual of Mistakes* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus, 1902), 71, 75, 107.

⁵⁴Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 8

listening to social reformers like the suffragists. The ideological constant among the adherents of the New Woman was the belief that a woman was a man's equal.⁵⁵ These notions make the lady and the New Woman appear to have little in common.

This clear-cut division is less compelling when comparing the lady's and the New Woman's relationship with alcohol consumption. The lady's relationship to alcohol was ambiguous from the beginning. Murdock argues that etiquette and cook books supplied Victorian women with many chances to drink in private, but whether these women took advantage of these opportunities is unknown.⁵⁶ Presuming the Victorian lady did drink within the privacy of her own home, she would have possessed some knowledge of alcohol. In addition, early twentieth-century etiquette and advice manuals say little about a lady drinking in public. On the other hand, historians have ignored the New Woman and alcohol consumption. The New Woman declared, "I can do everything my brothers do; and do it rather better, I fancy," but historians have interpreted this idea primarily in terms of political equality with a secondary focus on certain types of social equality, such as what jobs were appropriate for women.⁵⁷ However, they have failed to notice that this same rhetoric could apply to alcohol consumption. With these ambiguities and holes in the historiography, it is a mistake for historians to assume women prior to 1920 had little experience or little desire to drink recreationally in public.

The lack of response in newspapers to reports of women recreationally drinking in saloons suggests that working-class women commonly patronized these places by 1900. The current literature on public drinking has a majority of working-class women

⁵⁵Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 71; Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 19–26.

⁵⁶Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 52–62.

⁵⁷Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 71.

imbibing alcohol in private settings, such as their tenements. Peiss and Powers both argue that single, employed working-class women utilized the backroom of saloons for survival.⁵⁸ If the histories of Prohibition and the current historiography of women and public drinking are correct then the instances where a woman drank in a saloon for reasons other than survival should have elicited a reaction, but none of the incidents in the twentieth century did. The *New York Times* during the first two decades of the twentieth century commonly published reports about women in saloons, either getting arrested or being sent to the hospital, but these articles do not focus on the fact that a woman was publicly drinking alcohol.

Articles from the *New York Times* shed light on the possibility that working-class women drank in saloons for fun. In 1900, a well-dressed woman met Emil Kesserling and another man in a saloon. Kesserling recalled that the woman, whom neither he nor the other man had met before entering the saloon, was “flush with money and spent it freely for drinks.”⁵⁹ In 1901, two women who had smallpox escaped quarantine and spent the day in the backroom of saloons.⁶⁰ In 1902, “when Nicholas Fish, banker and society man, was found dying in West Thirty-Fourth Street . . . he had been in a saloon with two women and a man.” The police arrested Libbie J. Phillips, Nellie Casey, and Thomas Sharkey for Fish’s death. The four met in a saloon and had a few drinks. Later that evening, Sharkey attacked and killed Fish.⁶¹ The police probably arrested Phillips

⁵⁸Peiss, *Cheap Amusements*, 27–28; Powers, “Women in a New World,” 46–52; Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 75.

⁵⁹“Taken Dying From Saloon,” *New York Times*, 28 September 1900.

⁶⁰“Women Smallpox Patients At Large,” *New York Times*, 2 January 1901.

⁶¹“Nicholas Fish was Killed by Violence,” *New York Times*, 17 September 1902.

and Casey for hiding Sharkey.⁶² In 1907, Belle Menke and Agnes Dryer met police lieutenant Dennis Grady through a friend, and the four of them went out drinking. Grady later arrested the women “on a charge of stealing from his pocket \$166 while they were drinking in a saloon at Twenty-Third Street and Eighth Avenue” but not for drinking in a saloon.⁶³

This trend was not confined to New York City. By 1914, there were so many women drinking at the saloons near Market Square in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania that the Committee on Public Safety received a recommendation to consider opening saloons for women.⁶⁴ The use of the term *saloon* suggests that the recommendation supported the creation of a female homosocial establishments that sold alcohol by the glass for profit, indicating a growing acceptance of women drinking in public during the early twentieth century. All these examples point to the fact that working-class women could recreationally drink in a saloon without negative consequences.

Contemporaries even noted the shift away from the social restrictions placed on women drinking alcohol. A 1900 *Los Angeles Times* article proclaimed, “It is a most deplorable fact, but one which seems not to admit doubt, that intemperance in the use of alcoholic stimulants is on the increase among women, and particularly among young women, in the United States.”⁶⁵ In Atlanta Georgia, the police saw more drunk women on the street every weekend, while “the proprietor of a fashionable New York hotel is

⁶²Upon finding out his wife had been arrested, Mr. Casey expressed some regret and then played his child and the police a tune on the piano. See “Nicholas Fish,” *New York Times*, 17 September 1902.

⁶³When Grady returned to the saloon to get the bartender’s testimony, the bartender gave Grady his \$166 dollars. It turned out Grady had forgotten that he had asked the bartender to hold onto the money for him. “Women Sue Lieut. Grady,” *New York Times*, 4 October 1907.

⁶⁴“City May Have Saloons For Women Only,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, 15 February 1914.

⁶⁵“A Peril of the New Woman,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 February 1900.

quoted as saying . . . that the drink habit among women of the higher as well as the lower classes is growing.”⁶⁶ By 1902, one *New York Sun* reporter claimed that “society women throughout the country . . . now drank wine at their luncheons and dinners, at home and in restaurants,” indicating that all classes of women actively sought to drink alcohol.⁶⁷ A 1903 *New York Times* editorial stated, “It is probably true that the strong prejudices of even half a century ago against discreet drinking are disappearing, and that the social restraints imposed upon [women] are somewhat relaxed in this particular.”⁶⁸ Although the women in the previous paragraph were far from discreet (newspapers did publish articles about them after all), it does indicate that social restrictions against women drinking alcohol were vanishing. The third and fourth examples follow the accepted historiography of women drinking in saloons; those women had male escorts. However, the first two examples had unescorted women drinking in the saloon for fun. These two instances indicate that some working-class women actively sought the recreational atmosphere of the saloon. Yet, these women were not at the center of the emerging female homosocial public drinking culture.

Middle-class women had greater roles in the creation of female homosocial public drinking than their less well-to-do counterparts. Etiquette manuals from the early twentieth century show that the idealized lady would receive callers, make calls, and have

⁶⁶“A Peril of the New Woman,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 February 1900.

⁶⁷“Some Strange Ways of the New Woman,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 April 1902.

Although appearing in the *Los Angeles Times*, a notation at the beginning of the article indicates that the *New York Sun* originally published this piece.

⁶⁸“Women and the Drink Habit,” *New York Times*, 12 April 1903.

servants to perform the housework.⁶⁹ In addition, “her appearance must suggest absolute neatness, and her dress must be appropriate to the place and the occasion.”⁷⁰ Although the Victorian lady was the bourgeois gender ideal, working-class women had neither the time nor money to be proper ladies. Authors wrote advice books more for the middle class, making the New Woman ideal more reflective of the middle-class woman’s experience. These women, in exercising their new freedom, made some companies, like department stores, adapt their business strategies to attract women.⁷¹ Some public drinking establishments followed this trend, but they did so at a slower pace than other business due to the perceived stigma surrounding women and alcohol.

The story of ladies’ day at the Knickerbocker Hotel concisely summarizes both the evolution of female public drinking and how drinking establishments adapted to this new clientele. Middle-class women had to be secretive about their drinking in the 1890s. First-class restaurants and tea rooms served alcohol to women only in teacups; if a woman wanted her drink in the proper glass, she had to be in her hotel room. James B. Regan, manager of the Knickerbocker Hotel, changed this paradigm. At first, he smuggled drinks to women in teacups but then defied convention by serving women drinks in normal glasses: “It was a triumphant day for liberty when he had ‘ladies day’ for two hours one afternoon a week.”⁷² This story suggests that some middle-class public

⁶⁹*Correct Social Usage: A Course of Instruction in Good Form, Style, and Deportment by Eighteen Distinguished Authors* (New York: The New York Society of Self-Culture, 1906), 180–205, 542–568.

⁷⁰*Correct Social Usage*, 139.

⁷¹Leach, *Land of Desire*, 148.

⁷²“Women at Bars Hotly Defended,” *New York Times*, 21 July 1935.

drinking establishment adapted to the demands of a new clientele.⁷³ In reality, the changes the story suggests occurred in places that were less obvious and had fewer men than hotel bars.

The modern bar owner's power to adapt his business to changes in society originated with the circuitous route that middle-class women had to take so they could drink acceptably in public. Middle-class women probably did initially start drinking in the home. As Murdock points out, the most obvious opportunities would be the cooking alcohol in the kitchen or patent medicine.⁷⁴ As late as 1902, advice manuals told teenage girls that ladies "don't even have a speaking acquaintance with King Alcohol. He's a disreputable old fellow."⁷⁵ By 1907, etiquette manuals permitted women to drink privately in certain circumstances. One example was the formal dinner. No one asked the host and hostess for anything that they did not offer: "The very good friend of the host or hostess, dining somewhat informally, and wishing to offer a compliment may ask to have his glass [of wine] replenished. To ask this more than once, however, is not in good taste, and a woman should never prefer this request."⁷⁶ At a formal dinner party, "a hostess is pleased by praise of her cook, and a *host* [emphasis added] of his wine," reinforcing the idea that alcohol was a male prerogative.⁷⁷ After the meal ended, the ladies adjourned to the drawing room, where "coffee, and possibly liquor, is served to"

⁷³For a seemingly momentous break with early twentieth century standards, no one published any articles about a ladies' day at the Knickerbocker Hotel before 1930. The only *New York Times* articles about a ladies day at a place called the Knickerbocker were the ones held at Knickerbocker Athletic Club held during the early twentieth century.

⁷⁴Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 52–53.

⁷⁵Antrim, *Don'ts For Girls*, 99.

⁷⁶*Correct Social Usage*, 74.

⁷⁷Mrs. Charles Harcourt, *Good Form for All Women: A Guide to Conduct and Dress on All Occasions* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company, 1907), 157.

them.⁷⁸ This acceptance of women drinking in a formal, private setting suggests that middle-class women could drink in regulated and discrete social situations by 1907.

In fact, thanks to the tea rooms, middle-class women drank unobserved in public since perhaps the first decade of the twentieth century. This type of business was described at the time as “a woman’s institution. It [was] run by women, for women. Men enter with diffidence, and seldom alone.”⁷⁹ Two men from Britain attempted to enter a tea room in New York City only to have a waiter turn them away, saying that they “never serve tea to gentlemen unaccompanied by ladies.”⁸⁰ This ban made tea rooms similar to the saloon; owners designed both types of places for a single gender but generally allowed in members of the opposite sex only occasionally, and with an escort. Women gathered in tea rooms without losing social position, and while inside, they were free, for a short time, of the restraints of society and their obligations, including any restrictions of their consumption of alcohol. An 1896 *New York Times* article indicates that the first tea room in the city opened no earlier than 1897. Yet, another *New York Times* article shows that owners had already started to serve women alcohol in these places by around 1910, suggesting that women were already drinking alcohol and the proprietors simply offered their customers what they wanted.⁸¹ The tea room emphasized “congeniality, tone, ‘atmosphere,’ a place for the foregathering of kindred spirits—these

⁷⁸Harcourt, *Good Form For All Women*, 134.

⁷⁹Richard Barry, “The Tea Rooms, Where Society and Business Meet,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1912.

⁸⁰“Kept Out of the Tea Room,” *New York Times*, 18 December 1906.

⁸¹“Afternoon Tea Room.” *New York Times*, 13 October 1896; Barry, “The Tea Rooms,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1912.

[were] the means of its existence; ‘refreshment’ is the end.”⁸² The tea room was a public space where women could find a place to relax and visit with other women, something working-class men had in the saloon and middle- and upper-class men had in their private clubs.

However, the tea room showed more adaptation to the rise of consumer culture and the changes in society than the saloon. Although the idea of tea rooms did not arrive in New York City until the late 1890s, they had become popular by 1904.⁸³ Tea rooms spent large amounts of money in an effort to be modern, and they catered to the tastes of specific clientele. Some theaters opened tea rooms inside their buildings for women between acts, while the Metropolitan Museum of Art opened one decorated with a selection of its collection.⁸⁴ The proprietor of one tea room spent ten-thousand dollars to make it a period place.⁸⁵ All these places shared a two elements. People believed them to be a business designed for women, and tea rooms changed their layouts based on their locations. These efforts to attract patrons through décor in addition to the product sold suggest that the flexible nature of public drinking establishments started with places attempting to attract women. Yet, atmosphere was not the only, and perhaps not even the most important, reason why women went to tea rooms.

A number of women who patronized the tea rooms wanted a comfortable place to drink alcohol. In 1912, Richard Barry did not believe women would use a bar designed

⁸²Barry, “The Tea Rooms,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1912.

⁸³“The Tea Room Habit Has Come To Stay,” *New York Times*, 3 April 1904.

⁸⁴“New Theatre’s Tearoom Exclusive?” *New York Times*, 3 December 1909; “Art Museum Opens Artistic Tea Room,” *New York Times*, 20 October 1918.

⁸⁵The article does not mention the name of the tea room or what period it recreated. See, Barry, “The Tea Rooms,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1912.

specifically for them, so he wrote an article about tea rooms, none of which had liquor licenses. He had a female associate go undercover to help demonstrate his point. Using the telephone directory, Barry chose eighteen random tea rooms in the shopping district between Union Square and Central Park. He instructed his female colleague to attempt to buy alcohol at each of these places. The female investigator discovered that she could get alcohol with little trouble at six of the eighteen tearooms. One place served women drinks over a bar, in labeled bottles, and in bar glasses. Two other places gave women their cocktails in opaque glass that obscured the contents. Another pair of tea rooms denied serving alcohol but did provide “Russian tea.” Upon ordering Russian tea, the server gave the investigator the choice of gin or whiskey and (scotch or rye after choosing the latter). When the female investigator received her order, she found no tea in the teapot; the entire thing was full of whiskey. The investigator had to persuade the waitress at the final place to give her alcohol but eventually did receive some. The female colleague told Barry she believed that she could have obtained alcohol at all eighteen places if she took the time to become a regular.⁸⁶ Although the tea rooms also probably sold tea, the secrecy surrounding the sale of alcohol in most these businesses indicates that a large majority of these places did not have liquor licenses. In retrospect, Barry’s article may not have entirely proven that, as he put it, “women may want a bar, they even may use a bar, but not by that name—not yet.”⁸⁷ The tea room that served alcohol over the bar in glasses was basically an unlicensed bar for women.⁸⁸

⁸⁶Barry, “The Tea Rooms,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1912.

⁸⁷Barry, “The Tea Rooms,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1912.

⁸⁸These six tea rooms were not unique. In September 1919, police raided a tea room that contained several hundred bottles of alcohol. Although wartime Prohibition may count for the large number of bottles, the article did not focus on the raid and not alcohol being found in a business

Barry's opinion that women did not want to drink alcohol at places called bars suggests that even illicit female homosocial drinking spaces threatened the dominance of men. Filene argues that any "sex role is, by definition, is a product of interaction between male and female; the history of one sex is only half of the whole."⁸⁹ This idea makes Barry's quote more indicative of what men wanted than of women's desires. As discussed above, men were struggling with transformations in their own gender identity by 1910, and they retreated into public drinking establishments to reinforce their notions of gender. Saloons and hotel bar rooms became settings vital to the practice of manhood; they were one of the few places where men felt they still controlled the environment and exercised the independence associated with manhood. As long as women did not publicly drink in female homosocial places, men could claim that they were the masters of public drinking. Under this paradigm, a woman had to obey the rules that men laid down if she wanted to drink in public. Women purchasing and consuming alcohol in a female homosocial space (regardless of the legality of it) threatened men by jeopardizing their control over public drinking and the independence they associated with it. A business dedicated to offering women liquor and a space to mingle and relax with other women endangered the dominance of the male-dominated saloon and, consequently, male gender identity.

Barry's quote also reflected changes in female gender identity and its relationship to alcohol. A literal reading of the quote had women wanting to drink alcohol but not at any place called a bar. The tea rooms that served alcohol in teapots and teacups support

patronized by women, suggesting that people knew women commonly drank in these places. See, "Police Raid Tearoom," *New York Times*, 7 September 1919.

⁸⁹Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, xx.

this idea; the women who patronized those establishments would not have gone there if they did not feel, for whatever reason, the need to conceal their drinking. However, other tea rooms served women alcohol either openly or semi-openly, and these were not the only places women drank. In June 1911, a reporter from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania entered a hotel bar to find that several women there. The reporter noticed that one man started to tell a story he had heard at his club only to have his friend silence him with, “ladies present, old top.”⁹⁰ Meanwhile, men would leave the back room of a saloon if a woman entered it.⁹¹ These examples indicate that men and women responded differently to female public drinking. For these women, there is little evidence to suggest that they lost any status or respect for drinking in public. The examples of middle-class women either openly or semi-openly drinking alcohol shows a rising social acceptance of public drinking among women. Meanwhile, men’s reactions to women in public drinking establishments signify that men were losing control of the public drinking culture. If public drink remained a male prerogative until the 1920s then men would have had no need to alter the way they acted while drinking; there would have been no women with whom they had to contend. Yet, these examples clearly show that men changed their behavior to accommodate women drinkers, suggesting that men were not entirely comfortable consuming alcohol in public with women.

The final indicator that female public drinking had become socially acceptable among women and some men was the opening of licensed drinking establishments specifically for women. The *New York Times* reported that Walter H. Marshall, the

⁹⁰“Women Invade Barroom,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, 12 June 1911.

⁹¹Powers, “Women In A New World,” 46–47

manager of the Vanderbilt Hotel on Thirty-Fourth Street and Park Avenue, was closing the Oriental Room. This room was essentially a bar for women. Marshall believed that female guests wanted a place to drink unobserved, but due to the lack of use, he decided to close it. The probable reason women did not use the Oriental Room was amount of alcohol they received there. The Oriental Room served “dainty drinks in thin-stemmed, thimble-sized glasses,” suggesting that female customers got little alcohol in their supposed drinks.⁹² In a way, the Oriental Room continued what etiquette manuals implied; women had to drink significantly less alcohol than men and do so in a controlled setting, making it unlikely that Marshall would have increased the size of the drinks for women at an upper-class hotel. On the other hand, the Oriental Room represented the maturation of the female homosocial drinking culture. Businessmen now saw potential profit in having licensed establishments for female drinkers and were willing to defy gender ideals to provide their female customers with these places.

The tea rooms and the Oriental Room also indicate that middle-class women wanted to drink normal portions of alcohol in public but lacked a socially acceptable place to do so. Louis Bustanoby, proprietor of the Café des Beaux Arts, solved this problem around 1910 or 1911; he opened a bar that catered specifically to women in his restaurant. Murdock, in *Domesticating Drink*, claims this bar was a publicity stunt, but the evidence suggests otherwise.⁹³ The Café des Beaux Arts bar did not gain any national

⁹²“Women Lose Hotel Bar,” *New York Times*, 29 January 1912. It appears that this is the only article about the Oriental Room, so it is unknown how long it operated under this particular business model.

⁹³Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 74.

attention until January 1914.⁹⁴ Bustanoby opened the bar in 1911, but the *New York Times* did not write an article about it until October 1913. Barry, in December 1912, wrote his article in response to this specific bar but did not name it, providing it with no useful publicity. If Bustanoby opened the bar as a publicity stunt then he failed miserably; he gained no effective publicity for nearly two years. This evidence suggests that while publicity might have been a factor, he probably saw a business opportunity to satisfy a preexisting demand.

The bar of the Beaux Arts Café possessed both the characteristics and spirit to make it the first female counterpart to the male saloon. The women who patronized the bar treated each other more often than men did. According to Bustanoby, “you will hear [women] say, ‘this round is on me,’ and insist on it, and when the check is put down, you will see them fight for it. Women put more value on being regarded as good fellows than men do.”⁹⁵ This fact suggests the camaraderie of group drinking composed an aspect of and demonstrated their gender identity. Women used the same toasts as men, like “here’s now” and “good luck. The only toast the bartenders did not hear women use was “here’s looking at you.” Meanwhile, Bustanoby took into account the fact that his customers were middle-class women. Similar to the working-class saloon and hotel bars, the Beaux Arts bar had tables and chairs, but its bar had barstools for women to sit on.⁹⁶ This last feature upset “the women patrons [who] resent[ed] the idea that they cannot stand up and

⁹⁴“Drinks Chosen for Color, Not Taste, at Woman’s Bar,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1913; “The Tea Rooms,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1912; “New York Has Bar Exclusively for Women,” *The Western Brewer and the Journal of the Barley, Malt, and Hops Trade*, 15 January 1914, 41.

⁹⁵“Drinks Chosen for Color,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1913.

⁹⁶“Drinks Chosen for Color,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1913.

take their medicine like men.⁹⁷ It also had a free lunch composed of salted almonds, ripe olives, and miniature sandwiches of pate de fois gras. Finally, the Beaux Arts bar only served members of the opposite sex if properly escorted. “The only time either [bartender] ever gets stern is when some man approaches and tries to buy a drink. Then he is firmly told that he cannot buy unless he is properly chaperoned by a lady.”⁹⁸

Bustanoby, during the interview for the *New York Times* article, described the single most important feature to the success of the bar. He said, “It was regarded at first as a freak, but it is now an unqualified success, the more so as it is a quiet place and women can walk in there when they need a drink without creating any talk.”⁹⁹ The Beaux Arts bar offered female drinkers what they had wanted for over a decade: a legal *and* socially acceptable environment in which to drink by themselves.

Women’s use of the Beaux Arts bar suggests that they had reinterpreted public drinking in terms of the New Woman ideal. The New Woman, wanting to be a man’s equal, did not allow men to tell her how to drink in the Beaux Arts bar, demonstrating the increasing social freedom the New Woman possessed. Bustanoby claimed, for example, that women drank more scientifically than men did. Francois, the head bartender, said that “a man . . . would order any kind of a cocktail and be satisfied with it as long as it tasted good, but a woman couldn’t be fooled. She would send the cocktail back with instructions about how she wanted it made, and he would have to make it over and over

⁹⁷“Women Can Now Get Drinks in Barroom All Their Own,” *The Washington Post*, 28 October 1912.

⁹⁸“Drinks Chosen for Color,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1913.

⁹⁹“Drinks Chosen for Color,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1913.

again until he got it right.”¹⁰⁰ In addition, when a woman drank hard liquor, the glasses the bartenders used became important. Bustanoby started to use a brandy glass that was similar to a lamp chimney, which developed the flavor more fully. “The moment the women discovered this they all insisted on having their brandy served in the new glasses instead of the old-fashioned narrow glass.¹⁰¹ Finally, the female customers drank primarily during the afternoon, after shopping or attending a matinee, suggesting that these women held similar beliefs about their gender identity.¹⁰² In the Beaux Arts bar, women were the customers, and they used it to reflect and reinforce their emerging gender identities as New Women.

The female clientele of the Beaux Arts bar represented a generational break with the ideals of the Victorian lady. As mentioned above, etiquette manuals in the early twentieth century either severely restricted where a lady could drink or prohibited it entirely. By 1913, some middle-class women took their teenage daughters to the Beaux Arts bar, and in some cases, high school girls went there on Saturdays for fun.¹⁰³ This trend of parents either allowing or taking their children into drinking establishments was not new. Boys had rushed the growler for male industrial workers for decades. Jack London’s first experiences in the saloon were with his father as a young boy.¹⁰⁴ These middle-class mothers in effect ended the dominance of the male homosocial public drinking structure by taking or letting their daughters go into the Beaux Arts bar. Men

¹⁰⁰“Drinks Chosen for Color,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1913.

¹⁰¹“Drinks Chosen for Color,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1913.

¹⁰²“Drinks Chosen for Color,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1913.

¹⁰³“Drinks Chosen for Color,” *New York Times*, 12 October 1913.

¹⁰⁴Powers, *Faces Along the Bar*, 36–37; London, *Barleycorn*, 37–40.

could no longer claim dominance in the area of public drinking if women found the activity socially acceptable.

By 1920, women had found a form of the equality they sought with men through the creation of their own public drinking sphere. Its creation reflected the decline of the ideal of the Victorian lady and acceptance of the New Woman. The Victorian lady was not supposed to drink liquor; alcohol was a man's prerogative. The freedom attained through the practice of the New Woman gave women the opportunity to create their own public drinking culture and to determine what alcohol consumption meant to them. They decided it was a recreational activity. It was something they could do for a diversion with no other purpose than to share each other's company and have fun. This meaning complimented the male public drinking structure by showing society a different purpose of public drinking. By 1920, female homosocial public drinking had developed the elements vital to constructing a heterosocial public drinking environment.

Conclusion

By 1920, society had come to accept the fact that men and women could both drink alcohol in public, but they did so in businesses like the saloon or the tea room that encouraged single-gender environments. Under these circumstances, each homosocial drinking situation contributed to the heterosocial drinking environment that still existed after Prohibition ended. Men unintentionally facilitated the destruction of their homosocial drinking culture, a contribution not to be underestimated. Male public drinking dominated society's conceptualization of public drinking, and for heterosocial

drinking to emerge, the old structure had to weaken. Men unwittingly ended their reign as the principal public drinkers by attempting to use the saloon to create and reinforce a fading practice of manhood. Older generations of men had trouble adapting to a rapidly changing society that made their notions of gender identity obsolete. They responded by retreating into public drinking establishments like the saloon. These places supplied men with the atmosphere they desired, but they failed to preserve men's ability to determine their gender identity. Younger generations of men abandoned the saloon, because it reflected characteristics that did not attract them. By failing to attract young men coming of age, male public drinking, once a centerpiece to male gender identity, began to collapse in on itself.

Female homosocial drinking supplied the idea that the public consumption of alcohol could be a recreational activity with no meaning beyond having a good time. Nineteenth-century society had defined female gender identity in ways that did not involve alcohol. With the rise of the New Woman, women began using alcohol to reflect who they were, making public drinking a constituent part of their identity (though not as large a part as men had made it). As more and more women began drinking in public, the establishments that started to cater to them showed an adaptability that the saloon had lost. These businesses reflected what women wanted, and women wanted places they could drink alcohol. This desire created a female public drinking environment, and with its emphasis on leisure rather than gender, it was in some ways more stable than its male counterpart. The existence of two different public drinking structures and the onset of national Prohibition in January 1920 created the conditions for a compromise on the fundamental meaning and purpose behind public drinking.

PART 2

PROHIBITION, JULY 1919 TO DECEMBER 1933

A group of mourners gathered at the Park Avenue Hotel in New York City on January 16, 1920 to lay an old friend to rest. The Philadelphia publisher throwing the wake captured both the solemn nature of the event and the festive quality of the deceased's life. The attendees and waiters wore black, with the walls, tables, and fixtures draped in the same color. The main course for dinner was black caviar, and those in attendance received their drinks in black glasses specially made for this occasion. Throughout the night, the orchestra alternated between dance tunes and funeral dirges, highlighting the evening's cheerful yet somber character. At midnight, the grief-stricken crowd marched past the bottle-filled coffin of the departed, bidding a final farewell to their treasured companion. Once everyone had resumed their seats, a spotlight focused on four teary-eyed servers, two men and two women, as they filled the glasses of the assembled mourners one last time. John Barleycorn, also known as King Alcohol, was dead; national prohibition was now in effect.¹

The above story epitomizes how historians have traditionally interpreted Prohibition's impact on public drinking: the Eighteenth Amendment killed public

¹Herbert Asbury, *The Great Illusion: An Informal History of Prohibition* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1950), 151–152.

drinking and everything associated with it. Historians of the saloon conclude their narratives with national prohibition destroying both the public consumption of alcohol and the places where it occurred.² Historians of Prohibition reinforce this idea by claiming that the Volstead Act successfully decreased alcohol consumption from 1920 to 1922. Then, bootleggers, who had spent these two years determining the most efficient ways of circumventing the law, flooded the nation with liquor.³ The resurgence of drinking gave rise to the speakeasy, the illegal drinking establishment of the Prohibition era that historians address only in passing.⁴ Historians frequently mention it, but they say little more than that a large number of these places existed during the 1920s and that proprietors regularly disguised their sale of liquor with other businesses. These authors agree that the speakeasy of the 1920s suddenly gave birth to heterosocial public drinking, but they ignore the fact that neither the historiography nor their descriptions of the public drinking culture before 1920 provide a prior basis for this phenomenon.⁵ This interpretation of Prohibition makes it appear to be an absolute break with the past, giving people a carte blanche to restructure the drinking tradition in whatever way they desired.

In reality, the social and physical characteristics people later associated with the bar surfaced in the speakeasy during Prohibition. A recursive relationship existed

²Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1870–1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 303; Madelon Powers, *Faces along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman's Saloon, 1870–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 235.

³Edward Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years that Changed America* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011), 87; Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 118; W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 232–233; Michael A. Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 57–60.

⁴Behr, *Prohibition*, 87

⁵Catherine Gilbert Murdock, *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870–1940* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 91–92; Behr, *Prohibition*, 87; Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*, 177; Okrent, *Last Call*, 211.

between how people viewed a particular commodity and the design of the physical space in which they used it. For example, Lewis Erenberg, in *Steppin' Out*, determined that business owners created the cabaret based on the vision of providing customers with entertainment at informal public dinners.⁶ William Leach's *Land of Desire* showed that department stores originated with the idea that customers should be able to interact with the products they wished to purchase without the constant presence of a sales clerk.⁷ In a similar manner, people started going to drink in speakeasies, the layout of which was different from the saloon. This new space helped encourage people to change their drinking traditions while reinforcing these alterations at the same time. In the process, people transformed their conceptualizations of drinking as a group activity and a leisure activity; they also changed who participated in it, and the space in which it took place. Influenced by elements from before and after 1920, people invented a new public drinking culture and a new archetype for its host establishments.

⁶Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890–1930* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 75–76.

⁷William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 72–73.

CHAPTER 3

PROHIBITION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC DRINKING

Between July 1919 and December 1933, public drinking and the places where it occurred were transformed. Motivated by Prohibition, drinkers altered the public consumption of alcohol in two fundamental ways that combined new ideas with preexisting ones. First, Prohibition encouraged people to alter the nature of public drinking as a leisure activity. The perceived scarcity of liquor during this period caused people to increase their alcohol consumption. Public drinking largely became a facilitator of a new pattern sociability by turning the consumption of alcohol into the main goal of a popular but illegal leisure activity. The desire to continue drinking despite the illegality of alcohol prompted retailers to institute and patrons to accept security measures to protect these businesses; this assisted in reducing the size of drinking groups. However, sociability in small parties for leisure activities was not new. Sociologists had since 1900 had found that people tended to gather in small groups with members possessing common ideals. The popular dislike of Prohibition and the fear of arrest provided drinkers with a shared set of principles while also persuading drinkers to form smaller parties. The shift in its nature as a leisure activity enable people to reconceptualize public drinking.

Second, Prohibition provided the impetus for male and female drinkers to move heterosociability into the mainstream drinking culture. Despite evidence to the contrary, men believed the Eighteenth Amendment had killed the saloon, effectively removing it from the center of public drinking. The apparent death of the saloon caused people to replace it with the more socially flexible speakeasy at a time when gender ideals were still in flux. The demise of Victorian gender ideals corresponded with this shift in drinking establishments, removing all the social and ideological barriers to mixed-gender alcohol consumption. Heterosocial drinking suddenly became possible during the 1920s, simultaneously socializing men and women into the new drinking culture and their emerging gender identities. The way people reacted to the seemingly abrupt changes in drinking demonstrated its rapid acceptance. While older generations blamed the mixed-gender drinking of young adults for the degradation of society, they also quickly adapted to the new situation. The rise of heterosociability in public drinking represented the remarkable reinterpretation of this activity.

As people transformed public drinking, the restaurant speakeasy emerged as the institution that best reflected and reinforced the culture. While some proprietors questioned the necessity of security measures, these procedures also served as advertising ploys to attract customers. One particular disguise, the restaurant, possessed all the features necessary to make it compatible with the new drinking tradition, but some of its characteristics further changed the public consumption of alcohol. The presence of a kitchen, necessary to maintain the façade of an eatery, made the service of food a genuine part of this business while helping to strengthen heterosociability. The compartmentalization of the main room bolstered small groups and privacy and also

depoliticized drinking establishments. The end of the saloon made people believe that the alcohol industry had lost its political power, while the division of space in the restaurant speakeasy decreased the political utility of these places. People transformed the public drinking culture and the places where it occurred based on both the actual and perceived effects of Prohibition.

Mixing New Ideas of Drinking

Changes surround the consumption of alcohol signified the transformation of two fundamental elements of the public drinking culture. First, the increase in drinking that began in 1920 signaled the emergence of a new purpose for public drinking. While people still used alcohol as a facilitator of socialization, they increasingly drank to facilitate sociability by making drinking the goal of a leisure activity. Second, the institution of security measures by liquor retailers to protect their businesses helped alter how people conceived of drinking as a group activity. During the early 1920s, the federal government threatened to arrest anyone in possession of alcohol. The warnings motivated speakeasy owners to introduce security measures, but it also led people to reduce the size of drinking parties. This move reflected and reinforced what sociologists had concluded about the size of groups for leisure activities since 1900. It also highlighted the new rhetoric about drinking that people had started to use, a shift important for the next section of this chapter. The changes in the way people thought about alcohol consumption represented the first steps in restructuring the public drinking culture.

The foundation for drinking as a facilitator of socialization, seen as a standard of society before 1920, was the moderate consumption of alcohol. Samuel G. Blythe, a writer for the *Saturday Evening Post*, noted in July 1927 that most men before Prohibition thought “booze was a diversion, an incident, a five-o’clock relaxation. . . . [They] took one drink, two drinks, half a dozen drinks and went on [their] way.”¹ George Ade, in his 1931 book entitled *The Old-Time Saloon*, recalled that “the reading public was educated to the belief that moderate drinking under polite auspices was an alluring and zestful relief from the monotonies of life and certainly not sinful.”² Madelon Powers’s examination of the reports of settlement house workers showed that they noticed the same standard in saloons.³ Combined with her examination of saloon customs, she concludes that working-class men utilized these places as a club, suggesting they used alcohol to facilitate social activities like discussions, singing, and games.⁴ Paula Fass’s assessment of college newspapers showed that people believed self-restraint while drinking was a traditional standard of adult society and recreation before 1920.⁵ Before Prohibition, many drinkers thought that moderate drinking helped demonstrate their status as mature adults, making alcohol consumption into one element of the social experience of drinking in public.

¹Samuel G. Blythe, “Inquiries into a Long Dry Spell,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 9 July 1927, 9.

²George Ade, *The Old-Time Saloon: Not Wet–Not Dry–Just History* (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), 66.

³Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 12.

⁴Powers, *Faces along The Bar*, 229–230.

⁵Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 316.

However, the illegality of alcohol spurred drinkers to increase their consumption of alcohol, revealing the abandonment of self-restraint in this activity. While some historians claim drinking decreased during the first two years of Prohibition, evidence from newspaper and magazine articles demonstrated that the opposite occurred.⁶ A June 1920 *New York Times* examined the amount of beverage alcohol people had withdrawn from federal warehouses for medicinal purposes for the year ending in March 1919 and the year ending in March 1920.⁷ By March 1919, doctors had written enough prescriptions to necessitate the removal of 3,589,863 gallons of beverage alcohol from federal warehouse. This figure had increased by nearly 500,000 gallons to 4,016,983 gallons by March 1920.⁸ In 1922, *The Beverage News*, a trade journal for the alcohol industry, compared the amount of money spent on liquor imports for the first four months of both 1920 and 1921. This piece, also comparing statistics on beverage alcohol for medicinal purposes, showed that people spent \$108,327 in 1920 versus \$1,690,974 in 1921 to obtain liquor for their “prescriptions,” an increase of 1,561 percent.⁹ Jack O’Donnell, a writer for *Colliers*, reported that the Internal Revenue Department estimated that Americans had drunk 198,097,006 gallons of liquor in 1923. This figure, which did not include homemade alcohol or moonshine, revealed that consumption in the United

⁶Behr, *Prohibition*, 87; Okrent, *Last Call*, 118; Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 232–233; Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*, 57–60.

⁷“Outlawed Whiskey and the Bootlegger’s Big Profit,” *New York Times*, 13 June 1920.

Doctors had traditionally prescribed beverage alcohol to patients for medicinal purposes, and the Volstead Act allowed this custom to continue by making an exception for liquor prescribed by medical doctors. See, Behr, *Prohibition*, 78, 84–85.

⁸“Outlawed Whiskey,” *New York Times*, 13 June 1920.

⁹“Liquor Imports Show How Sick We Are,” *The Beverage News*, 15 June 1921, 11.

States had increased by 30 million gallons in the six years since 1917.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the nation had been under some form of prohibition (first a wartime measure that began on July 1, 1919 then the Eighteenth Amendment) for three and half years out of those six.¹¹ The most revealing story about the amount of alcohol Americans drank came from the *Washington Post* in August 1921. One of its reporters went to the Bahamas and found that it had exported 10,000 cases of liquor in the last year to the United States. The amount of money the Bahamas had made from these exports had paid off its entire national debt, making it the only colony in the British Empire to be debt free.¹² As E. Ellicott said while writing for the *Washington Post*, “Prohibition . . . achieved one result, anyway, it . . . made more drunkards than anything else could.”¹³

This dramatic increase in alcohol consumption occurred at a time when observers began to notice a change in the primary purpose of public drinking as a leisure activity. People no longer gathered together principally to socialize while consuming an alcoholic beverage; they assembled to drink. Blythe pointed out in 1922 that people had “the tendency to drink all that is available when any is available ‘Drink it all’ is the motto; hurry down two, three, a dozen drinks for fear there may be no next time.

¹⁰Jack O’Donnell, “They’re Drinking More Than Ever,” *Colliers*, 21 June 1924, 9. In response to this estimate, Wayne B. Wheeler of the Anti-Saloon League claimed only 4 million people drank the 198,097,006 gallons of alcohol in 1923. Wheeler’s number has each one of those people drinking forty-nine gallons of liquor in one year. See, *ibid.*, 27.

¹¹Duis, *The Saloon*, 301.

¹²“10,000 Cases of Whiskey Sent Monthly By Bahamas into ‘Dry’ United States,” *The Washington Post*, 22 August 1921.

This article contains conflicting information. The title claims that the Bahamas exported 10,000 cases of liquor monthly to the U.S., while the body of the article says the Bahamas sent 10,000 cases in one year. Representing a more cautious estimate, I chose to use the latter number. See, *ibid.*

¹³E. Ellicott, “Jags and Then Some,” *The Washington Post*, 18 September 1921.

Drinking, when drink is available, is the main object of the meeting.”¹⁴ Five years later, he declared that drinking had “become a sodden, sullen task rather than a diversion” and “if there had been no prohibition there would have been no change in our manner of taking liquor.”¹⁵ Fass wrote that on college campuses, “there was a subterranean ethic developing that worked counter to these self-limiting rules. In this ethic, one drank to become drunk or, failing that, to appear drunk, with newspapers like the *Cornell Sun* reporting that students drank as much as possible of whatever they could find.¹⁶ People had turned drinking, even to the point of drunkenness, into the goal of a leisure activity, making sociability the dominant purpose of this pastime.

Although drinking as a facilitator of socialization did not vanish, the way people reacted to the increase in alcohol consumption signified a growing social acceptance of drinking as the goal of a leisure activity and the sociability that it fostered.¹⁷ A February 1920 *New York Times* article claimed that some farmers called the authorities with tips, because their wives could no longer hold their liquor, suggesting that people fought the increase in drinking only if it became an inconvenience.¹⁸ Police Judge Mattingly told *The Washington Post* in October 1921 that the number of cases for drunkenness brought before him had increased fifty percent over pre-Prohibition numbers.¹⁹ Observers also noted the effects of increased drinking on different aspects of society. Psychologist A. A.

¹⁴Samuel G. Blythe, “Booze Complex,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 4 March 1922, 106.

¹⁵Blythe, “Inquiries into a Long Dry Spell,” 9, 146.

¹⁶Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful*, 316–317.

¹⁷For more information on the continuing use of public drinking as a facilitator of socialization, see chapter 5.

¹⁸“Every-Day Facts of Prohibition Enforcement in New York,” *New York Times*, 29 February 1920.

¹⁹“Prohibition Facts,” *The Washington Post*, 2 October 1921.

Brill, commenting to the *New York Times* in February 1922, blamed Prohibition for causing “the drunkenness of people who used to be temperate, the carnivals of intoxication at many public dinners where men used to behave, [and] the drinking in homes where liquor was previously unknown.”²⁰ Foreign visitors recognized the surge in alcohol consumption. Margot A. Asquith of Britain declared: “The drinking by your young men and maidens is shocking. I am told nothing like it was known before the days of Prohibition. . . . It is considered ‘chic’ to violate the law.”²¹ Former British Minister of Education H. A. L. Fisher said: “There was more heard of drinking as mere bravado and [he heard] how a conductor on a Pullman car . . . had watched with disgust the drinking of a set of young men and then remarked . . . ‘they would never have done it but for prohibition.’”²² Prohibition had caused people to expand the purpose of public drinking; both moderation and abandon had become socially acceptable.

Another event that signified a change in the public drinking culture was the widespread apprehension about the authorities among drinkers. Newspapers articles in 1920 propagated the belief that anyone possessing alcohol was subject to arrest. In February 1920, Commissioner Roper of the Internal Revenue Bureau (IRB) declared that “the national prohibition act . . . definitely prohibits the manufacture and sale for beverage purposes of all liquors containing one-half percent or more of alcohol by volume. . . . All persons . . . who are found guilty of this violation of the federal statute

²⁰“Prohibition To Blame,” *New York Times*, 26 February 1922.”

²¹“Dry Evils She Saw Appalled Mrs. Asquith,” *New York Times*, 6 March 1922

²²“Calls Our Dry Law A ‘Moral Blizzard,’” *New York Times*, 14 January 1925.

will be proceeded against to the limit of the law.”²³ On the same day, the IRB ruled that people could transport alcohol only to new places of residence with a special permit. However, it also stated: “This ruling is not construed to mean . . . a person who owns a shooting lodge in Maine, a winter residence in Florida and a private dwelling in New York may transport liquor . . . from one to another. Liquor so transported and the vehicle in which it is conveyed are subject to seizure. The person transporting it is subject to arrest.”²⁴ In reality, only the retailers and suppliers of alcohol faced any real danger of arrest. One federal attorney said, “the consumer seems of no particular interest to the officials—whether he does his consuming from a pocket flask or from one of those mysterious pitchers, which now are wont to perch upon the serving bar of current saloons.”²⁵ The danger, both perceived and actual, from the authorities motivated customers and retailers to protect themselves from arrest and their alcohol from seizure.

The introduction of security measures to conceal drinking establishments and to protect both the owner and patrons had a direct impact on the size of drinking groups. For proprietors and customers, the inconvenience of being arrested was the least important consequence of a Treasury Department raid. In the event of a raid, owners had everything on the premises seized, losing hundreds of dollars in alcohol, furniture, and fixtures, while patrons had only to find a new place to drink. Consequently, being suspicious of strangers was the safest course of action for speakeasy proprietors. Joel Sayre, writing for *Outlook*, advised owners not to “let strange customers into your joint. Smart speakeasy proprietors . . . [stay] on the premises from the time the joint opens until

²³“Federal Warning on Prohibition,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 29 February 1920.

²⁴“Rules For Transfer Of Liquor Stocks,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 29 February 1920.

²⁵“Every-Day Facts of Prohibition Enforcement,” *New York Times*, 29 February 1920.

it closes, and taking a squint at everybody who rings the bell.”²⁶ Sayre also recommended that owners prevent large drinking parties from forming, saying: “It makes surveillance lax, and before long a squad of prohis is back of your bar flashing badges.”²⁷ These circumstances prompted retailers to monitor whom they admitted through the use of different types of security systems, simultaneously protecting their businesses and giving them a way to limit the number of people they admitted.²⁸ One method involved trusted customers providing a password or phrase, such as “George sent me.”²⁹ Another popular method of monitoring clients involved membership cards. Some speakeasy owners issued an identification card to trusted patrons to show before the doorman admitted them. This system ensured that the cardholder had been at a particular place before and probably was not a Treasury agent.³⁰ The large groups of the saloon era had become a danger that needed to be avoided; small groups and the privacy associated with them proved more sensible for anyone wanting to sell or purchase alcohol during Prohibition.

The adoption of small-group drinking during Prohibition (and even the acceptance of the new security measures to a degree) represented a standard of sociability previously absent from public drinking. Sociologists between July 1919 and December 1933 described the characteristics of groups of people who associated with each other for the

²⁶Joel Sayre, “How to Run a Speakeasy,” *Outlook*, April 1932, 217.

²⁷Sayre, “How to Run a Speakeasy,” 217.

²⁸Sayre, “How to Run a Speakeasy,” 215; Asbury, *The Great Illusion*, 196.

²⁹“‘No Speakeasy Sign’ Wards off Thirsty Assaults on Dwelling,” *New York Times*, 7 April 1931. Antonio Sclafani of New York City had to put a sign on his front door declaring “No Speakeasy.” Strangers kept knocking on his door and telling him that “George sent me,” believing that his home was a nearby speakeasy. See, *ibid.*

³⁰“Repeal Brings Unseen Crisis as Nation’s Pockets Sag under Weight of Useless Speakeasy Admittance Cards,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, 8 January 1934.

purposes of leisure. Frederick Clow, in his November 1919 article for the *American Journal of Sociology*, brought attention to a neglected aspect of social organization theory. First expounded by sociologist Charles Cooley in 1900 and reinforced by sociologists Simmel and Wallas in 1902 and 1915 respectively, Clow defined, what he termed, the congenial group.³¹ This group “consists of persons who habitually maintain direct communication with one another for the sake of the enjoyment they in it. They must . . . be persons who are in sympathy with one another, or at least without strong antipathies. . . . It is rare, therefore, for a congenial group to include more than half a dozen persons.”³² Clow and his contemporaries also emphasized the importance of common ideas to the people participating in these small parties. These fellows sympathized with one another, and “the causes which stimulate loyalty are those that are felt as momentous to the safety and prosperity of the group.”³³ These shared beliefs helped the clique emphasize conformity among its members, providing it with a sense of self-preservation.³⁴ Motivated by the Eighteenth Amendment, the people who defied the law unknowingly made public drinking into a more intimate leisure activity more reflective of this type of interaction.

In the context of these sociological findings, the widespread acceptance of the link between the choice to drink and independence represented a shift in how people

³¹Frederick R. Clow, “Cooley’s Doctrine Of Primary Groups,” *American Journal of Sociology* 25 (November 1919): 328.

³²Clow, “Cooley’s,” 330.

³³Clow, “Cooley’s,” 330; J. E. Boodin, “Law Of Social Participation,” *American Journal of Sociology* 22 (July 1921): 36. For similar information, see also: John C. Almack, “Efficiency In Socialization,” *American Journal of Sociology* 31 (September 1925): 242.

³⁴Boodin, “Law Of Social Participation,” 38; H.D. Hill, “The Adoration of Groups,” *Atlantic Monthly* June 1929, 761.

viewed alcohol consumption. As a rhetorical justification for their actions, both men and women quickly came to view their choice to drink in violation of the Volstead Act as an exercise of their personal liberty against oppressive action by the government. Created by Blythe, the following vignette accurately represented the attitude of many people during the 1920s: “‘Peter lost his job, a man told his companion.’ ‘What for?’ ‘Too much booze.’ ‘I thought Peter never drank.’ ‘Never did until Prohibition came in, and then he began to drink like a fish.’ ‘Why?’ ‘Oh, he said no Congress could infringe on his personal liberty.’”³⁵

People began complaining that prohibition (first wartime and then national) stripped them of their freedom of choice as early as July 1919. A *Chicago Daily Tribune* editorial on July 13, 1919, twelve days into wartime prohibition, asserted that prohibition fundamentally altered the United States. The writer believed that urban women (and farmers to a lesser extent) wanted to dominate society, so they “changed American individualism, with its standards of personal liberty, into an agrarian and feministic communism.”³⁶ The right of urban men to control their actions, a trait that made Americans exceptional, meant nothing when compared to the greater good of the community. Henry C. Maine of Rochester N.Y., in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, believed the Anti-Saloon League used a similar interpretation of the Constitution. He declared that Wayne B. Wheeler “denies any guarantee of liberty in the Constitution and that the individual has no rights when facing society in general.”³⁷ In 1929, Mrs. Charles H. Sabin of the Women’s National Republican Club blamed the government for

³⁵Blythe, “Booze Complex,” 6.

³⁶“American Individualism–Mex.,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 July 1919.

³⁷Henry C. Maine, “The ‘Dry’ Constitution,” *New York Times*, 14 February 1920.

taking people's right to choose, declaring that "to tell citizens what they must or must not do in their strictly personal conduct as long as public safety is not affected, is a function which government should not attempt."³⁸ Opponents of Prohibition had transformed the independence embodied in the saloon into symbolic rallying point against the Eighteenth Amendment.

This rhetorical use of the idea of independence, once a manly virtue represented by drinking in the saloon, added a performative aspect to public drinking. The choice to consume alcohol during Prohibition demonstrated a person's dedication to personal liberty and his protest against oppressive laws. A *New York Times* reporter in 1931 commented that people still drank for the purpose of interacting with one another, but "they [also] drink . . . as a protest [against an unjust law] as honest and sincere as similar ones . . . such as the nullification . . . of the 1850s . . . fugitive slave law."³⁹ The idea that drinking represented independence joined the shared beliefs about sociability and leisure as reasons why people formed groups for this activity, something Clow thought necessary to maintain group cohesion.⁴⁰ This idea about personal freedom even crossed gender lines and helped move heterosocial drinking into the mainstream, a topic discussed in more detail in the next section. Beneath the banner of independence, public drinking had become unifying and fundamental activity to American society.

The rhetoric of personal liberty and the perceived danger of arrest cemented the place of small groups and the privacy associated with them in the public drinking culture. Despite its threats, the Eighteenth Amendment did not directly give the government the

³⁸"Brands Prohibition Laws Worst Menace in America," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 April 1929.

³⁹"After All, Why Do Men Like to Drink," *New York Times*, 4 October 1931.

⁴⁰Clow, "Cooley's Doctrine," 330.

authority to prosecute anyone buying or consuming alcohol, but the belief it did made drinking seem dangerous to the customer in addition to the retailer.⁴¹ Consequently, a small circle, perhaps consisting of approximately the six people of Clow's congenial group, allowed drinkers to protect themselves from the authorities while demonstrating their convictions about Prohibition.⁴² In addition, speakeasy proprietors could easily monitor these small parties, increasing the chances of preventing a raid. These elements came to form a recursive relationship with the space within drinking establishments. Small groups and privacy became a motivating factor for dividing the space inside these places, while the division of space reflected and reinforced these changes (which I will discuss in later this chapter).

The restructuring of the public drinking culture began with changes in how people viewed alcohol consumption. The increasing use of drinking as a facilitator of sociability by turning it into the goal of a leisure activity altered the purpose of drinking in public. Moderation, with the idea of participating in other activities, was no longer necessary. This change correlated with an increase in drinking during Prohibition, suggesting that people had come to accept drinking for no other reason than the alcohol they consumed. Meanwhile, the threats the government issued concerning the enforcement of the Volstead Act motivated people to reduce the size of drinking parties. This change brought public drinking more into line with what sociologists had concluded about groups since 1900, but it also tied alcohol consumption to something other than gender or socialization. The exercise of independence that drinking during Prohibition represented

⁴¹U.S. Constitution, amend. 18, sect. 1.

⁴²Clow, "Cooley's Doctrine," 330.

became a shared belief that helped bind parties together. At the same time, this justification became the basis for another transformation of the public drinking culture, one that had begun before Prohibition.

The Rise of Heterosocial Drinking

The move of heterosociability into the mainstream drinking culture was a watershed in the history of American alcohol consumption. Chapter 2 demonstrated that public drinking before 1920 was a differentially gendered activity; men and women, each in their own homosocial environments, used alcohol consumption to reinforce their gender identities. Two concurrent events during Prohibition, however, led to the gender integration of drinking. First, people changed the establishment they believed to be the center of public drinking from the saloon to the speakeasy. Despite evidence to the contrary, men believed the Eighteenth Amendment had killed the saloon, causing them to prematurely mourn its loss. Meanwhile, the speakeasy not only became the center of attention but also became more accessible and flexible than the saloon. Second, Victorian gender ideals gradually fell out of the public favor, nowhere more than among the expanding drinking public. The paradigms that replaced them reflected the growing equality between men and women and the changing nature of public drinking. Yet, older generations of adults saw mixed-gender alcohol consumption as a symptom of society's degradation while adapting to it at the same time. The rise of heterosocial drinking signified a permanent departure from the old public drinking culture.

The saloon, although gradually replaced by the speakeasy, continued to dominate public drinking in the early 1920s. Most saloonkeepers flouted the law and remained open after January 16, 1920, a fact that historians have overlooked. In 1921, the Anti-Saloon League performed a survey of drinking establishments on First, Second, and Third Avenues. They found that only 131 of the 561 saloons on these streets had closed. In addition, 303 of the remaining places operated without hiding what they were doing (or “wide open” as people called it then).⁴³ At this point, the League had little reason to exaggerate the number of closed saloons; an accurate or understated figure would be more useful in obtaining more state and federal funds for Prohibition enforcement. Using the survey as a sample, it indicates that the Eighteenth Amendment only closed approximately twenty-three percent of the 15,000 saloons in New York City, leaving around 11,550 of these pre-Prohibition businesses open and selling alcohol in 1921.⁴⁴ In addition, the term *saloon* continued to enjoy widespread usage. This word possessed specific connotations of working-class male homosociability for adults during this period, suggesting the likely probability that places referred to as saloons opened before 1920. McSorley’s, for example, operated openly and continued to serve its signature ale throughout the 1920s; the Tammany politicians and minor police officials who drank there protected it.⁴⁵ The *New York Times* commonly referred to places as saloons in

⁴³“Dry Survey Shows City is Still Wet,” *New York Times*, 19 March 1921.

⁴⁴I use Benjamin DeCasseres’ claims that 15,000 saloons existed in New York City prior to Prohibition. His estimate is the higher of the available figures, the others being between 7,000 and 16,000 saloons, but it means that the number of drinking establishments in New York City only doubled thanks to Prohibition. See, Benjamin DeCasseres, “Elegy in a Malt Mood,” *American Mercury*, November 1927, 289; “Saloons Had Their Points,” *New York Times*, 28 January 1931; Behr, *Prohibition*, 87; Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*, 14, 54.

⁴⁵Joseph Mitchell, “Old House at Home: McSorley’s Café,” *The New Yorker*, 13 April 1940, 23.

many of their articles about public drinking between January 1920 and December 1933.⁴⁶ Isidor “Izzy” Einstein, one of the most effective and well-known Prohibition enforcement agents, used this word to describe some, but not all, of the places in his memoir, *Prohibition Agent No. 1*, indicating he viewed some establishments differently from others.⁴⁷ Despite the best efforts of Prohibitionists, the saloon had survived the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment.

Yet many men mourned the death of the saloon as early as July 1919, signifying that they no longer believed these places or themselves to be viable centers of public drinking. This conviction, although based on a faulty perception of the situation, helped displace the saloon and its homosocial environment from the mainstream drinking culture. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* published an editorial on July 13, 1919, in which the author claimed that women’s attacks on all-male activities damaged American society. He declared that “men went to saloons and prize fights and the women either do not want to or they cannot and therefore men shall not. It results in a leveling down politically and socially.”⁴⁸ His comment implicitly asserted that the saloon and its single-gender environment was no longer available for men. George MacAdams overtly proclaimed this fact in his 1925 *Literary Digest* article. He stated that men once had four sanctuaries: the barroom, the bootblack stand, the barber shop, and the smoking car. By 1925, they only had the smoking car left, which women had finally taken over. MacAdams

⁴⁶*New York Times*, 17 January 1920–31 December 1933, subverb saloon.

⁴⁷Izzy Einstein, *Prohibition Agent No. 1* (New York: Frederick Stokes Company, 1932), passim.

⁴⁸“American Individualism–Mex.,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 July 1919.

declared: “Well, the battle’s over, boys. We’re licked. Our last sanctuary is gone.”⁴⁹

Equating this passing of these manly retreats with a loss of male influence and with the mythology of the disappearing Indian, he told men: “Weep, fellow barnacles, weep! As it came to pass for the Red Man, so has it now come to pass for us. Our sun is set.”⁵⁰

Travis Hoke in the March 1931 issue of *American Mercury* wrote, “The saloon was for men only. It was their last stronghold in a world of women, and for that reason if no other, outlaw and wicked.”⁵¹ Hoke, like the other authors, depicted the saloon as a homosocial refuge for men in a changing world while, at the same time, mourning its loss. The perceived death of the saloon marked the apparent end of men’s dominance over the public drinking culture.

An underlying, reciprocally-related reason men no longer believed they controlled public drinking was the demise of the man of action, represented in part by the saloon. Working-class men, already reliant on these places for an environment in which to create manhood, probably thought themselves deprived of one of the only places they could freely practice their gender identity. Meanwhile, middle- and upper-class men saw the Victorian gentleman quickly become a more democratic ideal. W. I. George in 1920 questioned the validity of the Victorian gentleman, but he did not say it would disappear. He claimed that the gentleman would survive “by merging with the social classes that rose up around him,” suggesting the creation of a less elitist paradigm.⁵² *The Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature* supported George’s assertion about the Victorian

⁴⁹George MacAdams, “Hopeless Wails against the New Woman,” *Literary Digest*, 17 January 1925, 50.

⁵⁰MacAdams, “Hopeless Wails,” 50.

⁵¹Travis Hoke, “Corner Saloon,” *American Mercury*, March 1931, 315.

⁵²W.I. George, “Exit the Gentleman,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, January 1920, 269.

gentleman. It shows a decline in the number of articles about the gentleman after 1914, with the subject heading disappearing all together around 1927.⁵³ By 1924, Irving Bacheller declared that “the thing we call ‘side’—birth, grandeur, wealth, horses and hounds—will . . . be no essential part of the assets of a gentleman. We have come to a time when we have to be shown; we want to know what things are made of.”⁵⁴ The new gentleman, being a man of the people, needed others to like him, had to be a democrat, and had to have a spirit of chivalry. Most importantly, “mere equal rights for women will not satisfy him. His respect for them should be deep, inviolable, and even aggressive.”⁵⁵ This new, more democratic male gender ideal, by recognizing women as equals, implicitly acknowledged their ability to participate in the same activities as men and promoted male acceptance of mixed-gender alcohol consumption. The perceived death of the saloon had taken with it the man of action, making it increasingly difficult to sustain a homosocial drinking environment.

As men prematurely declared the saloon dead, the public’s attention shifted to the speakeasy, marking the emergence of heterosocial drinking.⁵⁶ Speakeasies were unlicensed drinking establishments whose layout did not necessarily resemble the saloon. Roy Rosenzweig, in *Eight Hours for What We Will*, notes that working-class women

⁵³*Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature*, vol. 1–22 (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1905–1961), subverb *Gentleman*.

⁵⁴Irving Bacheller, “What Is a Gentleman,” *Delineator*, March 1924, 11

⁵⁵Bacheller, “What Is a Gentleman,” 11

⁵⁶In the early twentieth century, people commonly referred to the speakeasy also as blind tigers and blind pigs. For the sake of variation, I will do the same.

sometimes ran these places out of their kitchens.⁵⁷ However, the first evidence of women drinking in blind tigers with men appeared during Prohibition. Some of the middle- and upper-class establishments spent the money to have three bars: one for single men, one for single women, and one for couples.⁵⁸ The extra expense involved in running a business in this fashion clearly indicated an attempt to attract women while still providing men with their own space. John Chapman Hilder, a contributor to *Harpers*, complained that young women used to confine their drinking to “a spoonful of eggnog on New Year’s Now they stand up at the bar and order whiskey-sours like seasoned cannoneers,” oblivious to the fact that they had drunk this way since the 1900s.⁵⁹ The speakeasy of the 1920s served as the bridge to unite male and female homosocial drinking.

Speakeasy proprietors virtually assured the institution of heterosocial drinking by making their business accessible to people of all classes. Julian Jerome, writing for *Vanity Fair* in 1932, and Hilder noted that the middle and upper classes did not patronize blind pigs until these places moved closer to their residential neighborhoods.⁶⁰ In fact, people living in middle- and upper-class suburbs did not have easy access to drinking establishments before 1920. Perry Duis found that some cities, like Chicago and Boston,

⁵⁷Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers & Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 40–43.

⁵⁸John Chapman Hilder, “New York Speakeasy: A Study of a Social Institution,” *Harpers*, April 1932, 597.

These types of places were probably private clubs. According to Walter Anderson, a person could protect his speakeasy by incorporating it as a club with the state. This tactic prevented federal agents from entering and allowed the owner to do whatever he wanted. See, Walter Anderson, “The Speakeasy as a National Institution,” *Current History* July 1932, 419.

⁵⁹Hilder, “New York Speakeasy,” 596–597.

⁶⁰Julian Jerome, “Evolution of the Speakeasy,” *Vanity Fair*, September 1932, 46; Hilder, “New York Speakeasy,” 600.

legally prevented saloons from opening in or near certain areas, such as middle- and upper-class suburbs. This moral geography protected these places but also served to privatize drinking in these areas.⁶¹ With the advent of Prohibition, the owners of blind tigers capitalized on these previously restricted areas. They faced no competition from neighborhood drinking establishments, because police boards had previously limited the sale of alcohol to downtown areas.⁶² Jerome and Hilder argued that the movement of blind tigers into these residential areas prevented lower-class customers from patronizing these places, but it also gave middle- and upper-class women far easier access to drinking establishments than they had before 1920.⁶³ The expansion of speakeasies into all areas of cities made public drinking as an activity available to men and women of all classes.

Heterosocial drinking became a realistic option for middle- and upper-class women due to ideological changes that occurred during the 1920s. First, most of these women abandoned the last restraints of the Victorian lady ideal, signifying the widespread acceptance of the New Woman. Emily Rose Burt in 1923 complained: “The girl of to-day has abandoned most of [the] precepts [of the Victorian lady]. . . . She is . . . fairly independent about venturing out alone into a museum or library. And it is highly impracticable to keep to a ‘modest and measured gait’ when battling in a subway crowd.”⁶⁴ Burt’s comment, demonstrating the continuing movement away from the Victorian lady, came at a time when most of her contemporaries had already stopped discussing the old ideal. *The Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature* shows that the

⁶¹Duis, *The Saloon*, 227–229.

⁶²Duis, *The Saloon*, 228.

⁶³Jerome, “Evolution of the Speakeasy,” 46; Hilder, “New York Speakeasy,” 600.

⁶⁴Emily Rose Burt, “Other Times, Other Manners,” *Woman’s Home Companion*, November 1923, 41.

number of articles published about the Victorian lady started declining after 1914. Around 1924, the index ceased using the subject heading of lady all together, suggesting that people no longer thought it an important designation or topic of discussion.⁶⁵ In the area of gender identity, women were, at least in theory, becoming the equal of and entitled to participate in the same activities as men.

Second, the anti-prohibitionist rhetoric of personal liberty crossed gender lines, giving men and women a common idea with which to link their respective homosocial drinking spheres. During Prohibition, people equated the ability to choose to drink in public with independence, and they saw any attempt to abridge this right as oppression. A majority of these arguments during this period did come from men. Maine declared in 1920, “The great and too often careless public, neglectful of its rights, is beginning to awaken to the full knowledge of a situation created by the [Anti-Saloon] League and to see where these self-appointed masters are leading,” hinting that prohibitionists had seized some of the public’s rights while they were not looking.⁶⁶ Similarly, Boyle Working, a candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, said during his 1921 campaign that it was “proper for me to express my views on [Prohibition] laws that tend to deprive one of the rights which the Constitution of the United States guarantees to us.”⁶⁷ Neither Maine nor Working mentioned gender in their comments, leaving it open to interpretation whether or not they meant to include women, but women started using the same themes of liberty by the end of the 1920s. In 1929, Sabin declared that Prohibitionists were

⁶⁵*Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature*, vol. 1–22 (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1905–1961), subverb *Lady*.

⁶⁶Maine, “The ‘Dry’ Constitution,” *New York Times*, 14 February 1920.

⁶⁷“Liberal Stand On Prohibition,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 April 1921.

zealots who curtailed the people's freedom and that the Eighteenth Amendment was part of "the age-old effort of the fanatic which has been behind every invasion of personal liberty in the past."⁶⁸ Over twenty years of experience and rhetoric had come together to create a sustainable mixed-gender drinking environment.

Yet older generations of adults thought the sudden appearance of heterosocial drinking signaled the decay of society, for which they blamed young men and women. Although older men and women had both drunk in public before 1920, the fact that young adults chose to do so in circumstances they had little control over seemed to shock them. As early as February 1921, the *New York Times* reported that older adults viewed mixed-gender drinking as a generational break because of the hip flask. The author proclaimed: "The hip pocket flask has got[ten] into mixed society. . . . many 18-year-old girls of formal American society are for the first time indulging in intoxication."⁶⁹ By June, ministers blamed parents for the lax social conditions, claiming, "Young men and women are degrading themselves by drinking at public and private gatherings."⁷⁰ Wayne B. Wheeler, in 1924, declared that other than immigrants and the personal liberty advocates only "the flapper (both male and female; for the thrill) [and] youth (showing off)" consumed alcohol.⁷¹ Blythe commented in 1927 that "these boys and girls . . . had no—or small—experiences of drinking before prohibition. Many of them were mere children then."⁷² These comments made it appear that the younger generation had

⁶⁸"Brands Prohibition Laws," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 April 1929.

⁶⁹"Pocket Flask and Younger Set," *New York Times*, 6 February 1921.

⁷⁰"Ministers Blame Parents for Lax Social Conditions," *Atlanta Constitution*, 12 June 1921.

⁷¹O'Donnell, "They're Drinking More Than Ever," 9, 27.

⁷²Blythe, "Inquiries into a Long Dry Spell," 149.

created heterosocial drinking over the objections of their elders. Using the tone of women as protectors of the home, M. Louise Gross best summarized the situation in 1928. She claimed women wanted the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment: “The young people of this land . . . are . . . indulging in drinking hard liquor, such as never was known in the days of Prohibition. Young people . . . carry hip flasks, and have drinking parties at their school and college dances and socials.”⁷³ The younger generation, only accomplices in the creation of heterosocial drinking, found themselves blamed for something that was largely the responsibility of their elders.



Howard, Permission The New Yorker, © F-R. Publishing Corp.
“Don’t you know you can’t park in 48th Street?”
Figure 15: “Don’t You Know You Can’t Park in 48th Street?”

Historiographically, it is worth noting that historians continued this trend by seizing upon the flapper, a member of the younger generation, as the symbolic beginning

⁷³M. Louise Gross and Mrs. Henry W. Peabody, “Do Women Want National Prohibition,” *Current History*, July 1928, 538.

of both heterosocial and female public drinking. Flappers, the daughters of the New Women, seized the opportunity of Prohibition to increase the social freedoms with which they grew up. Historians have assumed this expansion meant that a majority of women also began drinking alcohol publicly and, at the same time, began doing so with men.⁷⁴ However, chapter 2 shows that women of all classes consumed alcohol in public settings no later than the first decade of the twentieth century. This fact decreases the importance of the flapper in public drinking; she did not start women drinking alcohol in public. Instead, she simply emulated her mother in a situation that increasingly encouraged heterosocial alcohol consumption. Contemporaries of the flapper used her to comment on female drinking for the first time, giving her a rhetorical prominence that later attracted the attention of historians. Consequently, the flapper assumed a historical position of significance to which she was not fully entitled.

Ironically, older generations of adults quickly adapted to the new heterosocial drinking situation while blaming young adults for degradation of society. On the one hand, society did appear to be destabilizing from the point of view of older adults. The use of hip flasks and advent of widespread mixed-gender drinking were, in fact, phenomena in which they did not participate before 1920. In addition, the decline of Victorian gender ideology, with its restrictions on associating with people below one's class, made it appear that the entire class structure was unstable. A writer for *Literary Digest* declared in 1922 that in the new "clubs" of the 1920s "a woman leader of Fifth Avenue social life sat at one table; at a neighboring table sat a noted stage beauty, whose name was figuring in the divorce courts This sort of thing used to be called 'slumming,'" intimating that respectable people should not be regularly participating in

⁷⁴Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*, 173–176; Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 162–163.

this type of intermingling.⁷⁵ On the other hand, male and female drinkers quickly adapted to interacting with each other while consuming alcohol. The same clubs where people of different social status mingled also developed mixed-gender entertainments about which no one appeared to complain. One establishment invented a game that involved tying “circus balloons . . . to each lady’s ankle. The game is for every man to see how many balloons he can step on while protecting the balloon on the ankle of his own lady,” suggesting that neither men nor women had an issue with this kind of close contact.⁷⁶ A political cartoon published during Prohibition (see Figure 15) shows a drinking establishment with a bar similar to those in saloons. A group of men talk to a woman holding a cocktail, while a cop ignores the drinking in order to reprimand a man for parking on 48th street.⁷⁷ This image suggests that mixed-gender drinking became so common during Prohibition that everyone (including the authorities) took it for granted. The apparent resistance to heterosocial alcohol consumption at the time was nothing more than some people trying to adjust to a rapid social change.

Prohibition and the continuing changes in gender identity created the circumstances that motivated people to construct a mainstream heterosocial drinking culture. The perceived fall of the saloon and its replacement by the speakeasy reflected and reinforced the acceptance of new gender ideals. The New Woman and the democratic gentleman replaced the Victorian lady and gentleman as the dominant gender

⁷⁵“The New Nightlight of New York,” *Literary Digest*, 25 February 1922, 40.

⁷⁶“The New Nightlight,” 40.

⁷⁷“Dry Era: A Cartoon History,” *New York Times Magazine*, 14 January 1945, 21.

Although published in 1945, the captions below the political cartoons indicate that the author used images created during Prohibition to create his cartoon history of the Dry Era.

paradigms, eliminating the final barriers that had prevented mixed-gender drinking. In addition, the anti-prohibitionist rhetoric of personal liberty provided men and women with a common ideological basis necessary to form a heterosocial drinking environment. Although older adults complained about the actions of young adults in the area of public drinking, their objections seem unimportant when compared to the way most drinkers adapted to the new conditions. The result was the situation depicted in Glenn O. Coleman's painting *Speakeasy*. Probably showing a fictional speakeasy, men and women drink together in the same space apparently as equals.⁷⁸ However, the new drinking tradition people had created required a new setting.



Figure 16: Glenn O. Coleman's *Speakeasy*

⁷⁸Glenn O. Coleman, "Speakeasy," painting, as reproduced in A.J. Kennedy, "Saloon in Retrospect and Prospect," *Survey Graphic*, April 1933, 205.

A New Place To Drink

The emergence of a new archetype for drinking establishment represented the final aspect of the transformation of the public drinking culture.⁷⁹ While some proprietors questioned the necessity of the security measures they used, customers found these devices attractive due to the illicit thrill it added to their experience. One particular disguise, the restaurant speakeasy, reflected and reinforced the new drinking tradition better than any other model, but this layout encouraged people to make further changes to these businesses. The kitchen helped make the service of a food into a permanent part of these enterprises, while the façade itself helped create a reciprocal relationship with heterosocial drinking. The compartmentalization of space resulting from the presence of tables and booths strengthened the prevalence of small groups and privacy. One effect of this division, driven in part by the perceived death of the saloon, was the depoliticization of drinking establishments. The development of a new archetype for drinking establishments signified the widespread acceptance of the new public drinking culture.

The security measures surrounding speakeasies, although openly questioned by some owners, added an element of the forbidden to the experience of public drinking that customers found attractive. Beyond the use of passwords or membership cards, proprietors also camouflaged their blind pigs as other kinds of businesses. Writing for

⁷⁹I believe this is due to, in part, the prominence accorded the restaurant speakeasy in the early 1930s. The authors who published articles about how to start a speakeasy all told their readers to start a restaurant speakeasy, while descriptions of the social importance of blind tigers primarily described restaurant speakeasies, suggesting drinkers found these places more attractive than anywhere else. See, Sayre, "How to Run a Speakeasy," 215–217; Proprietor, "How to Run a Speakeasy," *The New Freeman*, 11 June 1930, 297–299; Hilder, "New York Speakeasy," 591–601.

Outlook in 1929, Frederick L. Smith Jr. said he saw speakeasies disguised as tool shops, tobacco shops, lunch counters, a fountain-pen repair shop, and a lamp company while living in Detroit.⁸⁰ Yet, people questioned the necessity of these procedures as early as October 1919. An article in *Beverage News* intimated that only the patrons of upper-class places had any difficulty getting alcohol; anyone, even a stranger, could walk into many saloons and get a drink.⁸¹ A saloonkeeper told Stephen Graham, writing for *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in 1927: "I don't think [security measures] make much difference If it has been decided to raid the place the place will be raided. . . . The business we do is known [by the police and revenue officers]. If you want to find a place to drink, ask a cop."⁸² Graham, although speculating at the time, found the most likely explanation for security measures: the efforts to conceal the sale of alcohol drew customers by adding an element of illicit excitement to public drinking. He surmised that the "pass-word and peep-hole business is not merely part of the glamour of the speakeasy, possessing considerable commercial value. The sophisticated like the thrill of imagining they are entering a smuggler's cave—an extra kick is imparted to the bootleg scotch."⁸³ On the surface, attracting patrons and maybe protecting the business appeared to be the only functions of any security system at a speakeasy.

⁸⁰Frederick L. Smith Jr., "Look behind the Front: The Speakeasy," *Outlook*, 13 March 1929, 424.

⁸¹"Looking For Forbidden Drinks." *Beverage News*, 15 October 1919.

⁸²Stephen Graham, "Bowery under Prohibition," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, February 1927, 336.

⁸³Graham, "Bowery under Prohibition," 336.

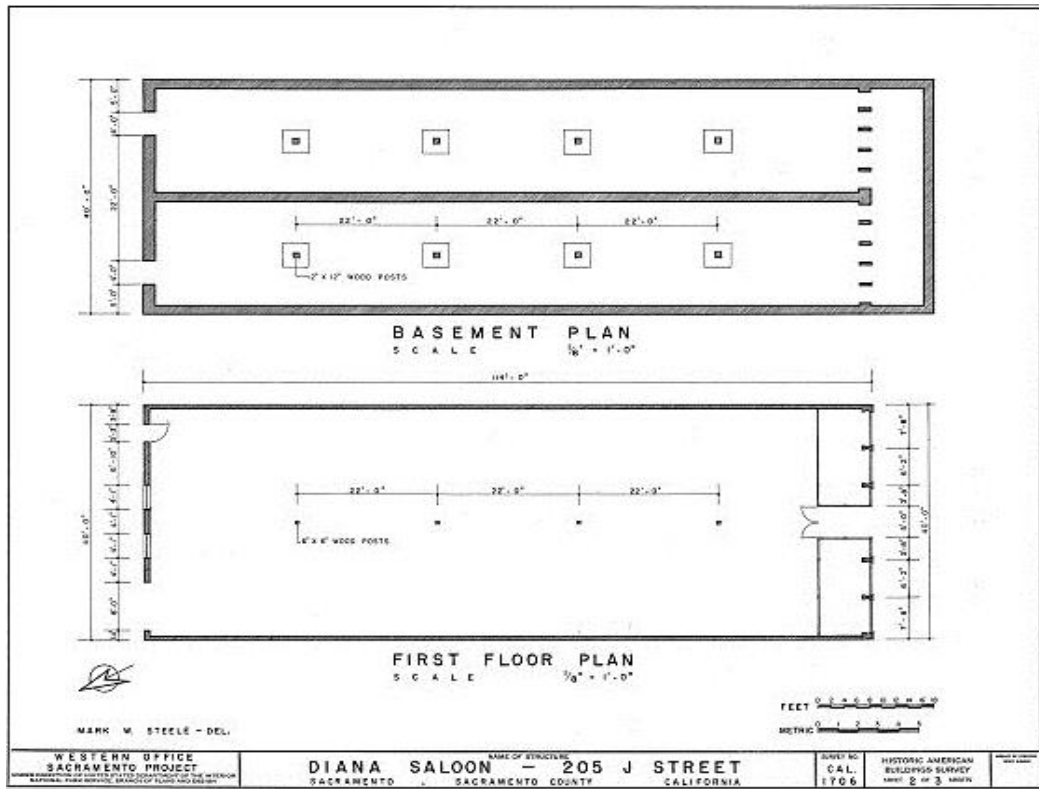


Figure 17: The Diana Saloon

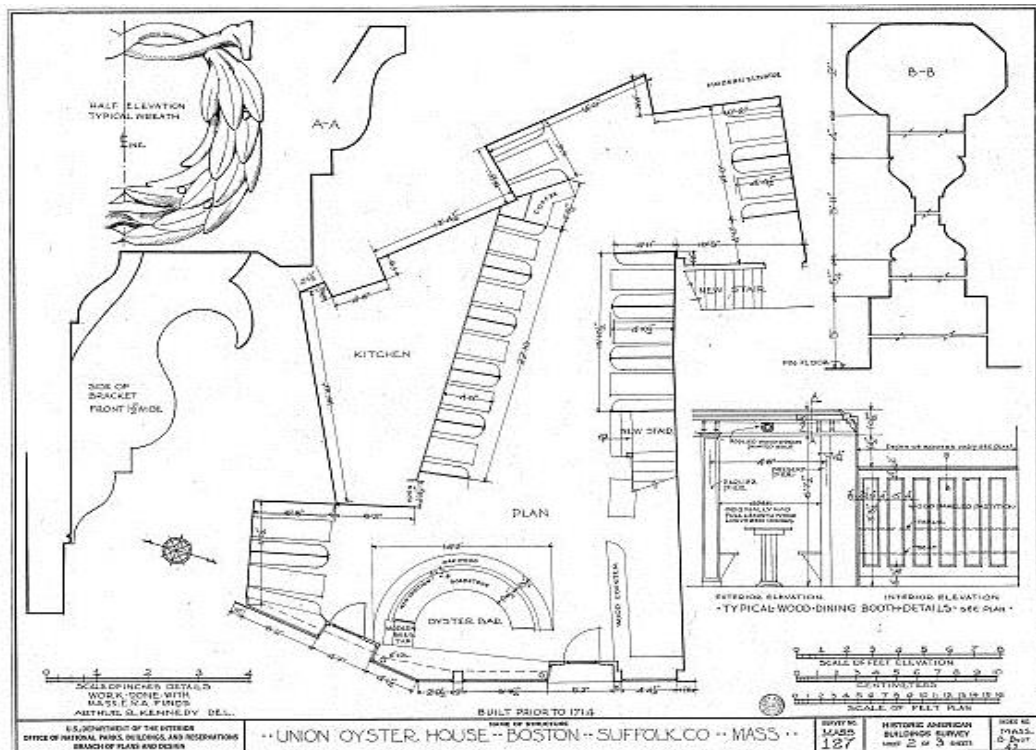


Figure 18: The Union Oyster House

The restaurant, one common disguise for speakeasies, demonstrated the extent to which people's conceptualization of drinking had changed during Prohibition. Figure 17 shows the Diana Saloon of Sacramento, California that, similar to the illustrations in chapter 1, represented a specific type of drinking culture. This tradition involved mobility, shared ideology, and leisure involving large groups.⁸⁴ This place ultimately symbolized a drinking culture that people increasingly abandoned as the 1920s progressed. The Eighteenth Amendment motivated drinkers to change each of these elements to fit new circumstances. Meanwhile, the Union Oyster House (figure 18) better exemplified the new drinking culture than any saloon.⁸⁵ The division of the room made it harder to form large groups, thus curtailing one possible threat to the speakeasy and making mobility less important. While drinkers probably shared a common dislike of Prohibition, the heterosocial environment made the reinforcement of gender ideology a moot point. The new public drinking culture simply did not correspond to the layout of the saloon; circumstances had provided a replacement.

While the major characteristics of the restaurant speakeasy reflected and reinforced the new drinking tradition, its ancillary elements helped both owners and customers alter the way these places functioned. The presence of a kitchen, for example, integrated the service of food into the business model of public drinking establishments, giving proprietors a more diversified enterprise. Although the saloon offered a free lunch, it was, in reality, "one of the [alcohol industry's] most successful public relation schemes of the era"; the free lunch was an advertising ploy and not meant to be a

⁸⁴The Diana Saloon, Floor Plan, HABS CAL 34 SAC 8, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁸⁵Union Oyster House, Floor Plan, HABS MASS 13 BOST 45, Historic American Buildings Survey, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

permanent part of how these places operated.⁸⁶ In fact, the typical saloon, like the Diana, did not even have a kitchen.⁸⁷

By the end of Prohibition, the providing of meals to customers had become an important part of drinking establishments. Sayre recommended spending between \$5,600 to \$5,800 of a \$10,000 on the kitchen, utensils, place settings, furniture, and fixtures for a blind tiger. He told his readers to pay servers \$1 per day plus tips and a chef might receive between \$50 and \$75 per week. Sayre claimed: “Although you don’t make any money on food, it’s food that builds up good will. And in these days [1932] good will is the only thing that makes a speakeasy tick.”⁸⁸ His recommendations indicated that the restaurant was more than a simple façade; anyone going through this much trouble to set up this disguise intended to make the service of food at least a secondary concern for his business. In addition, his comment suggested that the food a place served distinguished it from its competitors in the minds of customers, a necessity at a time when New York City alone had an estimated 30,000 speakeasies.⁸⁹ These speakeasy proprietors discovered that what had begun as a mere disguise for their sale of liquor had become a vital element in sustaining their businesses.

Unlike the saloon, the restaurant speakeasy possessed a flexibility that enabled their owners to adapt these places for use by any class. Some upper-class establishments made their drinks look like particular types of food. Dry martinis resembled glasses of sauerkraut juice, while Bacardi with grenadine looked like “well-seasoned essence of

⁸⁶Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 207–208.

⁸⁷The Diana Saloon, HABS CAL 34 SAC 8.

⁸⁸Sayre, “How to Run a Speakeasy,” 216.

⁸⁹Behr, *Prohibition*, 87.

clams.”⁹⁰ These places even attracted patrons who probably had never entered a saloon with the intention of drinking. According to Hilder, Mrs. A., a member of an old New York family, was curious about speakeasies, so she and three friends went to one. Mrs. A. discovered that the place she went and the food to be reminiscent of Delmonico’s and declared she would start going there often.⁹¹ By 1932, the *New York Times* reported that the restaurant aspect of blind tigers had attracted a steady stream of consumers, making them serious competitors with hotels. The Hotel Accountants’ Association of New York City discovered that among hotels and speakeasies catering to the same class of clientele, the food prices at blind pigs were slightly lower. Murray Rappaport, a member of the Association, also said: “The food is rather good . . . and you can get something to drink [at speakeasies]. . . . fortunately or unfortunately, people’s appetites have not changed as a result of the law.”⁹² Prohibition had prompted people to create a drinking establishment that crossed class boundaries, thus making it appealing to most of society.

By the time speakeasies became popular as restaurants, blind tigers reflected and reinforced the new public drinking culture better than any pre-Prohibition saloon. The speakeasy proprietor who chose a restaurant façade needed men and women in the same room to maintain the disguise, creating a mutually reinforcing relationship with heterosocial public drinking. The sudden prominence of the blind tiger during Prohibition signified that men and women began consuming alcohol together, but it did not necessarily mean they did so solely by choice. By disguising blind pigs as eateries, proprietors at least ensured the strengthening, if not creation, of a heterosocial drinking

⁹⁰Hilder, “New York Speakeasy,” 595.

⁹¹Hilder, “New York Speakeasy,” 593.

⁹²“Good Speakeasy Food Found to Hurt Hotels,” *New York Times*, 25 June 1932.

situation. Lewis Erenberg shows that restaurants had begun to emerge in the mid-nineteenth century as male establishments, but had become heterosocial environments by the 1890s due to industrialization and the competition for wealthy patrons in places like New York City.⁹³ Consequently, a restaurant with an entirely homosocial environment during the 1920s probably would have attracted unwanted attention. In addition, the cost of drinks made a single-gender environment impractical for the average speakeasy proprietor. One person estimated that the owner of a blind tiger who sold beer and hard liquor for between \$.25 and \$.75 need to do a daily business of \$100 to make a profit.⁹⁴ The exclusion of half of all potential customers simply made no sense under the circumstances of Prohibition, especially for proprietors wanting to avoid suspicion.



Figure 19: Interior View of Cerf Meyer's Saloon, 1911

⁹³Erenberg, *Steppin' Out*, 9–11.

⁹⁴Proprietor, "Running a Speakeasy," 298.



Figure 20: Leadville, CO. Saloon, c. 1880–1910

The restaurant speakeasy also strengthened the idea that public drinking could contain an element of privacy. Figures 19 and 20 show two saloons in different parts of the country. Each place has a single large room available for patrons, indicating that public drinking before 1920 occurred in large groups with all activities visible to everyone.⁹⁵ Disguising blind pigs as eateries introduced the frequent use of booths and tables into public drinking establishments, compartmentalizing the space. The Union Oyster House (Figure 18), for example, had several booths along the wall, something no saloon had featured.⁹⁶ The compartmentalization of the space effectively limited the size

⁹⁵The Diana Saloon, HABS CAL 34 SAC 8; *Chicago Daily News*, Inc. Photographer, “Interior view of Cerf Meyer’s saloon at 848 Blue Island Avenue in Chicago, Illinois,” photograph, 1911, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago IL; “Leadville, CO. Saloon,” photograph, c. 1880–1910, Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library, Denver CO.

⁹⁶Union Oyster House, HABS MASS 13 BOST 45.

of drinking groups; there was simply no place for a large group to congregate. Commentators during the 1920s noted both the compartmentalization of drinking establishments and its results. An anonymous author for *Literary Digest* observed that many blind tigers, some of which called themselves clubs, used booths, alcoves, and wall benches to create an “atmosphere of ‘just us members.’”⁹⁷ He declared that these physical features and “the very name ‘club’ is a part of the general scheme of surrounding patrons with the psychology of privacy and intimacy—which . . . has been no small factor in ousting the clammy dread of the law that had placed its damper on Broadway’s spirits since July 1919.”⁹⁸ The compartmentalization of space in blind tigers gave people a place to drink in public and feel safe while doing it.

The division of the room also curtailed public drinking’s utility in electoral politics.⁹⁹ The security measures that many places implemented after 1920 prevented politicians from easily canvassing all the drinking establishments in an area. Even if the candidate had gained entrance to a speakeasy, features like booths and alcoves restricted the size of drinking parties and made it difficult for a person to obtain everyone’s attention, rendering canvassing in these places rather time consuming. Finally, Prohibition had caused the price of drinks to increase as much as 1,000 percent.¹⁰⁰ The high cost of drinking made it prohibitively expensive for a candidate to purchase

⁹⁷“The New Nightlife of New York,” 40.

⁹⁸“The New Nightlife of New York,” 40.

⁹⁹I define electoral politics as the tasks involved with disseminating the party’s platform and getting voters into the polls.

¹⁰⁰Eric Burns, *The Spirits of America: A Social History of Alcohol*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 199.

everyone a round of drinks like they had previously.¹⁰¹ Prohibition had also changed people's attitudes toward alcohol consumption. Drinking had become the goal of a leisure activity that they doggedly pursued, decreasing the likelihood of them tolerating extended interruptions.¹⁰² Public drinking had changed to such a degree that the advantages using drinking establishments in electoral politics had significantly decreased.

At the same time, the perceived death of the saloon caused people to hail the end of the alcohol industry's influence over electoral politics as a good thing, reinforcing the depoliticization of public drinking. William G. McAdoo, in his Labor Day 1920 address, assumed that Prohibition had destroyed the political power of the alcohol industry. He proclaimed, "every . . . voter who puts the welfare of children and humanity above the mere gratification of harmful appetites should see to it that the next congress does not destroy the prohibition amendment [and] restore the breweries and wineries to political power," suggesting that these trades could easily reclaim their lost power through any retail business.¹⁰³ By November, the *New York Times* reported: "The power of the saloon as a vote getting or vote influencing agency in New York City has been shattered. Some saloons are still open, but they are no longer the rallying point for political campaigners."¹⁰⁴ Even people who knew that the saloon still existed believed it had lost its political power by 1923. George C. Wilding wrote in his Letter to the Editor of the *New York Times* that the saloon "has no friends now. . . . And yet once it was so

¹⁰¹Powers, *Faces along the Bar*, 107–111.

¹⁰²Blythe, "Inquiries Into A Long Dry Spell," 9, 146.

¹⁰³"McAdoo Declares Against Light Wines and Beer," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 17 September 1920.

¹⁰⁴"Facts and Factors of 1921 Election," *New York Times*, 21 November 1920.

powerful and lorded it over the politicians and the people.”¹⁰⁵ By 1929, the public believed that the political power of drinking establishments was a thing of the past. Robert Quillen, writing for *The Washington Post*, suggested that the alcohol industry had lost its influence over politics. He proclaimed that “there was a time when brewers and distillers were a great political power, with branch headquarters in every saloon, and policemen, mayors, judges, and governors stepped lively when booze cracked a whip.”¹⁰⁶

The new archetype for public drinking establishments emerged alongside the new public drinking culture during Prohibition. The use of restaurants to hide speakeasies served several functions in the transformation of the saloon. It started as a security measure that morphed into an advertising ploy. However, the layout of these places made food a serious part of the business plan for drinking establishments. The use of a restaurant disguise also necessitated the reinforcement of the developing heterosocial drinking situation. Booths, tables, and alcoves manifested the new idea of privacy in public drinking and limited the size of drinking groups. The compartmentalization of the floor space, combined with the security measures, resulted in the depoliticization of drinking establishments. The one thing this new model lacked was a name.

Conclusion

Prohibition served as the catalyst that motivated people to transform the public drinking culture and the places where it occurred. The illegality of alcohol drove

¹⁰⁵George C. Wilding, “Will the Saloon Come Back?” *New York Times*, 24 June 1923.

¹⁰⁶Robert Quillen, “The More Idiotic We Were, The Saner We Shall Be,” *The Washington Post*, 6 May 1929.

drinkers to abandon moderate alcohol consumption and consume as much as they could whenever they could. This alteration signaled a change in the purpose of drinking. People no longer imbibed liquor primarily as a facilitator of socialization; they drank principally to facilitate sociability demonstrated by the fact that drinking as itself the goal of a leisure activity became socially acceptable. Meanwhile, a fear of the authorities made people cautious about performing this activity too openly, resulting in the use of security measures to protect both the proprietors of speakeasies and the customers. These systems limited the size of drinking parties, which corresponded with what sociological studies of groups suggested was the appropriate size for this activity. In addition, these small parties ensured a certain amount of privacy and that the members probably held the same attitudes about Prohibition. The anti-prohibitionist rhetoric these groups used and further changes in gender identity helped male and female drinkers move heterosociability into the mainstream drinking tradition.

The transformation of the public drinking culture eventually resulted in the emergence of a new archetype for drinking establishments. The restaurant speakeasy reflected and reinforced the new drinking tradition better than the saloon or any of its contemporaries. The compartmentalization of space strengthened the use of small groups and privacy, while the dining room virtually required a heterosocial crowd to avoid suspicion. In addition, the façade of an eatery made food a serious aspect of the business model for drinking establishments, and the dining room helped to depoliticize these places. However, the restaurant speakeasy also demonstrated that how people perceived the situation during Prohibition enabled all these changes. Drinkers thought the saloon was dead, so they replaced it with the speakeasy, leading to the removal of electoral

politics from drinking establishments. Drinkers believed the federal government would arrest them for activities, so they instituted security measures, leading to the use of restaurants as disguises. Perception as much as Prohibition was responsible for the transformations that occurred during this period. By 1933, the saloon and the homosocial drinking tradition were things of the past; people had a new drinking culture and a new place in which to perform it.

PART 3

PUBLIC DRINKING, C. 1930 TO C. 1960

The transformation of the saloon into the bar, rather than ending with the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment in December 1933, continued throughout the middle third of the twentieth century as proprietors, patrons, commentators, and legislators struggled to determine how these businesses and the activities that occurred within should be reorganized. This period was hugely important in shaping public drinking in America. Yet, historians of drinking and historians of Prohibition alike generally have little to say about these years within the broader trajectory of alcohol consumption. Prohibition historians study the rise and fall of the Eighteenth Amendment but make no serious effort to examine the actual physical locations where public drinking occurred. Moreover, they end their narratives in December 1933, declaring the Noble Experiment a failure but then ignoring the subsequent development of public drinking. By neglecting the effects of Prohibition on later public drinking, historians have failed to realize the importance of this period in shaping the decisions that people made when determining the structure of post-Prohibition drinking establishments and the ways people used them.

Most authors writing about the repeal of Prohibition dedicate a chapter about it at the end of their books but say little about the effects of this era on public drinking or society. David Kyvig, in *Repealing National Prohibition*, studies antiprohibition groups,

such as the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment, and the methods they used to successfully repeal the Eighteenth Amendment, but he ends his story with the disbanding of the organization in December 1933. The only consequences Kyvig mentioned was effects it had on how people viewed the Constitution, Progressivism, and the Prohibition movement.¹ Michael Lerner, in *Dry Manhattan*, believed Prohibition to be a failure, marking “the demise of a moral crusade meant to impose a uniform standard of social behavior in the United States,” but he does not extend his story of public drinking into the post-Prohibition era.² Popular authors likewise say little about the effects Prohibition had on public drinking. Herbert Asbury’s *The Great Illusion* concluded that people learned nothing from Eighteenth Amendment but did not elaborate on what they should have learned.³ Edward Behr, in *Prohibition*, made a similar assessment but also included what he felt to be the effects of Prohibition on society. He claimed that organized crime grew dramatically, emphasized the two-tiers of the American justice system, and people did not learn that legislation cannot solve all problems, but he provides no evidence to support his assertions.⁴ In *Last Call*, Daniel Okrent concluded that “in almost every respect imaginable, Prohibition was a failure,” largely reiterating what Behr wrote earlier. Okrent does assert that the Eighteenth Amendment reduced alcohol consumption, but chapter 3 demonstrates that people began

¹David E. Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979) 183–202.

²Michael A. Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 307.

³Herbert Asbury, *The Great Illusion: An Informal History of Prohibition* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1950), 330.

⁴Edward Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2011), 235–243.

imbibing more liquor during the 1920s.⁵ Although the Twenty-First Amendment marked the end of Prohibition, it did not signify the end of the development of public drinking.

The confluence of both the Prohibition movement and era with their previous thirty years of experience with public drinking also influenced the ways people restructured the public drinking culture. Although the new alcohol control laws determined the physical *form* of post-Prohibition public drinking establishments, drinkers had to determine for themselves whether the drinking *culture* would contain customs of more recent origin or of more traditional origin. This debate included arguments over drinking patterns, the role of the bartender, and the consequences of having televisions in the bar. The dispute over the characteristics of the public drinking culture also involved a fight over whether it would be heterosocial or homosocial. Both male and female gender identity continued to change during the middle third of the twentieth century, but men had more trouble coping with these alterations than women. As men looked to the past for guidance with their gender identity, some of them wrote an imaginary history for public drinking in order justify their attempts to reestablish a single-gender drinking environment. Female drinkers defeated these efforts by ignoring the critics who tried to limit their access to the bar. Prohibition did not end the debates over public drinking; instead, it influenced people to argue about the structure, rather than the necessity, of this activity and the places where it occurred.

⁵Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 373.

CHAPTER 4

THE ASCENDENCE OF THE BAR AND MODERN PUBLIC DRINKING

This chapter will examine the influence of the repeal movement on post-Prohibition alcohol control laws and the structure of public drinking establishments. Anti-prohibitionists succeeded in their quest to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment by agreeing with the prohibitionists that the saloon caused social problems and should never return. The wets managed to separate alcohol from the saloon through a very careful rhetorical construction that first appeared in Prohibition rhetoric during the 1870s. This partial acceptance of the arguments prohibitionists had used against the saloon influenced the characteristics people thought drinking establishments should not possess. These attributes included the political power these places had once possessed, the tied-house system, businesses that sold only alcohol by the glass for profit, and certain vaguely defined physical feature of the saloon. The similarities between the laws in New York, Illinois, and California indicated a general desire to fulfill the promises of the anti-prohibitionists. In the process, they accidentally institutionalized the basic format of the restaurant speakeasy as the new home of public drinking by eliminating other available competitors.

After the institutionalization of the bar, the men and women using these businesses struggled to determine whether the public drinking culture would contain

traditional rituals or ones they had created during Prohibition. This debate began with commentators during the early 1930s arguing about the nature of the saloon, suggesting the relevance of both sets of customs. After repeal, this argument transformed into a popular examination of drinking patterns for about twenty years, a debate which, at its core, addressed the underlying purpose of public drinking. (The heterosocialization of public drinking, probably the most important issue drinkers had to contend with and the most important aspect in the saloon-to-bar transformation, will be discussed in chapter five.) Meanwhile, this struggle of choosing between the traditional and modern drinking customs appeared as a disagreement over questions such as the role of the bartender and the wisdom of having a television in the bar. The efforts of drinkers and social commentators to redefine the public drinking culture after repeal represented an attempt to fulfill the desire to prevent the saloon's return expressed by anti-prohibitionists.

There was also another effect the debate between modern and traditional drinking customs had on the role of public drinking establishments, one that could be seen most clearly after repeal: the effective political neutralization of one of the most important types of working-class spaces in the American city. During the early 1930s, people identified four aspects of the saloon they did not want to see return after the ratification of the Twenty-First Amendment. They gave the most attention to the saloon's power to influence electoral politics. This interest in preventing drinking establishments from regaining any political power represented a significant change in how people viewed these places. Men had used drinking establishments for political purposes since colonial era. The saloon had become an important gathering place for both political machines and labor unions by the late nineteenth century, but Prohibition changed the purpose behind

public drinking (as discussed in chapter three). This change continued to influence public drinking after Prohibition as men and women struggled to determine whether bars should act primarily as a place of sociability or a place of socialization. From approximately the mid-1930s to 1960, drinkers increasingly chose to emphasize the sociability characteristics of drinking establishments over the socializations aspects, making drinking establishments more prominent as centers of leisure rather than places where men could obtain information about, and involve themselves in, the community and politics. Prohibition had already begun to depoliticize public drinking establishments, and consequently, the objective of preventing the saloon's return with the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment and the institutionalization of the new archetype for drinking establishments and its culture effectively established the idea that these places should not have any power in electoral politics. The destruction of the saloon and its unique environment after the repeal of Prohibition represented a constitutive aspect of the deradicalization of the working class. The structure of post-Prohibition drinking establishments and the culture people practiced in them were the consequences of changes in attitudes toward public drinking and its perceived role as a leisure activity.

From the Saloon to the Bar

Westbrook Pegler, in a December 1932 article to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, wrote, "Now that prohibition is doomed, as Mr. Roosevelt said, the best minds of Congress are beginning to give serious thought to the question of just what constitutes a saloon."¹ During the early 1930s, social commentators and state legislatures also

¹Westbrook Pegler, "Best Minds Wonder How to Define 'Saloon,'" *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 8 December 1932.

considered answers to this question, resulting in the institutionalization of the restaurant speakeasy's basic physical structure as the dominant site of the public drinking culture. Advocates of repeal rallied support for the Twenty-First Amendment by promising to legalize alcohol but prevent the saloon's revival, partially embracing the arguments of the prohibitionists. Anti-prohibitionists accomplished this seemingly contradictory feat using the technical difference between the Temperance and Prohibition movements. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the focus of prohibitionists gradually shifted from alcohol being the source of evil to the saloon being its source. This shift allowed dries (and later wets) to focus the public's attention onto the saloon and helped social commentators identify four highly visible characteristics of these places that they blamed for social problems before 1920. State legislatures noticed this rhetoric and made banning these features important parts of their post-Prohibition alcohol control laws. The attention commentators and legislators paid to the pre-Prohibition saloon indicated that they were more concerned with what future drinking establishments should not be rather than the role they should play in society.

Wets and dries stood united against the return of the saloon during the early 1930s, but the implication of this stance was that a physical place became responsible for the troubles that people's drinking had caused. The Association Against the Prohibition Amendment (AAPA), according to Andrew Sinclair in *Prohibition*, "used precisely the same threats and organization at the grass roots as the [Anti-Saloon] League had. . . . It subsidized research studies and put out propaganda to show the failure of prohibition. . . . It tried to place favorable articles in the newspapers and magazines. Indeed, in every

action, it was the Siamese twin of the Anti-Saloon League.”² The AAPA’s most indispensable action was to agree with the prohibitionists that the saloon had caused all the pre-Prohibition social problems. Its “letterhead bore the slogan, ‘Beers and Light Wines *NOW*: But no Saloons *EVER*,’” suggesting that the saloon, not liquor, had been the true problem before 1920.³ David Kyvig, in *Repealing National Prohibition*, asserted that “many antiprohibitionists viewed the saloon as a social and political center of dubious virtue and agreed that its return should be prevented,” a sentiment with which the public agreed.⁴ Commenting upon the probability of repeal, *Commonweal* published an article in April 1933 that the saloon “is not to come back in the sense in which this [ninety-three year old temperance worker] knew and hated it, must be the resolve of good citizens everywhere.”⁵ An October 1933 *New York Times* piece declared one problem states faced with the Twenty-First Amendment was “how is the return of the old-time saloon to be prevented?”⁶ Anti-Prohibitionists purified alcohol by sacrificing the saloon, but they could not have done so without the assistance of the prohibitionists.

The anti-alcohol crusade had begun with the Temperance movement, which thought the place where people obtained and consumed alcohol was irrelevant; it was the

²Andrew Sinclair, *Prohibition: The Era of Excess* (New York: Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1962), 338; quoted in Eric Burns, *The Spirits of America: A Social History of Alcohol* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 266.

³David E. Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 58.

⁴Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition*, 188.

⁵“Lest We Forget,” *Commonweal*, 19 April 1933, 675.

⁶Mrs. John S. Sheppard, “After Repeal: Great Problems,” *New York Times*, 22 October 1933.

unrestrained consumption of alcohol they thought caused problems.⁷ W. J. Rorabaugh, in *The Alcoholic Republic*, asserts: “It was the unrestrained consumption of liquors of [ninety proof or more] that amazed [travelers] and alarmed so many Americans. . . . During the first third of the nineteenth century the typical American annually drank more distilled liquor than at any other time in our history.”⁸ The magnitude of this drinking led some reformers as early as the Revolutionary era to speak out against it, but until the Civil War, these activists concentrated on the problems the imbibing of alcohol caused. For example, Dr. Benjamin Rush published a pamphlet, which later became a model for temperance tracts, in 1784 that “catalogued liquor’s defects: it protected against neither hot nor cold weather . . . [and] caused numerous illnesses.”⁹ Eric Burns’ *The Spirits of America* pointed out that temperance societies in the early nineteenth century publicized the potentially fatal delirium tremens that struck drinkers: “The disorder usually [began] with a nail-biting bout of anxiety, often accompanied by the shakes and then moving quickly to periods of paranoid hallucination. . . . ‘Finally . . . falls into a deep sleep and enters an acute alcoholic depression. Either death or complete recovery follows.’”¹⁰ In the 1840s, a temperance advocate visually showed people the gradual but inevitable decline and suicide of a respectable man who chose to drink in *The Drunkards*

⁷Temperance advocates wanted people to voluntarily limit their consumption of spirits, while Prohibitionists wanted to ban all alcohol consumption. For more information, see Burns, *The Spirits of America*; Herbert Asbury, *The Great Illusion: An Informal History of Prohibition* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1950).

⁸W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 7.

⁹Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 41.

¹⁰Burns, *The Spirits of America*, 64.

Pilgrimage (see figure 21).¹¹ For the temperance worker, alcohol was the enemy, while the place where people drank it was largely irrelevant.

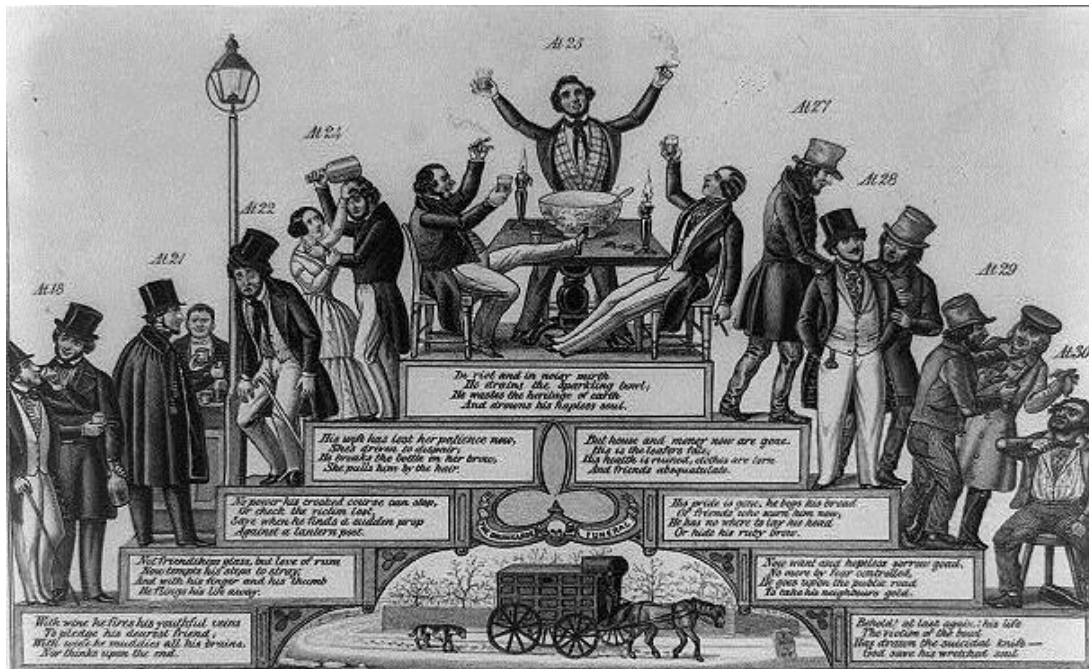


Figure 21: The Drunkards Pilgrimage, May 1846

The Prohibition movement after 1870 increasingly ascribed the evils alcohol caused to the place where people sold it, specifically the saloon. Inspired by Dr. Dioclesian Lewis, the Women’s Crusade of 1873 attacked these businesses as the source of crime and political corruption.¹² These women prayed and sang hymns outside of these places until the proprietors shut down their businesses.¹³ After 1893, The Committee of Fifty for the Investigation of the Liquor Problem, “a political body representing the historical position of corporate capitalists on the liquor problem,”

¹¹“The Drunkards Pilgrimage,” Print, 11 May 1846, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C.

¹²Asbury, *The Great Illusion*, 68, 71.

¹³Burns, *The Spirits of America*, 101–104.

assailed the saloon as the origin of industrial accidents and inefficiency.¹⁴ Roy Rosenzweig, in *Eight Hours For What We Will*, asserted that middle-class prohibitionists viewed the saloon as a center for class warfare. He writes:

The offensive against the saloon and its values was . . . a defense of a set of bourgeois values that the saloon seemed to threaten. The urban-industrial saloon, Norman H. Clark has observed . . ., “challenged the moral values so recently articulated as the bourgeois tradition: self-confidence, conscience, sexual discipline, ambition, measurable accomplishment, loyalty, reverence, responsibility, respect.” These values . . . were . . . profoundly individualistic and supported a “developing consciousness of individual, rather than communal dignity.” . . . [The] saloon symbolized the rejection of this middle-class world view.¹⁵

By subtly shifting the reform movement’s focus, prohibitionists turned the saloonkeeper and his business into an enemy, to which they could direct the public’s attention. This alteration also placed responsibility for the issues associated with drinking on the saloonkeeper and his business, making liquor a commodity people had possibly misused but not inherently evil.

This conceptualization of the relationship between public drinking and the issues associated with it led social commentators during the 1930s to identify four highly visible characteristics of the saloon as the causes of the social problems before 1920. The first issue, and probably the most important one they directly addressed, was stopping drinking establishments from regaining the political power they had once commanded. In this instance, these observers want to prevent the saloon from regaining its power to influence electoral politics and not this place as a key topic able to affect political platforms. A reporter for *The Washington Post* considered the saloon the chief culprit behind political corruption before Prohibition. He wrote on January 21, 1931, “The open saloon is the greatest enemy of temperance and has been a chief cause of much

¹⁴John J. Rumbarger, *Profits, Power, and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America, 1800–1930* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 91, 97.

¹⁵Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers & Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 102.

political corruption throughout the country in the past.”¹⁶ *The Christian Science Monitor* published a piece the next day summarizing the findings of the Wickersham Commission, a committee formed by the federal government to examine Prohibition, which came to a similar conclusion. According to this article, the study found that “the evils of the liquor system most responsible for the formation of public opinion leading to the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment were the saloon and the corrupt influence of liquor dealers in politics.”¹⁷ Even anti-prohibition groups solely blamed the saloon for this problem. In June 1932, the Crusaders, a national anti-prohibition group, proclaimed that they had “virtually the same code now [as the Prohibition movement]. They are working for: . . . 2—the elimination of wholesale corruption between the illicit liquor traffic and politics.”¹⁸ Although Prohibition had informally separated electoral politics from public drinking, commentators seemed to desire a more permanent solution be instituted, which would help deradicalize the working class (a topic I discuss later in the chapter).

The debates about the potential solutions to prevent drinking establishments from becoming politically powerful centered around the issue of state control versus local control. For example, New York, home of the powerful Tammany Hall machine, had to confront this matter the moment the legalization of 3.2 percent beer became a possibility. In January 1933, the *New York Times* published an article discussing the potential problem of controlling 3.2 percent beer if Congress authorized it. The reporter declared,

¹⁶“Abolition of Open Saloon Is Held Law’s Only Moral Improvement,” *The Washington Post*, 21 January 1931.

¹⁷Richard L. Strout, “Barroom, with Its Corrupting Influence, Caused Prohibition,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 22 January 1931.

¹⁸“Crusaders Fight For Temperance, Chief Tells Bar,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10 June 1932.

“It is already predicted at the Capitol that with Tammany and its allies in actual control of the State Senate, and in control also of the large Democratic minority in the Assembly, the saloon may prove the rock on which hopes for a solution of the State’s future liquor problem on rational and non-partisan lines will be shattered.”¹⁹ Governor Lehman expressed a similar fear while advocating for his beer control act in April 1933. State senator George Fearon announced that local control of licensing was the best way to keep politics out of public drinking, while Lehman thought that “those advancing arguments in favor of local licensing boards . . . ‘are generally interested in seeing that all of the political power, all of the political patronage, all of the power of the prestige . . . used to build up the local political machine.’”²⁰ The influence of the saloon in electoral politics, a feature men had once taken for granted, had come under fire by both social commentators and the very politicians who had once used these places in their machines.

Similarly, critics attacked the tied-house system as another characteristics responsible for the pre-Prohibition problems surrounding public drinking, making it the root cause of the saloon’s lawlessness. *The Christian Science Monitor* reported in January 1931 that the Wickersham Commission had found brewery-controlled saloons had caused the “most strongly aroused public sentiment against the liquor traffic was the licensed saloon. . . . In general, they were either owned or controlled by brewers or wholesale liquor dealers. The saloon keepers were under constant pressure to increase the sale of liquor.”²¹ George Ade, in his 1931 book about the saloon, reinforced this idea: “The brewers were in wrong because they took over virtual ownership of a large

¹⁹“Liquor Topic Rules Session at Albany,” *New York Times*, 15 January 1933.

²⁰“Governor Warns People,” *New York Times*, 3 April 1933.

²¹Strout, “Barroom,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 22 January 1931.

percentage of saloons and compelled the managers of drinking places to resort to every kind of vulgar device to promote sales and operate at a profit.”²² In September 1932, *The Christian Science Monitor* published an article that examined the liquor trade, the true evil behind the saloon. The author referred to the problems with the tied-house system by writing that “some manufacturers of beer and whisky have ignored decency and defied law in connivance with the saloon which latter, indeed, was frequently merely their tool.”²³ The breweries’ supposedly heedless drive for profits had turned people against the idea of drinking establishments being the retail division of large corporations.

A third characteristic social commentators attacked was the saloon’s business model of selling only alcohol, even though they rarely explained that they believed it led to intemperance. Hugh F. Fox, secretary of the United States Brewers Association, wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* January 1931 in which he denounced the primary feature of the saloon’s business model and Prohibition. He declared: “The main trouble was that many saloons were nothing but drink shops, and the prevalence of the treating habit led to wasteful extravagance. . . . Nobody wants to bring the saloon back. The sale and service of alcoholic beverages should be a mere incident in restaurant catering.”²⁴ The implication of Fox’s remark was salongoing men wasted money through a constant string of drunken binges due to the saloon selling only liquor, but the sale of food with alcohol would somehow prevent a repetition of such benders after repeal. In April 1931, a reporter for *The Atlanta Constitution* declared that “any talk

²²George Ade, *The Old-Time Saloon: Not Wet–Not Dry–Just History* (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), 25.

²³“The Thing behind the Saloon,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 24 September 1932.

²⁴Hugh F. Fox, “Saloons Had Their Points,” *New York Times*, 28 January 1931.

from any one about a possible ‘comeback’ of the old saloon drunk factory is scare talk to instigate the people against listening to any sane proposals to reform the prohibition policy and make the good parts of it really enforceable and satisfying to general desires.”²⁵ This statement suggested that prohibitionists attempted to frighten potential supporters of repeal with the specter of an enterprise selling only liquor by the glass turning out an endless procession of drunken customers. Pegler echoed Fox’s comment in December 1932 when he asserted that the congressmen discussing repeal “are puzzling over a substitute for the word saloon and trying to think of some way to compel people who buy drinks with their meals to eat the meals.”²⁶ Prohibitionist rhetoric and the surge in alcohol consumption during the 1920s had made drinking establishments that only sold alcohol a repugnant feature of these places for many wets and dries.

Finally, critics attacked vaguely defined physical characteristics of the saloon and assumed their audiences remembered that these elements had contributed to men breaking the law in these places before 1920. In February 1930, Boston’s licensing board requested that police commissioner Herbert A. Wilson submit a list of businesses that were “still clinging to the brass rail, sawdust floor, or other typical barroom fixtures. . . . It was the board’s intention gradually to transform these places . . . and to eliminate the saloon atmosphere, which, it is felt is repugnant to the community as a whole.”²⁷ This article did not explain what Boston officials labeled as *typical barroom features* or *saloon atmosphere* or why these were problems, leaving virtually any element they did not like open to attack. However, a typical feature of the saloon was the screen, which hid all

²⁵“The Saloon Is Dead,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 10 April 1931.

²⁶Pegler, “The Best Minds,” 8 December 1932.

²⁷“Boston’s Bars with Fixtures Ordered Down,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 7 February 1930.

activity men performed in the main room. These elements allowed saloons to open on Sunday in violation of the law but hide it from passersby and police. Dr. Thomas Carver, writing a column for *The Christian Science Monitor* in August 1932, alluded to the same idea but also made little effort to describe what he meant. He proclaimed: “in order to increase its sales of liquor, the saloon lured men by all sorts of devices. These devices were the sort which appealed to men who drank. They were the accessories of the saloon to which many people, wets as well as drys, objected,” presuming his readers knew exactly what he meant.²⁸

Mrs. John A. Sheppard, in her October 1933 article for the *New York Times*, was one of the few observers who clearly identified the elements she believed objectionable and why. She wrote that “there were . . . features of the old saloon which, while not so generally recognized, were equally objectionable. These features were the back room, the side door, or ‘family entrance,’ and the fact that all view of the interior of the premises was screened off by swinging doors and frosted windows.”²⁹ These comments implicitly made physical objects responsible for the way men had behaved in the saloon and assumed that banning these features would suddenly improve the way drinkers acted.

The elimination of these four characteristics represented the ideal drinking establishment that social commentators wanted to achieve after the repeal of Prohibition. They wanted this model to be a locally owned business that sold alcohol by the glass and food. They also wanted these places to be electorally apolitical and not have the physical features of the saloon. These observers thus had a negative agenda: they identified the

²⁸“Dr. Thomas N. Carver, “Prohibition Facts: 22—Why Not the Saloon?” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 August 1932.

²⁹Sheppard, “After Repeal,” *New York Times*, 22 October 1933.

traits of the saloon that they did not want to see return and not the features they wanted, making the future drinking establishment the antithesis of the saloon. However, by wanting to abolish the saloon, critics also implicitly advocated for the destruction of the pre-Prohibition drinking culture by changing the setting in which people would drink. In an ironic twist of events, the prohibitionists had succeeded; both wets and dries agreed that the saloon's most important features had caused most of the problems surrounding pre-Prohibition public drinking and should never return.

Legislators, by acting on the rhetoric surrounding repeal, influenced the form of drinking establishments after Prohibition by making the restaurant speakeasy the least offensive place that met all the new legal requirements. These bills largely institutionalized much of the social and economic features of the restaurant speakeasy, making it difficult for any other archetype to become dominant.

Many states included enforceable provisions in their alcohol-control legislation that removed public drinking from electoral politics.³⁰ New York required all retail liquor establishments for consumption on the premises to close “on any day of a general or primary election during the hours when the polls are open.”³¹ This law also allowed the state liquor board to revoke “[a]ny license issued pursuant to this chapter . . . for cause and must be revoked for the following causes: . . . 3. If, within a period of two years, there shall have been two convictions for any violation.”³² This clause made it

³⁰In this case, California was the only state whose laws I use as evidence in this chapter that made no provision against the politicization of drinking establishments. Other states might have followed suit, but there is summary of how many or which ones. See California, *State Liquor Control Act*, chap. 658.

³¹New York, *Alcoholic Beverage Control Law*, chap. 478 art. 8 sect. 106 sub. 5c.

³²New York, chap. 478 art. 8 sect. 118 sub. 3.

dangerous to violate the alcohol code, especially with the state board membership composed by people chosen by the governor.³³ These provisions greatly reduced the power these places possessed as political centers by making it extremely difficult for politicians to bribe voters with free drinks.

Illinois went even further and made a rather impressive effort to eradicate completely the political power of drinking establishments. Like New York, Illinois required all retail liquor businesses to close on the day of an election, but the Illinois law had two important clauses that the New York one did not.³⁴ First, the state forbade “any law enforcing public official, any mayor, alderman, or member of the city council or commission, any president of the village board of trustees, any member of a village board of trustees, or any president or member of a county board” from having a license for or any interest in a bar.³⁵ Second, the legislature made it “unlawful for any licensee or any officer, associate, representative, agent or employee or such licensee to become liable for, or pay or make any contribution directly or indirectly toward the campaign fund or expenses of any political party, or candidate for public office, or for nomination of any candidate for any public office.”³⁶ Any person violating this clause had his license revoked in addition to a \$1,000 fine or up to one year in jail or both.³⁷ The ideal behind these provisions was to prevent public drinking from corrupting politics, but they also

³³New York, chap. 478 art. 2 sect. 10.

³⁴Illinois, *An Act Relating to Alcohol Liquors*, article VI sect. 10

³⁵Illinois, article VI sect. 2 sub. 14.

³⁶Illinois, article VI sect. 12a.

³⁷Illinois, article VI sect. 12a.

legally formalized the form of public drinking that first appeared during Prohibition these themes recurred in other parts of post-Prohibition alcohol control laws.

The desire to remove public drinking from politics, however, did not easily translate into practices that everyone willingly followed. For example, New York struggled to keep politicians from once again using drinking establishments to influence electoral politics. Governor Lehman's goal was for "the control board not only [to] be divorced from partisan influences but that no suspicion should be left in the public mind," indicating he wanted an impartial board that the public sincerely believed was unbiased.³⁸ Yet New York politicians attempted regain their influence in drinking establishments at the first opportunity that presented itself. In November 1933, the state beer board under Chairman Edward P. Mulrooney received notification from the applicants for beer licenses that politicians were demanding a portion of the owner's profits to guarantee them their permits. One politician attempted to extort sixty percent of one applicant's profits.³⁹ Mulrooney, rather than letting people believe politicians had any influence over who received permits, publicly declared, "The surest way not to get a license is to bring pressure by so-called politicians," simultaneously shutting down this scam and reassuring the public of the board's impartiality.⁴⁰ Governor Lehman assumed a similar stance in April 1934 when the state legislature attempted to exempt two hundred job positions in the alcohol control board from the civil service requirements. One amendment to the pending liquor law would have allowed the board to appoint two hundred snoopers agents (probably inspectors), making them political appointees, but

³⁸"Politicians Hate Lehman Beer Bill," *New York Times*, 2 April 1933.

³⁹"Liquor Graft Plot Is Laid to 'Fixers,'" *New York Times*, 22 November 1933.

⁴⁰"Liquor Graft Plot Is Laid to 'Fixers,'" *New York Times*, 22 November 1933.

Lehman, who had “[r]arely . . . taken such a decided stand on a legislative measure before it actually came before him for veto or approval,” threatened to veto the bill as soon as he heard about this change, signifying his intention of keeping the liquor board neutral.⁴¹ Although public drinking establishments dramatically reduced influence over electoral politics legislatively, politicians nearly perpetuated this problem by trying to use drinking establishments the way they had before 1920.

Meanwhile, Illinois struggled with a different aspect of this issue when Governor Horner and Mayor Kelly of Chicago began arguing whether the state or the local governments were better suited to prevent the pre-Prohibition problems surrounding the saloon from returning. Horner set up a commission in September 1933 to help draft the state’s new alcohol control law, and this group held a series of public hearings about this matter. Colonel Ira L. Reeves, western manager of the Crusaders, attended one of the early meetings and declared that it “is not a name against which we must legislate, but the evil which has attended retailing alcoholic beverages Prohibition was directed more at the evils of the saloon and its political affiliations than at alcohol itself. Let us now devise ample safeguards against the return of those evils.”⁴² In November, with the ratification of the Twenty-First Amendment virtually assured, Kelly informed reporters that individual communities were better equipped to license and supervise drinking establishments, declaring that with “the termination of federal prohibition and a hands off policy on the part of the state, the city will be able to establish policies of control and

⁴¹“Lehman Prevents Liquor Job Grab,” *New York Times*, 26 April 1934.

⁴²“Liquor Board Hears Friend, Foe of Saloon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 September 1933.

regulation that will avoid the evils of pre-war days.”⁴³ This proclamation, which directly conflicted with Horner’s beliefs, initiated a brief war between the governor of Illinois and the mayor of Chicago.

While neither Horner nor Kelly disagreed with the idea of keeping public drinking out of politics, the disagreement over the exact method of keeping these two activities separate symbolized the importance of this issue during the early 1930s. Rhetorically, a depoliticized drinking establishment after repeal was a foregone conclusion, but Horner and Kelly fought over the best way to ensure that saloons with its political power did not return. On December 19, 1933, Kelly informed Cook County Democrats that he had reached an agreement with Horner to achieve this goal. This compromise gave the proposed state commission the authority only to hear appeals in Chicago and gave the city its own board to decide all other matters. This bargain fell apart the next day when Kelly declared the state board would have the power only to hear appeals when the Chicago board denied licenses, while Horner believed that the state board had the authority to hear appeals no matter the circumstances.⁴⁴ By January 1934, Horner and Kelly reached compromise that gave Chicago its own three-member appellate board, comprised of the chairman of the state commission, the secretary of the state, and one member appointed by the Chicago city council. Kelly, who had stay silent on his motives for alcohol home rule, then proclaimed that his “only interest has been to control the criminal element in the city. The way to do that is to leave the issuing and revoking power, in the liquor or any other business, with the city,” ignoring both the state

⁴³“Mayor to Ban Old Saloon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 November 1933.

⁴⁴“Liquor Home Rule Is Saved, Asserts Kelly,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 December 1933; “Horner-Kelly Split on Liquor Bill Reopened,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 21 December 1933.

commission's avowal to prevent the saloon's return and the potential for Chicago drinking establishments to regain their political power under these circumstances.⁴⁵

Despite the trouble that putting these clauses into effect caused, state legislatures followed the will of their constituents and legally removed public drinking from politics.

The alcohol control laws in many states across the nation also abolished the tied-house system, a feature that had disappeared during Prohibition due to the illegality of alcohol. The most prominent element of these provisions was the fact that each state attacked alcohol manufacturers, signifying a widespread belief that they were primarily responsible for the illicit actions of saloonkeeper before 1920. Leading the way with the basic language concerning the ban of brewery-controlled saloons, California forbade a person involved in the brewing or distilling industries in any way to "hold or have any interest either directly or indirectly in the business of any 'on [premises] sale' licensee nor in the furniture and fixtures on the premises wherein the business of such licensee is conducted; nor shall any such person endorse, guarantee or stand surety for a lease or any other obligation of such licensee."⁴⁶ The New York law possessed a prohibition similar to California with an additional passage that also outlawed any contract that required a retailer to sell only one manufacturer's or wholesaler's product. Any violation of this clause resulted in everyone involved losing their licenses.⁴⁷ The Illinois legislature, in

⁴⁵"Liquor Accord Gives City Home Rule, Kelly Says," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 January 1934.

⁴⁶California, chap. 658 sect. 26. California passed its post-Prohibition alcohol control law through a referendum during the 1932 election, but there is no evidence to suggest that other states used it as a model for their laws. In addition, a search of the *Los Angeles Times* revealed no articles commenting on the proposal during 1932 or 1933. The lack of debate suggested a desire to see Prohibition repealed but a widespread disinterest in provisions of the bill until it actually took effect. See, Stephen Freund, "Keeping the Promises of Repeal: Drinking and Working in California's Post-Prohibition Public Drinking Establishments" (Ph.D. diss., Wayne State University, 2006), 86–88.

⁴⁷New York, chap. 478 sect. 101.

addition to banning the tied-house system, forbade manufacturers from providing anything of value, including money, to retailers except a ninety-day line of credit for the purpose of buying merchandise.⁴⁸ At the state level, legislatures took they could conceive of in order to prevent brewers from regaining control over drinking establishments.

Politicians found this issue to be of such importance that even the federal government took steps to suppress brewery-controlled establishments after repeal. Under authority of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 (NIRA), the Federal Alcohol Control Administration prohibited brewery-controlled saloons in the industrial codes of every aspect of the alcohol industry. When the Supreme Court ruled the NIRA unconstitutional, Congress created the Federal Alcohol Administration, which reissued this same proscription for the alcohol industry.⁴⁹ This action by the federal government in what otherwise was exclusively a state-level legislative concern represented a new underlying concept for the alcohol industry. The public found the production of beverage alcohol by national corporations permissible, but the retail sale of liquor needed to be far smaller scale, intimating that the state could better control a local individual than they could a company. The abolition of the tied-house system, the most drastic legal change imposed on public drinking establishments, restored these places to being locally-owned businesses rather than the retail division of large corporations.

Another restriction that had nearly as large an impact on drinking establishments was the requirement they sell meals in addition alcohol by the glass. Although

⁴⁸Illinois, article VI sect. 3–5.

⁴⁹Leonard V. Harrison and Elizabeth Laine, *After Repeal: A Study of Liquor Control Administration* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1936), 29–30, 33, 37–38.

saloonkeepers had offered the free lunch since the late nineteenth century, it was only during the 1920s, for the express purpose of hiding their sale of alcohol, that proprietors made the serving of food a legitimate aspect of their businesses, a feature legislators found attractive in preventing the saloon's return. California decided that only "in hotels, boarding houses, restaurants, cafeterias, and other public eating places, wines and beer may be served and consumed with meals furnished in good faith to the guests and patrons thereof" and supplied a definition as to what constituted each of these places.⁵⁰ New York enacted a statute that gave licenses only to "a hotel, club, vessel, car, or such premises which are kept, used maintained, advertised or held out to the public to be a place where food is prepared and served for consumption on the premises in such quantities as to satisfy the liquor authority that the sale of beer intended is incidental and not the primary source of revenue from the operation of such premises."⁵¹ This clause intimated that these businesses were supposed to be restaurants that happened to sell alcohol, not saloons that sold food. The liquor authority also had the power to revoke a place's liquor license if it determined that the business was not a legitimate hotel, restaurant, or club.⁵² This clause prevented a repeat of the abuses under the Raines Law, which saloonkeepers had used to turn their businesses into spurious hotels that crowded beds into back rooms and sold food by placing one sandwich on each table in order to sell alcohol legally on Sunday.⁵³ However, the public desire to have bars sell both food and alcohol was not universally achieved for some unknown reason. Illinois and eight other

⁵⁰California, chap. 658: sect. 1, sect. 4.

⁵¹New York, chap. 478 sect. 55 sub. 3.

⁵²New York, chap. 478, sect. 118

⁵³Lerner, *Dry Manhattan*, 25–26.

states that were home to nearly twenty percent of the nation's population (or 24,555,010 people out of the 122,775,046 on the 1930 census) did not legally require drinking establishments to sell food.⁵⁴ Yet, the great majority of drinkers lived in states that did have this restriction, indicating the widespread belief that this feature had become a legal necessity for these businesses.

Finally, legislators symbolically prevented the saloon's return by forcing proprietors to abandon the physical characteristics that had one defined these places. The lack of agreement as to what constituted a saloon posed a problem for these restrictions; without a clear definition for the term *saloon*, the banning of certain material features had no reason other than they were once parts of these businesses. Both New York and Illinois outlawed the use of any type of partition, screen, or blind that obstructed a full view of the room from outside, a generally ineffective action to prevent crime taken against drinking establishments before 1920.⁵⁵ New York also forbade these businesses from having more than one bar, from it being the predominant feature of the room, from having swinging doors, back rooms, passages to adjoining buildings, and opaque, colored, stained, and frosted glass in windows and doors.⁵⁶ Illinois banned any retail liquor establishment from having anything more than a service bar or, in the case of restaurants, a lunch counter, suggesting that a bar somehow promoted illicit activity

⁵⁴Harrison and Laine, *After Repeal*, 64; George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *American: A Narrative History*, 9th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2013), A105.

⁵⁵New York, chap. 478 sect. 106 sub. 9; Illinois, article VI sect. 20; Perry Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 13–14, 276.

⁵⁶New York, chap. 478, sect. 100 sub. 4, 9.

among patrons.⁵⁷ Other parts of these laws were largely symbolic measures intended to avoid the return of the saloon evil. California declared, “No public saloon, public bar or barroom or other public drinking place where intoxicating liquors to be used for any purpose shall be kept, bought, sold, consumed or otherwise disposed of, shall ever be established, maintained or operated within this state.”⁵⁸ Although no one explained how this provision would prevent the problems associated with saloon or the speakeasy, its goal was probably to disassociate public drinking from the saloon in the minds of the public. Similarly, Illinois prohibited the use of the terms *saloon* and *bar* in all signs and advertisements, but neither Illinois or California actually defined the terms *saloon*, *bar*, or *barroom*, leaving open to interpretation the exact type of drinking establishment either state wanted to ban.⁵⁹ Metaphorically and literally, legislators took great strides in outlawing the four aspects of the saloon their constituents had identified as negative and accidentally institutionalized the form of the restaurant speakeasy.

The anti-prohibitionist acceptance of dry rhetoric about the saloon dramatically influenced the way people perceived the purpose of the Twenty-First Amendment in two ways. First, repeal became more about ensuring the saloon did not reappear with legal alcohol than about reintegrating legal alcohol into American society and culture. This particular focus assisted people in determining the characteristics about the saloon they found problematic, but it did little to help them ascertain the structure of the drinking establishment with which they would replace the saloon. Consequently, the official form

⁵⁷Illinois, article VI sect. 21a.

⁵⁸California, chap. 658, sect. 3.

⁵⁹Illinois, article VI sect. 22.

of the place where people would drink in public, and the drinking culture by extension, became a blank slate on which no one had any suggestions what to draw. Second and subsequently, the negative agenda surrounding the future form of drinking establishments during the 1930s influenced legislators to ban the characteristics of the saloon commentators found objectionable but generally not describe its replacement. The new alcohol control laws, for the most part, banned the saloon features that critics had identified as having caused problems before 1920. The only real guidance these regulations provided for what drinking establishments needed to look like was the provision that required these places to sell food. This combination of factors led to the institutionalization of the restaurant speakeasy, the only available model that met all the new requirements. And at some point during the early 1930s, people started calling these business bars and restaurants or bars and grills, or bars for short.

Redefining the Public Drinking Culture

The institutionalization of the modern public drinking culture occurred during the middle third of the twentieth century as patrons attempted to determine what traditions would be most appropriate for the new drinking establishments. The underlying reason for this matter was the rising tension between public drinking as a facilitator of sociability and a facilitator of socialization. The post-Prohibition alcohol control laws dictated the type of place commentators and legislators wanted, but they could not address the question of the drinking culture that customers would participate in while using these businesses. However, participants in the drinking tradition did not agree whether it should be primarily for leisure or for the inculcation of specific identities. These issues

led to a struggle lasting over twenty years about whether the drinking culture would contain more traditional, pre-1920 elements or more modern, post-1920 features. Rhetorically, this debate began in the early 1930s as an argument over the character of the pre-Prohibition saloon, with one side claiming it had positive attributes and the other asserting it was an entirely negative place. This dispute developed into the two sides commenting on drinking patterns after repeal, symbolizing the struggle to determine whether public drinking should contain more traditional or more modern characteristics. This contest also appeared as a debate over the role of the bartender in the 1940s and the desirability of having televisions in the bar from the late 1940s through 1950s. The dispute came to no clear resolution at the time. It did, however, result in the loss of drinking establishments as places of working-class radicalism as drinkers accepted the bar as a modern, apolitical center of leisure after repeal.

The legal institution of the bar as the dominant home of public drinking did not resolve the questions participants struggled with about the form and function of the drinking culture after the Twenty-First Amendment. Drinkers faced a choice between two different sets of characteristics for the drinking culture, each of which represented competing purposes for public drinking. One option people had was the continuation of the drinking culture they had created during Prohibition, which emphasized drinking in small groups, sociability, and alcohol consumption as the goal of a leisure activity, but they also had the opportunity to revive the pre-1920 tradition, which had large groups drinking to facilitate socialization.

A major influence in this decision was the physical space in which people would drink. The provisions of the new alcohol control law implicitly required most proprietors to provide customers with objects like tables and chairs at which they could sit and eat, encouraging the continued use of the new features of the drinking culture developed during Prohibition. However, the Eighteenth Amendment had not commanded popular support or respect, evidenced by its failure and eventual repeal, but it also failed to fully invalidate the traditions of the drinking culture from before 1920. This allowed some drinkers, viewing the past with rose-colored glasses, to cling to the more traditional elements of public drinking in the decades after December 1933.

An early sign of tension between traditional and modern drinkers surfaced during the early 1930s when some commentators argued that the saloon had benefitted both its community and society, implying these elements needed to be revived with repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. John Hanfordson, writing to the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in May 1930, declared these businesses to be both culturally uplifting and politically necessary. He declared that “man was at his best in the old time, high class saloon. Conversations in saloons among men usually were on grave and important and cultural subjects. Talk was on a higher plane than can be found any-where in our social life at present. In the absence of such conversations and exchanges . . . we find ourselves adrift in politics and affairs go from bad to worse.”⁶⁰ John Mangan in his June 1930 article believed that “the old time saloon was head and shoulders over our present day gin mills The old time barrooms had class, plenty of light, ventilation and cleanliness. Their beer and liquor were wholesome and pure, their prices one-fifth of what they are today. There was food for the hungry and, most important of all, they furnished plenty of revenue in taxes for

⁶⁰John F. Hanfordson, “The Old Time Saloon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 May 1930.

both your local and national government.”⁶¹ George S. King’s September 1930 *New York Times* letter to the editor asserted that Boston saloons were model businesses that never did anything wrong. He wrote that saloons did not serve alcohol “to minors. No liquors were served to women unaccompanied by men. No liquors were served to any one showing evidences of intoxication . . . [or] any one known to have been intoxicated within a thirty day period” and rigidly observed the closing time.⁶² For these observers, the saloon and its social features had become the paradigm against which they measured modern public drinking and the places where it occurred.

Another group of critics (which probably included prohibitionists) thought the old-time saloon was unremittingly evil, with the implication that it and all its features needed to stay dead. F. Snow, in a September 1930 letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, refuted George S. King’s memories of Boston saloons point for point. Far from being model businesses, he claimed these places served unescorted women, minors, and drunkards and had no regard for the law. He asserted that “from personal experience . . . similar conditions obtained in hotels in New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Jacksonville, merely to cite a few.”⁶³ William Pierpont, in a June 1931 letter to the editor of *The Washington Post*, believed pre-Prohibition drinking establishments caused families to suffer in poverty. Men spent a total of ten cents for stale bread and scraps of meat to feed their families and then paid ten more cents for a single drink of liquor; meanwhile, women sold their babies’ shoes to saloonkeepers for a pint of alcohol. Pierpont then declared, “It is the purpose of the prohibition to prevent the evil results of

⁶¹John J. Mangan, “The Old Time Saloon,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 June 1932.

⁶²George S. King, “Giving the Saloon Its Due,” *New York Times*, 7 September 1930.

⁶³F. Snow, “Saloons Were Not So Virtuous,” *New York Times*, 14 September 1930.

drink, and at its worst, prohibition is infinitely better than the saloon at its best,” suggesting that these problems would reoccur if steps were not taken to prevent this place from returning.⁶⁴ Lambert Fairchild’s sarcastic letter to the editor of the *New York Times* in September 1932 echoed Pierpont’s earlier piece. According to Fairchild,

seldom was a workingman permitted to leave with a substantial sum of money (the root of all evil in his pocket. . . . ‘Suffer little children to come unto me’ was their motto, and while they were not permitted to enter with their elders through the swinging doors in front, how gladly they were welcomed with their little buckets and pitchers at the small side door! Intoxicated men were not permitted to remain in most saloons. No, indeed; they were first ‘rolled’ and then thrown out By all means, let us have the return of the saloon, the poor man’s club.⁶⁵

Although these commentators spoke out against the saloon, their opinions gradually came to symbolize tacit support for the elements of the drinking culture developed during Prohibition as the Twenty-First Amendment became increasingly likely.

After the ratification of the Twenty-First Amendment, drinkers and social commentators struggled rhetorically to determine whether the purpose of public drinking was principally to facilitate socialization, as it traditionally had been, or was to facilitate sociability through drinking as the goal of a leisure activity, as it had become. People who observed the more recent phenomenon of drinking in and of itself as the goal of a leisure activity tended to comment on the problems they thought it caused. Theophilus Lewis, in his August 1934 column for *The New York Amsterdam News*, bemoaned the ignorance many people seemed to display over protocol surrounding drinking. He declared: “To see cocktails and cordials served in reverse order is almost as common as it is to discover hosts who do not know what a cordial is. . . . The cocktail . . . was originally intended for a before dinner bracer to sharpen the appetite. During prohibition

⁶⁴Wm. Pierpont, “Evils of the Saloon Are Pointed out by Writer Who Has No Fond Memory of the ‘Good Old Day,’” *The Washington Post*, 29 June 1931.

⁶⁵Lambert Fairchild, “A Plea For the Saloon,” *New York Times*, 3 October 1932.

young people adopted it as a drink for all occasions.”⁶⁶ A *New York Times* reporter concentrated on the speed at which people drank, intimating that it signified a breakdown in a traditional pastime. He declared: “We gulp more often than we sip, drink to forget more often than to remember. In time, as the shadows of the Volstead era recede, perhaps we shall attain the golden mean, the good time without the morning after, the glow without the headache.”⁶⁷ Herbert Block, in his January 1949 *American Scholar* article, argued that the rate at which drinkers consumed alcohol in the United States reflected a depersonalization of leisure. He asserted: “American speed of drinking and timing provided a case in point. . . . The marked intensity of such [drinking] occasions and the zealousness with which such activities are pursued, characterized by a remarkable absence of well-integrated recreational and cultural forms . . . is germane to the entire American recreational outlook as well.”⁶⁸ Although these comments were predominantly negative, they indicate that some adults through at least the end of the 1940s quickly drank a lot of alcohol and made it the centerpiece of their entire evening out, signifying the persistence of drinking traditions created during the 1920s.

Other commentators signified the continuation of some pre-Prohibition elements of the public drinking culture when they discussed the way people drank in order to facilitate sociability. Although published more than two years before the repeal of Eighteenth Amendment, James Truslow Adams’ October 1931 *New York Times* analyzing the universal reasons why people consumed alcohol demonstrated that the

⁶⁶Theophilus Lewis, “Harlem Sketchbook,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, 25 August 1934.

⁶⁷“The Art of Drinking,” *New York Times*, 16 October 1938.

⁶⁸Herbert A. Bloch, “Alcohol and American Recreational Life,” *American Scholar* 18 no. 1 (January 1949): 58.

traditional purpose of public drinking retained some importance during the 1920s. While people used alcohol as an escape and for biblical reasons, he also asserted liquor “takes off the rough edges of shyness among strangers, and lets the talk flow more easily and genially,” suggesting that alcohol was still a vital component in the formation of groups.⁶⁹

Critics during the 1940s discussed drinking as the goal of a leisure activity in pessimistic terms, suggesting they wanted to emphasize socialization over sociability in this activity. Edith Efron examined five types of drinkers in her April 1946 *New York Times* piece but concentrated the most on the social drinker. She claimed over 37 million drinking adults fell into this category and consumed alcohol primarily in groups. She believed that “the social drinkers . . . drink because it is a conventional and agreeable thing to do. . . . [They] drink to relax, to keep warm, to cool off, to cheer up. They never, under any conditions, drink just to drink!”⁷⁰ Efron, with a slightly negative connotation, also declared that “the serious drinkers . . . [have] a purpose and a consistency about their consumption of liquor that takes them out of the purely social class. . . . Unlike the social drinkers, they do not drink for a ‘reason,’ but merely because they like to drink.”⁷¹ Robert V. Seliger, in his July 1949 piece for *Woman’s Home Companion*, wrote that social drinkers constantly asked him if they drank too much, intimating that this group found drinking as the goal of a leisure activity repugnant and dangerous. He stated: “These people are in every social and economic stratum. . . .

⁶⁹James Truslow Adams, “After All, Why Do Men Like To Drink,” *New York Times*, 4 October 1931.

⁷⁰Edith Efron, “Who Drinks, Why and How,” *New York Times*, 14 April 1946.

⁷¹Efron, “Who Drinks,” 14 April 1946.

Some drink regularly every day. Others only on week ends [sic] or festive occasions. But most of them have one characteristic in common: They have resolved at various times to stop drinking or to cut down; but have failed,” suggesting that drinking for any purpose than to facilitate socialization signified a problem.⁷² The tension between the advocates for the more recently created drinking customs and those wanting the more traditional ones signified the effort to define post-Prohibition drinking traditions in ways the new laws had failed to address.

The struggle to decide whether the public drinking culture would contain more recent and more traditional customs ultimately raised questions about if these businesses would be spaces of sociability in which drinking was just one component or establishments that offered patrons a place to drink. For example, commentators disagreed about whether the bartender should resume his traditional role of being every drinker’s friend or if he should be an employee who quickly made drinks. In August 1941, a New York City bartender commented on the growing trend of speedily making drinks over customer service. He told the *New York Amsterdam News*:

In my long run of activity behind the bar I have had ample chance to observe . . . my fellow workers, especially those who came from the bartenders schools. Their motto seems to be prepare the drinks fast, as fast as possible, the manager may be watching your speed, and the customers all around will admire your skillful (?) velocity; never mind the correct proportions of the ingredients used, as long as the drink is made in 15 seconds even at the cost of insufficient chilling, for quick serving of the customer is the main thing in the opinion of most head barkeepers and managers.⁷³

This bartender’s lament over the declining quality of workers in his profession indicated that both employers and customers wanted faster service, but it also suggested patron wanted to interact less with the employees in order to concentrate, at least in part, on their drinking. This pattern continued throughout the 1940s as commentators continually gave

⁷²Robert V. Seliger, “To Drink Or Not to Drink,” *Woman’s Home Companion*, July 1949, 32.

⁷³“Tavern Topics,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 16 August 1941.

advice that would have made bartenders and public drinking resemble their pre-Prohibition counterparts. Edith Carroll's March 1945 *New York Times Magazine* claimed that a bartender must be a good conversationalist or know when and when not to talk, intimating they no longer understood a concept that these workers had easily comprehended prior to 1920.⁷⁴ Similarly, Tavern Topics, a column in the *New York Amsterdam News*, in April 1946 advised bartenders to "be courteous and clean Don't ever become crusty, irritable, and impatient, and look upon your customers with disapproval."⁷⁵ By May 1946, critics felt that the quality of bartenders had adversely affected public drinking. A *New York Times* reporter declared, "it must be admitted that the art of bartending has fallen to a low estate in most of the bars in the city, particularly in the busier parts of town where the relaxation that should go with good drinking is not only unsought but impossible."⁷⁶ The conflicting ways people conceptualized the purpose of the bartender symbolized the way their perception of the bar as an urban recreational center had begun to change through the influence of Prohibition.

The debate over having televisions in bars during the late 1940s and 1950s best exemplified the tension between the competing sets of customs for public drinking and, subsequently, the role of the bar in society. Bars that had televisions seemed to act as modern centers of recreation, offering patrons a variety of options but not requiring them to participate in any one of them beyond the purchase of a drink. An April 1948 *Washington Post* article best summarized the two positions about having televisions bars. While interviewing bartenders, the reporter found that the "installation of television sets

⁷⁴Edith Carroll, "Barmaids Come Back," *New York Times Magazine*, 18 March 1945, 27.

⁷⁵"Tavern Topics," *New York Amsterdam News*, 27 April 1946.

⁷⁶"Guide, Philosopher, and Referee," *New York Times*, 26 May 1946.

in taverns has sent bar and food business soaring, some proprietors say.”⁷⁷ Although this comment revealed the utility of attracting customers, the proprietors who agreed with this sentiment generally did not describe the activities patrons engaged in once inside the bar, suggesting the only commonality between customers was the fact they were all drinking while in this space. A June 1947 *Time* article declared that “[a] bunch of men, and a few women, frequently friends since childhood, gathered at their favorite bar in warm, festive spirit. Television is the best thing that’s happened to the neighborhood bar since the free lunch.”⁷⁸ This comparison implied that the television benefitted bar owners by attracting customers their businesses to spend money, unaware that the free lunch had economically harmed the saloon. In September 1948, T.V. repairman Howard Levin told *The Washington Post* that “bars deserve a lusty assist in pioneering television, video had been one great big shot in the arm for them,” intimating that the places with televisions had an economic, not a social, advantage over those who did not.⁷⁹ Similarly, a *Chicago Daily Tribune* reporter surveyed proprietors and bartenders about the T.V. in 1950. He found that “the majority of middle-of-the-roaders explained TV today is a big attraction when—and only when—some sort of extra important sporting event is being televised.”⁸⁰ Conversation, among other potential activities, fell by the wayside in bars that had televisions, hinting that drinking in order to obtain the privilege of watching whatever was on the screen was the reason why some drinkers went to these places.

⁷⁷John London, “Restaurateurs Don’t Agree on Value of Video,” *The Washington Post*, 14 April 1948.

⁷⁸“Television Attracts the Bar Trade,” *New York Times*, 22 June 1947.

⁷⁹“Tele Expert Barges from Bar to Bar,” *The Washington Post*, 19 September 1948.

⁸⁰Clay Gowran, “TV Sets Fine in Drinkeries If Turned off,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 17 September 1950.

However, other bar owners felt the television destroyed their businesses' traditional functions of socialization and drinking, intimating that the bar was (and needed to be) a place where people gathered to talk while they drank. The *Washington Post* reporter also found that "other restaurateurs and gin-millers claim video repels paying customers, draws mostly deadbeats."⁸¹ This remark signaled the continuing shift in the way men and women used drinking establishments; drinkers preferred small groups and no longer placed the highest value on conversing with each other. For example, *Time* discovered in December 1947 that regulars on Manhattan's Third Avenue, in Chicago, and in Los Angeles concluded that televisions detracted from bars. One bartender complained that "in watching the screen . . . people forget what is the prime purpose of a bar, which is to drink."⁸² A May 1949 *Washington Post* article informed its readers that New Jersey tavern keepers had come to dislike the television. They claimed: "customers [bought] fewer drinks and leave as soon as their favorite program is over. Nonpaying barflies hog the bars to the exclusion of monied customers."⁸³ *The New Yorker* ran a story in July 1960 that best summarized what people in this camp felt. Mike Moriarty, owner of Moriarty's Bar, felt real bars had drinking and conversations, not television watching. Bartenders also felt the T.V. detracted from the business. Before television, customers expected them to be friendly and fatherly; with it, their jobs involved serving drinks, keeping the picture clear, and keeping quiet otherwise.⁸⁴ Perhaps the most evocative observation about this phenomenon came from a *New York Times* reporter in

⁸¹London, "Restaurateurs Don't Agree on Value of Video," 14 April 1948.

⁸²"Television Set," *Time*, 15 December 1947, 50.

⁸³"The Swing Is On," *The Washington Post*, 15 May 1949.

⁸⁴"Crutch: Influence of T.V. on Bar Life," *The New Yorker*, 16 July 1960, 26.

June 1948. He found that televisions in bars caused people to talk less: “Man’s last citadel crumbles before the sound and fury of television . . . conversation in the saloon tapers off into whispers.”⁸⁵ For these people, the television did the one thing prohibitionists could never achieve; it was destroying the very foundation of public drinking and all the activities surrounding it.

Ironically, the barmen who believed that the television was altering how drinkers used these spaces found their views vindicated when the bar business began to decline. The *Atlanta Daily World* found in September 1951 that the consumption of beer had increased in the eighteen years since Prohibition, due primarily to the creation of a can brewers could use to sell beer to people for home consumption.⁸⁶ Combined with the increasing number of televisions in private homes, the bar began losing its appeal as a social center, a trend the alcohol industry noticed as early as 1950. In November, a New York City tavern keeper declared that the widespread ownership of “television[s] has almost ruined us. Our beer business is going to the grocery.”⁸⁷ R. R. Fowlers, speaking before the National Beer Wholesalers Association in 1951, declared: ““Old methods of purveying beer and ale will not suit the future We must face the fact that the tavern is in a declining trend due to the spread of television and a new attitude by the public toward social drinking, which is returning to the home as its focal point.””⁸⁸ By 1952, New York State reported that in 1940, sixty-five to seventy percent of all liquor sales occurred in places licensed for on-premises consumption. By 1950, liquor stores sold

⁸⁵Richard Maney, “Barroom Lament,” *New York Times*, 13 June 1948.

⁸⁶“Beer, Television, and the American Home,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 12 September 1951.

⁸⁷“15-Cent Beer Voted in Four Boroughs,” *New York Times*, 8 November 1950.

⁸⁸“Warns Bars Wane as Beer Drinker Haunt,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 October 1951.

sixty-five to seventy percent of all alcohol for at-home consumption. The *New York Times* reporter summarizing this change stated that “the agency . . . offered no explanation for the change. Unofficially one commissioner suggested that home television might be responsible.”⁸⁹ Yet, the situation itself was something inexorable process. *The New Yorker* reported in 1960 that bars that openly excluded television were rapidly disappearing.⁹⁰ Drinking establishments no longer served as the principle place of urban leisure; the features that had once attracted patrons to it (primarily, easily obtaining alcohol and the recreational activities it offered) were now readily available elsewhere in society.

The conflict over whether the public drinking culture would have more traditional or more recently created customs also symbolized the loss of the bar as a center for working-class radicalism. The alcohol control laws that removed public drinking from electoral politics marked the beginning of the process by banning the activity that had made drinking establishments a center for working-class radicalism in the first place, but this restriction only applied to the owners and employees of bars. The public addressed this issue through their debate over which set of practices to adopt in the public drinking culture. An implicit question of this argument was whether participants in the public drinking culture would resume using these businesses for political reasons. Advocates for the traditional customs of the public drinking culture failed to acknowledge that politics was a long-established feature of public drinking, making them indirectly support the return of this trait. Advocates for the elements of the drinking culture developed during Prohibition incidentally supported a depoliticized bar, because the archetype it

⁸⁹“Drop in Drinking at Bars Reported by State Agency,” *New York Times*, 15 January 1952.

⁹⁰“Crutch,” *The New Yorker*, 26.

used included this characteristic. Consequently, the debates about the quality of the saloon during the early 1930s and whether the purpose of public drinking was for consumption or socialization both possessed the underlying question about whether the drinking public would use the bar for politics, an argument that came to no clear rhetorical resolution.

The most illustrative example that drinkers would, in practice, depoliticize the bar and thereby lose this space as a center for working-class radicalism was the debate over the television. Hanfordson, in his May 1930 *Chicago Daily Tribune* article had already noted that drinkers no longer held conversations on politics like they once had, causing the state of political affairs to go into decline.⁹¹ The proprietors who believed that having televisions in bars destroyed the traditional functions of these places noted a similar drop in the amount of conversation among patrons during the late 1940s and 1950s. The *New York Times* reporter in 1948 specifically mentioned this phenomenon, writing that “conversation in the saloon tapers off into whispers” in places that had televisions.⁹² With the television attracting customers’ attention more than potential conversations, working-class patrons were probably no longer discussing political topics in the same way they had in saloon. In addition, the decline of the bar business due to widespread television ownership also drew this group away from this space, making it less likely that they would be considering these matters in the bar to begin with. The same factors that had led to drinking establishments losing their status as the principal place of leisure in society also led to the loss of these spaces as centers of working-class radicalism.

⁹¹Hanfordson, “The Old Time Saloon,” 4 May 1930.

⁹²Maney, “Barroom Lament,” 13 June 1948.

In the twenty-seven years between 1933 and 1960, drinkers and social commentators struggled to determine whether the public drinking culture would possess of more traditional or more recent origins. The physical setting of the bar encouraged people to use the elements of public drinking they had created during the 1920s, but many drinkers believed that aspects of the pre-Prohibition drinking customs were still relevant. This tension resulted in a nearly three-decade debate that, at its core, was about the purpose of public drinking. The role of the bartender and the conflict about having televisions in the bar represented difference instances in the debate to determine whether alcohol consumption was to facilitate sociability by making drinking the goal of a leisure activity or to facilitate socialization. During this argument, two important changes occurred to the status of drinking establishments in society. First, the bar failed to retain the saloon's position as being the most important place of homosocial leisure in urban society; customers could obtain the same recreational options in grocery stores and their own homes, reducing the importance of these places. Second, the bar lost its role as a place of working-class radicalism. The same factors that had decreased its importance in terms of leisure also deradicalized this space for the working class. Although a few decades late, drinking establishments had become modern centers for leisure.

Conclusion

The reorganization of public drinking and its establishments after Prohibition demonstrated that the transformation of the saloon into the bar continued throughout the middle third of the twentieth century. Legislators institutionalized the archetype people would eventually call the bar by eliminating all other available models for drinking

establishments that existed at the time. Anti-prohibitionists managed repeal the Eighteenth Amendment by agreeing with the dries that the saloon was the origin of many social problems and should not return. This rhetoric helped separate alcohol from the issues it caused, but it framed the repeal effort in such a way that commentators attacked the saloon rather than describe what they wanted in future drinking establishments. This shared agenda against the saloon influenced people to identify the four most highly visible characteristics of these places they thought had caused the problems before 1920. This anti-saloon campaign subsequently influenced legislators to ban the four features critics had branded as evil. The result was the institution of the restaurant speakeasy archetype, soon to be called the bar, as the dominant place of public drinking, because it was the only business to meet all the new legal requirements.

These laws, however, could not address the customs that participants in the public drinking culture would follow, leading to them arguing for over twenty years about whether this culture should contain traditional or more recently created practices. The post-Prohibition alcohol control laws encouraged drinkers to perpetuate the features they had created during the 1920s by establishing the bar, but Prohibition had not fully invalidated the pre-1920 drinking customs, prompting a debate over the practices and purpose of public drinking. Supporters of both positions rhetorically fought over the nature of the saloon during the early 1930s and then drinking patterns after the ratification of the Twenty-First Amendment in an effort to answer the larger question about the drinking culture. This contest also manifested itself as arguments over the role of the bartender and consequences of having televisions in the bar. However, this debate over whether the drinking culture should have traditional or modern customs also signified the

loss of drinking establishments as spaces for working-class radicalism. This particular disagreement over the drinking culture implicitly asked whether customers would be able to find these places political useful, but the same rhetoric and factors that led to the decline of this business during the 1950s also deradicalized this space. Although patrons came to no clear resolution concerning the practices they would use, the deciding factor in this debate, and ultimately about the nature of post-Prohibition public drinking, occurred during the same period and involved the heterosocialization of public drinking.

CHAPTER 5

THE GENDERED STRUGGLE OVER HETEROSOCIAL PUBLIC DRINKING

While the heterosocialization of public drinking was the most important change in the saloon-to-bar transformation, it took some men nearly twenty-five years to acknowledge that their reign as the masters of public drinking had ended. They had fought a largely defensive battle against the encroachment of women into a traditionally masculine activity, beginning in 1900 when they struggled to maintain both manhood and the importance of their drinking sphere in a changing society. Yet, manhood gave way to masculinity, and Prohibition altered the public drinking culture and the places where it had been practiced. Women, meanwhile, gradually incorporated the idea of the New Woman into their gender identity as they increased their presence in the arena of public drinking. Thus, all the elements were in place by 1930 for heterosocial public drinking, but it did not completely emerge until the 1950s. During this period, the struggle between men and women to shape the new public drinking culture represented the ongoing tension between alcohol as a facilitator of socialization and alcohol as a facilitator of sociability. Some men saw the repeal of Prohibition as an opportunity to reclaim public drinking as an activity controlled exclusively by men and its establishments as single-gender public spaces. These men and their desires came into direct conflict with the women who wanted to continue drinking in public as the equals of

men. The masculine struggle to control post-Prohibition public drinking and women's response to it symbolized the gendered reactions to the heterosocialization of a traditionally homosocial activity.

This chapter examines how men and women reacted to and eventually accepted the restructured public drinking culture during the middle third of the twentieth century. The number of women who drank in public steadily grew after 1933, evident through statistical studies, advertisements for women's fashions and bars, changes in people's observations about female tipplers, and women's role in popular movies of the period. This phenomenon shaped the reactions of drinkers of both genders in two different, yet overlapping cases. The debate over vertical drinking best represented how some men responded to the increase in female public drinking and reveals their underlying goal of using alcohol consumption to again imbue men with a particular gender identity. Men had found masculinity to be an unreliable standard for their gender identity, changing as it did depending on the social circumstances. This problem led some men to create an imaginary past for public drinking in an effort to regain their dominance over this activity. The repeal of Prohibition offered them the chance to reclaim what they believed to be a traditional measure of male dominance, but they needed to reimagine female tipping as a recent phenomenon in order to make public drinking a historically male activity. The story these men invented reflected and reinforced their desire to recover a public space for their homosocial use, something that had become increasingly difficult for them to find as women gradually moved toward social equality. Men's success in the debate over vertical drinking appeared to reinforce their ideas, but physical and social changes to drinking establishments and the nature of pre-Prohibition public drinking

deprived this victory of the meaning these men wanted it to have. The homosociability some men desired in public drinking after Prohibition was a figment of their historical imagination, but one that influenced how they responded to certain situations in this activity for nearly two decades.

The effort by some men during the 1940s and 1950s to legally ban unescorted women from the bar best demonstrated how female drinkers reacted to the heterosocialization of public drinking. These men sought a homosocial public space throughout this period, and they used the disagreement about how women needed to act in public around the early 1940s in an attempt to achieve their goal. This dispute was an example of the social ramifications of the fracturing of the Progressive era's women's movement. Although the movement's split centered around politics and reform, the resulting division provided women with three different standards of how to conduct themselves, which led to a rhetorical revival of the characteristics of the lady. These circumstances led social commentators to advise women to drink as little as possible in public settings, though they did not deny women's right to consume alcohol in general. Female tipplers responded to these endeavors to limit their public drinking by ignoring both the men and the social commentators. As early as the 1930s, women simply drank in public regardless of what men thought of them. The commentary on the glamour girl during the 1940s reflected the maturation of mixed-gender alcohol consumption as some women used bars to find sexual partners. Men's failure to regain their mastery over the public consumption of alcohol symbolized the widespread acceptance of the heterosocial public drinking culture and the modern version of the bar.

Women's Public Drinking

The ever-increasing number of female drinkers during the middle third of the twentieth century influenced the reactions men and women had toward the post-Prohibition public drinking culture. Starting around 1933, a variety of sources showed increasing evidence that women were becoming both sought after as customers and accepted as participants in this formerly male-dominated activity. Statistics indicated that, over the course of about thirty years, the number of female tipplers steadily grew until they began to rival the numbers of male drinkers. During the 1930s alone, people had ample evidence that more and more women were drinking in public and were becoming socially accepted participants in this activity. Women drinkers became a group that certain bars specifically targeted in their advertising. Some department stores also began selling fashions they believed women should wear when they went out to drink, especially at upper-class bars. Even the commentary about female consumers of alcohol had shifted. Many men began to believe that bars and public drinking in general benefitted from the presence of women. Some critics of female public drinking still existed, but their articles only served to confirm the idea that a growing number of women drank in public. At the same time, popular movies of the 1930s and 1940s depicted different views of women consuming alcohol. In some films, they were obviously the equals of men; in others, this implication was present but never actually seen on screen. Although evidence in popular sources about women drinking in public grew less frequent after 1940, the continued preference for heterosociability signified the growing permanence of the post-Prohibition public drinking culture.

In the years after Prohibition, the percentage of women who consumed alcohol dramatically surged, suggesting more of them than ever drank in public.¹ The Anti-Saloon League reported a fourteen percent increase in the number of female alcohol patients admitted to the Keeley Institute for treatment during the first ten months of 1935. Martin Nelson, secretary-treasurer of the Institute, stated that seventy-seven percent of them were housewives, with the remainder being school teachers, nurses, bookkeepers, sales ladies, office workers, and restaurateurs.² Although this article only discussed alcoholics, the growing number of female patients suggested an overall increase in female drinkers. In 1947, the *Quarterly Journal on Studies of Alcohol* published an article by John Riley and Charles Marden about drinking patterns from 1940 to 1946. Their survey estimated that sixty-five percent of the adult population age twenty-one and older drank. Seventeen percent of adults were regular drinkers (consumed liquor at least three times per week), while forty-eight percent were occasional drinkers (defined as everyone else who drank).³ When they analyzed their results by gender, they found that fifty-six percent of the female population drank, with forty-eight percent of them being occasional drinkers and eight percent being regular drinkers. They indicated that this was an increase over the estimated number of women drinking in 1940, although they did not

¹One issue to remember when examining these statistics is the difference between male and female tipplers before the 1930s. Men had far greater access to places where they could obtain and acceptably drink liquor before Prohibition, suggesting greater number of men drank than women. Subsequently, any increase in the number of women drinking in public would appear dramatic.

²“Women Drinkers Reported Gaining,” *The Washington Post*, 25 December 1935.

³John W. Riley, Jr. and Charles F. Marden, “The Social Pattern of Alcoholic Drinking,” *Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 8 (1947), 266.

This article does describe the survey’s methodology or the number of people who responded to it, potentially raising questions about its accuracy. See, *ibid*.

provide any figures to support this statement.⁴ Claiming the number of female tipplers had grown faster than their male counterparts, the authors claimed that “[t]he rise in the relative proportion of female drinkers apparently reflects the increasing trend toward the emancipation of women which has been operative in American society throughout this century. Since this trend has not reached its peak, it should operate to increase still further the total population of drinkers.”⁵ This comment clearly indicated that Riley and Marden were cognizant of the effect women’s growing social freedom had on public drinking. By 1963, sixty-three percent of women drank alcohol.⁶ Statistically, women had gained an increasing amount of equality with men in terms of public drinking, but these numbers represented researchers examining these trends after the fact.

At the time, people had subtler indications that more women drank in public than before 1920, signifying a growing heterosociability in the public consumption of alcohol. The attention paid to certain fashions during the early 1930s, for example, clearly indicated that drinking in public had become a popular and socially acceptable activity for women. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported that the Speakeasy Suit had made a return in February 1933. This outfit consisted of either a velvet or satin gown with a décolleté back and a coat of either matching or contrasting color; a hat made this ensemble more formal but not overly so. The article, appearing ten months before the end of Prohibition, claimed that a woman could wear the Speakeasy Suit to cocktail hour

⁴Riley and Marden, “Alcoholic Drinking,” 267.

The authors provided a chart depicting the percentage of the population who drank versus age groups for 1940, but they did not provide any overall averages for this year. In addition, the age groups for the 1940 chart began with age 10, while the authors start with age 21, a difference for which they did not adjust. Consequently, these issues limited the value of this chart. See, *ibid.*, 268.

⁵Riley and Marden, “Alcoholic Drinking,” 272.

⁶Vera Efron, Mark Keller, and Carol Gurioli, *Statistics on Consumption of Alcohol and on Alcoholism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies, 1974), 3.

and feel appropriately dressed for any activity that followed.⁷ By 1934, stores that sold women's clothing had begun to capitalize on the idea of well-dressed women drinking in public. Macy's, for example, ran three different advertisements in January and February 1934 using this concept as their basis. Figures 22 and 23 show the promotions for The Madison Bar and The Park Lane styles respectively. The backdrop in both instances showed a middle- or upper-class bar, leaving only one interpretation for these advertisements: a fashionable woman wears these outfits *when* she goes out drinking.⁸ A Macy's ad in February marketed "Pastel Knits for Suburban Sundays" and recommended that readers "look for them at cocktail time," although it did not specify whether this cocktail time was at home or in public.⁹ Russeks Fifth Avenue advertised a type of dress simply called The Cocktail Gown, describing it as a "new ankle length silhouette to be worn from Five to Seven;" the designer called one style the Martini.¹⁰ The number of women who consumed alcohol in public had grown to the point where it had become profitable for stores to offer women a variety of fashions designed specifically for this activity.

⁷"Speakeasy Suit Returns," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 21 February 1933.

⁸"Display Ad 4[The Madison Bar]," *New York Times*, 2 January 1934; "Display Ad 5[The Park Lane]," *New York Times*, 3 January 1934.

⁹"Display Ad 19," *New York Times*, 4 February 1934.

¹⁰"Display Ad 6," *New York Times*, 30 January 1934.

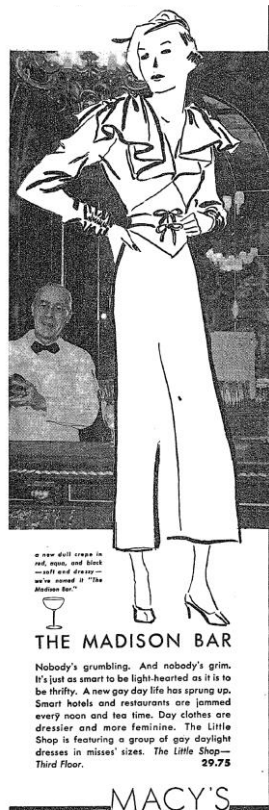


Figure 22: Macy's Advertisement, *New York Times*, 2 January 1934



Figure 23: Macy's Advertisement, *New York Times*, 3 January 1934

Meanwhile, women went from drinking surreptitiously in public before Prohibition to being able to choose from a variety of places trying to attract their patronage after it. In January and February 1934, the first two full months of legal drinking, three different New York City hotels advertised their bars with the intent of attracting women, indicating they had become a sought after clientele. The Gotham Hotel publicized its cocktail bar only for ladies and their companions on January 31, 1934.¹¹ On February 7, the Ritz-Carlton announced that it had recently opened two bars: one only for men and one for “the use of ladies and their escorts.”¹² Although these places provided a space exclusively for men, they clearly wanted women to patronize

¹¹“Display Ad 18,” *New York Times*, 31 January 1934.

¹²“Display Ad 23,” *New York Times*, 7 February 1934.

their bars. The Hotel McAlpin made itself appear more accepting of women drinking alone in February by leaving out whether it had a separate bar for them. Promoting the McAlpin Café and Bar, its advertisement asked people to “stop in for a cocktail . . . or a meal . . . and get acquainted with McAlpin hospitality. Our invitation includes the Ladies too.”¹³ Places like cocktail bars, which specialized in quickly serving customers who did not want meals, became businesses that some women chose to frequent. In his December 1935 *Washington Post* column Raymond Clapper proclaimed: “The cocktail bar is . . . [the] boon [of elderly ladies]. They can drop in of a late after-noon, make away with a couple of sidecars, and still be back home in time to be tucked away in bed as early as the doctor orders.”¹⁴ Female tipplers had a variety of drinking establishments that welcomed their patronage, symbolizing their acceptance as participants in the public drinking culture.

Many men, despite having moved away from the gender ideal that said women possessed inherently moral natures, believed that their presence made public drinking better than what it had been as a homosocial activity. One theme was that female drinkers imposed a new level of control over male alcohol consumption. A reporter for the *Pittsburgh Press* wrote in December 1933 that “most fair-minded people realize that men have a lesser tendency to be liquor gluttons in the presence of women. . . . There’s another important feature about women participating in repeal. It is the women who have to keep an eye on the family budget—and they are not going to see a whole week’s salary

¹³“Display Ad 15,” *New York Times*, 1 February 1934.

¹⁴Raymond Clapper, “Between You and Me: Repeal Is Almost Two Years Old and Grandma Feels Almost That Young; Townsend Smiles,” *The Washington Post*, 5 December 1935.

gouged in a pointless drinking bout.”¹⁵ Other men thought that women set a higher standard of conduct for male customers. A July 1937 survey showed that nine out ten Harlem bartenders believed “women have been the cause of all these new-fangled, dressed-up [probably higher-class] bars and the cleaning up of language.”¹⁶ In a November 1940 interview for the *New York Amsterdam News*, Harlem bartender Calvin Wood suggested that female tipplers conducted themselves better than men. He proclaimed: “I find the women very orderly . . . and I’d rather serve them than men as a general rule. They have more respect than men and are 100 percent easier to serve.”¹⁷ The presence of women tipplers in bars elevated the quality of these establishments over the saloon for many men.

Even people who criticized female drinking only reinforced the idea that an increasing number of women were consuming alcohol in public. For example, Dr. Paul Studenski, professor of economics at New York University, performed a study of the drinking habits of young adults around 1937, but the *New York Times* focused its article about the results almost exclusively on women. Studenski discovered that female drinkers consumed beer, wine, cocktails, and hard liquor. He found that the “young women . . . incline[d] more to mixed drinks, . . . but their taste for hard liquor is about the same as the young men’s,” with little else mentioned about male tipplers.¹⁸ The reporter’s concentration on the drinking of young women suggested this phenomenon was more noteworthy than men’s drinking, although an equally valid interpretation might

¹⁵“John Barleycorn and the Ladies, *The Pittsburgh Press*, 10 December 1933.

¹⁶Marvel Cooke, “Gals Can Hold Liquor as well as Men,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 24 July 1937.

¹⁷“They Also Serve . . .,” *The New York New Amsterdam News*, 16 November 1940.

¹⁸“Rise in Drinking By Girls Shown,” *New York Times*, 22 July 1937.

have been that the increase in female alcohol consumption was socially disturbing. Laurence Bell, writing for *American Mercury* in 1938, stated that Americans of both genders after Prohibition drank anything purportedly containing alcohol but used a woman as his only example. He claimed that a one hundred and twelve pound girl “takes in her stride Scotch, *Pernod* (and *absinthe*, if she can get it) champagne, and beer—she bars only gin, and that, I suppose, because it looks like water.”¹⁹ Although both genders consumed just as wide a variety of liquor before 1920, most people only knew the drinking habits of men due to the saloon’s popularity; the drinking habits of women, on the other hand, appeared to be a new and significant social development.²⁰ Prohibition had brought the public drinking of women into the mainstream, attracting the attention of both its supporters and its critics.

Some states also noticed, both explicitly and implicitly, that women consumed alcohol in public and took steps to ensure their continued access to drinking establishments. Illinois, for example, included a clause in its alcohol control law stating that “no licensee . . . shall deny or permit his agents and employees to deny any person the full and equal enjoyment . . . of any premises in which alcoholic liquors are authorized to be sold subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and

¹⁹Laurence Bell, “Americans Will Drink Anything,” *American Mercury*, November 1938, 321.

It is possible a racial component prevent the young woman from drinking gin. In his article “Corner Saloon,” Travis Hoke claimed that pre-Prohibition white male saloongoers thought gin appertained to their “colored brethren.” Rufus Lusk, in his article “The Drinking Habit,” says people use to call gin a “nigger drink.” See, Travis Hoke, “Corner Saloon,” *American Mercury*, March 1931, 316; Rufus S. Lusk, “The Drinking Habit,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 163 (September 1932): 47.

²⁰George Ade, *The Old-Time Saloon: Not Wet—Not Dry Just History* (New York: Ray Long & Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), 49–61 passim; Barry, “The Tea Rooms,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1912; “Drinks Chosen for Color” *New York Times*, 12 October 1913; “The Tea Rooms,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1912.

applicable alike to all citizens.”²¹ The gender-neutral language intimated that the state legislature at least took into consideration that women drank in public, although there was little evidence to suggest they intentionally wanted to protect them. A New York City barkeep alluded to a similar situation in New York because of a civil rights act passed at the state level. He declared: “There is nothing more disgusting than to see a woman, especially one under the influence of liquor, standing at the bar. . . . Of course, under the Civil Rights Act you have no right to practice discrimination. If a woman insists, you must serve her at the bar, but many times, by using a little horse sense, you can suggest that she sit at a table.”²² In reality, public drinking increasingly became a heterosocial activity that people found socially, culturally, and legally important.

At the same time, fiction involving drinking portrayed the public consumption of alcohol as an activity in which men and women equally participated, demonstrated by some of the movies of the 1930s and 1940s. One theme, seemingly confined to the 1930s, showed male and female characters in movies overtly drinking as equals. These types of films tended to show middle- and upper-class married couples, suggesting that men and women of certain socioeconomic standing had achieved at least a symbolic parity in public drinking. One example of this trend was *The Thin Man* (1934), starring William Powell and Myrna Loy as Nick and Nora Charles. The driving force behind the plot of this movie was the different situations in which Nick and Nora drank. In one scene, Nick was drinking in a bar when Nora sat down across from him and ordered a cocktail. She asked him how many drinks he had had; when he responded six, she

²¹Illinois, *An Act Relating to Alcohol Liquors*, article VI sect. 12b.

²²“Liquor Sources Curbed by State,” *New York Times*, 20 August 1936.

ordered five more so she could catch up, although she did pass out on drink number six. Another scene showed their bedroom, with two twin beds and a supply of liquor bottles in the corner so that either one of them could drink at any time during the night.²³ Even after a burglar broke in and shot Nick, Nora's first question to her husband after the police had left was if he wanted a drink. His response, of course, was, "Whadda *you* think?"²⁴ For Nick and Nora Charles, drinking together was a part of their everyday lives, and neither of them appeared to give a second thought to the fact they drank together.

Another movie in which a wealthy, married couple frequently consumed alcohol together was the 1937 film *Topper*. George and Marion Kerby, played by Cary Grant and Constance Bennett, lead what appeared to be a carefree existence regularly enhanced by drinking together. One scene early in the movie showed George and Marion driving their custom convertible down the road, except George was steering the car with his feet. Later in the film, they went to a club, where they drink for so long that they were the last customers to leave. Yet, they had a meeting with their friend and banker Cosmo Topper the next morning and did not want to be late. So, they simply drove to the bank, slept off the alcohol in the parking lot, and were oblivious to the looks they received from everyone who stared at them the next morning. Eventually, their alcoholic antics got them killed, and when George and Marion realized they were dead but had not moved onto the afterlife, they decided they needed to perform a good deed. The recipient of this act was their friend Topper, whom they decided to help by showing him he did not need

²³Judy Cornes, *Alcohol in the Movies, 1898–1962* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), 96–99.

²⁴Cornes, *Alcohol in the Movies*, 99.

to lead such a rigid life by teaching him to drink.²⁵ Although the remainder of the movie was about Topper's two ghostly friends getting him into and out of a variety of trouble, this particular film represented public drinking as a pursuit where both men and women equally participated in the activity and the consequences of it.

A more prominent and enduring theme in movies of this period was female drinkers as the implied equals of men. These films rarely showed men and women drinking together but did present situations or locations where it probably occurred. For example, *Man on the Flying Trapeze* (1935) starred W. C. Fields playing a character named Ambrose Wolfinger, a man so predictable that he had not missed a day of work in twenty-five years. He supported a wife and mother-in-law who gave him plenty of motivation to drink, a brother-in-law, and a daughter who was the only family member to have any sympathy for Ambrose. Ambrose did, in fact, drink, but the constant presence of his nagging wife and abstainer mother-in-law forced him to keep it a secret. The only time any character in the movie mentioned a woman drinking was outside of the wrestling match Ambrose had worked so hard to get to only to miss through a series of comedic events. As he bought his ticket, a wrestler was thrown from both the ring and the building and knocked Ambrose from his feet. His secretary then came out of the match, saw her boss, and knelt down to help him.²⁶ When Ambrose's brother-in-law came out of the match moments later and saw the two of them on the ground, he ran home to report to his mother that Ambrose "took his secretary to the wrestling matches

²⁵Cornes, *Alcohol in the Movies*, 101–104.

²⁶Cornes, *Alcohol in the Movies*, 85–87

where they drank themselves into imbecility and fell into the gutter.”²⁷ This subtle mention of women drinking indicated that movies following this trend placed more importance on men who publicly consumed alcohol than women.

Focusing on alcoholic Don Birnam (played by Ray Milland), *The Lost Weekend* (1945) similarly depicted men as the primary consumers of alcohol with the implication that women also drank. Based on a novel by the same name, this film followed the degeneration of a male alcoholic who made little effort to remain sober, even when his family, friends, and girlfriend tried to help him. Don struggled with his nearly all-encompassing desire to drink but being forced to hide it from his friends and family for most of the movie. Despite the centrality of alcohol to the plot, women tipplers appear only as a secondary figures in the film. The most prominent example of women consuming alcohol in this movie was when Don met Helen, played by Jane Wyman. They first encountered each on the street, and as they were talking, a bottle fell out Don’s coat pocket and broke on the ground. Don made up the excuse that the bottle was for a sick friend; accepting his excuse, Helen decided to invite him to a cocktail party that she was going to.²⁸ There were no clear examples of women consuming alcohol even in the nightclub scene later in the movie. Women were present in this establishment, but none of them appeared to be drinking alcohol or even visibly have a glass of it in front of them.²⁹ Oddly enough, this type of movie did not even remotely reflect reality; female tipplers had actually assumed a position of relative parity with men in public drinking.

²⁷Cornes, *Alcohol in the Movies*, 87.

²⁸Cornes, *Alcohol in the Movies*, 124–129.

²⁹*The Lost Weekend*, dir. Billy Wilder, Paramount, 1945, YouTube.

During the middle third of the twentieth century, people had ample evidence, both in reality and in fiction, that the public consumption of alcohol by women was growing, reflecting and reinforcing the heterosocialization of public drinking. Researchers have found a steady increase in women drinking from the 1930s through the 1960s, with some of them aware of this development at the time of their project. Most people had to simply look around them to see the evidence of growing participation of women in public drinking. Department stores began offering fashions designed for women to drink in, while some establishments began to run advertisements with the specific goal of attracting female customers. Many observers also offered the public their opinions on what appeared to be a new situation. Some commentators thought that women drinking in bars was a positive trend, improving the overall quality of this activity and of the customers, while critics found this pattern disturbing, although their remarks also reinforced the idea that more women were drinking in public than before. Even movies tended to depict mixed-gender drinking environments, although the role of women drinkers changed depending on the film. Yet, men and women responded differently to what clearly seemed to be the heterosocialization of public drinking.

Kings in Their Own Minds

Struggling against the rising tide of heterosocial drinking, men's fight for social dominance in the bar revealed a desire to reclaim a space and an activity they once had uncontested control over as a counter to their overall diminishing social authority. Men's reaction to their increasing loss of dominance in public spaces led to the controversy over

drinking while standing at the bar during the 1930s.³⁰ The growing presence of women in the public drinking sphere reflected their growing presence in public generally, and men's fight for control over this activity signified, in part, the backlash against the expansion of social freedom for women. Another aspect of this struggle for men involved dealing with the problems they continued to face with masculinity. Many men sought out homosocial activities as a way to stabilize their gender identity, leading them to admire the public drinking culture men had once dominated, but the increasing numbers of female tipplers after Prohibition made it difficult for men to exercise uncontested influence over public drinking. Some men responded to these trends by imaginatively erasing a large majority of women from the history of pre-1920 public drinking, making it into a pastime which men had undisputed control over. While efforts to reinstitute perpendicular drinking and to push women away from the bar appeared to be a victory for men, the growing heterosocialization of drinking and the architecture of drinking establishments, changed by Prohibition, made homosocial alcohol consumption increasingly difficult. The desire of some men for homosociability in public drinking represented the uncertainty among male drinkers as to who controlled this activity.

The debate over customers being able to drink while standing at the bar, especially in New York, revealed the characteristics of men's struggle to control public drinking from 1930 to the mid-1950s. The controversy over vertical drinking began when state legislatures, attempting to keep their promises of preventing the return of the saloon, came into conflict with some male drinkers who wanted to resume this practice.

³⁰Newspapers at the time referred to this as either vertical drinking or perpendicular drinking, terms I will also use.

Traditionally, saloon-going men had stood together at the bar while consuming their liquor, making it representative of the control men wished to possess over the new drinking culture. In addition, a majority of men had probably drunk in the saloon prior to Prohibition and probably wanted to resume their old habits, which might have fallen out of widespread use during the 1920s due to the perceived need for secrecy. Regardless of what actually happened to perpendicular drinking during Prohibition, state governments began declaring this practice illegal around the time of repeal, due to the attitude that the saloon was evil and all its features needed to be banned in order to prevent its return. For example, the Washington state legislature operated under the premise that they had “to do away with all the atmosphere of the old saloon,” so they forbade vertical drinking.³¹ Writing a letter to the editor in response to the March 1934 proscription in Washington D.C., Christopher Dudley claimed, “the fathers have forbidden vertical drinking and have ‘banished the horrors of the saloon.’”³² The Connecticut legislature proclaimed it was against the saloon and forbade the consumption of alcohol while standing in June 1935.³³ The fact that men had once drunk alcohol standing in the saloon was reason enough for lawmakers after 1930 to prohibit it.

The men who attempted to explain the reasons for these bans used rhetoric that assumed women would be drinking in bars and that their presence would cause problems for the male drinkers. Some men argued that female drinkers needed to be protected from their inexperience in the rougher aspects of the men’s world. Edward P.

³¹“Liquor Board Rules Drinkers Must Sit Down,” *Chicago Daily Times*, 5 November 1934.

³²Christopher Dudley, “D.C. Liquor Regulations,” *The Washington Post*, 10 March 1934.

³³“Liquor By Glass Allowed By New Connecticut Law,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 5 June 1935.

Mulrooney, head of the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, proclaimed that New York State's injunction was for the protection of female drinkers. He argued that "some lady who had had two or three drinks too many might say something to which some man at the bar would take exception, and he would strike the woman."³⁴ The underlying tone of Mulrooney's statement made the bar into a place of masculine relaxation where women were permitted but not totally accepted. Other places defended their measures by claiming the ban on vertical drinking was needed to protect the male customers from women. The *New York Times* reported in July 1935 that "woman's hard-won alcoholic freedom was jeopardized recently by St. Louis barkeepers and Missouri temperance advocates. The barmen allege that feminine feet on the brass rail drive away male patrons who fear to be 'mooched' into standing treat."³⁵ These justifications all presumed that men's rights in the bar were somehow superior to those of women, indicating that the idea that public drinking was a man's domain survived Prohibition.

These notions served to reinforce men's desire during the 1930s for the return of vertical drinking that, to them, represented control, an element of male gender identity they wanted to reaffirm. The height of this controversy in New York occurred between 1933 and 1937. The state legislature, probably in an effort to stop the saloon's return, banned the consumption of liquor while standing at a bar under a temporary alcohol control law in late 1933. On 6 December 1933 (just one day after the Twenty-First Amendment's ratification), the *New York Times* reported that men freely expressed "the opinion . . . that before long the brass [rails] would furnish, legally, the comfortable foot support so definitely associated with old-time drinking. 'Mark my words,' asserted a

³⁴Elmer Davis, "Battling Drinkers," *New York Times*, 15 November 1933.

³⁵"Women at Bars Hotly Defended," *New York Times*, 21 July 1935.

veteran manager of a Greenwich Village resort . . . ‘drinking at the bar will be legalized by April.’³⁶ In addition, not all people believed prohibiting perpendicular drinking protected the customers. Elmer Davis, writing a Letter to the Editor of the *New York Times*, succinctly refuted Mulrooney on the issue of vertical drinking. Davis declared that “intersexual fights do not commonly arise between total strangers. The average man . . . is about five times as likely to hit his own wife as somebody else’s wife; and the average woman at least three times as likely to hit her own husband as somebody else’s husband.”³⁷ By May 1934, the state legislature had passed a permanent alcohol control law, and the Alcohol Control Board decided that this legislation allowed people to drink at a bar so long as the counter was in the dining room.³⁸ Perpendicular drinking was once again legal, seemingly to the benefit of male drinkers.

Soon after, some businessmen also started to want the return of vertical drinking and began opposing women drinking at the bar with male customers, making it appear that men had successfully reclaimed one area of the bar for homosocial alcohol consumption and the control that it implied. In July 1935, the *New York Times* reported, “New York purveyors of strong waters have long ceased trying to prevent woman from doing what pleases her,” making it sound like the entire debate of heterosocial drinking was over, fifteen months later, this attitude had changed.³⁹ Beginning in 1936, business owners started to support the idea that only men should drink at the bar. A survey performed in October 1936 revealed ninety-five percent of the Society of Restaurateurs

³⁶“Old-Timers Miss Foot on the Rail,” *New York Times*, 6 December 1933.

³⁷Davis, “Battling Drinkers,” *New York Times*, 15 November 1933.

³⁸New York, *Alcoholic Beverage Control Law*, chap. 478, preamble; “Drinking at Bars Legal on Monday,” *New York Times*, 17 May 1934.

³⁹“Women at Bars Hotly Defended,” *New York Times*, 21 July 1935.

believed women should not consume alcohol at the bar.⁴⁰ Professional organizations for barmen started to publically concur with the survey by January 1937. The Federated Liquor Dealers of New York and the Barmen's Branch of the Geneva Association both went on record as being against women drinking at the counter, despite the evidence that female tipplers increased a bar's profits.⁴¹ In March 1937, a survey showed that women had retreated from consuming alcohol the bar. The article reported: "in the more simple or humble cafes [working class and maybe middle class] signs are up that women will not be served unless seated at a table. And they aren't. Its more respectable that way, bartenders feel."⁴² Men, it appeared, had united against women and had driven them into booths and tables to drink.

The question remaining, then, was, What were the underlying factors that caused the controversy over vertical drinking to emerge during the 1930s. The answer was linked to an increasing desire among men for the homosociability of pre-1920 public drinking. Working-class men wanted the class-based, single-gender environment embodied in the saloon. The *Pittsburgh Press* published an article by Westbrook Pegler in April 1935 that lamented the loss of the saloon. His piece, which mentioned working women only once, focused almost exclusively on men. Pegler asserted that these men, "after a difficult day sweeping leaves on relief and a routine fight with the loving wife at home," cannot get a drink at their favorite watering hole due to the number of young

⁴⁰"Sidelights of the Week," *New York Times*, 4 October 1936.

⁴¹"Is a Woman's Place at the Bar?" *New York Times*, 3 January 1937.

⁴²"The Woman Question," *New York Times*, 7 March 1937.

adults from upper-class families at these places.⁴³ He believed that Prohibition democratized alcohol consumption, allowing the wealthy to go to drinking establishments where they were not wanted, and declared: “The saloon is the poor man’s club no more. The saloon has become a society dive and the younger set of America is driving the decent element onto the water wagon.”⁴⁴ Meanwhile, middle- and upper-class men simply wanted a place to drink without women. In September 1936, Alice Hughes, a columnist for *The Washington Post*, commented on the changing pattern of male patronage at certain places, such as hotel bars and cocktail bars. Hughes noticed that more women than men drank at these businesses between 4:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. She stated, “Men literally loathe having women drinking beside them, and many refuse to patronize places that permit the practice.”⁴⁵ The situation progressed to the point where the Waldorf established a room where only men were permitted to drink, an exact reversal of pre-Prohibition practices.⁴⁶ For some men of the 1930s, the single-gender drinking situation they wanted had gone from being the natural state of society to a privilege they had to demand.

The drive for homosociability in public drinking constituted one arena in which men tried to use the male-dominated past as a way to define firm boundaries for masculinity. Peter Filene has asserted that “most middle-class men of the 1920s were trying to retrieve a time gone by, because only in the frame of the Victorian past did they

⁴³Westbrook Pegler, “Saloon Is Poor Man’s Club No More, It’s Fault of Rich,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, 8 April 1935.

⁴⁴Pegler, “Saloon Is Poor Man’s Club No More,” 8 April 1935.

⁴⁵Alice Hughes, “A Woman’s New York,” *The Washington Post*, 2 September 1936.

⁴⁶Hughes, “A Woman’s New York,” 2 September 1936.

know who they were and how to act.”⁴⁷ Michael Kimmel has similarly argued that “racism and nativism bore the mark of gender, as if depicting ‘them’ as less manly would make ‘us’ feel more manly.”⁴⁸ Filipino men, for example, simultaneously became both effeminate and hypermasculine savages. Some white men, through the Ku Klux Klan, used racial violence against African Americans to act out their masculinity.⁴⁹ Men also attempted to recapture the past by seeking male camaraderie, a feature they had once possessed in homosocial drinking establishments like the saloon. Increasing numbers of middle-class men throughout the 1920s turned to service clubs, such as the Rotary or the Kiwanis, for status and, more importantly, fellowship. By 1930, 400,000 men had joined these organizations to find both “genuine friendship [and] . . . an impersonal atmosphere of bombast and competitive ‘kidding.’” Ultimately, the clubs were a way station between a man’s public world and his home.⁵⁰ Under these circumstance, the ratification of the Twenty-First Amendment suddenly offered men the opportunity to revive the pre-Prohibition public drinking culture and its associations with manhood.

Men’s attempts at regaining control over public drinking demonstrated their desire to reclaim an activity and a place where their dominance was uncontested, something that would become increasingly difficult to obtain. Men faced a constant

⁴⁷Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Gender Identities in Modern America*, Third ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 147.

⁴⁸Michael Kimmel, *Manhood In America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 195.

⁴⁹Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 195.

When examined through the lens of Filene’s idea, these actions against minorities also reflected an effort by men to revive the United States of the early and mid-nineteenth century, making the National Origins Act the legal mechanism to achieve this goal. The immigrations quotas this law implemented used the 1890 census, giving preference to the western and northern European countries that had supplied the majority of immigrants prior to 1900. See, Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1990), 60.

⁵⁰Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 152.

struggle in defining masculinity and in determining whether they were manly enough throughout most of the twentieth century. World War I had offered and World War II and Korea would later offer a brief respite by giving them the opportunity once again to prove themselves on the battlefield.⁵¹ As the century progressed, however, the surge in “military technology . . . devoured the heroic possibilities of war.”⁵² Another traditional standard men possessed in measuring their masculinity was their ability to support their family, but this paradigm was imprecise. The result was that men felt less manly during economic downturns, like the Great Depression, or as women gained economic equality.⁵³ According to Kimmel, “even the traditional image of the heroic toiler had become tainted by associations with bolshevism.”⁵⁴ Sports, invaded by commercialism, would also fail as a benchmark for male gender identity.⁵⁵ One of the few potentially reliable models that mid-twentieth-century American society seemed to offer men was public drinking—if they revived the pre-Prohibition drinking culture.

The presence of female drinkers, however, became the primary obstacle that prevented men from immediately restoring the old homosocial drinking sphere. Ironically, the success of the Repeal movement provided men with the rhetorical basis necessary for them to attempt to resume their dominance over public drinking and severely limit the influence of women over this activity. Chapter 4 demonstrated that repealists in effect rehabilitated alcohol by sacrificing the saloon and all it represented,

⁵¹Kimmel, *Manhood In America*, 192, 223–224.

⁵²Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 149.

⁵³Kimmel, *Manhood In America*, 192–194; Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 154–155.

⁵⁴Kimmel, *Manhood In America*, 192.

⁵⁵Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 149.

essentially accepting the prohibitionists' derogatory view of these places. A fundamental element of the prohibitionists' assertions relied on the supposed purity of women. They portrayed "women as pious, pure, domestic, and submissive: the 'true woman' who obeyed her father or husband while quietly swaying him with her inherently moral nature."⁵⁶ This idea made women superior to men in some ways but removed their ability to effect any direct change in areas that men dominated, demonstrated by the apparent lack of authority women had over male drinking before 1920. Catherine Murdock, in *Domesticating Drink*, asserts that alcohol victimized such selfless femininity.⁵⁷ This line of reasoning says that while alcohol "attacks the very heart and soul of a man," wives and children bore the burden of his deterioration.⁵⁸ While a wife stayed at home, her husband "grew too convivial [at the saloon] and spent the funds which should have gone for rent, clothing and food."⁵⁹ Even the wife of a middle-class male drinker had to "[darn] her gloves and [turn] her best dress and presses and [remake] it" while her husband "had no idea of the humiliation of having no dinner dress to wear to the party she had spent hours of labor in arranging."⁶⁰ The supposed purity of women thus gave the power to control public drinking imaginatively prior to Prohibition exclusively to men, making women appear more subordinate in this pursuit than they actually had been.

⁵⁶Catherine Gilbert Murdock, *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870–1940* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 17.

See also, Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 6.

⁵⁷Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 17.

⁵⁸"Wife's Side of the Liquor Problem," *Ladies Home Journal*, June 1914, 8.

⁵⁹Henry F. Pringle, "What Do Women of America Think about Drinking," *Ladies Home Journal*, August 1938, 14.

⁶⁰"Wife's Side of the Liquor Problem," 8.

Men took advantage of this idea to retroactively eliminate virtually all women from the public consumption of alcohol before 1920, thus creating a “historic” standard for masculinity by exaggerating men’s importance to and control over this activity. Between 1930 and 1932, some critics, including some women, began to minimize the number of female drinkers prior to Prohibition. Kay Kennedy, writing for *Outlook* in May 1930, asserted that only prostitutes and wealthy women trapped by their position had even thought of imbibing liquor. She proclaimed: “Back in the pre-Volstead era, alcohol was all but monopolized by the male. . . . The facts were simply that, for the most part, drinking among women was confined to those of two strata—inmates of orderly palaces and inmates of disorderly houses. . . . It . . . never occurred to the average woman that, if she wished, she could spend money on potables.”⁶¹ George Ade tried to provide a neutral analysis of the saloon in his 1931 book *The Old-Time Saloon*, but he unintentionally reinforced the idea that only men used the saloon.⁶² He wrote that “just for the sake of novelty, we are going to join friendly hands and stroll into the past and find out what all the shooting is about by reminding ourselves of some undeniable facts concerning a certain kind of public resort called a ‘saloon.’”⁶³ He did not include, however, the fact that working-class women drank in these places, intimating that men had somehow excluded women from the saloon. Rufus S. Lusk, in his September 1932 article for the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, claimed that “[women] did not stand at the bars of even cheaper class saloons. It is true that some lower grade saloons had back rooms where women might go. Barrooms catered to men

⁶¹Kay Kennedy, “Sisters of the Hollow Leg,” *Outlook*, 21 May 1930, 92.

⁶²Ade, *The Old-Time Saloon*, 3.

⁶³Ade, *The Old-Time Saloon*, 4.

and men only.”⁶⁴ Lusk’s comment attacked the status of women who drank in public, implicitly portraying female tipplers as low-class women with little reputation left to lose. By the time the nation repealed the Eighteenth Amendment in December 1933, these historical revisions had imaginatively relegated the vast majority of respectable women to having had little or no contact with alcohol before Prohibition.

As the 1930s progressed, men continued to minimized the numbers and status of women who drank before 1920. Russell Owen decreased the number of women drinking when writing for the *New York Times* in January 1933. He proclaimed that the saloon was “unique in its masculinity, for few women penetrated even its ‘Family Entrance’ in the days of the long-lived but now extinct Raines law sandwich.”⁶⁵ By 1934, some men had transformed all female tipplers before 1920 into prostitutes. H.I. Brock claimed that “only men were in the [saloon], of course—except that women with no reputation to lose might use the shut-off back room.”⁶⁶ Henry F. Pringle took this notion one step further by intimating that men had simply refused to allow women to intrude into their public spaces. Writing for *Ladies Homes Journal* in 1938, he asserted that “drinking, before prohibition, was a male privilege and vice. The men went to saloons or to their clubs while the women remained at home,” eliminating women entirely from this activity.⁶⁷ With only fallen women using the pre-Prohibition saloon, the male drinkers of the period became reputable men to admire for their dominance of and control over public drinking.

⁶⁴Lusk, “The Drinking Habit,” 50.

⁶⁵Russell Owen, “From Saloon to Speakeasy—And Now?” *New York Times*, 22 January 1933.

⁶⁶H.I. Brock, “A New Drinking Code Sets a New Tone,” *New York Times*, 15 July 1934.

⁶⁷Pringle, “What Do Women Think about Drinking,” 14.

It is worth noting historiographically that the revising of history to increase the importance of the pre-Prohibition male drinkers led historians to inaccurately alter the importance of female tipplers during the same period. Perry Duis, using the saloon to examine urban development, has no evidence that any woman who was not a prostitute ever set foot in this establishment, turning women drinkers into a historical footnote.⁶⁸ Some authors overemphasize certain groups of female drinkers by concentrating on why they seemingly defied convention. Kathy Peiss explores leisure for single, working women in New York City. She asserts that this select group of women drank in public to survive and to achieve a measure of entertainment on their meager wages.⁶⁹ Madelon Powers comes to a similar conclusion about women and the public consumption of alcohol in her study of saloon customs and traditions.⁷⁰ While Catherine Murdock admits the possibility that middle-class women consumed alcohol, she focuses on women drinking in the home and does not deal with the public aspect until the final chapter of her book.⁷¹ These authors, in their efforts to describe public drinking or women's roles in it before 1920, have uncritically accepted views created in the 1930s.

With men believing that they had been in control of the public consumption of alcohol before Prohibition, the saloon era became the golden age of manly public drinking, making the traits of this activity during this period an admirable standard for

⁶⁸Perry R. Duis, *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

⁶⁹Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

⁷⁰Madelon Powers, *Faces along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman's Saloon, 1870–1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Madelon Powers, "Women and Public Drinking, 1890–1920," *History Today* (February 1995): 46–52.

⁷¹Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 159–170.

masculinity. The characteristics that these rose-colored remembrances emphasized was intelligent socialization and control, both over oneself and (due to the supposed exclusion of women) over one's environment. The two best examples of this idealistic view of pre-1920 drinking establishments appeared in 1931. Edward Cotter of Union City, in a July Letter to the Editor of the *New York Times*, presented a vision of these places that best coincided with the manly new version of pre-Prohibition public drinking. He responded to a woman's comment about the appalling conditions of New York City's saloons before 1920:

I have lived in Greater New York and Vicinity for the past fifty years, and if the "saloon level" hereabouts was the lowest in the land, as she states, prohibition was and surely is a mistake. The average saloon of Greater New York prior to prohibition was a haven of respectability and cleanliness, where interesting and tolerant people congregated to refresh themselves in body and mind and discuss business, politics, sports, art, music and literature. If this was the lowest level, how perfectly righteous must have been the saloons on Main Street.⁷²

By turning the saloon into an oasis for the nation's working-class intelligentsia, the drinking that occurred in these places became more refined as a result. Travis Hoke's *American Mercury* article made male saloongoers into models of self-control. He claimed these men "drank to feel the effects of alcohol, yet they scorned those who felt it most and quickest, nor was it ever suggested that if they did not feel their liquor they might as well not drink it. . . . [T]hey would not have understood modern youth who drink to get drunk and announce their intention beforehand."⁷³ A July 1934 *New York Times* article revealed a similar attitude among bartenders after the Twenty-First Amendment's ratification. One bartender claimed that "gentleman knew how to drink [before 1920] They wouldn't start the evening by filling up their glasses, no sir! They'd hardly go above the church windows [the indentations at the bottom of the glass]

⁷²"Praises the Old Saloon," *New York Times*, 20 July 1931.

⁷³Hoke, "Corner Saloon," 321.

starting out,” suggesting they had far more self-control than the drinkers of the 1930s.⁷⁴ Public drinking in a homosocial environment had turned into an activity that real men had participated in for what it represented to them. Consequently, the fight over perpendicular drinking assumed the characteristics of masculinity that men of the 1930s wanted to recapture, making it necessary that only they be able to perform it.



Figure 24: Billie's Bar, 56th Street and First Avenue, New York City, 1936

⁷⁴“Bartenders Mourn the Good Old Days,” *New York Times*, 16 July 1934.



Figure 25: O'Reilly's Bar, 3rd Avenue, New York City, 1942

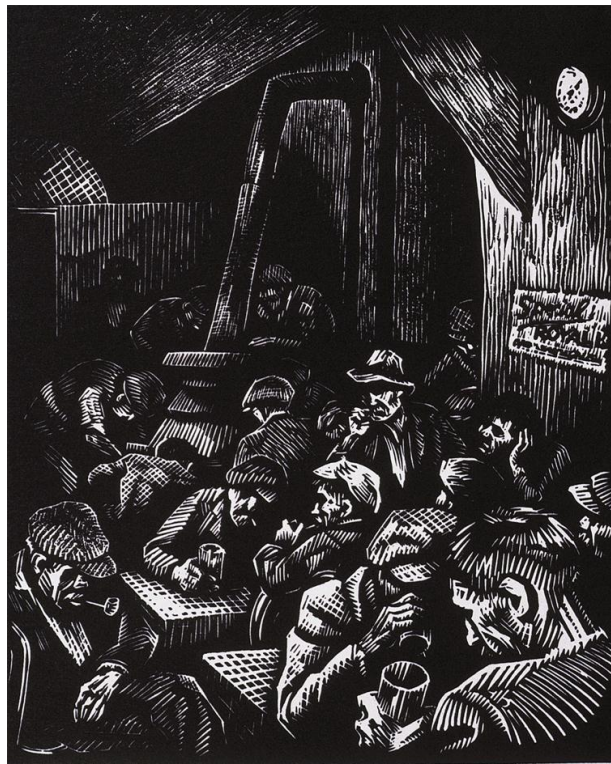


Figure 26: *Bar in Front*, 1939

At the time, it appeared that men had successfully restored a historic standard of male gender identity with vertical drinking, but in reality, they had failed. The characteristics of the post-Prohibition bar increased the difficulty of creating a large group that would quickly assimilate common ideas and values, limiting the utility of the bar and main room in acting as a standard for masculinity. The men who sought vertical drinking ultimately wanted “knots of men rightly sorted,” the large, male group drinking that began in the age of the colonial tavern and continued throughout the saloon era. They also needed the ability to move around the premises that the saloon had once offered, but the physical changes to drinking establishments caused by Prohibition made it far more difficult for the bar area to sustain mobility and a single-gender environment.⁷⁵ Figures 24 and 25 show two New York City bars, while Figure 26 presents artist Eli Jacobi’s vision of another, probably imaginary, establishment.⁷⁶ These images demonstrate how these places had adapted to a heterosocial environment that emphasized small groups and privacy. The introduction of tables into the main room, for example, reduced the available space for large groups, reducing the customer mobility that had once enable saloongoing men to circulate around the room and reinforce common ideas. Figures 24 and 25 reveal that the distance between the tables and the bar severely restricted the number of people who could stand at the counter and easily move about the room. Even one rank of men at the bar would prevent other customers from ordering drinks, limiting the amount of manly interaction possible at the bar. The tables

⁷⁵Sharon Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 82.

⁷⁶Berenice Abbott, *Billie’s Bar, 56th Street and First Avenue, Manhattan*, photograph, 8 December 1936, New York Public Library, New York City; Marjory Collins, *O’Reilly’s Bar on Third Avenue in the “Fifties,”* photograph, 1942, Library of Congress, Washington D.C; Eli Jacobi, *Bar in Front*, linoleum block, 1939, ARTstor.

and chairs also reduce the space available for casually wandering around the room, making it harder for the male clientele to interact with each other in large groups.⁷⁷ Even the simple decision between round and square tables affected the size of parties. People could push the square ones, such as the one partially seen in Figure 24, together more easily than the round ones seen in Figure 25, reinforcing the idea of privacy in public drinking.⁷⁸ The customers in Figures 25 and 26 have obviously broken into distinct groups, suggesting that they wanted limited interaction with the other people in the room.⁷⁹ The new archetype for drinking establishments contributed to the decreasing utility of vertical drinking as a standard for male gender identity.

The effort to create a partial homosocial environment through vertical drinking also presented a problem when comparing the pre- and post-Prohibition habits of drinkers. Before 1920, men and women drank in distinctly different fashions. While men stood up to consume their liquor, women generally sat down to drink theirs. The places where women drank (such as the Beaux Arts Café, the tea rooms, and the back rooms of saloons) had either tables and chairs or barstools on which female tipplers sat.⁸⁰ The rewriting of history to exclude women from public drinking before Prohibition erased this fact, making it seem as if they had had no experience with drinking outside the home before 1920. Both versions appeared to reinforce the idea that perpendicular drinking would help men stabilize masculinity, but the reinstatement of this practice did

⁷⁷Abbott, *Billie's Bar*; Collins, *O'Reilly's Bar*.

⁷⁸Abbott, *Billie's Bar*; Collins, *O'Reilly's Bar*.

⁷⁹Collins, *O'Reilly's Bar*; Jacobi, *bar in Front*.

⁸⁰Richard Barry, "The Tea Rooms, Where Society and Business Meet," *New York Times*, 1 December 1912; Drinks Chosen for Color, Not Taste, at Woman's bar," *New York Times*, 12 October 1913; "The Tea Rooms," *New York Times*, 1 December 1912.

little for them; the bar was still a heterosocial environment. Although it might have been surprising when the *New York Times* reported on May 22, 1934 that “despite the hue and cry that has been raised against the presence of women in bars, they evinced little inclination to stand up and drink with the men,” men and women, in reality, had simply begun using a heterosocial space created by Prohibition to resume their pre-Prohibition drinking habits.⁸¹

Only by ignoring the reality of post-Prohibition public drinking did men symbolically achieve the single-gender environment that they wanted to create with vertical drinking. The homosocial environment that men wanted for public drinking had become, by the 1940s and 1950s, more a work of fiction than a reality, demonstrated by writer John McNulty’s short stories and the drinking environment they depicted. McNulty started his career as a newspaper reporter after World War I and, by 1941, had begun writing for magazines, including *The New Yorker*. He commonly submitted short stories to *The New Yorker*, tales that he based on things he saw or heard about in Costello’s, a New York City bar at Forty-Fourth Street and Third Avenue.⁸² These stories, probably read mostly by the middle and upper classes at first, described a drinking establishment that appeared to be a saloon. However, McNulty had made Costello’s into a purely masculine place reminiscent of (if not identical to) the old pre-Prohibition saloon by focusing exclusively on the adventures of men in the bar when women did in fact drink in this place.⁸³ While coinciding with the contemporary literary

⁸¹“Men Rush to Bars, But Women Shy Off,” *New York Times*, 22 May 1934.

⁸²Faith McNulty, “John as He Was,” in *This Place on Third Avenue: The New York Stories of John McNulty*, [John McNulty] (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 2001), x–xvii.

⁸³[John McNulty], *This Place on Third Avenue: The New York Stories of John McNulty* (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 2001).

convention of concentrating on men drinking, the popularity of these stories suggests that men had failed to find the model for masculinity they had hoped to recreate through vertical drinking, an idea reinforced by the fact these stories appeared as their own anthologies in 1946, 1951, and 1957.⁸⁴ As late as October 1955, McNulty believed that the perfect bar needed to have more men in it than women to give the room a masculine aroma, although he did think that the idea of banning women from these places was absurd.⁸⁵ The drinking environment some men wanted had become a work of fiction, a means of entertainment for people rather than a serious standard for male gender identity.

By the late 1930s, male drinkers wanting to use alcohol consumption as a standard for masculinity demonstrated two important things about the post-Prohibition public drinking culture. First, any halfway measure for restoring homosociability to public drinking, with the intended result of making it a standard for male gender identity, were useless. The restoration of vertical drinking without banning women from the bar failed to achieve its intended goal. Male and female tipplers still accepted each other's use of these places, making the entire environment heterosocial regardless of where in the room individuals drank. Second, the Prohibition and Repeal movements had left public drinking's past open to interpretation. This reconstruction became the basis for all attempts to change the bar and public drinking from 1933 to 1960. All the major conflicts over who would control public drinking involved the rewritten history of pre-

McNulty took his future wife Faith there for their first date in 1942. In the 1950s, photographer Ed Feingersh brought Marilyn Monroe in drink. See, Faith McNulty, "John as He Was," xi; Joe McCarthy, "Costello's: The Wayward Saloon," *Holiday*, October 1959, 108.

⁸⁴Faith McNulty, "John as He Was," xxiii, xxvii, xxxviii.

⁸⁵John McNulty, "Search for the Perfect Bar," *New York Times*, 16 October 1955.

1920 public drinking that men had authored. So long as men and women used the bar as equals, this business lacked the social characteristics necessary for it to become the new location for most elements of the old public drinking culture, restricting its effectiveness as a standard of masculinity.

Homosocial Drinking's Last Stand

The responses to the fight to ban unescorted women from the bar during the 1940s and 1950s demonstrated the importance of heterosociability to a majority of the participants in the post-Prohibition public drinking culture. This continued the struggle some men had begun during the 1930s to reclaim a homosocial public space. Motivated by the same influences as before, these male drinkers continued to build off of their imagined history of pre-Prohibition public drinking in order to achieve their goal. More importantly, though, this case best represented how women reacted to efforts to legally restrict the greater social equality they had been gaining. Women had three different models about how to act in public to choose from after Prohibition, leading to a disconnect with the gender ideal that stated they were men's equals. Some of the advice they received in popular literature guided them toward a secondary position to men in some social spheres, an idea of which the men who wanted a public, homosocial space took advantage. By reducing the capability of women drinkers, men attempted to create a double standard for public drinking during the 1940s. Women, however, defeated this effort by ignoring the advice they received and instead acting as men's equals in the bar. In fact, the glamour girl represented the maturation of the heterosocial drinking environment, even though men were trying to ban women from the bar. The final serious

threat to the heterosocial drinking environment after Prohibition was mostly a masculine flight of fancy with little chance of success.

The contest during the 1940s and 1950s between men and women over the right of female tipplers to drink alone in the bar, and subsequently for control over public drinking began as an extension of the vertical drinking debate of the 1930s. When the United States entered World War II, the Army and the Navy began asking some cities to ban unescorted women from drinking at the bar in order to protect servicemen from “women ‘chiselers.’”⁸⁶ This appeal reflected and reinforced the reasons why men sought and the actions they took to secure a homosocial space within the bar, but events in Chicago demonstrated that legislation that regulated only female drinkers prompted women to respond more forcibly than before, indicating an assumption on their part that public drinking was their social right. Chicago passed an ordinance that banned women from drinking at the bar in August 1942. The Cook County board quickly enacted a similar law to cover areas in the county not incorporated into Chicago. This bill passed eight to one, with the dissenting vote being cast by Mary McEnerney. She proclaimed that she had “fought for woman suffrage and equal rights for women and I’m not going to turn around and vote for this silly discrimination. . . . I don’t think women ought to be at the bars, but neither should the men. What’s more, I’m not against drinking. I’ve always

⁸⁶“Ban on Serving Women at Bars Ends in 10 Days,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 December 1942; “No Women at Cook County Bars,” *New York Times*, 13 August 1942.

By October 1942, the U.S. Army had asked several cities in the east in addition to Chicago to pass this ban, while some other cities apparently considered this measure as a preemptive move. The Los Angeles City Attorney, for example, chose to study the city’s authority to pass a similar proposal at the request of Police Commissioner Al Cohen in October 1942. Cohen believed it “only a question of time when the Army will request Los Angeles to take similar action . . . in view of the large number of military men here.” See, “City Studies Ban on Women at Liquor Bars,” *Los Angeles Times*, 28 October 1942.

fought prohibition.”⁸⁷ By September, twenty-two year old model Genoveave Turnell had decided to legally challenge the Chicago ordinance. The bartender of the establishment she entered cited the city law and refused to serve her at the bar, prompting Turnell to file discrimination a lawsuit against the city.⁸⁸ People found the act so restrictive that the city council had to amend it in December 1942 to exclude women escorted by a man, such as a husband or a boyfriend.⁸⁹ Although this law assumed women drank at bars and did not broadly interfere with this right, the partial abridgement of their ability to drink in public constituted, for them, a threat to the social equality they had fought for.

The underlying masculine principles embodied in the Chicago and Cook County ordinances not only continued to spread but quickly evolved into the idea that women threatened public drinking in general. Prohibitionists tried to use World War II to obtain legislation that would once again ban alcohol, and although their effort failed, their attempt caused some men to fear the return of prohibition.⁹⁰ The war, meanwhile, allowed women to move into the workforce and the market in far greater numbers than in the past, but the “dominant cultural milieu . . . continued to place traditional notions of femininity above feminist quests for equal rights.”⁹¹ By 1945, the men who wanted to reclaim a public space for homosocial use became concerned that they would once again lose drinking establishments if women were not properly supervised while in these

⁸⁷“County Forbids Women at Bars Despite Chiding,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 August 1942.

⁸⁸“Thirsty Model Begins Attack on Ban at Bar.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6 September 1942.

⁸⁹“Ban on Serving Women at Bars Ends in 10 Days,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 December 1942.

⁹⁰Pamela E. Pennock and K. Austin Kerr, “In the Shadow of Prohibition: Domestic American Alcohol Policy Since 1933,” *Business History* 47 no. 3 (July 2005): 388.

⁹¹James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 32.

places. A Baltimore grand jury in this year became concerned that “prohibition might return unless [drinking] conditions improved,” so they recommended that the state governor “appoint a committee of at least five civic-minded and outstanding gentlemen to rewrite the liquor laws of the City of Baltimore and the State of Maryland.”⁹² One of the grand jury’s suggestions was to prohibit women unaccompanied by a man from entering bars after 8 p.m.⁹³ This proposal implicitly gave men control over these spaces throughout most of the evening by suggesting that unescorted women drinking after 8 p.m. somehow caused problems (both social and for other customers) that men did not. Former New York City mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia thought that female tipplers were social menaces and believed, like the Baltimore grand jury, that they represented “a potent argument for a revival of prohibition.”⁹⁴ In January 1947, he declared that “one of the saddest and assuredly the ugliest social spectacle of city life nowadays is the dark and dingy cocktail bar where at almost any hour of business the clientele is largely feminine and unescorted.”⁹⁵ In February 1948, vice chairman Joseph T. Sharkey of the New York City council, probably sharing LaGuardia’s trepidation, proposed a bill to prevent women from being “served at a public bar . . . unless accompanied by a male over the age of 21.”⁹⁶ While men justified these proposals by claiming it would help prevent a return of prohibition, they implicitly asserted that a male-dominated public drinking culture was superior to a heterosocial one.

⁹²“Jury Proposed Tightening of Md. Liquor Laws,” *The Washington Post*, 12 May 1945.

⁹³“Jury Proposed Tightening,” *The Washington Post*, 12 May 1945.

⁹⁴“Woman Barfly Menacing Repeal, Says LaGuardia,” *The Washington Post*, 7 January 1947.

⁹⁵“Woman Barfly,” *The Washington Post*, 7 January 1947.

⁹⁶“Woman’s Ire Rises on bar Proposal,” *New York Times*, 4 February 1948.

Despite these beliefs, the idea of a drinking establishment dominated by a single gender simply no longer appealed to many people. The Baltimore grand jury's suggestion received no noticeable attention in the newspaper after the initial article. Similarly, the *New York Times* did not report that the council made Sharkey's bill into a law. George Palmer, in his column "Tavern Topics" for the *New York New Amsterdam News*, asserted in July 1948 that "it is the sheerest anachronism, in a world in which women vote and play an active part in politics themselves, to go on pretending that woman is the weaker sex and must be sheltered from the rough male world. Besides, in a well-run bar, what is there to shelter a woman from?"⁹⁷ The idea that women had gained a level of social equality with men, at least in public drinking, appeared in other publications around the nation, signifying that attitudes had shifted decisively against the idea of subordinating female tipplers. Surveys performed by the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1945 and 1949 revealed that most people held sentiments similar to the one Palmer expressed in 1947. The newspaper published twelve responses to these inquiries, and only three respondents, two women and one man, disapproved of unescorted women drinking at bars.⁹⁸ Lawrence Slovic's 1949 response best represented the attitudes of the remaining nine people. He said that "women have proved their capabilities in business, politics, factories, etc., I think they should be granted the same privileges as males. If a woman feels she can take care of herself, then it's her business if she wants to enter a bar unescorted."⁹⁹ The Chicago ban remained in place until October 1955, and

⁹⁷George Palmer, "Tavern Topics," *New York New Amsterdam News*, 17 July 1948.

⁹⁸Maryon Zylstra, "Inquiring Camera Girl," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 20 August 1945; Maryon Zylstra, "Inquiring Camera Girl," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 April 1949.

⁹⁹Zylstra, "Inquiring Camera Girl," 29 April 1949.

when Alderman Petrone proposed to repeal this “emergency measure to protect service men from unscrupulous women,” he declared that “the emergency is now over . . . and women should have the same privileges as men.”¹⁰⁰ Even with male uncertainty over women drinkers, the heterosocial drinking situation of the bar had become a standard that neither men nor women seriously contested.

The masculine offensive to secure a homosocial public space during the 1940s and 1950s begged the question why men thought women would allow their rights as public drinkers to be legally abridged at this time. In this case, the answer began with what appeared to be an opportunity for men to socialize women into the idea of a male-dominated public drinking culture. Nancy Cott, in “Equal Rights and Economic Roles,” describes how members of the feminist movement during the early 1920s disagreed with one another about whether an Equal Rights Amendment was necessary. Supporters of organizations like the League of Women Voters wanted both equal rights and protective legislation for women. On the other hand, the National Woman’s Party wanted immediate equality with men through the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, whose passage could have invalidated all protective legislation for women.¹⁰¹ This division in the feminist movement corresponded with the rise of three competing visions about how women should utilize the social equality they had gained since 1900. None of these ideas

¹⁰⁰“Ban on Unescorted Women at Bars Repealed By Council,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 15 October 1955; “Act to Restore Woman’s Right to Drink at Bar,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 September 1955.

¹⁰¹Nancy F. Cott, “Equal Rights and Economic Roles: The Conflict over the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1920s,” in *Women’s America: Refocusing the Past*, eds. Linda K. Kerber and Jane Sherron De Hart, 6ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 380–381.

denied that women were the equals of men, but each one recommended that women interact with men in distinctly different ways.

The feminists of the Progressive era represented the first position. These reformers had achieved political (and, in a few areas, social) equality with men, in addition to obtaining maximum hours and, briefly, minimum wage laws for female workers. Based on the Victorian idea of female purity, these women wanted to use their supposed moral superiority to continue improving society.¹⁰² The women coming of age after 1920 symbolized a second stance. Embodied by the flapper, these women smoked, drank, had sex with men other than their future husbands, and believed themselves to be the social and political equals of men.¹⁰³ The older feminists, meanwhile, thought these “‘newly freed [women used] that freedom in a mere imitation of masculine weaknesses and vices,’” suggesting they acted similar to the men whose equals these women thought themselves to be.¹⁰⁴ The third view, appearing due to the Great Depression and as a response to the feminism of the previous three decades, had women leaving certain aspects of the public sphere solely in the hands of men. Many wives, for example, thought that they should stay home while their husbands supported the family. While grateful for her underemployed or unemployed husband’s offer to help with the household chores, she thought she would lose respect for him if he actually did the work.¹⁰⁵ The various beliefs about how a woman should use the social equality she had

¹⁰²Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 123–130.

¹⁰³Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 138–144.

¹⁰⁴Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 138.

¹⁰⁵Filene, *Him/Her/Self*, 160–172.

gained complicated the practice of female gender identity by offering both women and men different models as to how the former should act.

The guidance available for women about their behavior in public built on the three views about how they should use their social equality but largely encouraged a more traditional public role. Sarah Comstock, in her 1937 piece for the *Delineator*, provided advice that encouraged women to utilize their freedom as the social equals of men, representing what appeared to be a secondary strain in this literature. She declared a single woman could have “as far as propriety goes, a man . . . come for dinner and stay long enough to take the milk in, and no offense to anyone.”¹⁰⁶ She also claimed a woman looking for a husband could “put [her] hat right on and go out and start making [contacts].”¹⁰⁷ After 1940, however, the idea that women should not act like men became dominant in advice to women. Florence Howitt, writing for *Good Housekeeping* in 1943, told women that when going out “Don’t Quench Your Thirst with Alcohol. An inebriated female with an escort is bad enough; without an escort she is a social pariah. . . Don’t give yourself a chance to get a little too gay. It’s very unpleasant to have the manager stare at you as if he just had bitten into a worm.”¹⁰⁸ This counsel did not deny women the right to be in public, but it did intimate that women needed to act in a way superior to men. Patty De Roulf, in a 1952 *Coronet* article, went one step further by suggesting that men should be superior to women in certain social situations. She told

¹⁰⁶Sarah Comstock, “Are You a Lady?” *Delineator* February 1937, 24.

¹⁰⁷Comstock, “Are You a Lady,” 25

¹⁰⁸Florence Howitt, “How to Behave in Public Without an Escort,” *Good Housekeeping* September 1943, 40.

women that they could ask men out but to pay for, at most, half of the evening.¹⁰⁹ The different views about how women could act in public represented the larger issue of people attempting to cope with the increased social freedom of women.

This problem led to a renewed interest in the characteristics of a lady, which encouraged women to act like men by copying the ideals of the gentleman. In a 1944 article for *Ladies Home Journal*, Dr. Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg summarized both the New Woman and the new vision of the lady, although notably they believed them to be negative developments for women. They wrote that “women today . . . are free, in the sense of being liberated from most external restrictions—legal, moral and social. . . . Socially, they have won the right to emulate men.”¹¹⁰ Women imitated men by integrating the gentleman’s self-control into their definition of a lady. Richard Attridge, a contributor to the *Saturday Evening Post*, wrote that “there probably is something basic in the definition: ‘A gentleman is a person who never unintentionally injures anyone.’”¹¹¹ This trait began to appear in descriptions of a lady, making her a feminine version of the gentleman. Dorothy Thompson’s 1955 *Ladies Home Journal* article said a lady “conforms to a superior standard of conduct” and was “gentle, considerate, fair and kind.”¹¹² By 1958, Julia Wolf, in *House Beautiful*, claimed the two

¹⁰⁹Patty De Roulf, “Must Bachelor Girls Be Immoral,” *Coronet* February 1952, 57.

¹¹⁰Marynia F. Farnham, M.D., and Ferdinand Lundberg, “Men Have Lost Their Women,” *Ladies Home Journal* November 1944, 23.

¹¹¹Richard Attridge, “Most Women Aren’t Gentleman,” *Saturday Evening Post* 7 September 1946, 168.

¹¹²Dorothy Thompson, “Can Women be Ladies,” *Ladies Home Journal* June 1955, 14, 147.

most important factors for a lady were an “ever gentle and low” voice and “self-control. All expressions of discomfort . . . should be discreetly curbed.”¹¹³

Articles about how women needed to conduct themselves in relation to public drinking from 1930 onward reflected and reinforced the idea that they needed to follow a more outdated archetype than men. Kennedy’s 1930 article about female tipplers portrayed this difference as a positive characteristic for women. She claimed that Prohibition had taught women how to drink, but with no explanation, she also asserted that women knew their limits and were too intelligent to get drunk, suggesting that a mere ten years of experience had made women drinkers superior to men.¹¹⁴ The moral superiority of the Progressive-era feminist, hinted at in this piece, did not survive the 1930s. Men’s revision of the history of pre-Prohibition public drinking coupled with the idea that some social arenas were a man’s domain altered how some women thought about alcohol consumption by 1938. Some wives told Pringle in his survey that their husbands thought drinking by women was “‘degrading; I would have to leave my home,’ observed a cook. . . . A nineteen-year-old bride in New York City made it clear that her husband was broad-minded, but only within limits. ‘He objects if I have more than two drinks,’ she said.”¹¹⁵ The wife of a Philadelphia advertiser claimed her husband questioned her “sometimes as regards quantity; never on the idea of drinking.”¹¹⁶ The power men imagined they had over public drinking before 1920 seemed to give some of them control over their wives’ alcohol consumption after Repeal.

¹¹³Julia Whittier Wolfe, “What Makes a Lady,” *House Beautiful* March 1958, 194.

¹¹⁴Kennedy, “Sisters of the Hollow Leg,” 92, 117.

¹¹⁵Pringle, “What Do Women Think About Drinking,” 41.

¹¹⁶Pringle, “What Do Women Think About Drinking,” 41.

The combined influence of the rewritten history of pre-Prohibition public drinking and the notion that men dominated some areas of the public sphere decreased the competency of female drinkers in popular literature throughout the 1940s. Critics constantly told women in these publications that they were not as capable as men in the area of public drinking. Henrietta Ripperger, in her 1940 *Good Housekeeping* article, advised teenage girls to drink as little as possible by intimating that it negatively influenced their social standing. She told these girls that “we’ve assumed that you are not going to drink, and of course you aren’t. . . . [A] girl is never so attractive after she’s had something as she was before. After a drink or two your hair sort of slips, like a wig. . . . Boys prefer to take out a girl who don’t drink [sic].”¹¹⁷ The only time she dealt with young men and drinking was to advise young women not to date a boy who drank too much, clearly signifying a gender-based difference in the ability to handle alcohol. Frankenthaler found that the owners and bartenders of “respectable” establishments thought female drinkers were inferior customers to the male ones. She discovered that these men thought that women did not know how to properly use the bar area. They believed women spilled more drinks and cluttered the bar up with handbags and compacts, while men only left cash. One Madison Avenue bartender told Frankenthaler that women “leave powder and ashes all over the place. . . . Some of ’em need a street cleaner to sweep up after ’em.”¹¹⁸ A 1948 article for *The Pittsburgh Courier* basically claimed that women who frequented bars were morally unfit to be mothers. The reporter asserted that “the male bar fly . . . is a social nuisance . . . but the FEMALE of the species

¹¹⁷Henrietta Ripperger, “Tips to Teens: Lots of Good People Don’t Drink,” *Good Housekeeping* March 1940, 211.

¹¹⁸Frankenthaler, “Milady at the bar,” 13 October 1946.

is much more a menace. She is WORSE because she is destroying . . . her historic role in society which is to bear and to PROPERLY rear the coming generation so that it will be BETTER than that of the past or present.”¹¹⁹ Although none of these critics denied women the right to consume alcohol, a belief that female tipplers needed to drink and use the bar less than men clearly existed in popular literature, implying that men should dominate this activity.

Men took advantage of their seemingly superior position to female drinkers to suggest a double standard for public drinking, which limited women’s access to bars and gave men a version of the male-dominated space they wanted. Frankenthaler found that New York City bartenders expected female tipplers to maintain a level of decorum not required of their male counterparts, suggesting an expectation that women would drink less than and act differently from men. She quoted Sherman Billingsley of the Stork Club as having said, “you kind of expect a man to make a fool of himself after a few drinks, but a woman who’s downed the same amount is conscious that she has to act like a lady.”¹²⁰ The owners of these places, in order to remain “respectable,” even went so far as to deny unescorted women “service after dark and . . . assumed that any woman on the premises is at least a reasonable facsimile of a lady.”¹²¹ Noel Busch, writing for *Life* in 1947, gave female drinkers the most formidable list of advice concerning their behavior in public drinking establishments. He told them:

First of all, let lady tipplers be reminded once again that the bar is a men’s club, not a hospital for housewives with the fidgets. While in it they should try to act accordingly.

When she enters the bar, the lady should do so without fanfare. Taking a table near the door so

¹¹⁹“The New Look,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 February 1948.

¹²⁰Frankenthaler, “Milady at the bar,” *New York Times*, 13 October 1946.

¹²¹Frankenthaler, “Milady at the bar,” 13 October 1946.

that she can leave without annoying other patrons, she should then order some simple potion like beer, wine or whisky which will not distract the barkeep from his major duties. While drinking this she will see to it that articles of personal apparel or adornment do not fall into disarray. If a gentleman accosts her she will reply graciously, as the circumstances indicate, taking good care of her manners.

The lady should not grab other people's fruit, olives or pretzels. She must refrain from patting dogs, cats or other pets who may appear, as these animals are often temperamental. Hat, coat and gloves should not be dropped on the floor. The handbag will be opened if at all only to pay the bill, and there should be no argument about this matter.

If drunken political discussions start, the lady will refrain from taking part in them. She will eschew gossip, critical remarks and the impetuous rejoinder. No more than half an hour after her arrival, she will get up and go home.¹²²

Busch's recommendations relegated women to the role of second-class patrons, leaving men in a position to use the bar for socialization in a fashion similar to the saloon. Thus, by the height of the movement to ban unescorted women from the bar, men seemed to have already won the struggle, with the legal institution of this injunction simply a formality.

However, men's victory in creating a set of circumstances to legally ban unescorted women from the bar was as imaginary as their history of pre-Prohibition public drinking or their success at restoring the old meaning behind vertical drinking. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, female tipplers ignored the advice that limited their ability to drink in public and acted in a way similar to men. A maître d'hôtel, in a 1933 *New York Times* interview, complained that "in the old days you seldom saw a respectable lady enter a barroom unescorted But look at them now. They not only come in alone but order hard liquor. Girls and middle-aged women, and even women with white hair come in and ask for a Manhattan and another Manhattan."¹²³ In the 1935 book *Her Foot Is on the Brass Rail*, author Don Marquis similarly complains that

¹²²Noel F. Busch, "Lady Tipplers," *Life* 14 April 1947, 85.

¹²³"Hard Liquor Leads in Hotel Drinking," *New York Times*, 7 December 1933.

“women come into this New Barroom . . . through the front door. They go right up to the bar. They put a foot on the brass railing. They order; they are served; they bend the elbow; they hoist; they toss down the feminine esophagus the brew that was really meant for men—stout and wicked men.”¹²⁴ A 1948 article for *The Pittsburgh Courier* claimed that millions of women prior to 1920 wore the white ribbon of total abstinence, “but with the coming of Prohibition, along about the same time as the feminist drive for the ballot and the single standard of conduct, clandestine drinking became ‘adventurous’ and ‘smart’ and women entered enthusiastically into what had been largely a male VICE.”¹²⁵ By simply refusing to cooperate, women simultaneously encouraged the continued development of a mixed-gender drinking environment and ended any realistic possibility that men might reclaim a homosocial public space and the ability to facilitate socialization that accompanied it.

Even as men began to try to ban unescorted women from the bar, the glamour girl of the 1940s historically signified the maturation of the heterosocial public drinking culture. Men had used drinking establishments since at least 1880 to find sexual partners, and the glamour girl used the bar for the exact same purpose, which might have contributed to the desire to ban single women from the bar.¹²⁶ The glamour girl was an archetypal descendent of the flapper; she drank, she smoked, and she, in all likelihood, had pre-marital sex. Winthrop Sargeant, writing for *Life* in 1950, described a glamour girl as

¹²⁴Don Marquis, *Her Foot Is on the Brass Rail* (New York: Marchbanks, 1935), 7, 9; quoted in Murdock, *Domesticating Drink*, 166.

¹²⁵“The New Look,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 February 1948.

¹²⁶Duis, *The Saloon*, 249–252; George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 160–162.

primarily something to look at. Whether she had an aristocratic spirit like the Gibson girl or a smoldering soul like the vamp didn't matter a bit. The main thing was that she should resemble as closely as possible the archetypal model represented by the leading movie actresses and the girls who posed for fashion ads. . . . She lacked the Gibson girl's sophistication but made up for it in blooming health and often a touching air of virginal innocence which was somehow never compromised by her good-natured friendliness toward the male.¹²⁷

Dan Burley, a columnist for the African-American newspaper *The New York Amsterdam News*, reported that these women picked up men in the bar.¹²⁸ He suggested that the glamour girl was ready for anything, writing that she was

self-sufficient to herself. In fact, no German Parachutist, equipped with stove, bombs, machine gun, change in underwear, spyglasses, bottles of beer, comb, brush, stocking cap (if he belongs to the Race), and a will to kill can quite eclipse the Glamour Gal on the loose. She matches his equipment with high heels, sheer stockings, lipstick, rouge, powder, purse containing carfare, address book, and extra pair of dainties, and an open mind.¹²⁹

This tactic paid off for some glamour girls. One girl's married beau had "been giving her \$40 a month toward her rent for so long it isn't even news. Last Christmas he gave her a \$750 mink jacket and had promised her a car this coming month."¹³⁰ In terms of the variety of uses to which they put drinking establishments, women had achieved at least one type of social equality with men.

In the struggle for homosociability, the imaginary past men had created in order to justify their control over public drinking could not contend with the reality of this activity after 1933. Women chose to continue to drink in public with men after Prohibition, a fact

¹²⁷Winthrop Sargeant, "Fifty Years of American Women," *Life* 2 January 1950,67.

¹²⁸The available evidence shows that the Glamour girl was a cross-racial phenomenon. Sargeant's article, for example, uses drawings of white women to illustrate the timeline of female archetypes and photographs of actual women, including the glamour girl. In addition, a *New York Times* article by H.I. Brock about the glamour girl also uses pictures of white women to demonstrate his point. See, Sargeant, "Fifty Years," 64-65; H.I. Brock, "The Glamour Girls Are Always with Us," *New York Times*, 5 May 1940.

¹²⁹Dan Burley, "Dan Burley's Backdoor Stuff," *The New York Amsterdam News*, 28 June 1941.

¹³⁰Dan Burley, "Backdoor Stuff," *The New York Amsterdam News*, 15 June 1940.

the first section of this chapter clearly demonstrates. These female tipplers ignored the men who complained of their participation in this once male-dominated pursuit and simply drank with them. The glamour girl and her use of the bar during the 1940s, when men were attempting to drive unescorted women from this place entirely, represented a situation where the men wanting a homosocial public space did not comprehend her significance. Her defiance of the advice offered to women about their conduct in public symbolized how women actually felt about the public consumption of alcohol. The advice, which restricted the freedom of women drinkers, signified a line of thought that most of them found objectionable as it took away some of the equality they had gained with men. The heterosocial consumption of alcohol had become a standard of society, one that could not be replaced by the imagined world some men wanted.

Conclusion

Men's struggle to recreate a male-dominated public drinking culture demonstrated their uncertainty about themselves and how they should act in a familiar yet radically transformed environment. Between 1933 and 1960, male tipplers confronted a continuing problem in defining masculinity and the legalization of a leisure activity they had once controlled. The rewriting of the history of public drinking to make themselves its exclusive participants gave them the rhetorical basis to reshape alcohol consumption after 1933. The movements to permit vertical drinking and ban unescorted women from the bar ultimately represented this revision and the effort to stabilize male gender identity. However, these endeavors failed to give men what they wanted. Perpendicular drinking in the heterosocial bar did not possess the same connotation it had in the

homosocial saloon, and people no longer wanted a drinking establishment dominated by a single gender. The fight for a male-dominated public drinking culture demonstrated the difficult transition for patrons from a traditionally homosocial enterprise to a heterosocial business.

The masculine struggle to regain control over the public drinking culture also symbolized the final creative moment in the formation of the new drinking tradition and the bar. The men who attempted to reestablish features of a single-gender drinking situation offered society an alternative to the environment that Prohibition had motivated people to create and accept into the mainstream drinking culture. This choice would have benefitted primarily the male tipplers who used these places, but it did represent a viable option. The Twenty-First Amendment presented tipplers with the opportunity to decide whether they actually wanted heterosocial drinking. The rejection of men's attempts to restore the single-gender environment demonstrated that a majority of people did not want a return of the pre-1920 drinking situation. This decision relegated the saloon, mainstream homosociability, and their attendant meanings to the past.

CONCLUSION

If it can be said that there was a time and place of death for the saloon as people had understood it for a century or more, it would have been in lower Manhattan in the summer of 1970, when the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York and the New York City Council forced McSorley's Old Alehouse to admit and serve women. Karen DeCrow, a board member of the National Organization for Women, had been fighting against homosocial drinking environments since at least 1968. She had tried targeting the Hotel Syracuse, whose Rainbow Lounge barred unescorted women, but the federal District Court for the Northern District of New York dismissed the case.¹ DeCrow had based it on section 201(a) of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination in places of public accommodation based on race, color, religion, or national origin. However, the courts had consistently dismissed gender discrimination cases based on this portion of the Civil Rights Act; section 201(a) did not ban gender discrimination, making it impossible for the courts to grant plaintiffs any relief under the law.² None of this deterred DeCrow and fellow board member Faith Seidenberg from creating a new case by attempting to receive service at McSorley's. So, in 1969, the two women went to the Alehouse, and the staff, in keeping with the tradition set down by

¹Lauren Collins, "Ladies Night," *The New Yorker*, 85 no. 4, 9 March 2009, 23; *Faith A. Seidenberg and Karen DeCrow, Plaintiffs, v. McSorleys' Old Alehouse, INC., Defendant*, 308 F. Supp. 1253 (S.D.N.Y., 1970).

²*Seidenberg and DeCrow v. McSorleys'*, 308 F. Supp. 1253.

John McSorley, denied them service.³ Although DeCrow and Seidenberg did not get the ale they wanted, they did get an incident upon which to file a new lawsuit.

When the lawyers for McSorley's filed a motion to dismiss the case, it appeared that this suit, like all others of its kind, was going to fail, but on November 12, 1969, U.S. District Court Judge Tenney made a surprise ruling. He began by stating that DeCrow and Seidenberg had no standing to sue based on section 201(a) of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, but he then applied a test called the State Action Standard. He declared that only the State, through its police powers, had the right to issue and revoke licenses for public drinking establishments and that these places continued to operate only at the sufferance of the State. Consequently, these businesses were, through the licensing system, agencies of the State, making "the acts of the licensee those of the State itself."⁴ This reasoning made the case a Fourteenth Amendment issue of equal treatment, which Tenney refused to dismiss. The lawsuit went before U.S. District Court Judge Mansfield, who rejected all the justifications for a homosocial environment in places of public accommodation that served alcohol on June 25, 1970. He stated that McSorley's

policy of refusing service to women hardly represents an exercise of individual choice in the use of private property. McSorley's is open to the public. . . . In this significant respect [the] defendant differs from a private club, which does not purport, and is not required, to serve the public. . . . Furthermore, it is meaningless to conceive of McSorley's policy as in any sense an expression of personal preference on the part of a property owner. As the title of this action indicates, McSorley's is corporately owned. Its decision to exclude women is a business decision.⁵

Mansfield also believed that McSorley's had not shown that its treatment of women served any valid social purpose, such as those presented in *Muller v. Oregon* or *White v.*

³Collins, "Ladies Night," 23.

⁴*Seidenberg and DeCrow v. McSorley's*, 308 F. Supp. 1253.

⁵*Faith A. Seidenberg and Karen DeCrow, Plaintiffs, v. McSorley's Old Alehouse, INC., Defendant*, 317 F. Supp. 593 (S.D.N.Y., 1970).

Cook. He proclaimed: “Outdated images of bars as dens of coarseness and iniquity and of women as peculiarly delicate and impressionable creatures in need of protection from the rough and tumble of unvarnished humanity will no longer justify sexual separatism.”⁶ While Mayor John Lindsay and the New York City Council rendered the decision moot in August 1970 by enacting legislation that made any discrimination in public places illegal, the *McSorley’s* cases became important decisions in legal history. After June 1970, courts, including the Supreme Court of the United States, consistently ruled that homosociability in public drinking establishments and any gender discrimination surrounding the sale of alcohol was unconstitutional.⁷ The single-gender environment of the saloon had been declared both unconstitutional and illegal; without this defining feature, the saloon was, for all intents and purposes, dead.

In the forty-three years since the *McSorley’s* decisions, the bar not only retained the popularity the saloon had demonstrated decades earlier but also thrived as a business regardless of the state of the economy. The Census Bureau showed that the total number of bars in the nation fluctuated between 78,400 in 1972 and 46,924 in 2007.⁸ During this thirty-five year period, Americans had access to the most bars in 1977, with 93,700

⁶*Seidenberg and DeCrow v. McSorley’s*, 317 F. Supp. 593.

⁷*Paterson Tavern & Grill Owners Assn., Inc., a Non-Profit Corporation of New Jersey, et al., Plaintiffs-Appellants, v. The Borough of Hawthorne, A Municipal Corporation, et al., Defendants-Respondents*, Supreme Court of New Jersey (November 1970); *Craig et al. v. Boren, Governor of Oklahoma, et al.*, Supreme Court of the United States, 429 U.S. 190 (1976); *Roy Den Hollander v. Copacabana Nightclub*, 580 F. Supp. 2d 335 (2008).

⁸U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 100th ed., Washington D.C., 836; U.S. Census Bureau, “All Sectors: Core Business Statistics Series: Comparative Statistics for the United States and the States (2002 NAICS Basis): 2007 and 2002,” *American Fact Finder*.

places, and the least in 1990, with 43,800.⁹ Yet, through the stagflation of the 1970s, the Reaganomics of the 1980s, the dotcoms of the 1990s, and the bubbles of the 2000s, drinking establishments increasingly and consistently made more money every year. In 1972, Americans spent \$5.735 billion drinking in bars, which increased to \$7.695 billion by 1977.¹⁰ People expended \$11.5 billion in these place in 1990 when the number of bars were at a low.¹¹ In 2007, people drank away \$18,318,068,000 in the 46,924 bars around the country, up from the \$14,901,587,000 that they had spent in the 48,856 places in 2002.¹² The attractiveness of drinking establishments had survived both the transformative years of 1900 to 1960 and the later booms and busts of the economy.

Meanwhile, the bar's frequent appearances in popular television shows since the 1950s demonstrated both its central role as a gathering place in American society and its adaptable character. Jackie Gleason, playing Joe the friendly bartender, made it the setting for one of the sketches he regularly performed on *The Jackie Gleason Show* (1952–1959). Working-class bigot Archie Bunker regularly went to Kelsey's Tavern, the bar in his Astoria, Queens neighborhood, in *All In The Family* (1971–1979). He then bought it, and it became the primary setting for the series *Archie Bunker's Place* (1979–1983), which continued where *All In The Family* left off. The bar went overseas in *M.A.S.H.* (1972–1983) in the form of Rosie's, the Korean-owned establishment across the road from the 4077th. Jack and Larry went to the Regal Beagle, Los Angeles' swinging singles bar, in *Three's Company* (1976–1984). The bar travelled the galaxy in the

⁹U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract*, 100th ed., 836; U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 119th ed., 1999, 770, 772.

¹⁰U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract*, 100th ed., 836.

¹¹U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract*, 1999, 770, 772.

¹²U.S. Census Bureau, "Comparative Statistics: 2007 and 2002," *American Fact Finder*.

twenty-fourth century on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987–1994) as Ten Forward, where the alien Guinan waited to serve the crew drinks and offer words of wisdom. It appeared in the industrial town of Lanford, Illinois as The Lobo, where Dan, Roseanne, Jackie, and their friends occasionally went on *Roseanne* (1988–1997). It became a cartoon on *The Simpsons* (1989–present) as Moe’s, where Homer, Carl, and Lenny went for drinks and to see their friend and favorite bar owner Moe. Throughout all of television’s genres, the bar was a place where people met for the purposes of drinking and sociability.

But the most illustrative example on television of the bar and how people had come to perceive public drinking was the influential series *Cheers* (1982–1993). Set in the eponymous bar “where everybody knows your name,” the opening credits began with a 1980s street scene that faded into a sepia-toned image from a century before. The next picture showed a hand-shaped sign pointing down a flight of stairs to the bar, signifying a different kind of establishment. Hidden below street level, this business needed only a sign pointing toward the entrance for customers to understand that a place of alcohol and fellowship was near in an era where swinging doors at street level typically served this purpose. This image was followed by a series of drawings and photographs depicting men and women amicably drinking together from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. On the one hand, these images and the series revealed a popular interpretation of the bar’s characteristics. It was a place of relaxation, where people left their status and the outside world behind for a while. It was also a gathering place for men and women of different classes to drink and share their problems. Sam, the former professional baseball player, owned and tended the bar with his old coach and later with Woody, the country

boy who moved to the city. Carla, a former housewife, was the bar's waitress and received help from Diane, the graduate student, and later Rebecca, the businesswoman. Postman Cliff Clavin and accountant Norm Peterson sat across the bar from Frasier and Lilith, the husband-and-wife psychiatrists. On the other hand, this classless camaraderie that ignored gender, especially in the scenes shown in the introduction, presented a history where drinking establishments had not changed over time. According to this opening, the saloon of the 1880s and the bar of the 1980s were largely similar, effectively erasing the sixty-year struggle to create the bar. The series also sidestepped issues of race by only showing pictures of white men and women drinking, which corresponded to their all-white cast. Legally and popularly, people consigned the saloon and its attendant meanings to the past, but they also forgot the efforts that men and women had gone through earlier in the century to create the bar.

The saloon-to-bar transition reveals the complexity of the relationship between leisure activities that were integral components of society and culture and the people who participated in them. Over the course of approximately half a century, public drinking underwent a structural transformation that changed it from a gendered, class-based activity to a heterosocial, allegedly classless one. This alteration made it, in some ways, similar to its contemporary competition, such as dance halls and amusement parks. Drinking establishments, as homes of a centuries-old public drinking culture, also spoke to themes in sociability and consumer culture in ways not evident in other pastimes. Unlike movie theaters, amusement parks, and cabarets, the people who transformed the saloon into the bar had to recreate a new set of conventions to replace increasingly

outdated ones. The issues they faced during this process included conflicts caused by changes in gender identity, the feminization of the public sphere, the move from class-based consumption to mass consumption, and the use of purchased goods to reflect identity. In addition, alcohol occupied a unique position among the countless products that reflected and helped constitute gender identity. While liquor (like clothing, furniture, or other household goods) helped people demonstrate how they viewed (or wanted to view) themselves, it also influenced local, state, and national politics for over two hundred years. Changes in drinking both reflected the changes in how people conceptualized their relationship with each other and their reactions to reformers attempting to limit their access to alcohol. These topics and the alterations that occurred within them implicitly involved drinkers in the questions of how they viewed themselves and what they wanted out of this pastime, matters also linked to consumer culture. Due to its initial status as a gendered activity, the transformation of public drinking during the twentieth century mirrored the concurrent developments of sociability and gender in society.

The conflicts and influences surrounding the changes in gender identity manifested themselves in the adjustments made to sociability in the saloon-to-bar transition. For example, the emergence of the bar represented one instance of the conflict between men and women for influence in society. Men had dominated public drinking for centuries, and as of 1900, it reflected their gender identity and their preeminence in society, contributing to the belief that respectable women should not consume alcohol in public. But throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, working-class men confronted the decline of manhood and the ascendance of masculinity, a transition they

found difficult and attempted to delay by retreating into public drinking. At the same time, respectable women began drinking in their own public places as a manifestation of the freedoms they sought under the gender practice of the New Woman, thus eroding men's control over both this activity and society. The seemingly sudden emergence of mixed-gender drinking during the 1920s represented a decisive moment in this conflict. People eventually accepted the institution of heterosocial public drinking during Prohibition due to, in part, their rejection of the final elements of Victorian gender ideals. The acknowledgement of female drinkers by men cost them their total control over public drinking and over yet another facet of an already fast-changing society. However, not all men gracefully accepted women as equal partners in the drinking sphere: this was represented by their attempts to regain control of public drinking by restricting women's access to bars. The repeated failed efforts to restore the homosocial drinking environment from the 1930s to the 1950s signified the initial hesitation but eventual widespread acceptance of the new gender identities and the behaviors that they simultaneously caused and encouraged. The saloon-to-bar transition symbolized the decreasing control over society that the change in gender identity entailed for men.

The gender wars evident in other aspects of society throughout the twentieth century also appeared in and influenced the public consumption of alcohol. The emergence of heterosociability in public drinking was a microcosm demonstrating the feminization of the public sphere. Women took an increasingly active role in life outside of the home over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, helping them renegotiate their gender identity. Similar to organizations focused on social or urban reforms and the voting booth, the public places where women chose to consume alcohol

demonstrated their increasing influence over activities to which men once had exclusive access. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, respectable women, who were not supposed to drink anywhere, had little choice but to go to businesses without liquor licenses, such as tea rooms, to consume liquor in settings not controlled by men. It was not until Prohibition, when beverage alcohol became illegal, that they began affecting mainstream public drinking. Ignoring the reality of female alcohol consumption before 1920, older generations of adults made the flapper symbolic of women drinking in public and of the decay of society, but the tacit acknowledgement of women's capacity both to consume alcohol and do so with men diverged from traditional attitudes. This departure initiated a reciprocal relationship that increasingly made men and women equal participants in public drinking by influencing the creation of a new type of drinking establishment. The emerging status of female drinkers also contributed to the decay of homosociability after Prohibition; women had gained a privilege once restricted to men, and they fought to keep it, despite some men's resistance. The consumption of alcohol in public places was a little-known but extremely important arena for the reconstitution of gender identity.

The creation of the bar was also an important example of how heterosociability became the norm in society. Activities as diverting as going out for an evening to those as important as voting increasingly became mixed gender from the late nineteenth century onward. The saloon-to-bar transition was a key example of the development of heterosociability in society, representing the long, complex process that traditionally single-gender pursuits went through to become heterosocial. Public drinking was, and still is, a common, everyday activity, and its shift from single gender to mixed gender

demonstrated the decline of a centuries-old redoubt of homosociability. A key component in this transformation was gender identity. The changes in gender identity did more than simply allow men and women to acceptably drink together in public; it influenced their subsequent renegotiation of the purpose and meaning of public drinking. Before 1920, both male and female drinkers used alcohol as a facilitator of socialization, but the meanings they attached to their consumption of liquor differed based on their gender. For older generations of men, public drinking allowed them to create and reinforce a gender identity that they were increasingly unable to produce outside of the saloon. For women, the public consumption of alcohol was only one manifestation of the freedoms they found under the practice of the New Woman. The onset of national prohibition prompted people to begin drinking more alcohol than they had before, but this change in the levels of consumption also signified a shift in the purpose of public drinking. While alcohol as a facilitator of socialization never vanished, drinking as the goal of a leisure activity quickly became socially acceptable. This shift in the purpose of drinking, when combined with the emergence of heterosociability, helped remove some of the gender connotations associated with this pastime. This trend continued after 1933 and helped make men and women more equal in the area of public drinking. People consistently rejected efforts by some male drinkers to restore an element of homosociability to drinking establishments, while female drinkers not only refused to give up their right to drink in public but also began using these places to pick up members of the opposite sex. The transformation of public drinking reflected the concurrent cultural changes in American society and culture.

Finally, the saloon-to bar transition symbolized the move from class-based consumption to mass consumption that accompanied the emergence of heterosociability in public drinking. One conceptualization of mass consumer culture was the use of the same manufactured goods and services by people of all classes. This definition overlooked the fact that people sold some of these commodities for use on the premises, which made the setting (in some ways) as important to the consumer's experience as the product itself. In the case of liquor, which people of all classes had used for centuries, it was the place where people chose to consume it publicly that entered the mass culture. The saloon was a male, working-class institution, and while women and occasionally middle- and upper-class men went to these places, the saloon reflected a gender identity attractive to working-class men, who did not accept the others as part of the regular salongoing group. Consequently, the archetypal center of the public drinking culture before 1920 remained confined to working-class neighborhoods, while middle- and upper-class male drinkers went to hotel or restaurant bars. While Prohibition brought with it the rise of heterosociability, it also motivated proprietors to hide their drinking establishments behind a variety of disguises, one of which was a restaurant. These restaurant speakeasies virtually required that men and women utilize the same space at the same time in order to hide their true purpose, but they also possessed a social flexibility that allowed owners to move them from working-class and downtown neighborhoods to near the residential areas in the suburbs. These businesses became the archetype for public drinking establishments after Prohibition when lawmakers banned nearly every objectionable characteristic of the saloon, except homosociability. The shift from the saloon to the bar moved drinking establishments into the mass consumer culture

by offering customers of all classes spaces possessing similar characteristics in which to drink.

The creation of the bar and the modern public drinking culture represented the efforts of both drinkers and abstainers to deal with the transformations in sociability and consumer culture that accompanied a rapidly changing society. Public drinking possessed elements of each of these themes and illustrated the ways that people both struggled against and willingly instituted the changes in them. The shift from homosociability to heterosociability corresponded to a growing trend in leisure, but it also paralleled changes in gender, a key component in sociability. The alteration of both male and female gender identity allowed men and women to redefine the boundaries of acceptable public interaction, which encouraged their continued expansion of mixed-gender recreational activities. Meanwhile, the increasing availability of manufactured goods and services to people of all classes raised questions concerning the meaning of these products and how they reflected consumers' identities. These larger questions influenced people's perceptions and uses of drinking establishments and the traditions surrounding them, shaping first their obsolescence and then their restructuring. In gradually transforming the saloon into the bar, men and women negotiated the issues surrounding sociability, consumer culture, and gender through the creation of the social and cultural changes of drinking in the bar.

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