Introduction: Why a Social History of Leisure?

Among the ironies of contemporary life is the ambiguity many feel about leisure. Modern people congratulate themselves for creating an economy that has freed the masses from the drudgery of endless hours of work, and many are proud of the varied choices that leisure time has brought. Yet others lament that increased free time has undermined a commitment to competitive work and has led to an untrained, even unrestrained, pursuit of pleasure. An unintended consequence of industrialization, according to this view, is a mass hedonism that threatens western economic and cultural influence in the world. Still others express disappointment that the masses have failed to utilize their free time for personal and social growth and instead have become enslaved to a new tyrant: no longer is that master the parasitical feudal lord or slave-driving factory owner, but the manipulators of mindless consumption. And, if many intellectuals have been frustrated by the use of free time, many too have questioned the practical extent of that liberation from care and work. Contemporary people are a "harried leisure class," burdened by endless demands placed on their free time and, because of commuting, family and other responsibilities, deprived of choice in many hours liberated from the job. In numerous ways, leisure has become work.

It is no surprise then that leisure, like work, is among the most value-laden of concepts. Some refuse its use to those who merely "recreate"—rest and engage in activities which compensate for work. These modern thinkers, following Aristotle, insist that the term leisure be reserved to the disinterested cultivation of personality. Others argue that leisure is no more than a product of economic/cultural power. Social class largely determines leisure choices and economic systems control the range and distribution of recreational activities. A more optimistic outlook is that modern leisure is a concrete form of individualism, valued because it is activity freed from the control of church (or other authority) and natural necessity.

In the midst of so much disagreement about contemporary leisure, what can the historian contribute to the discussion? First and foremost, history can try to set the past record straight. Much of the ambiguity felt toward leisure...
concerns thinking about how play has changed: about what has been lost and gained. And, ideology naturally colors the glasses from which we see the past. My task is not so much to provide a “value free” history (for I too have biases); rather it is to offer a reasonably concrete picture of how leisure has changed. It is important to know when and why people stopped watching cock fights or started listening to radio. It is also worthwhile to understand why and why leisure behavior took major changes of course. I argue that these transformations have mostly taken place since the 16th century. Whatever your assessment of contemporary leisure may be, it can only be understood in the context of the stream of history.

Perhaps the greatest problem is that historians have seldom shown much interest in the question of explaining people’s use of free time. Until recently, most historians have studied the deeds of politicians, generals, intellectuals, and perhaps businessmen. The scope of people’s free time was “private” and cordonned off from serious historical inquiry. To be sure, leisure has had a place in the study of everyday life and popular culture. But scholars have usually undertaken these topics for ulterior purposes—like the study of class, gender, or political change. As a result, historians have neglected the story of the modern emergence of free time and the changing meaning of leisure as an activity of intrinsic value.

So what use is history? One answer is that the subdiscipline of social history has frequently filled the gap left by more traditional approaches. In recent years, social historians have explored those private sides of history, family, community, and work that had been so long neglected; and they have increasingly linked these social spheres to popular culture, much of which is leisure. People at play are obviously part of a wider society of work, family, religion, and even political power. These broad relationships are surely central to an understanding of the changing meanings of leisure.

This is not to suggest that leisure is merely a function of the prevailing economic/political system. Play may well have been a means of “social control” or a part of the social construction of gender and class roles.4 Leisure was doubtless often a vehicle for one group to protest the dominance of another. How else do we explain the popularity of traditional festivals that mocked authority? Play was also a reflection of technology and the physical environment, and how necessity determined the time and character of leisure. However, the story of leisure was also created by people and is not merely the effect of social or economic forces. Play was often an agent of social change, not only a consequence. And, in order to understand the varieties of leisure, it is perhaps most important that we understand that specific people enjoyed leisure activities—cock fights as well as theater.

We can understand the play of people of vastly different societies because it has something in common with our own pleasures—desire for variety, timidity, and freedom from anxiety, for example. Yet historical societies shaped that play in ways that make it seem strange to us precisely because it came from a very foreign social context. Rural festivals make sense to us; but we are not tempted to revive them precisely because our social lives are so different from that of peasants.

How do we begin to understand the influence of these social/historical factors upon the scope and meaning of play? Most modern social historians agree that the industrialization of Western economies is the critical factor. Commonly, if crudely, modern social history is divided into preindustrial, industrializing, and consumer phases. The same categorizations may be applied to the closely linked phenomenon of leisure. Thus we speak of the modernization of play.

This approach poses three potential problems: first, our understanding of preindustrial and industrializing societies is far more complete than is the history of consumer society—in large part because the latter is still emerging. Second, modernization theory implies the very sort of determinism that I have just rejected. It suggests that countries inevitably move through these phases like an organism and that change is simply the effect of technology or economic “rationalization.” This book will try to present a more balanced picture: it will stress the role of movements and, occasionally, of individuals in the shaping of modern leisure. It will show the debates, doubts, and conflicts that accompanied this history.

The third problem of modernization theory is that it tends to gloss over national differences: no one can deny that Americans played differently in their preindustrial phase than did Europeans or that regional culture and environment shaped the quantity and quality of free time. Most modern historians analyze the evolution of nations. There are many reasons for doing this. The difficulty comes, of course, when American or European historians mistake a characteristic common to most preindustrial societies as a “national trait.” For example, the proclivity of colonial Americans to gamble or drink heavily might be attributed to American character, when, with variations, this behavior was common throughout the peasant societies of Europe. The opposite error is just as important, finding a universal truth in the “accidents” of colonial America or Edwardian England.

The work of sorting out the national from the general pattern can be done only when leisure is studied comparatively. I have chosen two countries—the United States and Great Britain—for my comparison. Given the fact that their histories frequently touched, it is no surprise that their leisure histories had much in common. Yet many factors made them different: physical environment, immigration (and emigration), and contrasting economic histories, for example.

I picked these two countries for several reasons. Naturally, English-speaking readers are most interested in their own leisure history. I regret that I cannot give much space to the unique character of other English-speaking areas.
Moreover, there is a relatively rich historic literature dealing with these two countries from which to draw. At times, I will be obliged to emphasize the experience of one country over the other because of the uneven character of this research. I will stress English leisure rather more in the earlier periods and American play patterns slightly more in the later years. If the 18th and much of the 19th centuries were the years of British economic and cultural dominance, much of the 20th was the American century. Finally, I selected these two countries because they both played such an innovative role in the history of modern leisure. Spectator sports and the Boy Scouts as well as the amusement park and the television sit-com were mostly inventions of Anglo-Americans.

The study of the play of these two countries is hardly a substitute for a general history of modern leisure, yet it is a practical surrogate.

This will be an integrative, not a descriptive history of play, isolated from the rest of social experience. As sociologists of leisure frequently point out, play cannot be understood apart from work, family, community, and technology. Political pressures also shaped the modern formation of pleasure. At times, the reader may wonder what a passage has to do with leisure. But I hope that the connection will soon become clear. Some may have a greater personal interest in either the American or British experience. I hope, however, that a look at both sides may give you insights into your own leisure patterns as well as broaden your perspective on other cultures. This book has packed much history into relatively few pages. It must gloss over a great deal of fascinating detail. Notes provide a guide for further reading.

This book may not resolve the ambiguity that many feel about contemporary leisure, but I hope that it will clarify some of the issues.
Traditional Society and the Place of Leisure

Telling the story of how people played in the past may seem to be a relatively straightforward task. Yet, to get beneath bare description and the distortions of common assumptions about the past, we must consider two problems.

First, there is no consensus about the “world we have lost” of our ancestors. Many share the view of the 17th century philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, who believed the life of the past was “nasty, brutish and short.” To this group the “bad old days” were filled with war, early and unpredictable death, oppression, and most of all, unstinted work. According to this view there was scarcely any time for leisure. The sociologist of recreation, Joffre Dumazedier, paints a picture of “traditional” leisure as throttled by religious and family controls, with no room for individual expression. A recent historian agrees: the social demands of elders and clergy and the unpredictability of life produced a “siege mentality” and a “general psychological atmosphere of distance, manipulation, and deference...”14

Yet others have argued the opposite. In the 19th-century, British labor leaders told factory workers that before industrialization, Englishmen worked no more than eight hours per day; the medieval King Alfred had established the right of “freeborn” Englishmen to the three-eights division of the day into work, rest, and leisure. Some contemporary historians also lean toward this point of view. One scholar writes of 17th century England as a time “when the whole of life went forward in the family in a circle of loved, familiar faces, known and fondled objects, all of human size.”15

This conflict over the reality of traditional life is, at least, as old as the modern discipline of history. Since the 18th century, thinkers have disputed the gains and losses of modernity. If the Enlightenment believed that the world was inevitably improving over the “Dark Ages” of the past, the Romantics of the early 19th century were less certain of the benefits of individualism, science, and industry. In many ways this debate is still going on. It reflects as much our ambiguity towards our own world as our uncertainty about how our ancestors really lived.

There is a second problem to be confronted before we consider premodern leisure. There is much confusion about what is traditional. When
most of us think of the traditional world, we really picture a relatively modern experience, often customs and attitudes that are less than two hundred years old. The traditional Sunday family get-togethers and the circus under the big top are quite new, even if they are now passing from the scene. In the perspective of historians, these leisure forms are really modern, not only because of their comparative youth but also because of their links to the rapid change that is so characteristic of 19th-century America and England. We, who live in the late 20th century, have far more in common with these traditional ways of life than with what preceded it.

Yet, even historians, who ought to have a firm grasp on the concept of the traditional, find it hard to pin down this notion. After all, its opposite, the modern, we are told, already appeared in the 1500s with the Protestant Reformation and still more in the late 1600s and 1700s with the Scientific, French, and Industrial Revolutions. Yet, outside of the urban centers, life had scarcely changed in 1800, or even much later, from how it was in the Middle Ages.

One striking example of this survival of the traditional is the case of the Cow's Head festival still celebrated in 1937 in West Houghton, a village in the Midlands of England. Like the festivals of the past, it was a four-day celebration, held the last week of August. The event was held in remembrance of a farmer, who finding a neighbor's cow caught in his fence, cut off the animal's head. By the 1930s, the tradition of parading a cow's head on a pole throughout town (with its undertones of a fertility rite) had disappeared and the custom of eating a cow's head was restricted to a few bars. Yet this village, which was only a few miles from the factory towns of Bolton and Wigan, continued to use the occasion for drinking and consuming pasties. What is also intriguing about this apparent holdover of rural myth in an industrial society is that this seemingly archaic rural tradition dates only from 1815, well into the so-called modern age of industrialism when we should assume that leisure was being modernized. Tradition can, in fact, be "invented." Obviously, premodern leisure cannot easily be fixed in chronological time.

How then do we get beyond our feelings about the present in our view of the past? And how do we divide the modern from the old world? There is no easy solution to these problems. There is no value-free history nor is there a sharp line that separates the two worlds. Perhaps the simplest way of approaching these problems is to begin by defining a series of economic, social, and cultural patterns which we will call "traditional." We apply this label because these patterns prevailed before the revolutions which, for many reasons, historians believe shaped the contemporary world. Yet we must keep in mind that these premodern ways of life often survived the radical transformations in religion, science, politics, and economics, which ultimately produced modern leisure forms.

Many historians argue that the "modern world" really begins only about 1800. This is true especially if one focuses on the life of ordinary family. The dramatic struggles for empire and world exploration as well as the intellectual life of the elite, which take such a prominent place in the history of Europe between 1450 and 1800, played only an episodic role in lives of most the villagers. Far more important were the relatively unchanging facts of technology, family, and local society.

The Primacy of Technology

Key to an understanding of traditional life is the snail pace of technological and economic change. To be sure, the 12th and 13th centuries brought water- and wind-powered grain mills and the vertical loom; the 14th century saw an hour clock; and the 15th century introduced printing and iron blast furnaces. Still, such innovations scarcely affected the 75 percent or more of the population whose lives were tied to hand tools and draught animals which had dominated agricultural life for centuries. Farmers relied primarily on grain crops, productivity of which had scarcely improved since their domestication in ancient times. Standards of living rose slowly and were repeatedly set back by famine and disease.

Obviously, the lack of labor-saving devices meant that the hours of work often stretched from 5:00 AM to 8:00 PM or even 9:00 or 10:00 PM. Twelve or more hours of work per day was common; meal and rest breaks were pauses, not modern leisure. Iron founders and glass makers usually labored in 12 hours of continuous work seven days per week. And, of course, in most out of door occupations, work extended from sunup to sundown. Artisans or craftsmen spent a majority of their income on food, in hard times up to 90 percent. There was little chance of saving for retirement or allowing the young the luxury of a work-free childhood. And, if few adults survived their sixtieth birthday, there was always an excess of youthful mouths to feed. In the 16th century, over 40 percent of the population of Italian towns was under 16 years old and, as late as 1820, 48 percent of the population in Britain was under the age of 20. Small wonder that child's play was sacrificed to labor. For the poor, work often began at scarcely six years and apprenticeships regularly started at ten.

Yet there was another side to technological backwardness. The pace of life was clearly not dictated by the speed of the machine or the demands of the market as it is today. Rather, nature's seasons organized the peasant's time. Plowing, seeding, and harvesting alternated with periods of relative inactivity. Working longer and harder than one's neighbor or parent hardly guaranteed one a better life. Dependence on the luck of weather and the soil's fertility made peasants fatalistic.

In the premodern world, a work ethic made little sense. Long days of work were often punctuated by moments of refreshment (often accompanied with beer or wine), games, or other play. From the 16th century, English merchants tried to tap this underutilized rural labor. They put farmers to work in the winter spinning yarn or weaving cloth. This so-called putting-out system, however, frequently frustrated merchants. For, if rural labor was cheaper than
urban workers, the episodic and slow pace of agricultural work made these part-time peasant artisans undisciplined and unreliable producers. They not only freely abandoned craft work to tend to farm animals or crops, but found the regular pace of industrial work psychologically unacceptable. This preindustrial work culture of peasants still plagues those manufacturers who attempt to utilize cheap rural labor throughout the world.

To be sure, the seasonal character of farm labor meant long working hours in Spring and especially from late June until the end of September. During the harvest in England, even the village blacksmith and landowning gentry would join in the work, so important was the wheat, barley, and hay produced in this relatively unfavorable climate.

Yet there is another side to this story, the frequent holidays celebrated in the off-season. In France in 1700, there were about 84 holidays per year, not including (for those working out-of-doors) about the same number of days of idleness because of inclement weather. In 17th-century Paris, there were 103 holidays and in parts of northern Italy in the 16th-century the figure was about 95 (including Sundays). In 1552, The English Parliament attempted to restrict holidays (excluding Sunday) to 27 per year but met with much resistance in rural areas.  

Most of these work-free days were tied to the religious calendar. But they were also spaced in the relative ebbs of the rural work year: All Soul’s Day (or Halloween) and Guy Fawkes Day (November 5), Christmas to Shrove Tuesday (or Mardi Gras), and Easter to Whitsun tide (or Pentecost). Each of these featured specific customs: decorating churches with sprigs of birch trees and dressing up on Whit Sunday, for example. But during the days following a religious holiday there were also sometimes “horse parades, processions of trades’ and benefit clubs; fairs, menagerys, circles and traveling shows; sports meetings for running, wrestling, cudgelling, boxing, cricket, and . . . .the climbing of a greased pole having a leg of mutton or other trophy on the top.” Shrove Tuesday (just before the onset of Lent) was the day of giving pancakes to children. Youths banged stones against the doors of villagers, while shouting.

English parish festivals or wakes weeks often occurred in the early or late summer. They celebrated the founding of the parish church. But, by the 17th century, they had largely lost their religious meaning except, perhaps, in the procession of children carrying rushes through the village to lay on the floor of the church. Wakes weeks were, in reality, a period of largely secular diversion—of sport, drinking, and dancing. They occurred mostly during lulls in the agricultural work cycle. Midsummer or St. John’s Eve (June 23-24) largely served the same function with the added spectacle of midnight bonfires and dances.

Holidays were also related to annual fairs, the traditional marketing of goods. Fairs sometimes specialized in livestock, cheese, hardware, or general goods. These annual gatherings of migratory merchants were essential in a rural society, which lacked adequate retail shops or wholesale facilities to market agricultural products. Other fairs were primarily for the annual hiring of young farm servants. They often coincided with All-Soul’s Day or Midsummer’s Eve.

In the 18th century, at the English Stourbridge Fair, there were stalls not only for the sale of practical goods but:

Coffee-Houses, Taverns, Eating Houses, Music Shops, Buildings for the Exhibition of Drolls, Puppet Shews, Legerdemain, Mountebanks, Wild Beasts, Monsters, Giants, Rope Dancers, etc.... Besides the Booths, there are six or seven brick houses... and in any of which the Country People are accommodated with hot or cold Goose, roast or boiled Pork.

The oddities we associate with the traveling carnival or stalls at Blackpool and other inexpensive seaside resorts were long customary in rural English fairs. Wax figures of the famous and infamous, painted panoramas of historic events, curiosities such as dwarfs, a thin man, pig-faced ladies, and people from exotic places were all commonplace in fairs in the 17th century and much earlier. So too were clowns, puppet shows, and gingerbread stalls. Hiring fairs especially were noted for bringing together young men and women. Farm hands, complained one 18th century observer, “consider themselves as liberated from servitude on this day; and, whether they be already hired, or really want masters,” they rushed to the fairs. Men displayed their bravado in matches of singlesticks and backwords as well as a variety of races; evenings would be filled with dancing. The young couples during such fairs: and if we note village records, disproportionate numbers of babies were born nine months following these festive periods.  

The character of the agricultural work year made for seasonal leisure and the blending of work and play. Yet the constraints of nature or technology also shaped the use of time by merchants and urban craftsmen. The speed of the ox cart or sailing ship controlled the pace of business for the merchant and producer. So slow were communications and so costly was the transportation of goods and raw materials that few craftsmen or merchants had markets beyond their own limited surroundings. The price of goods could easily double with a 50 mile overland journey to market. Thus craftsmen usually worked for individual or custom order. Wealth was too scarce to be tied up or risked in accumulating an inventory of manufactured goods. This meant that even the industrial and commercial population worked on a seasonal basis when customers wanted shoes or clothing—and often at a pace that we moderns would find downright lazy.

For merchant-manufacturers (who supplied raw materials to craftsmen and marketed finished goods), profit came less from lowered production costs and efficient hard work than from successful risk-taking and high markups in
relatively small luxury goods markets. Success or failure sometimes turned on the fate of a relatively fragile cargo ship sailing the high seas. Life was more of a gamble and less the reaping of the fruits of hard work. Small wonder that Virginia tobacco planters in the 17th century would wager half of their harvest on a horse race. Ordinary business might well be just as risky. This was even true of 17th century Puritan merchants in New England, whose business dealings in sugar, slaves, and naval stores were strung out over months of waiting between the coming and going of ships. This left hundreds of empty hours, not only for religion but also for conversation and personal pleasures, for these presumably hard-working Yankees.\textsuperscript{12}

The slow pace of technological change meant that leisure customs could long survive and be passed on from one generation to another by example and word of mouth. Urban workers, for example, celebrated not only the usual Christian holidays, but suspended work on special days in honor of the patron saint of their trade. It was customary in Medieval Europe for masters to grant workers a half-day off in order to prepare for each holiday. In many trades, masters were expected to pay workers for these days. Sometimes this meant that holidays were piled on holidays over the generations. For example, after many centuries, the tradition-bound Romans of the fourth century AD celebrated 175 annual holidays! And, despite the rigors of the night work, some French bakers in the 17th century still were at leisure for the equivalent of 141 days.\textsuperscript{13}

In periods of relative prosperity (like the 16th or 18th century), craftsmen reduced the hours of labor sometimes by two hours per day. This was possible because "employers" (often little more than suppliers of raw materials and marketers of finished products) had little direct control over the pace or methods of work. The actual production process was usually controlled by a father in a household of workers; laborers were often members of his family. The employer seldom entered this cottage and certainly had no direct means of forcing weavers or spinners to work rapidly or regularly.

Low prices for the family's output of yarn or cloth might force the head of the household to insist on longer working hours. Indeed, in the early 18th century, economists advocated that merchants collude to lower prices. This, they believed, was the only effective means of forcing cottage producers to work steadily every day. However, higher prices often meant that work discipline was relaxed. The pace and length of the workday, especially in the early part of the week, was reduced. Both rural and urban artisans seem to have had a fixed notion of an appropriate standard of living. If prices were raised, instead of working steadily for increased income, these craftsmen seem to have reduced their time at work in order simply to earn their accustomed wage. Apparently they possessed a stronger leisure ethic than work ethic.\textsuperscript{14}

Yet, even when a craftsman worked for himself and presumably would be interested in accumulating wealth, he seldom had any incentive to increase his hours of work. There was little advantage in building up an inventory of goods. A blacksmith, for example, generally lacked the funds necessary to stock up in pig iron or charcoal much less to tie up his scarce resources in ready-made horse shoes. As a result, his work was paced by demand. And this meant a rather leisurely tempo, frequently interrupted by informal conversation and other forms of play.

An English law of 1495 attempted to impose a 12-hour day upon producers in a work schedule of 5:00 AM to 7:00 PM. But a 10 1/2 hour workday was far more common in the 16th century. While 18th-century British ship builders were "bound over" to work 12 hours per day, they often quit work at 11:30 AM (not noon) and returned at 3:00 PM (rather than at 1:00 as proscribed in their contracts). In effect, the ten-hour workday prevailed in such trades.

Many skilled trades long celebrated an informal holiday at the beginning of the week in what, somewhat mockingly, was called St. Monday. This custom epitomized an often-noted characteristic of preindustrial labor: its preference for leisure over increased income. When prices for their products rose or when costs of living decreased, they often responded with working less and playing more rather than attempting to accumulate wealth. What marked off the privileged trades from the lowly occupations was less a higher material standard of living than greater time free from work. In the face of social solidarity or inertia (depending on your point of view), reformers had much difficulty in uprooting this leisure ethic. Only the revolutionary impact of economic and technological change would seriously threaten this customary leisure and break up the communities that perpetuated and defended it.\textsuperscript{15}

**The Impact of Family and Community**

Sociologists have long distinguished traditional from modern society by the role that kin and neighbor played in the shaping of the individual's life. In the old world, almost no one lived alone or even within the strict confines of the nuclear family. Few had privacy. The humble lived in rural cottages or quarters above or behind a shop. These lodgings seldom consisted of more than one or two rooms. And, while the size of the household, especially in Western Europe, was seldom more than five, close quarters had an immense impact on the individual. It necessarily produced a collective outlook on work and leisure. In an environment where the same space was used to work, eat, sleep, and play, these functions were bound to be mixed. Where no one had a room of one's own, individualized or age-specific leisure had no space to develop—at least at home.

Historian Philippe Ariès argues that before the 18th century both the young and the old played the same games and shared in the same leisure. From about four years of age, children joined in the dancing and card games of ale houses. They were even allowed to gamble. Both rough outdoor sports like bull baiting, which to us are suitable only to adults, and seemingly childish activities...
like swinging, teeter-totter, or parlour games were played by both child and adult. This promiscuous mixing of the young and old in leisure ended only as graded schools deliberately separated the child from adult society. These schools emerged only in the 17th and 18th centuries (and then only for the elite). 16

Moreover, because of the lack of private living space, the community, rather than the home, dominated leisure moments. Even more than today, recreational periods were organized in sex-segregated activities away from the home rather than in family units. Since the Middle Ages, in the relatively warm climate of southern France, the village square and town well formed the foci of male leisure. In the colder and damper regions of England, the alehouse performed a similar role.

For example, in the 14th-century French village of Montailou, seven or eight villagers regularly met at one of their houses to play dice and chess. Others joined over the dinner table or fire to sing or play the flute. Indeed, a shepherd considered himself a failure if he could not afford a flute. More significant, however, were the neighborhood meetings of men under the elm tree on Sundays. There the men would talk about both women and religion. The 17th-century British ale house was often little more than a room in the cottage of a villager, who was licensed to serve beer. The owner was usually a farmer aided in his second calling by his wife, who often served as brewer. Small groups, mostly of men, gathered, especially on damp and cold days, for cards, conversation, and drink. 17

Women usually lacked these public and carefree opportunities for leisure. Their social pleasures were confined to church and to conversations at the market, well, or mill. Also important were the get-togethers when women worked. The 18th century has left witnesses of French veillées. These were gatherings of country people on Saturday evenings, most often held in winter months in barns. Women knitted or crocheted while talking, sharing information, and even singing. Each participant would contribute to the costs of the lantern and would share the warmth of a fire and animal heat. These veillées were similar to the sewing bees of American pioneer women a century later. 18

Poverty may have dictated these collective pleasures. Yet even for the rich there was no privacy. The intimacy of the dining room or the drawing room was unknown in the 17th century, even for royalty. For the French King Louis XIV, the pleasures of conversation or eating were open to an army of courtiers and distant relatives in multipurpose halls at his palace of Versailles. Even the privacy of the bed was inhibited by the nearly constant presence of servants; aristocratic women in 17th-century France were oblivious to the presence of male servants while taking baths. Individualism and the ideal of the intimacy of family had yet to be invented. 19

The primacy of the community over the family or individual was also a product of inadequate medicine and food. Both the individual and the family were most precarious entities. Up to half of children were dead by age four; a 20 to 30 percent mortality rate among babies less than one year of age was common. In 17th-century England, death rates for youth in their 20s was as high as mortality for people today in their 60s. As a result, parents might well have to rely on relatives or neighbors to raise children. Put differently, families were often “invaded” by the casualties of biological catastrophe, the widows or orphans of relatives.

Moreover, because of the economic costs of large families, the young often married relatively late. In 17th-century England, except for the very rich, men seldom married before age 27 and the mean for women was only a year or two younger. Thus, women and men remained in the homes of their parents often until their elders died or were incapacitated. Marriage was reserved for those capable of supporting a household. There were few who worked at jobs in offices or factories. This was because almost all production was done in the house. As a result, a couple married only when they could establish such a house. They not only had to have a skill and employment, but land, tools, and a cottage in order to support a family.

Especially in Western Europe, the young hired themselves out as servants. They usually lived in the homes of their masters and shared social as well as work lives with their superiors. Thus, the master tradesman, rather than the parent and family, often initiated the young into the world of work and leisure. A 17th-century English apprentice agreed to follow the master’s commandments both on and off the job:

Taverns and alehouses he shall not haunt; dice, cards or any other unlawful games he shall not use; fornication with any woman he shall not commit; matrimony with any woman he shall not contract. He shall not absent himself by night or by day without his master’s leave but be a true and faithful servant.

Masters would sometimes be legally accountable for the morality of their apprentices and servants. 20

Yet the older journeymen (workers who had completed their training but were still not masters) were often as influential on the young apprentice. In France, for example, organizations of journeymen dominated the leisure life of young male workers. They initiated youths into an often rich tradition of secret initiation rites, brawls with other trades, and annual festivals celebrating patron saints. These recreations, so reminiscent of the activities of modern college fraternities, colored artisans’ attitudes toward work and leisure for the rest of their lives. The artisan “works to live and have a good time; he does not live to work.” Even masters were patrons of journeymen celebrations. On specific occasions, bosses were expected to finance the parties of their journeymen. This free and easy way with money often meant that the master’s wife took charge of
business finances. Because she lacked those “hallowed traditions” of the
journeyman’s organizations, the wife “is a good manager essential to the success
of the shop, for it is she who runs it.”

There were some who resisted these collective pressures for pleasure.
In his Autobiography, Benjamin Franklin notes how the journeyman at an
London printing shop, “drank every day a pint [of beer] before breakfast, a pint
at breakfast with his bread and cheese, a pint between breakfast and dinner, a
pint at dinner, a pint in the afternoon about six o’clock, and another when he had
done his day’s work.” This was a custom which was reinforced by rules
requiring newcomers to provide the others with “Foot ales.” The tee-totaling
Franklin reluctantly gave in to this ritual, but he was thankful that it did not exist
in America.

Despite individualists like Franklin, peer pressure on leisure and work
customs prevailed. Communal controls on leisure cemented group loyalties,
regulated courtship, and chastised those who violated group expectations. For
example, the weaning bee was as much a place for the supervision of unmarried
couples and of the selection of appropriate matches as it was of diversion and
sociability. Sporting contests were often waged between villages (or their
champions) rather than between individuals. The purpose was less the display
of personal athletic skill than the building of loyalty to the group. The community
rather than the individual controlled the content and purpose of leisure life.

**Elite Culture and Popular Culture**

Traditional society was characterized by a basic division between the elite and
the common people, a split that fostered a unique contrast between elite and
popular cultures. The relative absence of a class in the middle created a cultural
world quite different from our own.

The ideals of a leisure class were expressed by Aristotle as early as the
4th century BC. For this Greek philosopher, leisure was “freedom from the
necessity of labor”; it was self-cultivating activity without any utilitarian
purpose. As Sebastian De Grazia argues, the Greek aristocratic ideal was “the
hearing of noble music and noble poetry, intercourse with friends chosen for
their own worth, and above all the exercise, alone or in company, of the specula
tive faculty.”

Yet, the class that was free from the necessity of labor seldom reached
these standards. In the Middle Ages, the aristocratic leisure class was materially
based on ownership of land and control of peasant labor. The institutions of
serfdom and (especially after 1400) rents, dues, monopolies, and royal posts
provided the necessary income. Both the upper clergy and the warrior class
participated in this way of life and often came from the same families. Of
course, freedom from regular toil guaranteed time for diversion and self-
cultivation.

But in the early Middle Ages (10th to 12th centuries), elite male leisure
was dominated by physical training for combat and hunting. The tournaments,
in which young knights competed for prizes in mock combat, were a central part
of the recreational calender. Still, the English crown encouraged the lesser ranks
to practice and compete in the use of the longbow from the time of the Hundred
Years War in 1338. Until the French Revolution in 1789, hunting was the
exclusive right of the aristocracy. In any case, only the aristocracy possessed the
vast stretches of land and horses that were required for the full enjoyment of this
sport. The domestication of hawks was another upper-class recreation—of
women as well as men—in the Middle Ages. In many ways, the medieval
aristocracy set the stage for later ideas of leisure, especially in physical activity.
The nobility also supported the traditions of the strolling singer or minstrel who
performed in the great halls of the nobles at dinner. More important, the after-
ninner entertainment was often devoted to dice and chess, both known to the
ancient Greeks, as well as to other board games like backgammon and draughts,
and to card games, from the 14th century.

As the warring classes were pacified and court life emerged in the 12th
century, the leisure culture of chivalry began to compete with these physical and
gaming traditions. A new stress on music, poetry, and even romantic love
emerged in the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine. Yet it is important to note that
chivalric leisure had little impact beyond the courtiers, a small group of retainers
with little social or political influence outside the most urban parts of Europe,
i.e. Southern France and Italy. The ideas of romantic love hardly penetrated the
common classes and were weak even among the elite.

The emergence of an urban society in northern France and Italy in the
14th and 15th centuries played a far more influential role in transforming the
leisure society of the European aristocracy. The so-called Renaissance, so well
known for its contribution to the recovery of ancient artistic and philosophic
ideals, was at least as important for its innovation in the arts of leisure. The
Italian and French aristocracy of the 15th century no longer lived in the isolation
of the manor or castle. Instead, they congregated in the bustling life of urban
centers like Florence, Milan, Lyons, and Paris. There, they began to develop
unique urban cultures.

These societies were characterized by their quest for individual
expression and their openness to, even obsession with, change or fashion. The
invention of fashion in the Renaissance is one of the key changes that made the
European elite unique in the world. It sparked the development of clothing
industries in Italy and the Low Lands, later stimulated the fur trade in North
America, and led to a virtual revolution in home furnishings. This meant the
development of upholstered chairs, wallpaper, and carpets. It created new
standards of comfort. Fashion became a key element in the filling of hours of
leisure.

Even more important was the development and partial rediscovery of the
ideals of self-cultivation. This had little to do with Aristotle’s call for
always more conservative, in the sense of being resistant to change. Commoners retained their communal pleasures and resisted the individualist far longer; their games remained rougher and less constrained by rules; and these pleasures were expressed in the traditional episodic festival or in small single-sex groups rather than in the regularized form of individual and family moments of fun. The upper classes, not the popular classes, would invent the weekend and the summer vacation.

The preindustrial European enjoyed lengthy breaks from the daily drudgery of manual work. Perhaps the most unique feature of popular leisure culture was its principle of *saturalia*, which derives its name from the ancient Roman custom of a week of drinking in early December. At base it was a “binge”—the unrestrained indulgence in food and drink, so often noted by anthropologists studying primitive village culture, was common in medieval European rural society. *Saturalia* served as a psychological release for people who knew scarcity all too well. Finally, in annual festivals like Mardi Gras and May Day, the common people indulged in a variety of games, plays, and songs that expressed many subtle forms of protest against the rich and powerful. The May Pole was long a symbol of dissent from authority, a major reason for its occasional suppression in troubled periods of English history.

Still, the elite—whether the clergy, local lord, or king—seldom attempted to repress these popular enjoyments. Even though popular leisure activities were often chaotic and crude, even violent and critical of the status quo, the powerful often patronized them. Sometimes they contributed land for games or food and drink. Quite often, an aristocrat, even one trained in the new arts of the gentleman (despite Castiglione’s admonition), would wrestle with his peasants or join them in a dance or song. At least until the 17th century, popular leisure was enjoyed by both the rich and the poor. There was always an interpenetration of the two cultures. Chivalric tales (like Tristan and Isolde) reached down into popular folklore. They became the major themes of cheap “blue” or “chap” books which were widely available to the laboring classes by the 17th and 18th centuries. At the same time, traditional popular dances, like the waltz, percolated up to the upper classes in the 18th century.

Moreover, the powerful felt that these periodic outbreaks of playful disorder were essential for the stability of society. Even the mocking of authority by the election of a boy or madman to the title of bishop or sheriff in a “feast of fools” was viewed as an effective way of releasing hostility.

This point of view was expressed in the *Book of Sport* published by the English kings in 1618 and 1633. These declarations, to be read in church, encouraged the traditional sports and pleasures of dancing, archery, jumping, or “any other such harmless recreation.” They also approved of “May-games, Whitsun-ales, and Morris dances; and the setting up of May-poles.” These activities would reinforce loyalty to the king and the passive acceptance of the status quo.
Leisure and the Traditional Meaning of Time

Leisure in preindustrial societies played radically different roles in the social routine than it plays in the modern world. Recreation was closely tied to the agricultural cycle and was far more irregular than in our rationalized industrial society. It also served social functions that differ sharply from our more individualized leisure activities. And, leisure often provided a necessary release of tensions borne of the rigidities of societies where class and status required constant subordination and social control. The following discussion of Saint Monday, charivari, and carnival will illustrate these distinctive qualities of traditional leisure, especially among the common people.

One of the clearest expressions of the irregular character of the work and leisure lives of the preindustrial artisan is the custom of Saint Monday, absenteeism on Monday morning if not the whole day. St. Monday was usually practiced by the traditional urban crafts. For example, as late as the 1860s, it was common among skilled tradesmen, such as tailors and mechanics, in the capitals of Paris and London and in major cities like Lyons and Birmingham. Women’s trades (lace, laundry, etc.) did not provide the income nor the organizations necessary to impose these extra days of leisure upon reluctant employers.

There were a number of reasons why this custom emerged: necessary materials for the week’s work often did not arrive until Monday afternoon or Tuesday. Orders did not have to be filled until Saturday morning; thus work early in the week was less pressing. Saturday pay burned holes in the pockets of working people on Mondays. Male workers celebrated Sunday with family, but then spent Mondays with comrades in ale houses—while money was still available. Often this custom was organized by the journeyman’s organizations. Among early 19th-century Parisian machinists, workers regularly participated in organized drinking parties twice a week on the edge of town where the wine was cheaper. Especially in good times, St. Monday was often extended to Tuesday. Porcelain makers in Limoges, France, seldom worked more than 15 days a month in the 1850s. And, as late as the 1860s, some skilled iron workers in Birmingham, England, worked no more than a three- or four-day work week. This behavior was justified as the ancient right of members of skilled trades.

From the 1820s, employers’ attempts to eliminate St. Monday were not always successful. Because entry into the skilled trade was controlled by craftsmen, these artisans were able to ignore the admonitions of their bosses. Only the erosion of the power of the skilled trades and their organizations gradually eliminated this custom.34

The same behavior frustrated the managers of the American government armory at Harper’s Ferry in the early 19th century. Frequently, each month gunmakers completed a pile of work (which they deemed appropriate) and then spent the rest of the month hunting, fishing, farming, and generally doing as they chose. Moreover, there were a vast number of trades where work was not regular, for example on the docks or construction sites. There laborers did not develop “work discipline,” the willingness to apply themselves consistently to any one job, because they never experienced regular work. These laborers lived an unstable existence, alternating work and play in irregular patterns. And, even when presented with the opportunity for regular work, they found it hard to accept.35

Recreation also served as opportunities for the coupling of the young. Yet these occasions for alliances between the sexes were radically different from the modern notion of dating. Unlike the modern concept, courtship in traditional society was socially regulated and ritualized. Matches deemed by the community to be inappropriate would be clearly ostracized in the practices of charivari. Perhaps most important, courtship was concentrated in the annual cycle of festivals.

The week preceding the onset of Lent, the 40 days of solemnity before Easter, was called Carnival (or Strove tide). It culminated in Mardi Gras (Strove Tuesday in Britain.) These seven days offered repeated opportunities for coupling in village dances and other festivities—yet, well within the watchful eye of relatives and neighbors. On the continent, one week following Mardi Gras, a ritual, called in France “donnage,” took place in the village square. At this time, after the community had ample opportunity to make opinions about the coupling of the previous week, young adults would make matches. One of their number would announce the “giving of” males to females. The young, but with the subtle involvement of the old, not only confirmed the affection between two people but stated the village’s view of the appropriate match.

More negatively, festivals were the occasion for social pressure to be brought to bear on those who violated community norms. On Mardi Gras, men who did household work or (worse) were cuckolded (or cheated on by their wives), were mocked or charivaried: villagers gathered around their houses, banged pots, and blew horns. Sometimes the offending party would be seized and paraded through town seated backwards on a donkey. Mismatched couples (of grossly unequal ages or of greatly different economic backgrounds) would also suffer the charivari. The same fate befell the young women who broke off an engagement or deprived the village males of her presence in the marriage
pool by taking a husband from another town. Variations on these customs, (called schurren, skimmingtons, or shivarees) were known from Germany to colonial New England. They survive today in the taunting of newlywed couples. Thus, festivals served to place the stamp of approval or disapproval on the individual’s conduct.

Clearly, festivals were central to the leisure of premodern people. In fact, they reckoned time by reference to festivals. They lived “in remembrance of one festival and in expectation of the next.” Cottage walls were decorated with souvenirs of pilgrimages and symbols of the current festival season. In 17th-century Sweden, the common type of house had two main rooms, one for ordinary use and the other for guests and for festivals. Festivals were certainly expressions of regeneration and renewal. Midsummer’s Eve was a celebration of the birth of St. John the Baptist. The custom of jumping over bonfires and bathing in rivers were rites of purification and of fertility, as if to assuage anxieties about the fate of the upcoming harvest.

Perhaps the most characteristic festival was Carnival. In southern Europe, this festival season began as early as late December and activities increased with the approach of Lent. As the historian Peter Burke describes it, “carnival may be seen as a huge play in which the main streets and squares became stages. The city became a theatre without walls and the inhabitants, the actors and spectators, observing the scene from their balconies.” Carnival usually included three elements: food, sex, and violence. The last week was characterized by the massive eating of meat (thus carnival, derived from the Latin root, carne) and pancakes. But more than this indulgence, carne also meant the flesh or sex. Weddings often took place at carnival and so did pre-marital pregnancies. Students of the carnival have been quick to point out the presence of phallic symbols in the long-nosed or horned masks of revellers. The normal constraints of hierarchical life were also removed. “People threw flour at one another, or sugar-plums, or apples, or oranges, or stones, or eggs…” Moreover, roles were reversed as men wore women’s clothes and women dressed as men. And, in plays and songs, the authorities were frequently mocked. “Carnival was, in short, a time of institutionalized disorder, a set of rituals of reversal.”

The British tradition of mumming on All-Soul’s Day and Strove Tuesday and the Christmas holiday custom of the Lord of Misrule were quite similar to Carnival. Mumming consisted of groups of youth going from door to door singing or dancing for food and drink from the householders. Sometimes these mummers at least feigned threats of damage to the owner (usually the well-to-do) if rewards were not forthcoming. This custom (like so many) survives among children in the relatively placid form of American Trick or Treating on Halloween. The custom of appointing a young man at the court to be Lord or Abbot of Misrule was a common medieval English practice. Sometimes he had license to organize mumming and to make an appearance in front of the homes of the nobility where he and his followers sang loudly and played tricks. In parish churches a Lord of misrule was elected by the “wild heads of the parish flocking together…” He would appoint a guard who would dress themselves in loud green or yellow clothes and “then they would bedeck themselves with scarves, ribbons, and laces... This done, they tie about either leg twenty or forty bells, with rich handkerchiefs in their hands…” These revellers then marched with pipes and drums toward the church and “though the minister be at prayer or preaching,” they danced and sang “like devils incarnate.” After disrupting the service, they went into the church yard where they feasted and danced all day. This occurred not only with the population’s compliance but often with their financial assistance—if only in fear of retaliation if they did not give freely. The May Day custom of people dressing like Robin Hood (dating from the 16th century) was a similar expression of anarchy in an otherwise hierarchical and self-controlled society.

These expressions of licence only occasionally took the form of overt protest against the status quo. Instead, they gave vent to built-up frustrations. Festive leisure thus both expressed feelings of anger among the common people and pacified them with relatively harmless and temporary forms of symbolic aggression and emotion.

Compared to the often ephemeral character of modern leisure, these traditional forms of play had an amazing staying power. It was only the emergence of new social elements—a middle class of merchants, businessmen-farmers, and later of industrialists, social reformers, and trade unionists—that would change these patterns. The first systematic efforts to reform leisure, however, were undertaken by the religiously motivated. The origins, character, and fate of this enterprise will be our next topic.
Leisure and Reform: 1500-1700

Between 1500 and 1660, many Europeans and (later in this period) American colonists began to question the traditional balance of work and play in daily life. Long before industrialization, some farmers, craftsmen, and merchants rejected old community recreations, the festival calendar, and even the love of sport, gaming, and drink that had so long linked the peoples of Europe. In England and America these reformers, who embraced a work ethic, were usually radical Protestants or Puritans. Their gospel of labor was not merely a way of earning time and money for pleasure; for them, work was an end in itself, almost a form of worship. Labor was also transformed from the episodic exertions of medieval society to a methodical, self-disciplined, purposive activity. As New England Puritans were reminded, “God sent you not into this world as into a Play-house, but a Work-house.”

An emerging middle class embraced this new attitude toward work and defined itself against the presumed sloth, inconstancy, and indulgence of both the masses and the elite. It rejected the attitude common among the “unregenerate poor” that work was merely the means to pleasure; nor did they see labor as did the “leisure class,” as a degrading activity suitable only for servants or slaves. Rather, methodical work was the mark of an improving humanity, its own reward but also a promise of future benefits, both spiritual and material. These values became the bedrock of the modern notions of rationality, accumulation of wealth, and even progress.

Ironically, these reformers also produced new forms of leisure and new relationships between work and recreation. Even if they never succeeded in imposing their values on the majority of humanity, they shaped the course of Western society in many ways.

For many readers, the first question will be: why did anyone adopt such a dreary doctrine, much less practice it? One theory claims that this ideology was a product of religious change; another explanation is that the ideology resulted from economic crisis. I will consider both arguments.
Religious and Economic Roots of Leisure Reform

When the German monk, Martin Luther, broke from the Roman Catholic church in 1517, he set in motion, not only over a century of religious ferment, but a cultural revolution. The Protestant doctrine, especially as developed by that second-generation reformer John Calvin in Geneva, Switzerland, went beyond the rejection of the authority of the Catholic church and its sacraments. It established a new way of life. A powerful combination of ideas greatly affected Western culture—especially in the English-speaking world where Calvinist Protestantism spread from the 1550s. These doctrines dominated the 17th century and were associated with Puritanism both in the British Isles and the North American colonies.

The key idea was that God “elects” or chooses those who will be saved. This means that the individual’s participation in the rites of the church and confession has no bearing upon his own salvation. This doctrine freed the person from the anxiety of not knowing whether he had done enough “good works” to be saved: salvation was a “free gift.” On the other hand, it often left the believer uncertain whether he was one of “God’s elect.” Protestant faith (especially in Calvinism) also meant that the Christian was able to grow in godliness and to cultivate blamelessness and purity of life. This process of “sanctification” meant that the believer was to be God’s instrument on earth to “glorify” the deity. This did not involve withdrawal from the world into the Catholic monastery or in contemplation, but in serving God in everyday “callings” or jobs. As William Penn insisted, “True Godliness don’t turn men out of the world (into a) lazy, rusty, unprofitable self-denial.” Rather, the Elect were to grow in sanctity by their diligence in their ordinary work.

These religious concepts affected ideas about work and leisure in many subtle ways. As the sociologist, Max Weber, noted, the notions of election and sanctification created a “Protestant Ethic,” a new more methodical attitude toward work. Anxiety over whether one was one of God’s elect made believers behave as if they were godly or sanctified in their everyday callings. This meant that the Protestant had to follow God’s will constantly.

It would not do to continue in the traditional culture of Carnival and Lent—indulgence in the flesh to be offset by repentance and austerity. The popular Catholicism of the Middle Ages tolerated a degree of license because, in the confession and in the sacraments, these sins could be blotted out and the offender forgiven. For the Calvinist, there was no such opportunity. Either you were damned and nothing could be done for you or you were saved and God expected growth toward perfection. The ancient Greek ethic of moderation in all things was no more satisfactory. Just a “little sin” was but an opening to debauchery. And the old comforts of community leisure were but a snare in dragging the individual believer down from his isolated path of following Christ.

Finally, the Protestant could not isolate his piety in the church on Sundays. Rather, he had to act religiously all the time because, according to this belief, God values all “callings” or vocations. This meant that work became a holy task—akin to prayer. And, if the ordinary day’s activities belonged to God, then “God’s time” should not be wasted in trivial pursuits. As the Massachusetts divine, Increase Mather, warned, “Every man’s Eternity....will be according to his improvement of time here.”

The Protestant work ethic drove pleasure out of the lives of believers; leisure was feared both as a lure to sin and a threat to godliness. The more desire to play made Puritans doubt their status as being among the elect. Leisure also threatened to “profane” (give offense to) God and His mission of creating His Kingdom on earth. As one of God’s chosen people, the Puritan believed that he not only had to avoid pleasures in his own life but to struggle against them in the community. He had to discipline the retrograde so that there would be no “dishonor of God” and that the “Lord’s Supper may not be profaned by being administered indiscriminately.” Puritans believed that God’s mission was not only to sanctify the believer, but also to use the elect to make the world holy. Thus, the Puritan could not remain content in his own piety. He had to reform the world.

Why, might we ask, was the Puritan so certain that God disapproved of traditional leisure? This conviction came partly from a belief that customary pleasures were opportunities for sin—dancing and drinking led to sexual promiscuity. The ale house competed with the church for the loyalty of the villagers. And, many traditional recreations, such as church ales, profaned the church and diverted the parish from its godly purpose. Gambling also “profaned divine providence to unworthy ends” because “God determines the cast of the dice or the shuffle of the cards, and we are not to implicate His providence in frivolity.” Perhaps most generally, to the Puritan, customary leisure was the opposite of self-control and serious pursuit of purpose. Drinking and rough community sports reduced one’s rational faculties.

To be sure, leading 16th-century Protestants did not oppose exercise. Luther claimed it was a Christian duty and Calvin even played bowls on Sunday afternoons. However, Protestants in England took a firm stance against violence-prone group sports. Oxford University banned football in 1555. A game which “withdraws us from godliness, either upon the Sabbath or any other day, is wicked.” Football was one of the worst because it was a “friendly kind of fight” rather than a “fellowly sport,” noted an English Puritan in 1581. Physical activity was fine if it profited a man’s calling. However, if it had no moral or social purpose and, if it led to pride in one’s athletic prowess, sport not only diverted the believer from work but encouraged the sin of vanity.

The Catholic Church was hardly immune from similar ideas. The Catholic Reformation of the mid-16th century reaffirmed traditional doctrine and sacramental religion, but it also attempted to purge Catholic culture of the profanation of the sacred. Like their Protestant competitors, Popes and Jesuits endeavored to instill a new respect for the Church by driving out the irreverent from feast days. The anarchy of Carnival was increasingly seen as a mockery of
create a new colony in the wilderness of New England. With their methodical devotion to work, they inevitably became economically dominant. "Tempered by self-examination, self-discipline, self-control, [the Puritan was] the practical ascetic, whose victories were won not in the cloister, but on the battlefield, in the counting-house, and in the market."  

**Puritans and the Sabbath**

Let us focus, then, upon the Puritans of England and the colonies. Puritans represented a broad movement of Protestants that emerged relatively clearly within the Church of England in the 1590s. Their objectives were both to purify worship (eliminating remnants of Catholicism from church doctrine and practice) and to purge society of godlessness. Perhaps the most important of these efforts was the Sabbatarian movement.  

The idea of "keeping the Sabbath," of course, was Biblical and not unique to the Puritans. Yet these radical Protestants developed this doctrine far further than the Christians before them and even more so than the Calvinists in Europe. The Puritan's obsession with the sanctity of Sunday went far deeper than a desire to make the Bible (or their interpretation of it) the foundation of civic law. It symbolized much of the Puritan attitude toward work and leisure. Essential to Sabbatarianism was a rejection of saints' days and other traditional holidays. Unlike the Sabbath, they believed, these holidays were not Biblical but invented by men for pleasure. As Luther said, "We increase the wrath of God more on holy days than on others." Their God—who valued work and discipline so highly—was most happy when his people were productive. During emergencies, Protestants in the 16th century even worked on Sundays.  

Yet most Puritans recognized that, if the saints' days were to be abolished, it was essential that Sunday be preserved to assure a "comfortable relaxation to beasts and men." A day of weekly rest was required to guarantee a new kind of balance between work and relaxation. This regular pattern—one day in seven—coincided with a new industrial and commercial rhythm of work. Unlike the rural cycle of seasonal labor and rest, the newer industrial pace was more steady and unwavering. Their model was the Genesis story of God's six days of work and one day of rest. This model meant both a more uniform and more full work year (with the elimination of saint's holidays). Sabbatarians also recognized the need for regular rest. Some Puritans were modern enough to warn employers that if weekly rest were not granted, then servants would work less steadily during the work week to the detriment of business.  

This idea, of course, marked the Puritans against the hierarchy of the Church of England (or Anglicans). While the official English Church had broken from Papal control in the 1530s, it was reluctant to accept Protestant (especially radical Calvinist or Puritan) doctrine. From the 1590s, English bishops prosecuted those Puritans who worked on feast days. Sabbatarianism
was a key element in the half-century of revolution in England. In the view of one Puritan, "England was at rest till they troubled God's Sabbath."

The idea of Sunday rest went beyond a restructuring of the work calendar or the struggle over control of church and state. Instead, Sunday was to be the day when, as Calvin wrote, "believers were to cease from their own works, and allow God to work in them." This means that Sabbatarianism was not only a critique of work on Sundays but also of traditional leisure. To follow attendance at services with an afternoon of games and drinking was to profane the serious intent of religion. As the historian Christopher Hill put it, "The Sabbath was not a day of leisure, on which it was lawful to waste time; it was a day for a different kind of labour, for wrestling with God."

The believer was, of course, unable to devote the whole day to church, but he should follow worship with family devotions. The father was obliged to control his children and his servants to shelter them from idleness and to lead them to prayers. This was no easy task for, as one English Puritan writer admitted, Sunday was the workman's "revelling day, which is spent in butt-baitings, bear-baitings, bowls, dicing, carding, dancing, drunkenness and whoredom." Between 1640 and 1660, the Puritans were in ascendance in England. They led a revolution, executed Charles I in 1649, and began in 1650 a decade of Puritan rule under the Cromwells. They used this power to attempt to control popular recreation not only on Sundays but throughout the week. The Puritans outlawed a whole range of traditional leisure activities from 1555 to 1557. They attacked gambling and animal baiting as well as Maypoles and most theatre. They enforced these prohibitions with military power throughout the island. Even after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the influence of Sabbatarianism continued. In 1663, the Bishop of London outlawed all commercial transportation on Sunday. By 1677, a law that prohibited almost all business on Sunday culminated two generations of Sabbatarian agitation. It solidified an almost unique British tradition: "Preaching and sitting on Sundays [became] the religion of England." The quiet day of family and later Sunday newspaper reading, which dominates England today, has its roots in the 17th-century Puritanism.

However, the Puritans were always a minority and enjoyed power only briefly. From the 1590s, they faced persecution from the crown and the established Church. Some, like the Separatists, fled England to Holland in 1619 because they had abandoned hope of reforming the English church. They were disappointed with the neglect of the Lord's Day in this more tolerant Protestant region. Worrying that their children would fall to the snare of such worldly ways, these Separatists or Pilgrims emigrated to the New World to found the Plymouth Colony.

Between 1620 and 1640, other less radical English Puritans (who rejected total separation from the English Church) also despaired over the possibility of reforming England. After obtaining an official charter from the king, their leader, John Winthrop, established the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630. Like the Pilgrims, these Puritans hoped to establish a Christian commonwealth. They felt themselves to be "grains" sifted by God to come to the wilderness. The wilds of New England were to be God's test for them.

True to the ideals of the English Puritan, the New England colonies banned dice, bowls, cards, and even smoking (except at dinner) as time wasters. Even the less religiously committed saw the wisdom of such controls, for survival depended on hard work. This fact led the non-Puritan colony of Virginia also to adopt strict controls on idleness in the first generation. By 1619, the governor there had banned dice and card games.

New England Puritan colonies prohibited any Sunday labor, travel, or even recreation, including in Massachusetts, "all unnecessary and unseasonable walking in the streets and fields." One 17th-century minister from Boston refused to baptize children born on the Sabbath believing that they must have been conceived on that day of the week. Only one in four of the first generation of migrants to Massachusetts were Church members (for most lacked sufficient evidence of conversion); yet all residents were obliged to attend services. All festivities on holidays were condemned as pagan; Puritans associated these celebrations with the boisterous and disrespectful practices of the "Lords of Misrule." The Plymouth colony Governor William Bradford, in fact, demanded that everyone work on Christmas.

This regimen hardly meant that Puritans rejected all recreation and play. Even stern Puritan divines in Boston, like William Sewell, enjoyed good food, black-cherry brandy, and even quiet walks in a friend's orchard. Puritan children enjoyed dolls and toys. Youth played football, stoopball, and cricket. And, although the Puritans attempted to regulate the inn, they never attempted to eradicate alcohol.

More to the point, recreation was tolerated and even embraced if it was "jointed pleasure and profit together," as the Englishman Richard Baxter put it. Moderate exercise, especially if it involved individual activities, like walking, riding, or even shooting, was acceptable. Health-giving recreation could "help you in your duty" and was laudable if it was put in "its proper time and place, as you do your meals." The same methodical and individualistic attitude toward work was to be applied to recreation. This attitude shaped the 19th century movement for "rational" or purposive recreation, which contributed much to modern physical fitness movements.

Still, as historian William Brailsford stresses, Puritan views did not lead to a reform of the chaotic games and leisure of the English peasant and lords. Puritans were too inflexible and repressive to really reform leisure or sport. They tended to drive traditional leisure underground in much the same way as the American Prohibitionists created the speakeasy in the 1920s.

Yet, the Puritans introduced new tastes that would have great impact later. If Puritans condemned theatre, they accepted singing (at least of Psalms)
and encouraged reading (at first, only of the Bible and devotional works). This venting of emotional needs in song and literature provided the foundation for new pleasures. The popularity of choral societies that embraced Bach and Handel and the massive market for the novel and magazine in the 18th century were indirectly due to the Puritans.

There was an even more important, if subtle, influence. The Puritans helped to create a new locus of leisure by replacing the community or parish with the family as the focus of a more restrained social life. This change meant a withdrawal of leisure from the often boisterous activities of the village and tavern and the creation of a more intimate familial circle. The Puritan encouraged fathers to take charge of the religious education of their household (including servants). They were expected to give the household servants Sundays off. Cotton Mather’s well-known detailed monitoring of his children’s moral development was only the repressive side of this new familial ethic. Puritan fathers could also share time with their children. Puritans also embraced a new respect for marital togetherness, and they were noted for their serious attachment to their spouses. Adultery was a far more grievous offense to them than it was to the Anglicans and they condemned it both in males and females. Companionship in marriage was highly praised. A French traveler in 18th century London wrote of the impact of this new marital style when he describes an affluent couple:

It is extremely rare to see one of them without the other. The richest people have only four or six carriage-horses; they have no need for more, because they do all their visiting together. It would be more ridiculous in England to do otherwise than it would be in Paris to go around always with one’s wife. They give the impression of the most perfect harmony.”

This attitude contributed to the individualized leisure built around family and “improving recreation” of the 19th century.

**Limits of Leisure Reform in the Anglo-American World**

Puritan reformers (like their Catholic competitors) were a relatively small, if rather successful, pressure group. But they were rowing against the tide of tradition, both in the inertia of the masses and in the power of the aristocratic elite. Their efforts to shape leisure were limited before the English Revolution in 1640 and their unquestioned power hardly lasted more than the decade of the 1650s during Cromwell’s dictatorship. In the New England colonies, Puritanism was more firmly rooted in the self-selection of colonists, the ease of the Puritan elite in driving out opponents, and the need for a strong work ethic to subdue the wilderness. Yet, despite the blue laws, in New England too, by the end of the 17th century, religious austerity had succumbed to a more relaxed cultural style.

Puritanism was a middle-class movement. It attempted to influence the poor through the patriarchal hand of the masters of households, and during the Cromwell period, through the power of the law. Still, peasants and journeymen were often loath to give up their Sunday games. They took their cockfights indoors and retreated to the alehouse when the Puritan government banned public rowdiness. Even New England Puritans found that Thursday church meetings were often followed by a day of playing and drinking by the less-than-arduous Christians. Their only practical response was to delay the festivities by holding services in the afternoon rather than in the morning.

The same resistance was evident among the aristocracy. Just as the Puritans were rising in England, James I established the Newmarket racetrack, which soon became a den of aristocratic gambling. James I defended traditional Sunday sports in 1618 with his famous Book of Sport, which encouraged games and exercise. Sports, James claimed, were necessary to train the young for military service; repression of these traditional pleasures would only produce discontent and drive the people to the alehouses.

Sometimes the common people and the aristocracy joined forces. For example, in about 1608, a noted royalist and opponent of Puritan austerity, Robert Dover, attempted to counteract the Puritan influence by sponsoring the Cotswolds “Olympic” Games on his estates near Gloucestershire. He turned his land to contests of cudgeling, leaping, races, pitching the bar and hammer, and wrestling. He even staged chess matches, hare hunts, and horse races in order to attract the aristocracy. In 1637, the Anglican Bishop of Hereford restored church ales, which had previously been banned, arguing that they brought people to church and reduced conflict between the rich and the poor.

Thomas Morton led a similar protest against Puritan controls in New England. A libertine and later a royalist, Morton offended the Pilgrim Fathers in 1627 by setting up his own fur trading company and by trading guns with the Indians. He went too far, however, when he celebrated a traditional English May Day at Mar-re Mount. William Bradford called him a “Lord of Mislite, [who] maintained (as it were) a School of Atheism.” Morton and his followers “set up a maypole, drinking and dancing about it many days together, inviting the Indian women for their consorts, dancing and frisking together like so many faires, or furies rather.” The Pilgrim response was predictable. John Endecott led a group to burn Mar-re Mount, cut down the maypole, and drive Morton out of the colony.

Both the Restoration of the monarchy in England in 1660 and, more generally, the dilution of the Puritan spirit in New England by the 1680s meant the decline of austerity. Perhaps even more important was the growing influence of commercial economic forces. As we shall note in the next chapter, growing affluence made possible the mass marketing of cheap versions of aristocratic pleasures. Secularization paralleled these commercial forces. The conviviality of the church ales (partially undermined by Puritan restrictions)
was gradually moved to the coffee house and tavern. Sunday Bible reading at home eventually was replaced by the newspaper and novel by the end of the 18th century. Against the appeals of affluence and secularization, the Puritan message was drowned.

The Legacy of the Reformers

So pervasive was the work ethic it survived the demise of its religious roots. It cropped up in the 19th century in the words of the English essayist, Thomas Carlyle, who wrote lovingly of work: “What is immemorial, waste, thou shalt make methodic, regulated, arable, obedient and productive to thee. Wheresoever thou findest Disorder, there is thy eternal enemy: attack him swiftly, subdue him.”

Yet perhaps the most famous exponent of the work ethic was the 18th century businessman-statesman, Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia. Although a child of Boston Puritans, in adult life he was unchurched and found doctrinal complexities utterly unintelligible. He retained a simple moral belief that “truth, security, and integrity in dealings between man and man were the utmost in the felicity of life.” But he followed the Puritan work ethic: “I spent no time in taverns, games, or frolics of any kind.” He advised, “lose no time; be always employed in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.” In his Poor Richard’s Almanac, Franklin extolled the virtues of time thrift: “Sloth like Rust, consumes faster than Labor wears... Do not squander Time, for that’s the stuff Life is made of... The sleeping fox catches no Poultry... There will be sleeping enough in the Grave.”

Yet, this evangelist of the work ethic was not a proponent of unstinted labor. He also had a “leisure ethic.” In his autobiography, Franklin lists his ideal scheme for the “natural day”: From 5:00 to 7:00 AM after rising, he leisurely planned the day while having breakfast. From 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM he worked. This was followed by a two-hour brake for reading and dining. Only at 2:00 did he return to work until 6:00 PM for an eight-hour workday! In the evening he would eat, examine the day’s activities, and enjoy “music, or diversion, or conversation” until he retired at 10:00 PM. This was a well-ordered life but hardly one enslaved to work. It was rather a surprisingly modern allocation of work and nonwork time. His prize for his rationality was retiring from business at the age of 42 after which he spent the rest of his 86 years in an amazing variety of self-determined activities that any modern person would surely call leisure.

Franklin was the model of the self-made man: methodical work and “character” were the keys to personal success. Like the famous 19th-century British manual Self-Help, by Samuel Smiles, Franklin promoted an individualistic set of values. He rejected the traditional fraternity of the shop and neighborhood in drink, conversation, or play for the self-improving ethic of diligence. Its reward was not only self-mastery but independence. In Franklin’s case, it also meant early retirement. This “leisure ethic” survives today in the dreams of many an entrepreneur and professional.

Franklin expressed a middle-class vision of self-control and material (if not spiritual) fulfillment in work. His life also revealed a real anxiety toward “idleness.” Franklin’s values were reinforced by the growing availability of relatively cheap pendulum clocks in the 18th century and by the appearance of the mass-produced pocket watch in the middle of the 19th century. Time pieces allowed the industrious to closely monitor their own time. Nevertheless, as we shall show in Chapter 5, only the mechanization in the new factories would impose “clock discipline” on the mass of men and women.

Moreover, despite the great secularization of the 18th-century, the religious roots of the work ethic did not die. The “Great Awakenings” of John Wesley and Charles Whitefield, both in England and the colonies, revived this Puritan ideal. These great outpourings of evangelism and reaction to irreligion were important vehicles for the transmission of the middle-class culture of the Puritans to large sections of the laboring classes. Methodists, from the mines of Cornwall to the American frontier, “declared holy war on drink, hurling, wrestling, bull baiting, cock-fights, and folk superstition.” Yet these spirited evangelists replaced condemned pleasures with the emotional expressions of revivals and hymn singing. This same impulse would reappear periodically in the Anglo-American world in waves of evangelical fervor. The most obvious occurred in the first two decades of the 19th century and then again toward the end of the century. In each case, these revivals prompted prohibitionism, sabbatarianism, and other movements against traditional leisure.

Finally, the revolt against popular leisure took still another form. It appeared in a new movement for social discipline, the French Revolution of 1789-1794. The leaders of this upheaval were, like their distant Puritan cousins, generally middle-class advocates of increased output. On the eve of the Revolution in 1788, lists of grievances sent to the king were replete with complaints from the middle class that religious holidays were keeping France uncompetitive, and poor. Once the Old Regime was overthrown in the summer of 1789, middle-class revolutionaries attacked the tradition of saint’s days and festivals. Although they were attempting to undercut the influence of the church, they also challenged customary work and leisure patterns. In 1791, when the new revolutionary government granted employers the right to set working hours, many masters removed traditional breaks and holidays enjoyed by artisans.

Finally, at the height of the revolution in 1793, the Jacobin government abolished the seven-day week along with the Christian calendar. In its place, the revolutionaries introduced a ten-day week. This liberated 17 days per year from the holiday calendar and created a new festival of 5 days at the end of the year. To be sure, its purpose was to destroy the culture of traditional Christianity and to replace it with a new cult of the nation. Yet it also was designed to decrease the idleness made possible by the old holiday calendar. Napoleon restored the...
Christian week in 1806 and King Louis XVIII, when the monarchy was restored in 1814, reinstated the old prohibitions against work on Sunday. However, these laws had only a limited impact: the French never enjoyed the nearly universal leisure on the Sabbath known in England.36

Puritan reformers in the 16th and 17th centuries attacked the traditional balance of work and play. Salvation came not from liturgical acts but from a total transformation of life. This meant that the believer must constantly do God’s bidding and that as God’s full-time agent, the Christian could not waste God’s time. Reformers identified godliness with methodical work and sought to purge the “disorder” of leisure from the world. These ideas were embraced by those seeking an alternative to the chaos of the economic crises of their times. The Puritans were or became industrious people—those who prospered in the painful transition from a rural subsistence economy to a new commercial one.

However, by the 18th century, the siege and wilderness mentality that had nurtured this austere religiosity had declined. As a result, this doctrine began to lose its power. Still, its kernel remained in the rationality of enlightened men like Ben Franklin. They represented an industrial urban world-view dominated by the virtues of work discipline and accumulation rather than by present-minded pleasure. The work ethic may have been more deeply rooted in America than in Europe. The payoff of economic success in the New World was a real prospect for many, at least until industrialization emerged in full force after 1850.37

These ideas never entirely prevailed over the champions of traditional leisure. Puritans and their more secular descendants found a silent but persistent resistance from the masses, who were generally unwilling to forgo pleasure in the weary world of labor. For them, the secularized “salvation” of economic security and independence through hard work was too faint a hope to stake their lives on. And the common people, in England especially, had an ally in the aristocracy, who likewise embraced sport and games even if for somewhat different reasons. Yet the austere message was threatened from still another quarter, the very commercial success that Puritanism encouraged. As the sociologist Daniel Bell argues, the work ethic inevitably produced a material plenty that ultimately undermined that austerity. Merchants who marketed pleasures were the best propagandists for leisure, towering over the austere admonitions from the pulpit or pen. After about 1660, new generations of merchants traded the meeting house for the counting house and eventually the coffee house.

Still, there was no simple trend. All of these forces would reappear time and time again in the 19th and 20th centuries. Elite and popular leisure, as well as the reformer’s alternative, continued to conflict and interact with each other. The characteristics of elite and popular leisure and the relationships between them following this age of the Puritans will be our next topic.
Anglo-American Leisure on the Eve of Industrialization: 1660-1800

England and the United States share far more than a common language and similar political and economic system. They participate in a similar leisure culture. Before industrialization, they shared common patterns of elite and popular play. In both countries, rigid social and economic barriers assured distinct and separate recreational forms. Yet economic change and the emulation of the rich by the poor softened these differences between the privileged classes and the masses. Following the austerity of Puritanism and the economic crises of the 17th century, the full expression and interaction of elite and popular leisure culture became possible. The task of this chapter is to present the various forms of traditional leisure on the eve of modern industrialization.

American Exceptionalism

At the outset, we must consider a major historical debate: to what degree was it true, as the German sociologist Max Weber once argued, that “America was born modern.” According to this view, transatlantic migrants were less tradition-bound than those who remained; and, perhaps more important, colonists found a new environment free of the institutions and customs left behind. These facts produced significant differences in American and English leisure cultures. For example, traditions often associated with the journeyman organizations, the village, or the parish church did not always make the Atlantic journey insofar as immigrants intermingled and formed new communities. Thus St. Monday, footales, Strove Tuesday cock throwing, and “parish wakes” largely disappeared in the colonies. The selective migration of Puritans to the Northern colonies meant a partial abandonment of the leisure of “Merrie England.” The mixing of different ethnic cultures (e.g. the Dutch and German in the middle colonies) added new games and recreations to the English repertory. Moreover, the simple facts of plentiful land and wildlife as well as sparse population shaped leisure. Hunting became far more democratic and frontier social gatherings, such as camp meetings, became imprinted upon the American leisure traditions.
However, the differences between the two areas can be easily overstated. Colonial settlers on the western shore of the Atlantic attempted to duplicate the English way of life. The founders of Jamestown in 1607 hoped to recreate a class of gentlemen planters and to enjoy the aristocratic way of life of the English nobility and gentry. The custom of educating young male colonists in England reinforced common leisure patterns as did cultural and commercial imports from the mother country long after the Revolution. Migrants from western England and the Scots-Irish brought their customs to the southern and middle colonies. Traditional English leisure ways were at least tolerated by the Anglican church, which dominated the southern colonies, especially after leaders abandoned efforts to repress idleness among the Jamestown colonists. Once the Virginia experiment had surmounted its first thirty years of instability and the planters had become enriched in tobacco farming, a more relaxed leisure culture emerged among the elite and the common European settler.

The practice of seasonal communal leisure did not vanish. In this way, too, America was not born modern. To be sure, colonists created a new festival cycle that was not built around Mardi Gras and Whitsun tide. But when colonists gathered for elections or for training in local militias, they also indulged in many of the same traditional communal games as practiced in England. And, the lengthy festivities of Christmas week or around May Day were not unknown in America. Despite the miseries of black slavery, custom prevented many masters from working slaves on holiday periods, Sundays, and even late Saturday afternoons. Parties were common on Saturday night when slaves reunited families and couples, sometimes from different plantations, for dancing and singing, with or without the master’s approval. Finally, the kill-joy image of the Puritan has often been exaggerated, and by the end of the 17th century the emerging mercantilist centers of Philadelphia, New York, and Boston were beginning to adopt a more relaxed attitude toward play. The customs of the English urban elite were eagerly adapted by colonial businessmen.2

We find change and contrast but also similarity between the pattern of the Old and New Worlds. American elites imitated their aristocratic cousins in England and old popular customs took new forms. This chapter will offer a series of examples of elite and popular leisure activities that were common on the eve of industrialization—and long before. How, and to what extent, the Americans differed from the English will be stressed.

Popular Pastimes: Rough and Blood Sports

Despite efforts of Puritans to reform popular leisure (Chapter 3), these pastimes remained largely untouched into the late 18th century. Opportunities for leisure among all classes grew from the mid-17th century with the decline of authoritarian religion and the growth of material wealth. In Britain, country squires tolerated and even sponsored popular leisure in their rural districts as a means of winning the loyalty of the people. The governing English oligarchy, unwilling to accept the cost or political threat of an enlarged army or national police, also accepted the disorder inherent in popular leisure customs. There was even more tolerance among the barely-governed peoples of the colonies. The result was a complex and not always gentle leisure culture.

Most characteristic, perhaps, were rough team and blood sports, which differed radically from our modern notions of athletic games. In England, traditional sport was nearly without rules. In Derby England, for example, until the 1830s, Shrove Tuesday afternoon was devoted to a free-for-all between the boys and young men of two large churches. As many as a thousand youths on a side crowded around a ball pushing, kicking, and, in general, fighting to drive the ball toward “goals” a mile out of town (a water wheel in one case and a garden gate in the other). The whole town was the playing area. There was no sense of “out of bounds” or “legal play.” Shops closed to avoid the intrusion of the players. And teams would even take the ball into the icy river in the hopes of gaining victory. Some historians have argued that these annual contests were “remembrances” or sublimated forms of war between closely-knit villages. This recreation was certainly a “periodic release necessary in a rigidly hierarchical society.”

Sporting contests were often slightly civilized forms of combat. The practice of cudgelling dated from medieval times and consisted of two men fighting with broad sticks or cudgels with the hand protected by a wicker basket attached at the base. The object was to guard oneself and “to fetch blood from the other’s head; whether by taking a little skin from his pericranium, or drawing a stream from his nose, or knocking out a few of...the teeth.” Variations on this sport were backsword or singlestick, where the free arm of the combatants was tied. These contests competed with boxing, a no-holds-barred affair, unconstrained by rounds, gloves, or referee. Gouging of eyes as well as punching were allowed. Wrestling was also common in western England (often in informal matches outside the alehouse on summer evenings) but also in scheduled games at rural fairs.4

Such events often were the foci of a series of rural contests of physical skill and endurance. “Pedestrianism,” or amateur foot races, were closely related to hammer throwing, leaping, and similar contests. Unlike modern track and field sports, pedestrianism lacked both regulation courses and uniform equipment. These games were natural extensions of everyday work lives using ordinary tools and stressing physical endurance (e.g. in races involving the carrying of heavy objects). Finally, a principal attraction of such games was gambling rather than the aesthetic of the sport itself.5

Often at the heart of these games was cruelty to animals. Cock throwing—tossing missiles at a rooster tied down with a five-foot rope until it was dead—was a popular, if, by modern standards, rather unsportsmanlike amusement. Another diversion, “ratting,” involved a dog placed in a pit with
When it is time to start, the persons appointed to do so bring in the cocks hidden in two sacks, and then everyone begins to shout and wager before the birds are on view. The people, gentle and simple (they sit without distinction of place) act like madmen, and go on raising the odds to twenty guineas and more.... Then the cocks are taken out of the sacks and fitted with silver spurs.... Then it is amazing to see how they peck at each other, and especially how they hack with their spurs. The comb bleed terribly and they often slit each other’s crop and abdomen with the spurs. There is nothing more diverting than when... the cock that appeared to be quite done for suddenly recovers and masters the other. When one of the two is dead, the conqueror invariably begins to crow and jump on the other.  

One might see in this violent ritual simply a people acclimatized to the slaughter of animals enjoying the thrill of contest. Others might give it a psychological significance and argue that the cock fight was a displacement of the aggression of the multitude: the cocks performed like people with both fear and courage; and many poor peasants surely could identify with the boasting victorious rooster even if their low status prevented them from crowing like a cock on the walk.

Another popular blood sport, bull baiting, should be mentioned. It often took place in front of a village pub because its owner sponsored the event. The bull was fastened to a ring on a leash about 15 feet long. A dog, trained for the event, would be freed to ‘bait’ the bull. In 1719, a Frenchman described this custom in England:

Leisure on the Eve of Industrialization
To a degree, they even survived the journey across the Atlantic. Bull running was unknown and animal baiting was rare in the American colonies. The communitarian character of the bull run (already severely localized in England in the 17th century) never withstood the migration westward. It was otherwise with cock fighting. There are plenty of examples of this sport in Virginia from 1725. Apparently, in the first century, colonists satiated their thirst for blood sports in frequent hunting. Cock fighting was also associated with the mixing of upper and lower classes, something that Virginia gentry, still in an insecure social position in the early years, would not tolerate. Only in the 18th century did cockfighting become widespread in Virginia and other southern colonies, especially among the small farmers around rural taverns and at county fairs. In New England, the Puritan influence largely eradicated this traditional blood sport but not wrestling, cudgeling, backsward, or singlestick, which were played on the Boston Common on “training days” during the colonial period. The age-old sports of boxing and wrestling were also as common in America as in England. Not only were frontiersmen like Abraham Lincoln skilled wrestlers in their youths, but chaotic games such as greased pig contests were common to American fairs and other festive occasions.¹⁰

Hunting and Racing: Patterns of Elite Play

In contrast to the popular origins of rough ball games or rough fight contests between men or animals, hunting was an elite pastime in England. Long associated with ownership of land and possession of weapons, it was usually the privilege of the European aristocracy. Humber people seldom had either the right to hunting lands or could afford handcrafted firearms. On the European continent especially, nobles and kings not only reserved lands for hunting but even had exclusive rights to hunt on common lands and even on the farms of the peasants. Although wolves still roamed the streets of Paris and other European capitals as late as the 17th century, wildlife was beginning to get scarce. Laws dating from the reign of James I in the early 17th century protected game in England from indiscriminate killing. These conservation measures, however, were designed primarily to preserve the sport of the aristocracy. They ignored the needs of farmers for protection from predators and sought to punish poachers seeking food or income in game meat. Only those who possessed a specific amount of property (the lordly sum of £100 of income per year in 1671) had the legal right to kill deer, hares, pheasants, partridges, and rabbits. It was illegal to sell game, although the black market for fine game birds in London inns made this aspect of the law a dead letter. Sometimes gamekeepers and gangs of lower-class poachers shot it out and, although juries were reluctant to convict minor poachers, several months in jail was not an uncommon punishment. Only in 1831 were these undemocratic laws repealed, at least for those farmers who wanted to shoot game on their own land.

The use of firearms in hunting came rather slowly. The weight of tradition assured that, until the 18th century, the English method of taking partridges still consisted of stalking the birds with dogs and horses and then netting them. Dogs were also trained to pursue and kill small game. Although matchlock guns had been available since the 1520s, only with the improvement brought by the introduction of the flintlock musket in the late 17th century did the gun become a practical weapon against birds on the wing and other speedy animals.¹¹

Hare hunting was an exception to the aristocratic character of European hunting. Middling farmers as well as country gentlemen kept harrier dogs to pursue the rabbit, which was a widespread nuisance. Gradually in the 18th century, however, the gentry adopted the more difficult sport of fox hunting. Only slowly did the gentry abandon the hare hunt because of the scarcity of foxes and the lack of properly trained fox hounds. The sport of the fox hunt was to lead a pack of dogs (bred for their noses and speed) across hedge and field to catch a fleeing fox. This sport commonly led to accidents as man and horse crashed through the numerous fences enclosing farm land. The fox chase appealed to social exclusivity: it required expensive specially-trained horses and dogs kept for the autumn hunts. By the 1840s it had become a complex ritual. The country squire was paid deference as Master of Fox Hounds and prosperous farmers gratefully accepted his nod of recognition and followed his lead on the hunt. Fox hunters took as much pleasure in their hounds as they did in the hunt itself. And, the event was surrounded by an elaborate ritual—the early morning breakfasts, the horn calls, and fox hunting fashion. Deer (like fox) hunting was often a contrived affair with the stag being carted to the field for a chase.¹²

Horse racing was also pursued with a passion by the English aristocracy. In the 17th and 18th centuries, there were private matches held on open field or commons; horse owners usually put up prize money (in effect, betting on their horse). The race was conducted in a series of heats; the winner was the horse that won the most races. Crossing and jostling a competing horse were generally permitted. The English development of the thoroughbred horse increased both the quality of the races and their exclusivity.¹³

Again, American patterns were somewhat different. Hunting was far more democratic in the colonies; it was undertaken as much for utilitarian reasons as for sport and with a far less concern for conservation. Deer were plentiful nearly everywhere, and game attracted both the townsman and farmer from New England to the Carolinas. Not only did flocks of wild turkey and pigeons provide an easy meal, but moose appeared on the outskirts of Connecticut towns in the 17th century. Even buffalo were found in western parts of South Carolina in the early years. Massachusetts farmers joined together to hunt wolves, raccoons, and, of course, squirrels. Even the Puritan divines, Cotton Mather and Samuel Sewall, enjoyed fishing. Throughout the 18th century, New Yorkers utilized the ponds and forests of Long Island for angling and hunting.
Urban Pleasures in an Emerging Commercial Age

Of course, traditional leisure was not restricted to the countryside. Indeed, much of the variety and change in preindustrial pastimes occurred in the city, town, and especially pacesetting capitals. As the historian Lewis Mumford notes, the 17th- and 18th-century royal capital was a creation of power and for pleasure, not of trade and industry. The medieval arts and amusements, once controlled by the church, were increasingly dispersed into various quarters of the city. The morality plays (extensions of the liturgy) became the theater patronized by the aristocracy and even by the common people. The choir moved into the concert hall and the sociability of the monastic order eventually reemerged as the male club. The royal court was imitated by the aristocracy and its pleasure emanated throughout the capitals, where the old landed elite increasingly resided.

These leisure forms, borne of the social contact, wealth, and time available to the aristocracy, were founded on exclusivity. They were enjoyed in protected isolation from the people and imparted status to those who participated; they were valued for the fact that only the "well-born" had the resources, training, or time to enjoy them. Nevertheless, the prestige of elite leisure made it an object of imitation by the other classes, who gradually adopted it as their incomes rose and as leisure was commercialized. Growing affluence made possible the mass marketing of cheap versions of aristocratic pleasures.16

The royal palaces in Paris, London, and Vienna were imitated in the "Hotels" (or urban mansions) where the aristocracy congregated. In the 1670s, the pressure of urban congestion and fear of the mob persuaded Louis XIV of France to build a suburban palace at Versailles. This flight from the city was not only imitated in the 18th century by other monarchs but copied in the sprouting of chateaux and country mansions of the great lords. These centers of pleasure—both urban and suburban—later would become the modern museum, as princes and lords filled their halls with collections of art and curiosities. Many of the old palaces, such as the Louvre, became museums. Aristocrats and kings also collected wild animals and plants first for the private amusement of the court. These collections, in the late 19th century, were transformed into modern public zoos.

Surely of more immediate impact were the aristocratic pleasure gardens, the expanses of green space, manicured gardens, fountains, and arborets. The English royal parks at St. James and its Mall provided walkways for promenades. Also important were Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. These parks formed the background for walks, parties, games, and dances, and even concerts, providing the "gaiety and license of the carnival, offered daily," at least in the summer season. Swings and roundabouts with their thrill of speed originated in the pleasure garden. Even the carousel was originally a plaza for the display of aristocratic horsemen. The wooden horses on the merry-go-round were the poor person's equivalent.

The spirit of the private gardens of the court were recreated in the ring of commercial pleasure gardens that surrounded London—especially Ranelagh in the 17th century and Vauxhall in the early 18th century. The private gardens of royalty and the lords could be enjoyed in the form of the commercial suburban resort. As Roy Porter noted, "admission fees were great, [social] levelers."

Some offered evening music or tea gardens. Others were built around spas where businessmen and professionals gathered to drink the "healing" waters (Tunbridge Wells). Most London pleasure gardens had walks, lawns, clipped hedges, a grotto, fountains, and statues. Some had arbors for tea drinking and often were decorated with paintings. The larger spots had large rooms for
concerts as well as a bun or cake house. People played variations on lawn bowling or nine pins. Some even had cricket fields. Often, even the common class went out on Sundays for a Sunday Ordinary (a filling meal) for the whole family at or near the pleasure gardens.

The urban aristocrats also invented new leisure spaces in the private dwelling. The 17th century began a process of spatial differentiation in the houses of the rich. Servants were increasingly banned from the common-dinner table. Dining rooms became specialized and formal chambers, while the common spaces of the great halls were divided into areas for receiving guests and for bedrooms. Dining dominated private parties; but guests also enjoyed amateur plays and, inevitably, cards—especially 100 and whist. The privacy and heat provided in the bedroom made sexual activity a year-around recreation. The growing desire for privacy created the need for a new meaning to the word "hall"—it was less a large common space than a corridor for public movement throughout the house that was broken up into private chambers. The male had his library (as often for billiards, drinks, and smoking as for reading) and the mistress, her boudoir. Of course, the common people remained in their two-room houses for a far longer period.

The 18th-century city also offered the pleasures of shopping. Partially to accommodate the long hours of craftsmen, many stores kept open until 10:00 PM, or even later on Saturdays. Shopping was also a social experience. It was an opportunity to see friends and to get out of small lodgings. Customers expected tea in London bookshops. When the church was purged of its “ales,” drinking and conviviality moved to the coffee houses. London had over 2,000 of them by 1700. The 18th-century coffee house was an important institution in England, where professional men gathered to mix pleasure with business. This was the origin of the Lloyd’s of London insurance company, whose principal partners first met in a coffee house by that name. Some became exclusive clubs. Political groups frequently formed in them. In others, such as White’s Coffee-house, cards and dice dominated. While artists and the literary elite converged in coffee clubs in Covent Garden, many were simply places for the reading of newspapers. By 1790, there were 14 morning papers in London; by 1799, the first of that great English institution, the Sunday newspaper, had arrived.

The elite, who had the funds and time to travel, also developed a taste for the seaside at Scarborough, or later in the 18th-century, at Margate and Veymouth. At these exclusive spots, they indulged in cold-water bathing and drinking of sea water. Modest 18th-century gentry used carriages to enter the water “behind a covering that lets down with hoops, so that people can go down a ladder into the water and not be seen, and those who please may jump in and swim.”

More traditional were the inland spas like Bath—where a daily routine of morning bathing and drinking of waters was combined with rounds of socializing. In addition to the medicinal attractions of water, visitors were drawn to the “assembly rooms” for music and dancing as well as gaming rooms, bowling greens, and shops. These clusters of buildings and activities would be imitated in the 19th and 20th centuries in the seaside amusement centers of Blackpool and Coney Island or in the “holiday camp.”

So important did these resorts become to the English elite that one historian has called the 18th century “an age of water-places.” The training of the young aristocrat would also be incomplete without the European tour, especially to the Renaissance centers of northern Italy. While only the very rich had the time and income necessary for such a major trip, the middle classes emulated their social superiors by traveling to the country in more comfortable commercial carriages. Even the 18th-century English poor could get a holiday to the south in late summer if they were willing to hire themselves as hop pickers.

In the 17th and 18th centuries urban working people’s leisure was, of course, more closely tied to the festival cycle rather than to the social season at the resort or spa. Weddings, and even funerals, were occasions for dancing, drinking, and games, and urban festivals, such as St. Bartholomew’s Fair in London, attracted a motley crowd with its trained animals, curiosities, and exotic foods.

Still, in the 18th century, the lower classes imitated their superiors in the adaptation of social tea drinking. They followed the rich to the suburban pleasure gardens on Sundays at least, and they played cards and other games developed first by the aristocratic leisure class. Urban living made possible the commercialization of leisure and offered the elite’s pleasures to the masses in cheap forms. It produced the very modern notion of the “star.” Actors, lion-tamers, and even healers became well-known. There were even sex therapists like James Graham, who promised to relieve impotence at 50 a night with his Celestial Bed.

Levis Mumford and others have argued that urban aristocratic pleasures of the period after 1650 were products of the boredom of the idle. The property-owning elite had slowly lost control of its destiny to the king or prince; and pleasure had become a substitute for politics. Perhaps we, like the aristocrats of two centuries ago, have substituted passive amusements for participation in the affairs of the world. Yet these leisure traditions were expressions of human longings, including competition, sociability, of variety, and even creativity. These activities were surely gentle and relatively humane alternatives to incessant warfare and religious bigotry, which so long dominated the history of Europe.
Social Leisure Among the American Colonists

Both the mercantile elite of the northern American ports and the Southern colonial gentry imitated the urban enjoyments of the London elite. Still, the American environment created both more rustic variations on the European leisure themes and, on the frontier, some quite different forms of sociability.

New wealth in New York, centered around the English garrison, emulated London society: "The fashionable paraded in the late afternoon around Hanover Square dressed in latest London mode. The gentlemen were resplendent in powdered wigs, varicolored coats, lace, and ruffles, the young dandies wearing silver-hilted small swords and ostentatiously taking snuff from jeweled boxes." The rich had even their version of the suburban pleasure garden. They took excursions by chair or chaise to stylish country taverns for turtle, madeira, and music. By the end of the 18th century, many took the ferry to horse races on Long Island. Others as far away as the West Indies and the southern colonies traveled to Newport, Rhode Island, in the summer for health and the pleasure of racing "frolics" or picnics on Goat Island. Balls, card parties, and especially the theater dominated the winter season. English theatrical troops entertained in New York from about 1700 and the first permanent theater opened in 1767. Northern mercantile elites imitated their London counterparts with exclusive coffee houses and private clubs, which met almost nightly for dinner at taverns. Even in Puritan Boston, dancing instruction was offered to young ladies and gentlemen by 1716 and the elite flocked to them to pick up the latest fashions. Even though the Puritan establishment succeeded in prohibiting theater until the end of the century, public concerts were a regular feature on the social calendar in Boston by the 1760s. 25

Members of the Southern colonial gentry, such as George Washington, supplemented their Sunday afternoon rounds of visits with frequent treks to Annapolis, Williamsburg, or Charleston for balls or plays. And, unimpeded by a hostile clerical eye, they enjoyed the gossip and conviviality of an ongoing social life. The renowned hospitality of the wealthy gentry, like that of Colonel Robert Carter at his estate of Nomini Hall, provided a stage for bowling, boat and horse racing, dancing schools, and even cockfights and fox hunts—as well as a table of wines, liquors, and expensive foods. Nomini Hall even provided guests with concerts of piano, flute, as well as Ben Franklin's invention, the harmonica. 26

Despite these rather urban leisure styles in both the north and south, the more traditional work-centered recreations survived the end of the 18th century even among the well-off. A New York mansion was the spot for a "candle-dipping frolic" long after this ancient "bee" had ceased to be a necessary part of winter preparation for the well-to-do. It was, in reality, an opportunity for 32 couples to gather in a huge kitchen to socialize while leisurely indulging in that traditional craft of dipping wicks in a kettle of melted tallow. This was followed by a feast of cold fowl, hot sausages, madeira, and egg-nog, and still later by dancing to amateur fiddles. The final dance, begun at midnight, was called the "fire dance" because the couples alternately swung each other around the huge triangular-shaped fireplace that lay astride several rooms. 27

Another significant variation in the American leisure pattern is the unusual role played by camp meetings. In the sparsely-populated frontier, the dreary and lonely routine of farming and hunting was relieved in fairs, weddings, and especially religious camp meetings. Around 1800, thousands gathered in forest clearings like Cane Ridge, Kentucky, for up to a week of religious enthusiasm. While the purpose was, of course, spiritual renewal and conversion, the camp meetings became an occasion for massive socializing and emotional catharsis:

The night meeting was picturesque, with the deep shadows of the primeval forest lighted up by lurid flames... This scene, with its background of the majestic forest, presented an imposing affect... As the night progressed, wilder and wilder became the disorder... [with] shouting, creeping, leaping, jerking, clapping of hands, falling and swooning away... So popular was the movement that everybody came. Young ladies were there to show themselves and their costumes. The young men went to see the girls and frolic in a quiet way... It was an enjoyable social season as the long isolated frontiersmen joined together for a time in the warmth of Christian fellowship. While guards were stationed on the fringes of the camp, there were many 'camp babies.' And the opportunity for both the religious and irreverent to gather (and taunt one another) was unique. 28

The Universality of Gambling and Drinking

In the 18th century, wagering and imbibing alcohol were the lubricants of most adult male leisure. The social pathologies that emerged from gambling and drink in the 19th and 20th centuries have, of course, contributed to numerous efforts to control these activities. Yet in traditional societies, attitudes toward gaming and alcohol were different.

Of course, gambling has been common in most cultures and, as we have already noticed, was at the heart of plebian blood sports and aristocratic racing. Historians identify a tremendous growth in all forms of wagering from the late 17th century. Betting was the principal reason for the growth of the aristocratic Newmarket race course near London as well as the more popular track at Epsom. The passion of card playing shared the same purpose. The popularity of gaming in the English court and among merchants of London spread to all layers of society and even to women. And betting was the main point of pugilism and cockfights. Even traditional participant games, like the
once-plebian sport of cricket, became spectator sports, drawing crowds up to 20,000 by 1772, to the gambling mania which was sweeping England. Gambling also pervaded the genteel atmosphere of the post-Puritan English club and coffeehouse.39

How do we explain this passion for gambling? The spread of commercial enterprise from the time of Queen Elizabeth led to a growing legitimacy to speculative endeavor. This positive attitude toward risk-taking complemented the behavior of the gambler. Most authorities did not condemn gaming itself; rather, churchmen and magistrates feared immorality and the influx of the "ungentlemanly" professional or cheater who undermined the sport. The same commercial spirit, which fueled the taste for risk-taking, also demanded that chance be minimized and deceit eliminated. As in business, luck and competition was inevitable, but there also had to be rules to assure predictability and a fair chance to win. In order to guarantee a rational assessment of risk, games were regularized. Card game rules were codified in manuals; boxers were matched by weight and regulated by referees in order to reduce cheating. As gambling became commercialized in the urban culture of London, club and racetrack owners had to guarantee bettors fair play.39

Gambling was also at the heart of colonization and the western migration in America. While the Virginia Company sought to outlaw the gambling of Jamestown settlers in order to impose work discipline, the company nevertheless sponsored a lottery in England in 1612 to raise funds for the financially unstable colony. New England Puritans attempted to suppress betting by outlawing cards and horse races and, in less-commercial America, casinos never prospered as they did in London. While individuals in taverns often bet on cards, backgammon, and billiards, truly commercial games like roulette and faro did not appeal to colonial Americans. Still, towns imitated the British with lotteries to finance public improvements.31

Gambling should be understood in its social context. In one sense, it was merely another way of accumulating money. The adventurers who settled Virginia scarcely saw any difference between the dangers of settlement and risks of the wager. Gambling debts, like any other unpaid liability, were legally binding as contracts. Anglican clergy sought not to eliminate gaming but to restrain it as a threat to the financial independence and responsibilities of bettors. As the historian John Findlay writes, gambling and the westward movement, so central to American culture, were closely related:

From the seventeenth century through the twentieth, both gambling and westering thrived on high expectations, risk taking, opportunism, and movement; and both activities helped to shape a distinctive culture. Like bettors, pioneers have repeatedly grasped the chance to get something for nothing—to claim free land, to pick up nuggets of gold, to speculate on western real estate. Like bettors, frontiersmen have cherished risks in order to get ahead and to establish identity.32

Gaming was also a means of displaying wealth and bravery. In Britain it was a legal privilege exclusively of the aristocracy, except during the Christmas holiday season. Gambling was not merely a status symbol but a pleasure enjoyed by the masses—as would be proved by the 20th-century Littlewood football pools in England and the illegal industry of the numbers games in American cities. It channeled the excitement of risk-taking and competition into relatively pacific directions; it expressed the value of individuality and the dream of gain. Authorities sought to control gambling in England but only for the poor, just as they conserved wildlife by restricting hunting to the elite. In America, it was more a matter of church pressure. But in most cases, regulation failed. The financial reward to the government of lotteries and the enterprise of gamblers proved too alluring.35

Alcohol played a no-less-dominant role in creating conviviality among people of all classes and in relaxing the social constraints that were so overpowering in this era of deference and repression. Drink was perhaps even more central to the meal and conversation than it is today. Beer, wine, and spirits were ageless means of conserving fruit and grain in a world without refrigeration and modern food preservation. American corn (i.e. maize) was, of course, cheaply converted into whiskey, and apples, peaches, and cherries were made into brandy in the American south. Beer, fermented cider, or wine at work was long viewed as nourishment. It "strengthened" the laborer and got him through a 10- or 12-hour day. In rural England, beer or wine rations were a part of the pay, offered at the midday meal. In New England, rum was rationed out to artisans and was used in trade with Indians. Drink was an integral part of work and social life.36

The emergence of a seafaring class in Boston, Newport, New York, and Philadelphia led to the growth of taverns near the wharfs. Yet in no town in the colonies was there a shortage of alehouses and retail dramshops. By the last decades of the 17th century, New England colonists took advantage of the midweek church meeting to ride from town to town "to drink and revel in ordinances and taverns" and court records reveal much evidence of drinking on the Sabbath. Frontier gatherings for corn husking, barn raisings, and weddings were occasions for communal drinking. Cheap home-made whiskey made by the barrel and drunk from a brown jug or "Black Betty" were commonplace in rural Virginia and the Carolinas. Wine was mostly imported from France and Portugal and was more common for the wealthy in both England and the colonies.35

Drunkenness was common enough but most people in preindustrial times drank in moderation. Total abstinence was a 19th-century phenomenon. Rather in both the old and new worlds, drink was an integral part of life, at work, meals, and pleasure, and was viewed as much as a food as an intoxicant. While Puritans and other reformers struggled against its excess, few opposed drink on principle.36
The attitude toward leisure, which prevailed in the 18th century, arose from many sources. In great measure, it was a product of rural society—and corresponded with the pace and requirements of work on the land and with the natural environment of forest, field, and stream. Yet preindustrial societies also produced urban leisure, rooted, in part, in the privilege of wealth and the time it gave the elite. The late 17th and 18th centuries saw new forms of leisure, such as the resort and commercial club, and these types of play "trickled down" gradually to the masses. Despite the efforts of the trend-setting courtiers from Castiglione down to the 18th-century dance instructors to infuse traditional leisure with civility, manners, and self-control, there remained an anarchic quality to play. Still dominant were rough and blood sports, gambling and drinking. The element of the carnival would always play a vital role in all people's leisure, but there were many who attempted to purge it from society. We have already seen examples of this in the Puritan movement. Far more effective was the complex reorganization of society known as the Industrial Revolution, our next topic.
Industrialization, Work and Play: 1780-1850

Most of us think of early industrialization in economic terms: miles of machine-produced cotton cloth, newly-enriched factory owners, and impoverished mill hands. Yet this complex process had perhaps a more important effect upon the way people worked and played.

The factory institutionalized the Puritan’s work ethic, imposing it on the masses in the lock-step movement of machine and the clock-driven demands of the overseer. A more intense work regimen purged much leisure from life and, for the rich and successful, industrialization substituted an ethic of economic accumulation for leisure. The factory imposed a new division in the lives of ordinary people: work time (for income) became separated from family time when jobs were removed from the household and centralized in the workshop or office. The result was an incalculable change in family and recreational life. Finally, industrialization meant the disruption of traditional village or community culture as rural workers flooded the new industrial towns and their leisure customs often were lost. Old paternalistic ties between the elites and the common people were torn when the wealthy withdrew support from festivals and when the powerful attempted to impose new forms of recreation upon an often reluctant population.

Many observers have described these changes in the negative term “breakdown.” Industrial society meant a loss of “natural rhythms” of work and leisure, an erosion of traditional bonds within families and between the classes, and the degradation of industrial workers, who often sought escape in alcohol and immoderate sensuality. Yet, as we shall see, this despairing image is exaggerated, for workers retained much of their traditional leisure ethic and, in the long run, industrialization created the foundation for better or worse, of our modern notions of work and leisure.

This chapter focuses on the linkages between work and leisure during a slow period of economic change, often somewhat misleadingly referred to as the “industrial revolution.” It started in Britain about 1780 and in the U.S. about 1810. Its first phase ended perhaps by 1850. For the sake of clarity, I will stress the similarities between the two countries, leaving for later chapters discussion of the differences.
Industrial Time

The mechanized world of work was impossible without a radical change in thinking about time. Historians have long noted that the clock was as important as the steam engine in the industrialization of work. It gave the 18th century employer the ability to precisely measure time and thus to quantify, control, and intensify the pace of work. When the cheap standardized watch emerged in the middle of the 19th century, the possibility of clock discipline became fully realized. The nineteenth-century factory clock—often perched high in its ornate copula—was both a symbol and tool of a new work discipline. It reminded all of the fact that time was the new deity and that it meant money. The clock set the standard for when work began and ended. Those failing to pass underneath it and through the factory gates before it showed 6:00 AM were locked out; they often were obliged to enter via the pay office to be subject to a reprimand and fine.¹

Another key to industrialization was the factory. As many historians have stressed, it was more the centralization of work rather than mechanization itself that allowed employers to dictate the length and intensity of the workday. Weavers, for example, were forced to work in a mill where they lost the ability, which they had enjoyed in their own cottage workrooms or family farms, to control the pace or methods of work. Work regulations and factory designs along the lines of Jeremy Bentham’s ideal prison, the Panopticon, were intended to assure a regular and constant attention to the job. Strategically-placed overseers capable of watching every worker were combined with a system of posted rules and fines for the slightest “falling off” of work. By 1760, timesheets, timekeepers, and fines for tardiness had appeared in the Crowley Iron Works of Britain. Josiah Wedgwood’s pottery works at Etruria had established a primitive-time card system to monitor punctuality. Even small-family New England mills in the 1810s “demanded that during working hours operatives display the traits of punctuality, temperance, industriousness, steadiness, and obedience to mill authorities.” These efforts to instill work discipline in the factory were similar to the new schools and penitentiaries, poorhouses, and insane asylums that appeared in the first half of the 19th century in the Anglo-American world. They all promised to correct social ills and to create new people “reclaimed, civilized, Christianized,” through routinized work.²

Southern Pennsylvanian textile factory rules as late as 1846 shared this spirit:

No person employed in the manufacturing departments can be permitted to leave their work without permission from their overseer... No talking can be permitted among the hands in any of the working departments, except on subjects relating to their work... No spirituous liquors, smoking or any kind of amusements, will be allowed in the workshops or yards.³

Finally, the new machines, themselves, forced the worker to submit to longer hours and increased intensity of work. First, a small number of power machines invented between the 1760s and the 1780s (spinning thrusters and mules, carding machines, and looms, e.g.) were harnessed both to James Watt’s steam engine and to the traditional water wheel. Mechanization, of course, reinforced the tendency of employers to centralize production in a factory. Spinners and weavers, who continued to labor at their cottage spinning wheels or hand looms, could no longer compete with the machine. Workers were obliged to accept the work discipline of the factory. Spinning thrusters or mules may have eliminated the burdens of the peasant women at her spinning wheel, but they produced new factory jobs that were relentless and monotonous. The impersonal machine set the pace of work and drove episodes of leisure out of the job.⁴

The factory sometimes also led to a longer work week in the early 19th century. Especially in the newly mechanized textile industry, hours of work extended to 12 or 14 hours per day for six or even seven days per week.⁵ In 1844, a French observer in Lancashire (England) commented:

The operative is a slave, obliged to adapt his movements to those of the machine to which he is attached; advancing when it advances and retiring when it retires, struggling with it in velocity, and no more able than it to rest. Experienced officers declare that a soldier cannot remain more than six or eight hours under arms without inconvenience. How then must it be for a spinner, who must not only keep standing every day, but must walk to and fro, going from one machine to the other, for a period of thirteen to fourteen hours, and where the attention as well as the muscles are incessantly in exercise.⁶

Mill owners had many economic incentives to extend the work week: They were obliged to meet bitter competition, which constantly drove them to cut costs, and they had to quickly recover the costs of machinery that rapidly became obsolete. Finally, they sought to take advantage of new gas lighting by working their machinery and “hands” into the evening hours. Moreover, factory workers lacked the means of challenging these innovations. Unlike some skilled artisans, they were seldom organized; the majority were women and children who were hired both for their presumed docility and adaptability to the “light” work, for example, of piecing broken threads on mechanical looms. In 1836, 85 percent of workers employed in a Massachusetts textile company were women and 80 percent of these were between 15 and 30 years old. In the same period, English textile mills employed far more children.⁷
Yet it was not only the factory worker who experienced a longer and more intense workday in the early 19th century. Craftworkers in cities like London, New York, and Philadelphia experienced significant loss of autonomy in such industries as tailoring, woodworking, shoemaking, and many other traditional crafts that saw little mechanization before 1850. Nevertheless, they experienced a dramatic change in work. Skilled journeymen increasingly found it difficult to "graduate" to the status of master; instead, many remained throughout their work lives as merely wage-earners laboring in ever increasingly large and impersonal work rooms. For example, by 1835 in New York City, half of the journeymen were aged thirty or more and the majority were married with no hope of leaving wage-earning status. Efficiency-minded managers broke jobs into more productive but less complex and often less satisfying tasks. Individual payment by the piece (number of articles produced) increasingly was used to encourage more steady and rapid output.

Yet perhaps the most onerous working conditions were experienced by the garret or even cottage worker caught in the net of the "sweating" system. Competition among merchants and consumer demand for inexpensive articles of clothing created the "slop" shop. Slop merchants farmed out cloth or other raw materials at low prices to "sweaters" (often craftsmen themselves) who competed bitterly against each other. Sweaters, in turn, contracted out the materials to poor seamstresses, woodworkers, and other artisans at very low prices. The result, declared English journalist Henry Mayhew, was that "underpay makes overwork." By the 1830s, 43 percent of New York craft workers labored under these conditions. Hand weavers in London in 1849, who competed against the mechanical loom, complained that hours had risen one-third since 1824. Moreover, periodic slack seasons obliged slop clothing workers to toil from 5:00 AM to 9:00 PM for six months per year simply in order to pay debts accumulated during periods of unemployment.

During the 19th century, many proud skilled workers clung to the idea that they were "independent" artisans who freely contracted with a supplier of raw materials to make cabinets or shoes on their own time. Still, employers were increasingly able to impose their vision of labor as a commodity—a human machine who sold his or her time to the manufacturer. These changes in work had a great impact upon leisure. Factory managers were not only able to intensify work, but they could purge play from work. Mill owners in Lowell, Massachusetts, required their largely single female workforce to live in dormitories, which they regulated with a paternal hand. All employees were required to attend church and to meet a 10:00 PM curfew. In the 1830s, the Lawrence Company warned: "every kind of ardent spirit (except proscribed by a regular Physician) will be banished from the limits of the corporation." Employers, increasingly dependent on a regular daily labor supply, came to treat St. Monday as mere absenteeism and punished it as such. This leisure tradition had disappeared from all but the most tradition-bound trades by mid-century in Britain.

Perhaps the most obvious effect of early industrialization on leisure was its impact on children's play. Of course, children in the old cottage industries or on the farm were often horrendously overworked. "Labor began at seven or eight years of age and work hours often were as long as those for adults. Yet the physical and psychological impact of the factory was often worse. Long hours were not redeemed by periodic bouts of play or distraction, as was common in cottage trades, and the work was repetitive and tended to distort physical development. Factory children were commonly beaten to keep them awake during their long working hours; child coal haulers toiled in narrow shafts of mines; and little boys assisted chimney sweeps, cleaning the tiny passages that only a child could enter. Many observers to Samuel Slater's Fall River Mills or to the spinning factories of Lancashire noted the stunted moral and educational development of children deprived of not only schooling but even of parental supervision. And, of course, children had little time to play.

From practically the beginning of the factory system, reformers took interest in the fate of mill children, reflecting not merely the deterioration of children's working conditions, but also the growing sensitivity to the developmental affects of constant labor upon the immature. Reformers realized that child's play was a physical and social necessity and that the factory Moloch was devouring time for this essential purpose.

Industrialization, the Home, and Sex Roles

Surely one of the greatest effects of industrialization was the split of domestic from economic time. The French observer, Léon Faucher, noted in 1844: "The factory has invaded the family hearth. To enlarge this circle, hitherto too contracted, it has commenced by breaking it. Life in the future, both for the employer and for the employed, will have two phases—the domestic hearth and society."

When the factory system removed the machine and the worker from the cottage's common room, both the time and space of the laborer became radically disjoined. As one investigation in 1833 noted, the British factory worker's discontent was not merely due to wages but also to "the separation of families, breaking up of households, the disruption of all those ties which link man's heart to the better portion of his nature, viz his instincts and social affections."

The workers' day became segmented into hours of work and hours of leisure, each conducted in different, often distant places. The family unit that had traditionally labored together now worked for different employers or in different places in the same mill. Although a father often attempted to keep his working children together (for example, as his helpers if he was a "mule spinner"), this was often impossible. Sometimes factory managers prohibited it.

The impact of this dispersal of the family was complex (and will be developed in subsequent chapters). Still, an outline here is important:
It meant that work and leisure would increasingly be experienced as radical opposites, rather than as complementary, even indistinguishable activities. Work was something the factory operative (or clerk) went to. It consumed a period of time in which his or her freedom was relinquished, and work was an instrument for deferred pleasure "after hours." Gradually, people expected less intrinsic satisfaction from work and, instead, sought increased compensation for it and more time free from it.

This division localized leisure outside of the work environment. By removing wage-work from the home, it made the domestic shelter the "haven from a heartless world" of increasingly impersonal labor and economic competition. Thus a cult of "domestic pleasures" emerged, deliberately privatized in the home and defined over against the world of business and labor.

The segmentation of work and leisure tended to separate, if not polarize, the generations. Fathers, for example, had less control over their children's educational training (especially in the working classes) and probably less influence over their offspring's social development. The father's guidance of, or even play with, children was probably less common in the era of the early factory than when the family worked together in their nine-foot cottages.

Perhaps most subtle, the industrial system separated female from male experiences. While men increasingly became distant "outside" breadwinners, women gradually lost contact with the world of business and labor. The working-class girl might well take a job in a mill (or more often as a servant in the new households of the industrial well-to-do). However, she would retire from employment once she married and had children. Only in low-wage trades was this not common. The reason for this was simple. Because wage work and family life ceased to be conducted in the same place (i.e. the household), women were no longer able to combine economic and family functions. As a result, they had to segment their lives into periods of work before marriage and periods of housewifery afterwards. This necessity, of course, was reinforced by the Victorian ideology of the "women's sphere," which placed all the domestic burden upon the female. Still, lack of birth control and personal services for the working classes made any other solution impractical.

Women increasingly had very different work and leisure experiences from men. For females, work outside the home was a temporary station between childhood and marriage. Interest in improving their wages and working conditions was often slight, even though women were underpaid and overworked compared to men. Moreover, after marriage, women retained many of the same attitudes toward time and work that had characterized the traditional artisan: housewives were often "task conscious"—organizing their day in accordance with the immediate demands of children, cleaning, and cooking. They often interspersed these tasks with episodes of semi-leisure activity, conversation and decorative crafts, for example. Depending on the availability of help from children or servants, a woman's day was relatively "porous," even if usually long and often lonely.

By contrast, the male became "time-conscious" in the factory or office. His day was organized by the clock and was more or less routinized. For him, the coming of "quitting time," separated the compulsion of work from the freedom of leisure. And, of course, most husbands expected to have homes that were "castles"—places exclusively for relaxation and the opposite of the submissive or competitive roles often imposed on them at work. "Home" and "after hours" meant leisure. Women's historians have noted that the "two spheres" dividing male and female became a dominant idea only in the early industrial era.

As an English woman remembered her late 19th-century childhood, "in all our working-class neighborhood, I never knew one mother who went out to work. However, poor, they 'cut their coat according to their cloth' as my mother was fond of saying. In other words, what they couldn't have they did without." Fathers, comments English historian John Burnett, "dutifully brought home their wage-packets on Saturday afternoon [but] were not expected to share in the routine housework: they might mend shoes, repair household articles, dig their allotment [garden] and, perhaps, play with the children, but they expected their meal to be on the table, the fire to be burning brightly and their best suit ready for the weekend."

Finally, if men adopted more "modern" views of work, women developed innovative approaches to leisure. While the male sought to increase productivity or income on the job, the women in the home attempted to reduce the toil of domestic tasks of cleaning and child-rearing. This is one important reason why the number of children women bore decreased nearly one-half in 19th century America (and somewhat less in Britain). Increasingly, wives and mothers shifted time from onerous domestic work to "organizing" leisure in the family. Women became the focal point for new domestic leisure built around "togetherness" and mentality rather than the traditional and often rough community pleasures of peasant society. Working-class mothers were sometimes the allies of reforming elites who often tried to play wives against the traditional leisure of their husbands.

For the early 19th century, the picture that we have just painted is an idealization only. Economic limitations imposed on the working-class family prevented it from becoming a reality. Indeed, the "breakdown" of the working family seldom resulted from conflicts between men and women over their increasingly different views of work and leisure (although this occurred). Rather, the problem was in the inability of the laboring poor fully to adopt this model of the "two spheres"—for women were often obliged to work outside the home and men's income was often insufficient to do without women's wage work.

Even radicals like Friedrich Engels saw in the factory a threat to female-orchestrated domestic felicity: "When women work in factories, the most important result is the dissolution of family ties." Opponents of child labor were particularly concerned about female youth. One British reformer noted in
1844 that the twelve-hour day began for the girl at 13 years of age, “the tenderest period of female life.” The survival of civilization required that this practice be abandoned. By contrast, few 19th-century reformers (outside the powerless ranks of the factory operatives) were interested in liberating time for male leisure. It went almost without saying that such freedom would be “wasted” in traditional recreational activities. The “two spheres” appeared first in the middle class; and then as incomes rose, it trickled down into the working-classes (Chapter 9).

Industrialization and Community

Industrialization affected leisure by transforming work and family. It also had a profound impact on the broader social life of the community. Social historians have often claimed that industrialization led to the breakdown of village life and the deterioration of traditional leisure. The outflow of rural people to the factory towns depopulated rural areas and concentrated workers into urban slums. The masses, uprooted from the parish churches and village alehouses, were then deprived of the focal points of their past leisure culture. This picture, as we shall presently note, is exaggerated. Still, new urban environments seldom had the green space or public facilities necessary for maintaining sporting customs or even regular socializing. As the cities expanded, open spaces were gobbled up by developers. What was left, of course, was the street and the pub.

As important, perhaps, was the withdrawal of elites from the patronage of popular leisure. Robert Malcomson and others have noted how the English gentry after about 1780 abandoned support for traditional sports. The Puritan’s fear of idleness had spread to the broader English elite and was combined with a fervent desire to increase labor discipline and productivity.

In the 1810s, the British Society for the Suppression of Vice pressed local magistrates to prosecute drunks, cock throwers, bear baiters, Sabbath breakers, and even nude sea bathers. The London Common Council drove the St. Bartholomew Fair out of business in 1854 by harassing organizers with rent hikes and legal restrictions. Throughout Britain in the 1840s, new professionalized police forces drove the young playing pitch-and-toss from the streets and even exterminated the ancient sport of pigeon-flying. Rural traditions in 1800 of up to 13 days of games, dancing, and drinking at Whitenside were reduced to a single Bank Holiday by the 1870s.

To a degree, this response was part of a growing revulsion against the violence of traditional culture. Note, for example, the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Britain in 1824. Yet often there was also a clear class bias in these campaigns. While magistrates repressed cock fighting, they and their gentleman friends were taking up fox hunting. As one commentator wrote in 1809:

A man of ten thousand a year may worry a fox as much as he please, may encourage the breed of a mischievous animal on purpose to worry it; and a poor labourer is carried before a magistrate for paying sixpence to see an exhibition of courage between a dog and a bear! Any cruelty may be practised to gorge the stomachs of the rich; none to enliven the holidays of the poor.

The English elite was increasingly concerned with the rights of private property; they fenced in lands and pathways which had been essential for the playing of popular games and for access to the countryside. The well-to-do had surely become more exclusive and insistent on physical distance from the “commoner sort.”

In the American frontier boom-town of Rochester, New York, in the 1820s, there was a similar breakdown of paternalism. Increasingly, employers ceased to provide lodgings in the shop for their laborers and clerks. The owning classes moved into new, exclusive neighborhoods and, in so doing, lost direct influence over their employees’ leisure hours. In the U.S. as well as Europe, leisure time became increasingly class-stratified.

Some Consequences and Mollifying Factors

Perhaps the most obvious effect of the factory was the simple reduction of time available for leisure. Time is always the most scarce resource, for it is voluntarily consumed but never accumulated. The only thing that we can do about time is to reallocate it. But the industrialists’ drive for efficiency did not liberate time from work even though it may have produced “labor-saving” machinery. Instead, the new factories often lengthened the traditional workday, at least in the early nineteenth century; twelve or more hours per day were not unusual.

Yet this was hardly a unvarying trend. For example, as late as 1851, even in industrial Britain, workers in non mechanized industries outnumbered mechanized trades by three to one. The 10-hour workday was not increased during the century in most construction and metal trades, despite employer efforts in the 1830s to raise it. Amazingly, only where women and children worked did employers impose more than an effective three-day week upon Birmingham and Black Country workers in the mid-19th century! The real lengthening of the workday in 19th-century Britain took place mostly among workers in mechanized textile mills and other trades competing against the machines and overcrowding.

In rural America, at the Harper’s Ferry Armory in western Virginia, two generations of efforts by Yankee managers failed to eradicate absenteeism for hunting and fishing in the first half of the 19th century. In the 1830s, Philadelphia’s artisans continued to pass around the communal jug in the late-afternoon “treating time.” The same was true of the “Puritan” New England factory, where one study found an absenteeism rate of 15 percent in 1830.
Despite the 19th-century trend toward an unvarying and more intense work year, laborers were often able to defend traditional leisure institutions and customs. Many dock workers preferred a seasonal work year, alternating long and arduous workdays with long periods of what the workers called "playing." This custom survived despite the efforts of reformers. As late as 1914, young machinists at a Glasgow Scotland engine works "never started work after holidays on the appointed day.... At some places they used to assemble at the gate and throw a brick in the air: if the brick stayed up they started work, but if it came down again they went for a drink." The pace of mechanization was far slower than is painted in the textbook picture of the Industrial Revolution, and the resistance of especially skilled male workers to the imposition of clock-discipline is often underestimated. Perhaps the "Puritan" psychologist, Sigmund Freud, is correct when he wrote that "human beings manifest an inborn tendency to negligence, irregularity, and untrustworthiness in their work and have to be laboriously trained to imitate the example of their celestial models." The low output of offices on Friday afternoons and the well-known gaps in the workdays of professors and students is evidence of the continued success of the lucky and resourceful to evade the standards of the time and motion ethic.

Still, critiques of the early factory almost unanimously complained that industrialization stimulated degrading forms of leisure. The frequenting of the brightly-lit "gin mill" after work, where wages were quickly drowned in strong drink, is a common image. The association of the breakdown of social controls in the industrial cities with the rise in sexual promiscuity was equally strong. Implicit, and often explicit, in these analyses is the view that the disintegration of family, especially of paternal authority and responsibility, is to blame for debauchery.

Drinking, which we noted was central to traditional peasant leisure, may have, in fact, changed in the industrial context. Consumption probably increased, as did the number of dispensers of drink in both America and Britain. In the 1820s, in England, drink retailers were roughly equal in number to food dispensers. In 1831, the per capita consumption of spirits was 1.11 gallons (compared to .22 in 1931); each Englishman drank 21.6 gallons of beer (dropping to 13.3 gallons one hundred years later). In the late 1820s, American men were drinking, on average, half a pint of hard liquor per day. Long days of unemployment brought on by trade depressions were often ended by drinking. And, in many trades, laborers waited in taverns to be called to work by hiring agents. Drink was also an obvious escape from the dead-end of the monotonous factory job and the loneliness of the city. It was, said Friedrich Engels, the "quickest way out of Manchester." In America, "soo-drinking" seems to have increased as did alcohol dependency in the disruptive decades of the 1820s and 1830s.

Charles Dickens's Sketches by Boz contrasts the slum with the gin palace and gives us insight into the appeal of the bar:

The filthy and miserable appearance of this part of London can hardly be imagined.... Wretched houses with broken windows patched with rags and paper; every room let out to a different family and in many instances to two or even three; a bird-fancier in the first floor, three families on the second, starvation in the attics, Irishmen in the passages.... filthy everywhere—a gutter before the houses and a drain behind them.... Men and women, in every variety of scanty and dirty apparel, lounging, scolding, drinking, smoking, squabbling, fighting and swearing.

You turn the corner. What a change! All is light and brilliancy. The hum of many voices issues from that splendid gin-shop which forms the commencement of the two streets opposite, and the gay building with the fantastically ornamented parapet, the illuminated clock, the plate-glass windows surrounded by stucco rosettes, and its profusion of gas-lights in richly gilt burners, is perfectly dazzling when contrasted with the darkness and dirt we have just left.

The gin-palace offered a gaudy elegance, the opposite of the home lives of working people.

Besides intoxicants, industrialization also produced an epidemic of extramarital sex. Illegitimacy rates in Europe increased up to tenfold between 1750 and 1850. The social pressures of the traditional village and the careful supervision of masters and relatives, which had been a powerful impediment to youthful sexuality, apparently had broken down in the new industrial towns.

However, there are a number of alternative ways of understanding this increase in alcohol consumption and sexual activity. The pub may be understood as the one true institution of the working man (seldom of women). The pub or tavern was, for many, the only place available for socializing, and the publican or bar owner often replaced the church and gentry in patronizing traditional sports (e.g. bull baiting) or serving as the impresario of musical entertainment. In the 1830s, the English publican often hired professional singers and other acts to attract customers from the unregulated beershops. As Léon Faucher describes how the Manchester gin palace had emerged in the 1840s:

By degrees, the dim lights have been replaced by the dazzling gas; the doors have been enlarged; the pot-house has become a gin-shop; and the gin-shop a species of palace. The games hitherto carried on in these places not being sufficient, the proprietors have added music,
dancing, and exhibitions, as additional attractions to a dissolute people. ... The swelling of the organ, and the sounds of the violin and the piano, resound in their large saloons. One of these houses... collects in this manner, one thousand persons, every evening, until eleven, PM.

The bar provided not only the space for drinking but the club atmosphere essential for free discussion of political and cultural issues. Trade unions, choral societies, sports clubs, and other working-class institutions had only the pub to shelter them.77

Even the data on alcohol consumption can be read in optimistic ways. Industrialization reinforced the traditional view that liquor was a safe replacement for unhealthful and even absent water supplies in the growing cities. Intoxicants were one of the few ways of disposing of grains and fruits in both countries in this era before modern food preservation; thus, farmers and the drink interests were often together powerful lobbyists against temperance.

Before 1830, American frontier farmers relied on the local distiller to buy surplus corn and rye. Finally, British historian Brian Harrison argues that the campaign of the 1820s and 1830s against “drunkenness is as much an indication that the ancient inseparability of work and recreation had become inconvenient [to employers] as that drunkenness had itself become more prevalent.”80

Moreover, Edward Shorter argues that increased signs of “promiscuity” should not be read as a social (or leisure) problem. Rather, increased illegitimacy indicates merely increased sexuality and even the emergence of romantic or individualistic love. Youths, Shorter claims, were no longer willing to forego physical expressions of affection for the sake of economic prudence or parental wish. This argument is debated: others claim that increased illegitimacy is an index of declining social controls, which had formerly pushed male courtiers into marrying pregnant lovers.89

Less controversial is the view that these trends in alcohol use and sexuality were not unmitigated examples of the breakdown of family. Indeed, despite these signs of atomized leisure, family solidarities survived the decline of the domestic economy. In the Lancashire town of Preston, social historian Michael Anderson has shown that families—far from breaking under the strain of urban and industrial life—actually were strengthened. Family members relied on each other for material and psychological assistance. Herbert Gutman shows the same phenomenon for black families in slavery and in the urban environment of the late-19th century. And Tamara Haraven makes a similar point for New Hampshire textile families.90 These economic alliances were solidified in family leisure; early industrialization produced Sunday evening family get-togethers and family reunions during annual summer “wakes weeks.” If industrialization broke up the extended family, the railroad made possible its reconstitution during holidays.

Finally, the withdrawal of patronage from traditional leisure has been blamed for the decline of communal sport and festival customs. The American historian, Mary Ryan, finds a linkage between the growth of cities in the 1840s and the decline of voluntary associations. Old community ties were fragmented by class stratification, and the impersonal character of urban life undermined fraternal groups such as fire departments.41 Numerous historians have noted a similar decline of mechanics and other societies of skilled artisans as well as traditional festivals during the disruption of early industrialization.42

However, the tenacity of community and traditional leisure must be stressed. Despite years of pressure to eliminate the unruly mass football game at Derby England, players were able to overcome official harassment until 1847. Many workers from Derby found in this annual event an opportunity to assert a right to a traditional holiday, a reunion of old friends, and casual competition. The same tenacity was shown toward the celebration of the Stamford Bull Run. The authorities required 20 metropolitan police and 43 dragoons, in addition to 90 local constables, to prevent a Bull Run in 1839. And, in any case, important sections of the British political elite were wary of abandoning traditional sports and leisure.43 Traditional fairs and circuses were, in fact, revived by the railroads and trams. The new freedom of distance allowed urban workers to flood traditional village wakes or to attend formerly remote races (Chapter 9).44

Portents of Change

The industrialization of the early 19th century was not merely a story of loss of traditional leisure and resistance to it. This new economic world helped to produce changes in the meanings of work and leisure. These changes may be divided into three broad areas:

1. Even if industrialization intensified and, to a degree, lengthened the work year, it also spurred movements for new allocations of time. As a result, the day, week, year, and life would be rearranged to carve out new blocks of time for leisure in the evening, weekend, summer vacation, childhood, and old age.

2. The breakdown of community leisure traditions may have deprived workers of their past recreational outlets and sparked class-cultural conflict; yet industrialization also helped to create new leisure attitudes and values. Not only the owning classes and religious groups advocated a more "rational," individualistic, and humane leisure culture, but large sections of the working classes and secularists shared this perspective. New ideas about recreation became the foundation of the modern leisure ideals of physical fitness, adult education, and cultural enrichment. The next three chapters will explore these three trends.
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3. If the separation of work and home weakened the bonds of the family, it also tended to liberate the domestic sphere for leisure. The home became the focus of family-based recreations centered around the child and often organized by the mother. New attitudes toward the leisure of youth also resulted.