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Middle-class millions: The creation of Atlantic City's "modern" image, 1890-1910

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Middle-Class Millions: The Creation of Atlantic City's "Modern" Image, 1890-1910

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

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FACULTY COMMITTEE:

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Dedication

My parents, William and Cecilia, have done more for their children than can be stated in this brief dedication. It is through their sacrifices, understanding, and love that we have been able to experience life in our own ways. To them I owe more than I can repay; completing this project is a start.

My siblings, all of whom look too much like me, barraged their youngest brother with advice for years, from work to love, yet were quiet when asked how to write a good dedication. Nonetheless, here it is, and there they are.

To my friends, old and new, who know better than I that of which I am capable.

And to my Quelle.

And the days went by like paper in the wind

Everything changed, then changed again

It's hard to find a friend

*It's hard to find a friend*ⁱ

ⁱ "To Find a Friend," Spotify, track 11 on Tom Petty, *Wildflowers*, Warner Bros. Records Inc., 1994.

Acknowledgements

The work I have completed here is the result of more individuals than I can satisfactorily acknowledge. At the risk of letting some fall through the proverbial cracks, I will, of course, do my best to thank them here.

The individual who deserves more thanks than I could possibly state is my thesis director, Dr. Emily Westkaemper. Although I originally entered James Madison University interested in a strange collection of topics—Lost Cause mythology, technology, and turn-of-the-century religious dynamics—it was in Dr. Westkaemper’s course, “Reform, World War, and Prosperity,” that I became enamored with the upheavals in American culture between 1870 and 1930. It was in this class, too, that I first read George Chauncey’s *Gay New York*, which, through a convoluted and sleep-deprived course of events, led me to the topic that became this thesis. More importantly, Dr. Westkaemper’s keen eye for detail, commitment to her students, seemingly unending patience as deadlines came (and passed), and immense knowledge of the period served me greatly during the research and writing of this thesis, and for that she has my enduring gratitude.

Drs. Evan Friss and Raymond Hyser were invaluable assets in the writing of this thesis. Dr. Friss lent his familiarity with both newspapers advertisements (not limited to those describing bicycles) and urban development, correcting overreaches and coaxing clarity. It is a wonder that Dr. Hyser was not blinded by his careful consideration of the footnote citations, very few of which were left untouched by his (digital) red pen.

My wordsmith sister, Natalie Szczur, read and edited this work in its entirety. She cleaned up the language and wording, rendering the final product far more readable than it had been in its earlier stages. Any instances of passive voice are chiefly my own fault.

I would be remiss not to mention the following people, who in the last few years have had an incalculable effect on my life, academic or otherwise. Dr. Gabrielle Lanier offered ear and encouragement whenever either was needed, whether asked or, almost clairvoyantly, not. My classmates and others, particularly Rachel Carey (who also edited this thesis), David Scott Merrifield, Daniel Dawson, Joshua Goodall, Nathan Ray, and Nick Sipes, delivered continued moral support, and with that constant I was able to finish this program with added academic experience and six firm friends.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
List of Figures.....	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One, “A Message from the Sea”: Atlantic City as Terminus.....	13
Chapter Two, “Modern in Every Way”: Hotels and Middle-class Repose.....	40
Chapter Three, “What the Public Wants”: Social Engagement at the Shore.....	67
Conclusion.....	95
Bibliography.....	101
Discography.....	109

List of Figures

- Figure 1: The cover of William Ralston Balch's *A Message from the Sea* depicts a well-dressed woman walking close to the water's edge. Archive.org.....30
- Figure 2: These lithographs appeared in both the Pennsylvania Railroad's *Summer Excursion* guide and Balch's *A Message from the Sea*, depicting respectable middle-class patrons of Atlantic City. Archive.org.....32
- Figure 3: The Chalfonte Hotel (left) and Haddon Hall (right) as they appeared in 1904. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.....45
- Figure 4: The Historical American Buildings Survey, conducted shortly before the Chalfonte's demolition, included a number of drawings of the complex. The tall building is the C-building. The building with the slanted roof is the original Chalfonte. They are joined by the six-story F-building. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.....48
- Figure 5: The original 1904 floor plan for the Chalfonte showing the third through sixth chamber floors. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.....52
- Figure 6: The Blenheim Hotel as it appeared shortly after opening. The Marlborough is just off camera on the right. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.....63
- Figure 7: Sunday editions of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* included lithographs and photographs of visitors, usually women, to Atlantic City. Courtesy of Newspapers.com.....76

Abstract

By the end of the nineteenth century, vacationing became more accessible to middle-class Americans than ever before, resulting in the growth of tourist destinations on the New Jersey shore, particularly in Atlantic City. Between 1890 and 1910, government officials, railroad companies, and hotel owners advertised Atlantic City's technological and cultural modernity to middle-class Americans particularly in Philadelphia, creating an image of Atlantic City as a modern middle-class utopia.

This thesis further examines the relationship between consumerism and American middle-class identity. While we often consider the link between consumerism and identity to have been solidified in American culture following the Second World War, in its modern, mass-consumption sense, it originated during the period of industrialization following the end of the Civil War. By the turn of the century, the emergence of a middle class brought greater wealth into the hands of more Americans than ever before. I argue that Atlantic City's popularity as a summer resort stemmed from its association with middle-class consumerist habits. From the city's infrastructure, to the technology of its hotels, to the structure of social engagement in its hotels and on its beach and boardwalk, Atlantic City became the site of middle-class leisure by combining modern aspects of urban life with the rejuvenation offered by the shore's rurality.

Predominantly using newspapers, I have analyzed the arguments of Atlantic City's advertisers to demonstrate that the city's emergence as a popular resort was not in the 1920s, as other historians claim, but in the first decade of the twentieth century. The first chapter describes the efforts by railroads and city officials to create Atlantic City as a modern, urban landscape offering the technology and spatial arrangement of larger cities while maintaining the healing properties of a coastal town. The second chapter analyzes

the modern features of the city's hotels—from their construction to their accommodations—highlighting their transition from small, public buildings to large, brick-and-steel skyscrapers with more private spaces. The third chapter addresses the social undertakings of middle-class visitors to the shore, describing how these regional actions reflected national trends in the creation of a middle-class identity.

Introduction

Today, the annual or semi-annual vacation seems a staple to Americans of almost all classes. These families, depending on their income and ability to travel for extended periods, may choose a variety of destinations: a major theme park like Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, or Walt Disney Land in Anaheim, California; one of the country's many National Parks, like Yellowstone or the Grand Canyon; or even places with more mature audiences in mind, like Las Vegas, Nevada, where entertainment and gambling abound. For many people in the metropolitan areas of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, the annual summer vacation has long been a trip to the New Jersey shore.

New Jersey's reputation as a beach destination may seem outlandish to those in other parts of the country who associate the state with its highways and political corruption, particularly as one recent governor allowed state-run beaches to close over Independence Day weekend before being photographed with his family on a closed beach.¹ But the state has long been the summer retreat for Americans in the vicinity. Cape May, the southernmost town in the state, was the destination of choice for wealthier individuals in the nineteenth century. Businessmen and numerous government employees—including members of Congress and several presidents—traveled to Cape May to avoid suffocation in the marshland of the District of Columbia. Indeed, Cape May was primarily a health resort dedicated to alleviating the new stresses and ailments brought to the forefront by increasingly urban life. When in the latter half of the century Atlantic City developed forty-eight miles north of Cape May and sixty-two miles southeast of Philadelphia, however, it attracted customers of the working and emerging

¹ "Chris Christie and 'Beachgate': What Happened?" *BBC News* video, 1:40, July 3, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-us-canada-40486350/chris-christie-and-beachgate-what-happened>.

middle classes as well as the wealthy. It, too, was associated with health and recuperation. Unlike Cape May, Atlantic City quickly urbanized.

Atlantic City's success as a resort between 1890 and 1910 was the result of prolonged efforts by city officials and businesses, particularly the railroads and hotels, to create an image of a modern city by the sea, combining all the conveniences of urban life with the health and leisure of the shore. The city and its hotels utilized print advertising to achieve this goal, often sponsoring or directly publishing travel guides emphasizing the city and its attractions as "modern in every way."² Newspapers, too, contributed in cultivating the popularity of the resort city, whether sponsored or not. While hotels and railroads advertised extensively in these newspapers, heralding the dawn of a new age with their modern appointments, newspapers independently published articles detailing the goings-on at the shore. For Americans who were not yet able to experience the wonders of modern luxury in the home, Atlantic City provided an almost utopian example of the city of tomorrow.

Atlantic City had in 1890 the unique advantage of benefiting from industrialization without itself industrializing. Expanding speedily after the end of the Civil War in 1865, industrial America produced previously expensive goods cheaply and rapidly with the aid of new technologies. With factories incorporating electric machinery into their processing, companies manufactured products at a rate previously unseen.

Goods such as soap, toothpaste (or powder), deodorant, and clothing graced the shelves

² Shorter newspaper advertisements and classifieds often described Atlantic City's hotels as "modern in every way," having "every modern convenience," or some similar iteration, leaving it to the reader to interpret the exact claims. However, the reader could find the answer in the page's context, as other advertisements provided hotels' modern qualities. For examples, see "Hotel Sterling," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), May 30, 1903, 14, Newspapers.com; "Waldorf-Astoria," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 5, 1899, 11, Newspapers.com.

of dry good stores in rural American and newly conceptualized department stores in urban areas. These specific products helped create modern conceptions of hygiene and cleanliness in urban areas that were constantly polluted. But these products, like others, spread out from factories thanks to innovations in transportation.³

The extensive and ever-expanding networks of railways linked distant rural towns with urban centers near the coast. Alongside the railways ran telegraph lines, and with cables spanning across the Atlantic Ocean, the most isolated rural communities were able to communicate instantaneously with nearly all areas of the country. The need for constantly up-to-date information regarding rising businesses in the East led to the mass dissemination of news via newspapers and magazines. With periodicals and other publications gaining tens of thousands of subscribers every year, they reached Americans of every level of the social strata.⁴

To sell their products, producers of all types of goods actively reached out to their potential customers through these periodicals. Many of the twentieth century's most widely circulated magazines, like *Ladies' Home Journal*, and newspapers, like the *New York Times*, were first established in this time and quickly garnered widespread acclaim.

³ The country's shift from an agricultural economy to an industrial, consumerist economy after the Civil War has been extensively documented and fiercely debated by historians. See H. W. Brands, *American Colossus: The Triumph of Capitalism, 1865-1900* (New York: Anchor Books, 2010); Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010); Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); and Olivier Zunz, *Making American Corporate, 1870-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁴ Communications technology and newspapers have often been studied hand-in-hand, but newspapers and periodicals existed before national communications networks. See Gerald Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Allan Pred, *Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information: The United States System of Cities, 1790-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); and Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Ladies' Home Journal had a circulation of 440,000 by 1889, just six years after its creation. By 1898, the *New York Times* reached 76,000 daily subscribers after dropping its price to one cent for home delivery. These mediums included advertisements to offset the costs of production and circulation. This change has been documented by a number of historians; however, newspaper advertising in connection to vacationing has not been exceptionally covered.⁵

Historian Jackson Lears documented the various roles advertising played in the American psyche over the last two centuries in his book, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*. Lears analyzed advertisements of all kinds, but much of his focus lay on the establishment and dominance of national advertisers and consumer branding. However, a great deal of *Fables of Abundance* relies on magazine and newspaper advertisements themselves to demonstrate how they reflect changing American values in response, not only to the constantly accelerating rate of industrialization, but also to the rise and rapid dominance of consumerism. Lears painstakingly details the clash of class values in the late nineteenth and early-to-mid twentieth centuries as evident through advertising. Additionally, he pays careful attention to changing attitudes and language regarding health and health products: whereas at the beginning of the nineteenth century, medicine was pseudoscientific in nature, by its end, modern science and understanding of the body appeared in American advertising to replace previously used images of primitive, exotic sensuality. Lears analyzes the upper

⁵ The *New York Times* was first published in 1851; *Ladies' Home Journal*, which has since ceased monthly publication, was founded in 1883; Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1964), 11; "Our History," *New York Times*, accessed August 29, 2017, <http://www.nytc.com/who-we-are/culture/our-history/#1910-1881-timeline>. Indeed, some social commentators have deliberately addressed public concern that advertisers allegedly control the magazines and newspapers in which they publish. See James Playsted Wood, *Magazines in the United States* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1949), 143-145, 291-292.

class's Victorian response to the hyperbolic speech of confidence men and early health products that would be later adopted—albeit modified to be more honest—by national advertisers. This thesis connects Lears's interpretations of modernity, health, and class to the expansion of Atlantic City between 1890 and 1910. By examining advertisements targeting Atlantic City, I will show that contemporaneous advertisers used the very same language as advertisers of health products to entice visitors to the shore with the promise that the shore enabled recuperation or health improvement.⁶

The rise of vacation culture, specifically at the beach, has already been documented by Cindy S. Aron in *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States*. In this book, Aron focuses on the adoption of beachgoing by upper-class Americans as an acceptable alternative to traveling Europe, as well as for its supposed health benefits. Aron uses contemporary writings and other artifacts, like postcards, to communicate the clash between the upper class, with its Victorian ideals, and the lower classes, with their seemingly looser morals. The upper classes made multiple attempts over the early decades of the twentieth century to control the dress and behaviors of the lower classes at the beach, enacting various restrictions ranging from bans on alcohol to inspections of swimwear. However, Aron considers beach vacationing as a whole and does not limit herself to one particular location, instead using a litany of locations along the East Coast of the United States, including Atlantic City and, to a lesser degree, Cape May. By narrowing my focus to these two cities and using advertisements almost exclusively, I hope to demonstrate that the shore towns themselves, through city officials and business owners, actively participated in defining beach vacationing by crafting their

⁶ Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994), 202-205.

own images through advertising, rather than having images ascribed by social classes with potentially opposing viewpoints.⁷

This, in turn, builds upon the work of Roland Marchand, who, in *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940*, sought to answer whether advertisements built facets of society or if they merely reflected societal images. Marchand also addresses the ever-present theme of modernity in American culture. Modernity, he claims, underwent several iterations as a theme over the twenty-year span he studied. In this respect, modernity as a theme came to denote technological development with convenience to consumers. Nevertheless, consumers oscillated between trusting mass-produced goods for their thrift and uniformity and distrusting them for the very same reasons. While it was a core tenet for advertising in the 1920s, modernity grew weary on consumers. Though Marchand's study begins in the 1920s, his examination of technological and cultural modernity will be particularly useful for my analysis of advertising fifteen to twenty-five years prior, the period in which modernity became a widely used theme for advertising, which, as Lears has shown, became national and branded. It is Marchand's two-sided definition of modernity that informs this thesis: "Ideas of modernity carried connotations drawn both from the realm of modern business progress (efficiency, control, rationality, technological sophistication) and from the realm of fashion (expressiveness, changeability, extravagance)."⁸

By focusing on newspapers and magazines, I am addressing a medium that rapidly expanded during the latter half of the nineteenth century and remained dominant

⁷ Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3-8, 183-205.

⁸ Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), xvi-xvii, 168.

until the proliferation of the Internet and digital media in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Many monographs analyzing the newspaper business in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era focus on the men who made the newspaper a daily purchase for most Americans, like William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer.⁹ Historians operating from a material culture standpoint have looked at the structures of advertisements in newspapers and magazines themselves as well as their contents to deduce characteristics of contemporary American life.¹⁰ In *Fables of Abundance*, Jackson Lears addressed newspapers in a similar way, focusing on individual advertisements. On the other hand, I will consider advertisements both individually and within their context on the page with potentially dozens of similar advertisements, specifically addressing the medium of newspapers. By analyzing classifieds and advertisements, I will be connecting indirectly with thousands of readers, some of whom may have been swayed by the papers' contents. These advertisements published individually acted collectively on the pages to create a ubiquitous and recognizable image of the shore to the papers' readers.

In this thesis, I have made extensive use of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, digitized by Newspapers.com, a subscription-based affiliate of Ancestry.com Inc., that provides access to digitized newspapers of varying sizes. In order to create a full picture of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*'s advertising of Atlantic City (without sifting through every issue

⁹ Kenneth Whyte describes Gilded Age newspapers extensively but with a focus on William Randolph Hearst in *Uncrowned King: The Sensational Rise of William Randolph Hearst* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2009); David Nasaw, too, addresses Hearst's contributions to print news in *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000); James McGrath Morris, offering a countering viewpoint, provides an account of Hearst's rival Joseph J. Pulitzer in *Pulitzer: A Life in Politics, Print, and Power* (New York: Harper, 2010).

¹⁰ An example of this is Ellen Gruber Garvey's *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Garvey, working with isolated advertisements in the scrapbooks of private citizens, meticulously retraces the publication of certain featured advertisements. Others, she admits, are impossible to connect to their original sources.

published between 1890 and 1910, numbering, roughly, 7,300 issues), I adopted a methodology that allowed for a dataset that would be less burdensome but still produce accurate results. While the majority of this study examines the twenty years between 1890 and 1910, much of chapters two and three utilize newspapers after 1900—by 1902, Atlantic City’s transportation and infrastructure had been modernized, leaving the city’s hotels and its visitors to construct a “modern” Atlantic City defined by its buildings and social engagement.

The majority of this thesis analyzes Atlantic City during its summer season, which, between 1890 and 1900, began, truly, on July 4. Therefore, between June 1 and September 1, I viewed nearly every issue (particularly between 1895 and 1906) published on Friday or Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and either Wednesday or Thursday. There are several reasons for this methodology. First, of course, was manageability. Second, it was necessary to establish when hotels tended to run advertisements in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Friday and Saturday, the most popular hotels tended not to run advertisements. Sunday editions, which had both the most sections and the largest articles on Atlantic City, often detailed the weekend’s events and carried advertisements for the hotels. By Monday, as visitors left, more hotels ran advertisements. By Wednesday or Thursday, nearly every hotel that regularly advertised ran advertisements. Third, by establishing this baseline, it became possible to examine changes to advertisements over time. This is evident at several points, discussed later in the thesis, specifically the fires of 1898 and 1902, and the construction of the Chalfonte and Blenheim Hotels in 1904 and 1906, respectively.

Atlantic City has been the subject of several historical studies in recent years; rarely do they focus on the period from 1890 to 1910. Historians have tended to limit their periods of study to Atlantic City's so-called golden age, lasting from the end of the First World War to the mid-1950s, when white flight and the abandonment of the city for the suburbs brought American cities' poverty levels to the fore, driving middle-class tourists away from Atlantic City. More recent works have considered Atlantic City's experiment with legalized gambling. This includes Bryant Simon's *Boardwalk of Dreams: Atlantic City and the Fate of Urban America*, possibly the most in-depth study of the city in the last twenty years. Simon examines middle-class efforts to exclude working-class whites and minorities in public spaces between 1920 and 1990, offering several thoughts about the city's recent decay and decrease in popularity. In *The Retreats of Reconstruction: Race, Leisure, and the Politics of Segregation at the New Jersey Shore, 1865-1920*, David E. Goldberg casts a net wider than Simon, yet narrower than Aron, to analyze the social dynamic of race relations—specifically between African Americans and whites—in New Jersey's beach resorts. Goldberg details the effects of Jim Crow segregation on black vacationers, workers, and businesses owners in shore resorts such as Asbury Park, Long Branch, Cape May, and Atlantic City.¹¹

Atlantic City plays a prominent role in New Jersey's recent history, and thus it is always included in overviews of the state's recent history. In 2012, Maxine N. Lurie and

¹¹ Howard Gillette, Jr., "Suburbanization and the Decline of the Cities: Toward an Uncertain Future," in *New Jersey: A History of the Garden State*, ed. Maxine N. Lurie and Richard Veit (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012): 278-279; For the foundational work on the Urban Crisis of the 1960s, see Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Bryant Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams: Atlantic City and the Fate of Urban America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15-17; David E. Goldberg, *The Retreats of Reconstruction: Race, Leisure, and the Politics of Segregation at the New Jersey Shore, 1865-1920* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 5-6.

Richard Veit published *New Jersey: A History of the Garden State*. The book collects ten articles detailing the stages of New Jersey's history from pre-European contact to the modern day. Atlantic City, as the largest city in the southern part of the state, plays prominently in the articles covering the twentieth century. Howard Gillette, Jr., particularly analyzes the city's decrease in popularity in recent decades in his article "Suburbanization and the Decline of the Cities." Russell Roberts and Rich Youmans offer a more accessible overview of the state's beach resorts in *Down the Jersey Shore*. Roberts and Youmans include extended comparisons between Atlantic City—highlighting its golden age in the 1920s—and Asbury Park, Cape May, and Ocean Grove.¹²

The period of time this thesis addresses—1890 to 1910—is marked by a key transitional stage in the history of both Atlantic City and New Jersey's seaside resorts as a whole. While Atlantic City started as a health and leisure resort like others along the coast, it urbanized by the end of the nineteenth century. The others did not. The two decades addressed in this thesis mark the city's transition from an organically expanding settlement to a city of deliberate planning. Between 1890 and 1920, Atlantic City used common ideas of the time—particularly modernity—to attract urbanites away from the cities and other resorts.

This thesis is divided into three parts. Each addresses modernity—technological, efficient, fashionable, and moral—and the way Atlantic City's officials, railroads, hotels,

¹² Brian Greenberg, "The Progressive Era," in *New Jersey: A History of the Garden State*, ed. Maxine N. Lurie and Richard Veit (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012): 202-235; G. Kurt Piehler, "Depression and War," in *New Jersey: A History of the Garden State*, ed. Maxine N. Lurie and Richard Veit (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012): 236-263; Gillette, "Suburbanization and Decline of the Cities," in *New Jersey: A History of the Garden State*, 264-285; Russell Roberts and Rich Youmans, *Down the Jersey Shore* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

visitors, and advertisers fostered, experienced, and reacted to modernity. Chapter one, “‘A Message from the Sea’: Atlantic City as Terminus,” discusses the ways that Atlantic City mirrored its larger neighbors in adopting concepts of modern infrastructure to cement its image as a shore-side modern city. The chapter details Atlantic City’s evolution from its founding in the 1850s as a health spa to a burgeoning urban center by 1890. The creation of Atlantic City’s modern image was a cooperative effort between the railroads and city officials—the railroads advertised themselves and the city, and the city advertised itself and the transportation network that put it within an hour’s reach of Philadelphia, benefiting both, as the railroads generally owned property in the city. The railroads claimed that visitors would experience modern accoutrements from the time they left the station in Philadelphia or Camden to when they arrived back in those cities at the end of their vacation. On the other hand, Atlantic City’s officials and businesses boasted that the city was as modern as any other, its infrastructure capable of handling everyday urban life without the plights of poverty and disease common to the Gilded Age city.

Chapter two, “‘Modern in Every Way’: Hotels and the Definition of Modernity,” shows the ways that Atlantic City’s hotels adapted to their conceptions of the public’s ideas of modernity. During the two decades covered in this study, Atlantic City’s hotels underwent a shift from low, horizontal wooden buildings stretching toward the beach to metal and concrete skyscrapers. The wave of development, specifically after 1902, spurred the city’s hotels to compete with one another to provide the most modern conveniences, technology, and style, both with the buildings’ construction and with their accommodations. Fire safety was particularly important, as were electricity in

bedchambers and private bathrooms *en suite*. These, like the city's infrastructure, represented more tactile aspects of modernity for visitors to the shore to experience.

Chapter three, "'What the Public Wants': Social Engagement at the Shore," discusses social dynamics at the shore, with a particular emphasis on middle-class attempts at reform, from temperance to swimwear, and Atlantic City's reputation as a destination for conventions held by reform groups and professionalized institutions alike. Additionally, the third chapter describes the activities open to visitors in Atlantic City, many of them hosted in the hotels themselves. This chapter draws on a variety of works, including Aron's *Working at Play*, Lears's *No Place of Grace*, John Kasson's seminal work on Coney Island *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*, and John Hannigan's *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis*.¹³

Over the last century, Atlantic City has strived to be at the forefront of tourism and leisure in New Jersey, if not on the East Coast entirely. This thesis will shed light on how the city earned the position that it has since summarily lost. While the city's heyday ended in the 1950s, it has continued to attract massive amounts of visitors each year with promises of cheap entertainment. And though the city has become marked by its many troubles in the last decades, an examination of its beginnings will potentially answer just how it came to lose its crown as the premier resort on New Jersey's coast.

¹³ Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

Chapter One, “A Message from the Sea”: Atlantic City as Terminus

“HOODOOED!” Thus began an article in the Sunday, July 14 edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1895. The staff correspondent continued in a paragraph-long sentence: “Starting out early in the spring with every prospect of the biggest season and the most prosperous it had ever known, ... Atlantic City was hopeful of attaining a degree of advancement which would carry it forward many steps in the direction of solid success, and its skies were blue and clear.” But, it seems, hope came crashing down for the residents, business owners, and travelers in Atlantic City. “[Mr. Pluvius] pulled a certain string and opened a large gap in the heavens, through which the source of weepings and gnashings came pouring down. It rained! Then it rained again! Then there was more rain!” Hexed, cursed, ruined, “hoodooed,” the summer season appeared over before it began.¹⁴

Even with the Roman god hindering beach-going and promenading on the seaside city’s expansive boardwalk, thousands of visitors continued to pile onto Absecon Island following the Fourth of July celebrations. The correspondent reported that beginning on Saturday, July 13, “heavily freighted trains” arrived in the city on the Pennsylvania line and Reading road, coming from Camden on the banks of the Delaware River. The Pennsylvania line’s 132 coaches and the Reading’s 138 coaches carried a combined

¹⁴ The title of this chapter is taken from William Ralston Balch, *A Message from the Sea: Cape May to Atlantic City: A Summer Note Book* (Philadelphia, PA: Press of Allen, Lane & Scott, 1883), Archive.org; A term that originated in the late nineteenth century as an evolution of “voodoo,” “hoodooed” means “bewitched,” “cursed,” or, more generally, to have had bad luck brought upon oneself; *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. “hoodoo,” accessed October 27, 2017, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hoodoo>; “The City by the Sea,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 14, 1895, 14, Newspapers.com.

16,200 passengers. Atlantic City, with a year-round population of about 20,000, had virtually doubled in size in forty-eight hours.¹⁵

Despite the 1895 season's rough start, the numbers reported by the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* staff correspondent are but one indication of Atlantic City's growing popularity with urbanites in the nation's eastern interior. Atlantic City, with the aid of the railroads that served it, grew in the 1890s and first decade of the 1900s to overtake other seaside resorts, like Cape May in the south and Asbury Park in the north, as the premier destination for Americans seeking escape from the putrid heat of the large industrial cities.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, domestic tourism was a somewhat new concept for most middle- and working-class Americans. At just over a century old, the United States was still a young nation, a fact not lost on Europeans who often criticized the New World nation for its lack of culture. But while wealthy Americans of the early nineteenth century could afford to sojourn to Europe, spending months abroad in the Old World's cultural capitals, the country's shifting developmental focus inward following the War of 1812 applied to travel and leisure as well.¹⁶

Beginning in the middle of the century, Americans increasingly turned their attention to the country's natural and artificial landscapes for education, leisure, and entertainment. Historians have characterized this early period of urban tourism as

¹⁵ "The City by the Sea," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 14, 1895, 14, Newspapers.com.

¹⁶ Brendan O'Connor, "A Brief History of Anti-Americanism: From Cultural Criticism to Terrorism," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 23, no. 1 (July 2004): 79-80, JSTOR. For more on American vacationing in Europe, see Lynne Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours: A History of Leisure Travel, 1750-1915* (New York: Morrow, 1997); James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to "Culture," 1800-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and William W. Stowe, *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-century American Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

predicated by intentions to reform cities' vulgar—i.e., not middle-class—populations, uplifting them to a position of Victorian morality that was sweeping the nation's middle class in the middle of the century. This reform impetus did not arise in a vacuum, and urban tourism, too, was carefully crafted by likeminded reformers in articles, guidebooks, and advertisements.¹⁷

Atlantic City and its beaches blended tourism of natural and artificial landscapes. At only a few decades old by the 1890s, the city had little to no historicity or import relating to the country's past. The city was barely even urbanized—by 1900, the city's population had reached 27,838 year-round residents. Comparatively, Philadelphia's population numbered 1,293,696, New York boasted 3,400,000, and Baltimore counted 508,957. Although Atlantic City was clearly not as urban as these three cities, each of which experienced surges of urban tourism in the latter half of the century, it did receive its fair share of urbanites who caused the city's population to swell seasonally. Hotels like the Traymore advertised themselves as “health and pleasure” resorts to attract urbanites concerned about the blights of modern city life that were all but absent at the shore.¹⁸

Even so, seekers of health and leisure, many of whom were middle-class urbanites, did not wish to leave the modern convenience of urban living in Baltimore,

¹⁷ Catherine Cocks, *Doing the Town: The Rise of Urban Tourism in the United States, 1850-1915* (Berkeley: University of Southern California Press, 2001), 3-8. Cocks's study traces the development of urban tourism beginning with reform movements and culminating in middle- and working-class leisure vacations.

¹⁸ Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population by Counties and Minor Civil Divisions 1910, 1900, 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912), 335, accessed October 23, 2017; Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census*, 462, 353, 221; See Cindy S. Aron, “Recuperation and Recreation: The Pursuit of Health and Genteel Pleasures,” in *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15-44; “Hotel Traymore,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), March 10, 1900, 4, Newspapers.com.

Philadelphia, and New York. Atlantic City needed to recruit visitors to join its ranks. Various businesses at the shore and in Philadelphia, including the Pennsylvania Railroad, thus seized the initiative in showcasing their simple but modern amenities, hoping to entice potential customers to visit their chateaus by the sea. Thus resulted Atlantic City's image as a modern city lacking the common blights of disease and poverty.

Atlantic City's officials and businesses did not form the city's identity on their own—a city's identity relied on its transportation network and connections to outside markets. Transportation and communication networks, specifically the railroads and telegraph lines in the latter half of the century, aided the United States in creating a national identity, linking together the disparate regions of the North, South, and West. Atlantic City's modern identity was formed as much by the railroads that served it as by the businesses that inhabited it.

Physical linkage to the outside world has always been a key aspect to a city's identity. The members of the Founding generation were aware of their country's lack of a cohesive identity due largely to its sheer size and inaccessibility. While some believed federally-funded infrastructure, like canals and roads, to be the answer, others disagreed, and road-building was left to individuals, corporations, and state governments. Indeed, it was not until the passage of the Pacific Railroad Acts in the 1860s that the federal government became irreversibly involved in establishing national infrastructure, beginning fatefully with a transcontinental railroad linking Chicago with San Francisco. Over the next few decades, the American railroad network aided the development of a national identity as it propagated cities and towns.¹⁹

¹⁹ John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvements: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 153-154.

It is difficult to downplay the role of the railroad in promoting American industry—and by extension travel and tourism—in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For over a century, the railroad dominated American industry, creating sprawling metropolises in the West, connecting far-flung towns to commercial centers in the East, and enriching various individuals with sufficient financial acumen and gall to take full advantage of a widely unregulated, emerging market. For the everyday American living in urban or semi-urban areas, though, the railroad served primarily to bring into the home new, cheap goods and products, including beef and pork from Chicago and St. Louis, wheat and corn from the breadbasket Midwest, and a “cornucopia” of material objects sold by Sears Roebuck.²⁰ When the railroad was not shipping goods to Americans, it was instead shipping Americans to American landscapes virtually inaccessible in the decades before the middle of the century.²¹

Larson’s work encompasses federal and state canal-, road-, and railroad-building beginning in the 1780s and ending in about 1900, detailing the ways Americans viewed internal improvements as either the arbiters or enemies of republican ideals. Charles Grier Sellers addresses the expansion of canal and road networks more narrowly in *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

²⁰ Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Gilded Age: Or, The Hazard of New Functions* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 81-82.

²¹ Scholarship on railroads in the United States is extensive but assuredly interesting. Maury Klein is, perhaps, still the leading figure in American railroad historical research. See Maury Klein, *Unfinished Business: The Railroad in American Life* (Hanover: University of Rhode Island Press, 1994) for a collection of articles related to Klein’s research. Klein’s *The Life and Legend of Jay Gould* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) offers a rather balanced analysis of the life and business practices of the titular capitalist—some would say “robber baron”—with special attention paid to Gould’s time in the railroad industry in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey. Additionally, Klein wrote three volumes on the Union Pacific Railroad, published in 1987, 1990, and 2011. The importance of the railroad to the development of both modern cities and the West has been carefully documented. See William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1991) for a detailed history of Chicago’s emergence as the main railroad hub in the West in the nineteenth century. Richard White offers a fresh perspective on western and urban development in *Railroaded: Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011). Barbara Welke casts a wide net in her social history *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law, and the Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

For many Americans in the twenty-first century, the iron horse has become relegated to a temporary annoyance precluding one from arriving at work on-time, cutting through modern highways and roadways on its journey to deliver unknown cargo to an undetermined location miles away. But for Americans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the railroad was the most efficient mode of transportation for long-distance travel, a fact that did not escape railroad company managers. Companies often encouraged passenger traffic between cities to help offset expensive loading, unloading, and switching of cargo between trains on short trips. This contributed to a rise in American tourism towards the century's end, with one prime destination being the beach on Absecon Island. As it was with so many American cities and towns in the nineteenth century, the railroad was also fundamental to Atlantic City in several ways.²²

The creation of the railroad between Camden, on the banks of the Delaware River, to Absecon Island, on the coast, was a primary contributor to Atlantic City's emergence as the top seaside resort in New Jersey by the end of the century. Indeed, the relationship between the city and its outside transportations network has always been reciprocal. When Atlantic City was incorporated on March 3, 1854, the Camden and Atlantic Railroad (C & A) opened concurrently. This was not a coincidence—the founding of a health resort and sanitarium on Absecon Island necessitated the creation of a railroad linking Philadelphia (via Camden) to the New Jersey coast.²³ Indeed, the railroad was at first meant for industrial products as much as for passengers.

²² Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 109-110.

²³ Thomas R. Winpenny, "The Engineer as Promoter: Richard B. Osborne, the Camden and Atlantic Railroad, and the Creation of Atlantic City," *Essays in Economic and Business History* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 301, 304-305, accessed February 2, 2018, <http://www.ebhsoc.org/journal/index.php/journal/article/view/88>.

New Jersey's moniker as the "Garden State" is well-deserved as industry in the state—especially its southern half—was never able to compete with similar manufactures in Pennsylvania and New York. From the colonial period to the middle of the nineteenth century, New Jersey produced substantial quantities of crops, lumber, glass, and especially iron. The state's vast deposits of bog ore, an impure iron ore, led individuals to establish ironworks to sate other colonies' needs for iron.²⁴ While iron producers in New Jersey flourished during the Revolution and the War of 1812, the ends of both wars temporarily depressed demand for iron, and the expansion of manufactures following the War of 1812 led similar industries in Pennsylvania and New York to overtake and outpace New Jersey's producers. By the 1830s, manufacturers in the Pine Barrens—a "vast heavily wooded [dismal] region" in South Jersey marked by enormous quantities of pine trees in poor, sandy soil—abandoned iron production, converting their ironworks to glassworks and importing sand from nearby beaches and marshlands.²⁵ These glassworks primarily produced windows for the expanding construction industry in Philadelphia. With the addition of a railroad to connect the small industrial settlements in the Pine Barrens to Camden and Philadelphia, though, the glassworks and few remaining ironworks in southern New Jersey could then ship their products to New York City, as well.²⁶

For many small cities and towns at mid-century, including those in southern New Jersey and along the coast, the railroad represented an economic opportunity that was

²⁴ Arthur D. Pierce, *Iron in the Pines: The Story of New Jersey's Ghost Towns and Bog Iron* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 10-11.

²⁵ Pierce, *Iron in the Pines*, 141-143.

²⁶ Arthur D. Pierce, *Iron in the Pines: The Story of New Jersey's Ghost Towns and Bog Iron* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 10-11; Pierce, *Iron in the Pines*, 141-143; Winpenny, "The Engineer as Promoter," 301-303.

difficult to pass up. As South Jersey's industry faded, however, passenger traffic constituted most of the revenue for the lines to the shore.²⁷ The line to Atlantic City was not dissimilar. The founders of Atlantic City—Dr. Jonathan Pitney, lumber merchant Enoch Doughty, and railroad engineer Richard Boyse Osborne—envisioned a health resort that would blossom into a significant port.²⁸ They established the Camden and Atlantic Railroad, a broad-gauge, flat-rail railroad that stretched sixty miles from Camden to Absecon Island.²⁹ Because of the barrier islands' shallow waters and susceptibility to hurricanes, Atlantic City did not become the port its founders had hoped it would, and by the 1870s, iron and glass production in southern New Jersey had withered and died. The C & A restructured with an emphasis on promoting passenger traffic over freight traffic, and this example led other companies to do the same.³⁰ Other railroad companies that had developed by the 1880s were usually on the precipice of bankruptcy, and over the next decade, the area's many railroads consolidated into two main lines: the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad (later the Reading Company) and the Pennsylvania Railroad.³¹

²⁷ See George W. Cook and William J. Coxey, "Chapter 3: Conversion to Standard Gauge, 1883-1889," in *Atlantic City Railroad, the Royal Route to the Sea: A History of Reading's Seashore Railroad, 1877-1933* (Ambler, PA: Crusader Press, 1980), specifically pages 33-36.

²⁸ Winpenny, "The Engineer as Promoter," 301; Arthur D. Pierce, *Family Empire in Jersey Iron: The Richards Enterprises in the Pine Barrens* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1964), 226-233.

²⁹ A railroad's gauge refers to the distance between rails on the track. Broader gauges usually offered greater stability on curvier tracks, but they also resulted in slower trains; Wheaton Joshua Lane, *From Indian Trail to Iron Horse: Travel and Transportation in New Jersey, 1620-1860* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939), 398-399.

³⁰ Winpenny, "The Engineer as Promoter," 305, 306-307. While Winpenny agrees that passenger traffic was only marginally enough to keep the C & A afloat, he focuses on the company's attempts to speculate in land along the lines and in Atlantic City, where it owned property.

³¹ The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad consolidated its own holdings into the Atlantic City Railroad in 1889, retaining control of the smaller railroads running down the coast into the peninsula. The Pennsylvania Railroad, one of the largest companies in the Mid-Atlantic, officially absorbed the West Jersey Railroad, the C & A, and several smaller companies in May 1896, creating the subsidiary West Jersey and Seashore Railroad Company (WJ & S). These two companies vied for control over passenger traffic for the next four decades until merging in the 1930s; Cook and Coxey, *Atlantic City Railroad*, 62, 69.

By the 1890s, the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Reading Company faced a conundrum. Freight traffic in southern New Jersey had been reduced to agricultural goods almost exclusively, thus shifting the burden of revenue generation to passenger traffic. While seaside resorts, Atlantic City chief among them, were growing in popularity, this was no guarantee that they would attract sufficient visitors to keep the railroads afloat. Consequently, the railroad companies needed to sell middle-class urbanites on their own lines and the shore, stressing the modernity of their amenities and of the shore's through convenience and comfortability. Historian Barbara Welke contends that these companies "incorporated new technologies and ideas, not as they became available, but as they saw it in their economic interest to do so or as they were forced to do so."³² As neither the Reading Company nor the Pennsylvania Railroad controlled a majority of the rail traffic, it became necessary for them to modernize so as to attract respectable customers.

Travel by rail was not a comfortable or even safe experience for travelers in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, one article in *Scribner's* described some of the ways railroads urged passengers to take charge of their own safety, including not tarrying on platforms between trains: "On a New Jersey road there was painted on a car door a picture of a new-made grave, with a formidable tombstone...announcing to a terrified public that it was 'Sacred to the memory of the man who had stood on a platform.'"³³ Not always were the passengers responsible for their own safety, making warnings like this all but moot. Accidents abounded on the lines between Camden and Atlantic City, but seldom were they due to derailment, which plagued many other trains in the period. New

³² Welke, *Recasting American Liberty*, 28.

³³ Horace Porter, "Railway Passenger Travel," *Scribner's Magazine* 4, no. 3 (September 1888): 301.

Jersey's generally flat terrain ensured an overall low grade, and the lack of hills or mountains in the southern part of the state allowed a very straight road between the two cities.³⁴

Accidents on the Reading and Pennsylvania Railroads between Camden and Atlantic City were often the result of collisions between trains. The incidents could not have escaped members of the public who read the daily newspapers: the stories were plastered on the front page. A collision between two trains with the Reading and Pennsylvania Railroads on July 30, 1896, made the front page of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* the next morning, complete with a list of the identified victims and a hand-drawn "Diagram showing the point of collision." The correspondent was not stingy with hyperbole, claiming that "Fully one hundred and fifty passengers on both trains were instantly killed or fatally injured, and scores more were more or less seriously injured."³⁵ In reality, the death toll did not exceed forty-four, although scores of passengers were, indeed, seriously injured and recovering in Atlantic City's sanitariums.³⁶ Survivors of train accidents, then, visited the city, of their own volition or not.

Advertising their safety became a priority for the railroads—an aspect of modernity, in the technological sense, was the ability of the machinery to operate efficiently and safely. The Reading Railroad continued its normal advertising, pushing the benefits of "No Smoke[,] No Cinders" from using only anthracite to fuel its engines.³⁷ Several pages away was a twelve-line advertisement for the "Royal Reading Route,"

³⁴ For example, the thirty-nine-mile span between Winslow Junction and Sea Isle City had a maximum grade of "0.5 percent while the sharpest curve was three degrees"; Cook and Coxey, *Atlantic City Railroad*, 62.

³⁵ "Scores Meet Disaster in Wreck Near Atlantic City," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 31, 1896, 1, Newspapers.com.

³⁶ "No More Deaths," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 3, 1896, 4, Newspapers.com.

³⁷ "Reading Railroad," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 31, 1896, 8, Newspapers.com.

stating riders could take the “swift, exhilarating ride of seventy minutes” to Atlantic City. Almost as an afterthought, the advertisement adds at the end, “And this is the double track line to the sea.”³⁸ By including the detail that the line is double track, the advertiser implies that the line is safe. By utilizing two tracks, railroads increased both efficiency and safety. Freight traffic and passenger traffic could be allocated to separate, parallel tracks or each rail could carry traffic moving exclusively in one direction. By separating freight and passenger traffic, communications between the two lines could be faster and more efficient. By making the lines one-way in either direction, the railroad would thus eliminate the possibility of head-on collisions like that of July 30.

The Reading Railroad ran similar ads to those above for the next few days, and the ads did not appear before the accident on July 30. The ads on the following days contained similar language, describing the “Royal Reading Route” as “straight as a taut-drawn string,” emphasizing its speed and safety. While the language throughout the ad was not exact to its first appearance on July 31, the final line of each, describing the double track, was.³⁹ Even as the Reading Railroad Company tried to salvage its reputation in the aftermath of the accident, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* praised its own reporting. Publishing an ad in the Sunday, August 2 edition, within the section detailing the happenings at the Jersey shore, the editors stated “That the *Inquirer* is always first with the news was again demonstrated by its early and complete reports of the awful Atlantic City disaster.” Describing the accuracy of its accounts and pictures, the ad concludes, “And this is only another proof that if you want all the news and the best news

³⁸ “Take a ‘Flyer’ and an Overcoat,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 31, 1896, 9, Newspapers.com.

³⁹ “A Straightaway Course to the Sea,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 1, 1896, 10, Newspapers.com.

at the earliest possible moment you must read the Inquirer every day in the year.” At two columns in width and roughly half the page in length, it would be hard to miss. While the railroad scrambled to control the accident’s damage to its reputation, the paper reaped the benefits of its quick response reporting.⁴⁰

Regardless of their own reputation for safety or comfort, when they were not advertising themselves, railroad companies described in detail the top destinations reachable on their lines, whether directly or via through lines with partner or subsidiary companies. As previously stated, railroad companies could not rely on the reputation of the destination to attract customers to their lines, and they actively advertised some of the most popular and convenient destinations, like Atlantic City.

The Pennsylvania Railroad, being the largest railroad company to serve Atlantic City and southern New Jersey, published a number of materials to attract new customers. At the very least, each included a description of Atlantic City as a health resort and sanitarium, if not as a destination for leisure and socialization. From the 1880s to the 1900s, the Pennsylvania Railroad published a comprehensive guide to its various seasonal offerings. These *Summer Excursion Routes* guides included detailed descriptions of the many resorts the Pennsylvania Railroad and its cohort reached. These guides offered not only an exhaustive list of the lines and fares that served these locations, but also their main attractions and principal hotels.

The 1884 edition of the Pennsylvania Railroad’s *Summer Excursion Routes* dedicated a third of a page to a description of Atlantic City, another third to two lithographs of well-dressed Americans enjoying the city’s beach and boardwalk, and a

⁴⁰ “That the Inquirer is always first with the news....,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 2, 1896, 21, Newspapers.com.

small corner to a list of the city's top ten hotels before listing the routes and rates for travel to Absecon Island. The four-paragraph description of Atlantic City is telling of the author's valuations. The author first describes the town's widespread fame for its beaches, fishing, and so on. Unlike with Cape May, Asbury Park, or Long Branch, the author specifically mentions Atlantic City's year-round "season" of operation. While hotels and businesses made much of their yearly income during the highly trafficked summertime, many of the city's businesses remained open during the winter, or what other towns and resorts on New Jersey's coasts would consider the offseason.⁴¹

The second paragraph describes the city's infrastructure, something that may seem odd to the twenty-first century reader. The author's description of the infrastructure as "attractions" may further compound this sense of oddity: "The city is built up along broad avenues beautified with shade trees, affording miles of good driving. It is supplied with every convenience that can contribute to the health and comfort of its inhabitants. The sewerage system is exceptionally good, and the water, introduced from fresh springs of the mainland, is pure and wholesome."⁴²

This passage demonstrates two concepts that gained traction in the minds of urban reformers in the latter half of the nineteenth century, both associated with health and, consequently, morality in the city.⁴³ First, urban reformers believed that proper infrastructure—paved streets, efficient sewer systems, clean reservoirs—would alleviate most of the health issues present in industrial cities. Second, by making city infrastructure more efficient on the whole and by eliminating health hazards, cities would thus become

⁴¹ Pennsylvania Railroad Company, "Atlantic City, N.J.," *Summer Excursion Routes* (Philadelphia, PA: Allen, Lane & Scott Printers, 1884), 18.

⁴² Pennsylvania Railroad Company, "Atlantic City, N.J.," 18.

⁴³ Pennsylvania Railroad Company, "Atlantic City, N.J.," 18.

more democratic and even-handed. However, as Alison Isenberg notes, “A democratic rhetoric of inclusive citizenship, beautification, and the public interest also hide[s] real practices of exclusion.” Reformers tended to be of the middle class, and thus their targets for beautification and improvement were largely middle-class areas.⁴⁴

In response to terrible conditions in the cities where disease and corruption abounded, middle-class whites initiated the City Beautiful Movement, dedicated to instilling physical and, by extension, social order in the nation’s largest and most chaotic cities.⁴⁵ Reformers believed “cities could and should be made beautiful” in order to facilitate the uplift of the cities’ profane, huddled masses and thus extend the standards of the middle class to the working class.⁴⁶ The City Beautiful Movement supported neoclassical architecture for civic buildings to emphasize grandeur and order. To further emphasize the latter point, wide, open boulevards surrounded by greenery were intended to demonstrate spatial order and republicanism. The attempted redesign of urban landscapes, while majorly aesthetic, was intended to alleviate rampant sickness and disease that plagued crowded cities that had not been modified since they were first established in the eighteenth century.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 35, 32-36. For more of Isenberg’s analysis of City Beautiful, see Chapter 1, “City Beautiful or Beautiful Mess? The Gendered Origins of a Civic Ideal,” 13-41, specifically addresses the rise of the City Beautiful Movement as a result of the efforts by women’s civic clubs to clean up larger cities, like Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, both physically and socially, targeting litterers and uplifting the poor. Isenberg also addresses their battles with men’s civic clubs and usually all-male city committees during the transition to deliberate city planning from natural, unplanned growth.

⁴⁵ Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 131-132. For a more comprehensive analysis of urban renewal and the City Beautiful Movement, see David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). Schuyler closely follows the life of Frederick Law Olmsted, who notably designed New York City’s Central Park, to demonstrate the movement’s birth, popularity among middle-class reformers, and eventual death in the 1910s.

⁴⁶ Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 130.

⁴⁷ Cocks, *Doing the Town*, 130-132.

The author's allusions to Atlantic City's open streets, pure water source, and "exceptionally good" sewer system potentially appealed to like-minded urban reformers. Atlantic City's spatial order, as described in the article, implied a moral order underlying the city as well, despite middle-class Americans' concerns about the effects that unproductive, non-educational leisure would have on the working class.⁴⁸ The description of the sewer system, though, further signifies Atlantic City's status as a modern city. By visiting the city, tourists could escape the potentially life-threatening cities that were their primary residences to a location that boasted modern, efficient infrastructure capable of handling the most basic of human products. The sewer system, according to a later account, "extends over the entire city, and by it all the sewerage is pumped to an extracting plant located a long distance away on the salt meadows, where it is incinerated and utilized."⁴⁹ The sewer system reflected a widespread desire for order and stability in the modern American city, and as a premier health resort, Atlantic City's sewerage had to meet middle-class standards.

Atlantic City's modern conveniences did not stop at its wide boulevards and sewer system. One of the lithographs included in the *Summer Excursion Routes* book included an important detail. Placed prominently in the center of the picture, running parallel to the boardwalk and located high above the individuals caught up in their promenading, is a wooden pole with two electrical lines affixed to it. The presence of the

⁴⁸ Aron, *Working at Play*, 185-194. The social aspect of modernity, utilizing John Kasson's *Amusing the Million*, will be further explored in Chapter Three, "What the Public Wants": Social Engagement at the Shore.

⁴⁹ Bureau of Information and Publicity, *Atlantic City, New Jersey: America's Greatest Resort* (n.p., 1906), 34.

electrical lines implied what the hotels' advertisements often belabored: Atlantic City was widely adopting the new technology, furthering its status as a modern health resort.⁵⁰

Railroads advertised these themes similarly across multiple forms. In 1883, the Pennsylvania Railroad's Passenger Department published an independent supplement to that year's *Summer Excursion Routes* guide dedicated exclusively to the beaches and resorts of southern New Jersey. Authored by William Ralston Balch, *A Message from the Sea: Cape May to Atlantic City: A Summer Note Book* was a short book, containing only fifty-seven pages, but its purpose was concisely put on the first page of the preface: "The perplexities that beset the summer wanderer in his yearly pilgrimage have given rise to this little book, in an attempt by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to clear the mists from the summer thoroughfare."⁵¹ But the company's sponsorship of the book should not worry the reader, Balch states, for "the reader will find neither falsehood of pen nor pencil. . . . The attractiveness of the places described has been attempted only in the nature of hints; the prices furnished, rates of fare, distances, and similar statements are taken from official sources."⁵² The official sources were, no doubt, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company itself. This does not belittle the attractiveness of the book to potential travelers to the shore, however. Balch authored several books between 1880 and 1890, including *The Life of James Abram Garfield* in 1881 and *The Complete Compendium of Universal Knowledge* in 1891; thus, he was an established writer with an ability to persuade.⁵³

⁵⁰ Pennsylvania Railroad Company, "Atlantic City, N.J.," 18.

⁵¹ Balch, *A Message from the Sea*, v.

⁵² Balch, *A Message from the Sea*, vi.

⁵³ William Ralston Balch, *The Life of James Abram Garfield* (Philadelphia, PA: J. C. McCurdy & Co., 1881); William Ralston Balch, *The Complete Compendium of Universal Knowledge* (Philadelphia, PA: Franklin Square Bible House, 1891).

The cover of *A Message to the Sea* (Figure 1) depicts a young woman in full formal dress: high-waisted dress, gloves, and hat, carrying an umbrella to protect herself from the sun's rays. She wipes sweat from her forehead with a handkerchief as she walks along a stretch of beach. The perspective of the lithograph is oriented outward to the sea and crashing waves, further emphasizing the woman's isolation as a tall ship passes in the opposite direction on the horizon. "A Message from the Sea" is etched in the sand just beyond the water's edge. Civilization undoubtedly waits behind the lithograph's perspective: the boardwalk, the hotels, and Atlantic City as a whole. Clearly, the book telegraphed a message from the Pennsylvania Railroad to the reader: Atlantic City was ready and willing to accept visitors. "In this way—or rather in these words—the reader is invited to the Jersey Coast."⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Balch, *A Message from the Sea*, 5.



Figure 1: The cover of William Ralston Balch's *A Message from the Sea* depicts a well-dressed woman walking close to the water's edge. Archive.org.

Despite its brevity, the book contained valuable information about Cape May, Atlantic City, and some surrounding towns in southern New Jersey. Between the covers, the reader could expect to find “queer illustrations of a wonderful place, where all its marked features are crowded into one street; where people walk and drive within six inches of great breakers; and where the hotel at which you think of obtaining rooms is higher, larger, grander than any other hotel on the Atlantic seaboard.”⁵⁵ Indeed, drawings and lithographs abound within the book, depicting wildlife, landscapes both natural and artificial, and tourists enjoying the shore’s many attractions.

⁵⁵ Balch, *A Message from the Sea*, v-vi.

The same two lithographs appearing in the previously discussed *Summer Excursion Routes* guide also appeared in *A Message from the Sea* (see Figure 2), speaking to the cheap nature of the latter book; however, their contents, in terms of middle-class respectability, are notable. The individuals depicted in the lithographs are dressed well and in a variety of fashions. The two men at the forefront of the image wear different style suits, but both maintain the staples of formality: hats, waistcoats, ties, and canes. The women are not as visibly rendered, their features blurred either by time or by purpose, nor are they, seemingly, the focus of the depictions. In the top image, the woman closest to the foreground is obscured by her escort. In the bottom image, it is, again, the man who is the central figure. Both images, though, present the viewer with a summation of Atlantic City's offerings: leisure and recuperation within the structural framework of middle-class respectability.⁵⁶

The book's nature as an advertisement for both the railroad and Atlantic City's hotels is betrayed by its glut of information. While it provides abundant detail regarding the city's many attractions—from art galleries to arctic gulls—the financial information a tourist would require is neither ignored nor minimized. Rarely does one page consist only of text; the monotony of text-only pages is broken up by lithographs and insets of travel information. Several pages into the chapter on Atlantic City, the author provides, in a separate column, as much information as a tourist would need to begin planning his or her vacation. “HOW TO GET THERE,” it clearly states. “Take Pennsylvania R. R. to Philadelphia,” the main junction serving the Pennsylvania Railroad's many lines. Before

⁵⁶ Balch, *A Message from the Sea*, 38; while the lithographs occupied a large portion of the page in the *Summer Excursion Routes* guide, they comprised the totality of the admittedly smaller page of *A Message from the Sea*.

listing the rates, the author takes care to mention the trip from Philadelphia to Atlantic being “65 miles, 90 minutes.”⁵⁷

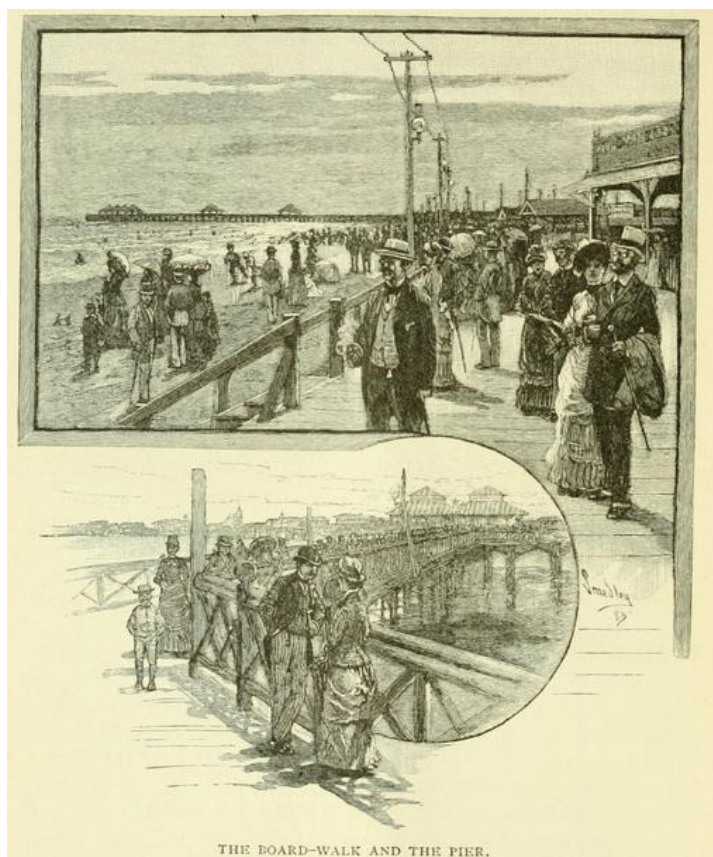


Figure 2: These lithographs appeared in both the Pennsylvania Railroad's *Summer Excursion* guide and Balch's *A Message from the Sea*, depicting respectable middle-class patrons of Atlantic City. Archive.org.

With such limited space—the column barely fits in line with the main body of text on the page—the inclusion of the estimated time of the journey, or rather the train’s speed, carries several messages. First, as previously discussed, an engine’s speed was closely associated with its technological relevance. Second, the short travel time emphasized the reader’s constant proximity to a popular, relatively cheap, all-season resort. Disregarding any additional travel time from the reader’s home to Philadelphia, as

⁵⁷ Balch, *A Message from the Sea*, 40.

the author does, a journey of a mere ninety minutes emphasizes the importance of the destination more than the trip aboard the train. Describing the coaches' comfortable accommodations, as the Pennsylvania Railroad often did in other mediums, did not contradict this. Visitors to Atlantic City would need a place to stay, and unlike other hotels of the period, resort hotels "were more in the nature of terminal points, places that people arrived at rather than moved through."⁵⁸ For Balch's readers and the Pennsylvania Railroad's passengers, Atlantic City's hotels were as much part of the destination as Atlantic City itself.⁵⁹

Indeed, Balch offers short descriptions of nine of Atlantic City's most popular hotels of the 1880s. The nine he includes, such as Congress Hall and the Traymore, evidently charged roughly the same prices on the more expensive end of the spectrum. Balch lists each hotel's capacity, but he organizes the list according to price per day. The Brighton Hotel, for example, charged between \$3.00 and \$4.00 per day, or \$18 to \$30 per week, for up to 200 guests. The Waverly, also capable of housing 200 guests, charged between \$3.00 and \$3.50. At the bottom of the column, combined with the description of the Traymore, Balch describes "66 other hotels, with accommodations for 6000 guests, and prices from \$1.25 to \$3.00 a day, \$7 to \$18 a week."⁶⁰ By comparison, smaller hotels in Cape May, like the United States Hotel, were charging "\$8, \$10, \$12 per week; \$2 per day"; the Hotel Kaaterskill, a luxury hotel in the Catskill Mountains in New York, charged a reduced rate of \$21 per week in 1888.⁶¹ By specifically naming only the more

⁵⁸ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 92.

⁵⁹ Balch, *A Message from the Sea*, 40.

⁶⁰ Balch, *A Message from the Sea*, 40.

⁶¹ "United States Hotel, Cape May, N.J.," *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), May 27, 1884, 3, Newspapers.com; "Hotel Kaaterskill," *Times* (Philadelphia, PA), July 5, 1888, 3, Newspapers.com.

expensive hotels, and not the cheaper cottages, Balch was likely attempting to emphasize Atlantic City's prestige as a modern town. But what image of the shore does the book portray? Taken as a whole, the book depicts Atlantic City as New Jersey's modern seaside resort for middle-class Americans.

Such was Balch's confidence that his readers would visit Atlantic City, he included an "Itinerary of the Summer Vacation.—1883." in the back of the book. The itinerary is not completed; Balch intended for the reader of the book to fill it in: "It is suggested to the reader, as both profitable and full of interest in coming years, to note down the details of the holiday journey, with such comments as will prove guide-boards for the future, as well as milestones of the past."⁶² Not only did Balch insist on the reader preserving the memories of retreat—which, Balch did not doubt, he or she would find worthy of preservation—he also intended for the reader to use the itinerary from 1883's vacation to plan return visits in the years following.

The itinerary spans four pages, each with a specific purpose. The first page includes space for details regarding the trip on the route taken, including places of departure and arrival. Although this page does not specifically mention the railroad the passenger should use, supposedly leaving it open for the reader to choose either a railroad or steamship to carry him or her to Atlantic City, the expense account on the second page reserves slots for "TICKETS, Railroad," and "[ditto] Sleeping Car," "[ditto] Parlor [ditto]." The rest of the expense report does not allow for other travel expenses: the only transportation worth taking, evidently, was one of the railroads serving Atlantic City.⁶³

⁶² Balch, *A Message from the Sea*, 52.

⁶³ Balch, *A Message from the Sea*, 53.

To further this point, Balch included only one map in the book, detailing the numerous railroads serving the coast of New Jersey between Philadelphia and New York City.

Even though the Pennsylvania Railroad worked tirelessly to draw visitors to Atlantic City, the company and its peers did not do all the work. By the 1890s and into the aughts, business leaders, including hoteliers, actively advertised the city as a modern resort catering to those who could afford the trip. In their effort to attract customers to the shore, hoteliers largely advertised their individual hotels in newspapers, magazines, and the railroad companies' publications, focusing on their accommodations, locations, and conveniences. Despite competition with other businesses, Atlantic City's businessmen formed their own committees to better advertise the city in a cooperative way.

In 1906, the Atlantic City Bureau of Information and Publicity published a self-promoting guide entitled, *Atlantic City, New Jersey: America's Greatest Resort*. Aside from the hyperbolic aggrandizement, a something else adorned the front of the book: a photograph of Atlantic City's boardwalk.⁶⁴ The book is filled with photographs and lithographs of Atlantic City's many accommodations, including hotels and boarding houses, the fire department, city hall, and, of course, the beach and boardwalk. The book offers lengthy descriptions of Atlantic City's many conveniences, stressing its world-class hotels, entertainment piers, safety services, and so on. Although the Bureau of Information and Publicity issued the book, it was not the result of one or even several individuals. Instead, the Bureau of Information consisted of three groups of four men

⁶⁴ By the late 1890s, the refinement of halftone techniques allowed newspapers and magazines to reproduce photographs cheaply, providing a visual element to otherwise text-heavy media; Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Verso, 1996), 234-237.

each: The Atlantic City Board of Trade, the Atlantic City Hotel Men's Association, and the Atlantic City Business League.

The Bureau was packed with hoteliers. The Atlantic City Hotel Men's Association included Samuel S. Phoebus, Newlin Haines, Albert T. Bell, and John J. White. Each of these men either owned, managed, or sat on the board of a hotel in Atlantic City.⁶⁵ They were not the only hoteliers, however; the remaining members of the Bureau were involved in the city's industry. Warren Somers of the Board of Trade led the Somers Lumber Company, for example. The only man not involved directly in business, although he was respected in the community, was the Bureau's director, George S. Lenhart.⁶⁶

George S. Lenhart, elected director of the Bureau of Information and Publicity in Spring 1906, had lived in Atlantic City for seven years when the Bureau was established. Once described as having "the quality of never knowing when he is beaten" for working against intense political opposition and entrenched parties, Lenhart was up to the job of leading Atlantic City's "important campaign."⁶⁷ Lenhart had extensive newspaper experience, working in the industry for over twenty-five years by the time of his election. Lenhart had established and edited Williamsport's *Breakfast Table*, a small weekly that

⁶⁵ Samuel S. Phoebus took over ownership of the sixty-nine-roomed Wiltshire in 1898. Newlin Haines operated the St. Charles Hotel. Albert T. Bell operated the new, ten-story Chalfonte Hotel with Henry W. Leeds and Sarah W. Leeds. John J. White sat on the board of the Traymore Hotel Company with Howard White, Jr., and Daniel S. White. Walter J. Buzby of the Board of Trade operated the Hotel Dennis, and Captain Walter E. Edge of the Business League once rented out a cottage in the summer of 1901; Alfred M. Heston, *Heston's Hand Book of Atlantic City* (n.p., 1896), 116; "Harbingers of Spring at the Venice of America," *The Times* (Philadelphia, PA), March 20, 1898, 16, Newspapers.com; "Resorts – The St. Charles," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), June 18, 1904, 13, Newspapers.com; "New Chalfonte Now Open," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 17, 1904, 6, Newspapers.com; "Atlantic Hotel Company Chartered," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), October 20, 1901, 4, Newspapers.com.

⁶⁶ "Hotel Dennis," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), April 1, 1907, 14, Newspapers.com; "For Rent – Cottage Near Beach," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), June 9, 1901, 23, Newspapers.com.

⁶⁷ "Movements in State Politics," *Times* (Philadelphia, PA), May 12, 1892, 6, Newspapers.com; "To Boom Atlantic," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), April 15, 1906, 27, Newspapers.com.

ceased publication in 1895.⁶⁸ After a failed bid for a seat in the Pennsylvania state legislature, Lenhart took on the job of New York correspondent for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.⁶⁹ Sometime between 1898 and 1899, Lenhart moved to Atlantic City, where he served as correspondent to *The Times*. Along with five other men from newspapers including the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Associated Press*, *Philadelphia Ledger*, Lenhart formed the Correspondents' Club in Atlantic City in July 1899 to "protect hotels and amusement places against impostors who seek to procure courtesies by alleging themselves to be connected with newspapers."⁷⁰ In short, Lenhart's directing the Bureau of Information and Publicity essentially married Philadelphia's newspapers and Atlantic City's hotels in their common goal to sell the shore.

And sell they did. The descriptions and details contained within *America's Greatest Resort* border on unbelievable; the Bureau used every piece of equipment in its advertising toolbox to convince readers that Atlantic City was a year-round resort. Cooperatively written by businessmen, hoteliers, and several professionals, the book largely reflects the biases of urban, middle-class elites with a desire to secure their own financial futures. "It is essentially a city of hotels, cottages, and boarding houses," write the authors. "Guests may be and are accommodated in the hotels with all the comfort and luxuries which can be obtained in the best metropolitan hotels. ... Atlantic City's prominent hotels are equipped with every modern convenience and luxury."⁷¹ Indeed,

⁶⁸ "The Breakfast Table," Library of Congress, accessed October 30, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/sn86081501/>.

⁶⁹ "Movements in State Politics," *Times* (Philadelphia, PA), May 12, 1892, 6, Newspapers.com;

"Lewisburg," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), January 1, 1899, 34, Newspapers.com.

⁷⁰ "Atlantic City and Cape May," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 20, 1899, 3, Newspapers.com.

⁷¹ Bureau of Information and Publicity, *Atlantic City, New Jersey: America's Greatest Resort* (n.p., 1906), 7.

many of the pictures in the book are of the city's largest and most luxurious hotels, including the Chalfonte, Hotel Dennis, Hotel Traymore, the St. Charles, and the Wiltshire, all of which were connected to members of the Bureau.⁷²

Like the Pennsylvania Railroad's *Summer Excursion* guides from two decades prior, the Bureau likewise noted the city's ordered infrastructure. The water supply came from a lake on the mainland, delivered by a modern pumping station "in the midst of a forest far away from civilization." The sewer system left "nothing to be desired," removing human waste to the salt marshes offshore. According to historian Carl Smith, "Waterworks systems denaturalized it into an apparently manufactured commodity that was sold, delivered, used, and discarded. To be reliant on a network of water pipes defined more viscerally than did walking or riding through streets the condition of being 'on the grid,' that is, within a human-made world separate from nature."⁷³ In an area where the sea is never far away—an island—the presence of a sewer system, then, provided a reminder that Atlantic City, like its neighboring metropolises, was anchored in the artificial. Unlike the other metropolises, Atlantic City was balanced by the artificial on one side and nature on the other.

The authors of the book had to tip their hats to the railroads that initially broadcasted Atlantic City's reputation as the foremost seaside resort on the New Jersey coast. The mention is short, spanning only one page, but it is significant. The authors praise the railroads' facilities, calling them "the most perfect to be found in the country and in the world." This embellishment was not uncommon. But the authors specifically

⁷² The images appear, respectively, on pages 6, 8, 10, 14, and 16.

⁷³ Carl Smith, *City Water, City Life: Water and the Infrastructure of Ideas in Urbanizing Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 5.

devote most of the page to consideration of the trains' speeds. The authors claim that five of the fastest trains in the world make the trip between Atlantic City and Philadelphia daily, sometimes reaching speeds of 115 miles per hour. This concession to the railroad acknowledged the contribution the companies made to advertising the shore but maintained the destination, Atlantic City, as the primary topic of concern.⁷⁴

Taken together, travel guides published and sponsored by the railroad companies and the Atlantic City Bureau of Information and Publicity helped to bring national (or, at least, regional) attention to Atlantic City as the chief vacation resort on the New Jersey coast. These works stressed the city's many modern characteristics, like its wide and ordered streets, electrical grid, sewage system, and large, luxurious hotels capable of competing with their more famous rivals in Philadelphia and New York. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century and into the first decade of the twentieth century, Atlantic City's status as strictly an island-wide sanitarium broadened to include respectable, middle-class leisure. As implied in these works, the city's hotels were the center of the tourist's social experience, housing modern conveniences and providing all the pleasurable activities worthy of attention, including concerts and galas.

⁷⁴ Bureau of Information and Publicity, *Atlantic City, New Jersey: America's Greatest Resort* (n.p., 1906), 34.

Chapter Two, “Modern in Every Way”: Hotels and the Definition of Modernity

On Saturday, March 14, 1896, the Leeds & Lippincott Company opened Haddon Hall after completing a renovation totaling \$200,000.⁷⁵ Like other hotels of the period, Haddon Hall, originally called Haddon House, started as a three-story wooden cottage in 1869 and moved closer to the ocean in 1879 and again in 1889. The Leeds & Lippincott Company purchased Haddon House in 1890, and upon the hotel’s reopening in 1896, it had virtually doubled in size. The reason for such a costly renovation was simple: the twenty-year-old structure had become outdated compared to its competition.⁷⁶

Newspaper advertisements touted Haddon Hall’s new features in the weeks leading up to its grand reopening. One advertisement from the March 7 edition of the *Times* spanned three columns of the second page, accompanied by a drawn elevation of the building (with well-dressed visitors milling about, showing both the size of the building and, by their handsome dress, the respectability of its middle-class clientele) and five lines of description. The second largest ad on the page, the elevation is the only image except for a far smaller rendering of a child for a Cuticura Soap advertisement. Were one to open the newspaper with page two in one’s left hand and page three in the right, the advertisement would be located just left of the centerfold. In other words, it would be difficult to miss either on first glance or while scanning the pages.⁷⁷

If the drawn elevation of Haddon Hall, with its wraparound porches and position on both the beach and the street, did not immediately entice the reader to inquire of the

⁷⁵ This would equate to roughly \$5,000,000 in 2017. “CPI Inflation Calculator,” *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.

⁷⁶ “First Atlantic City Casino – A Resorts AC History,” *Resorts AC*, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://resortsc.com/history/>.

⁷⁷ The largest ad on the page cryptically informed the reader to look for a “big surprise” in the next day’s paper; “Haddon Hall, Atlantic City, N.J.,” *Times* (Philadelphia, PA), March 7, 1896, 2, Newspapers.com.

hotel's plans, then the accompanying text bordered on overkill. "After having been entirely rebuilt and enlarged to more than double its former capacity," it states, "Every convenience and appointment known to modern hotel service has been introduced, making one of the most complete resort hotels along the coast." To quantify the claim, it then offered a list of the hotel's modern appointments: "hot and cold sea water baths," "hydraulic elevators, electric lights and bells," and "sun parlors, telegraph office in house, etc."⁷⁸ To put it simply, the hotel's modernity stemmed from the technology that supplemented the overall visitor experience: elevators reduced exertion from carrying luggage, telegraphs allowed guests to conduct business both personal and private, and private baths ensured that guests could get the most rejuvenating experience from their vacations. And as the technology changed, for example with the introduction of telephones and electricity, the hotels consequently changed as well. The hotels examined in this chapter represent a transitional phase in Atlantic City's hotel history. Haddon Hall represented the modernity of the previous era; the Chalfonte embraced changing concepts of modernity, but did not quite let go of the previous era's ideas; and the Blenheim signaled the beginning of Atlantic City's modern era in hotels, becoming the ultimate in hotel modernity at the shore by mirroring the modern hotels in the big cities.

Thus, the hotels in Atlantic City were anything but static, semi-permanent features of the ever-growing city skyline. From their construction to their eventual demolition to create room for the city's new casino project in the latter half of the twentieth century, many of the most notable and grandiose hotels—the Chalfonte, Haddon Hall, Traymore, and Grand Atlantic, for example—were renovated, damaged by

⁷⁸ "Haddon Hall, Atlantic City, N.J.," *Times* (Philadelphia, PA), March 7, 1896, 2, Newspapers.com.

fires or storms, and in some cases even moved from their foundations closer to the beach and boardwalk. Competition with other hotels, according to A. K. Sandoval-Strausz, drove hoteliers to produce “a continual escalation of capital spending on ornamentation,” including “furniture, carpeting, mirrors, drapery, dishes, silverware,” and technological innovations like “internal plumbing, steam heating, gas and electric lighting, and private telephones had their first extensive trials in hotels.”⁷⁹ Modernity was intertwined with technology and style.

Sandoval-Strausz argues that, at first, hotels willingly entered into a techno-industrial competition with their rivals, and historian Molly Berger conveys a less deliberate, almost forced participation in these competitions as the years progressed. Berger posits that owners and managers of luxury hotels in America’s cities—particularly New York, Chicago, and San Francisco—quickly recognized the advantage presented by new technology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and seized the earliest opportunities to update their businesses. Failure to do so was to risk falling behind in the competition for attracting visitors. Berger specifically analyzes “large, urban, commercialized luxury hotels,” those hotels in the cities with hundreds of rooms and a steady year-round customer base.⁸⁰ Resort hotels—the subject of this thesis—are not the focus of Berger’s study; she states her belief that “all other hotel forms derive from [urban luxury hotels].” What the largest hotels did in New York and San Francisco, smaller hotels in other locations copied.⁸¹ Berger outlines not only the adoption of modern technology by hoteliers but also the expectation of said technology by visitors.

⁷⁹ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 246.

⁸⁰ Molly W. Berger, *Hotel Dreams: Luxury, Technology, and Urban Ambition in America, 1829-1929* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 2, eBook.

⁸¹ Berger, *Hotel Dreams*, 18.

Thus, it is reasonable that urban visitors to the shore would have the same expectations for resort hotels, and hotel owners and management would strive to meet those expectations.

Indeed, advertisements for hotels in Atlantic City pushed their subjects' modernity, often citing their inclusion of new technology and therefore status compared to other hotels. Middle-class Americans, thus, could be exposed to such technology in hotels, and, recognizing both the convenience provided by the amenities and the style of the hotel, incorporate them into their own homes.⁸² Newspapers and magazines used technological—sometimes jargony—language to sell modernity to their readers. From elevators to *en suite* baths to fireproofing, hotels in Atlantic City vied for the top in providing modern convenience to their visitors from Philadelphia, believing those individuals and families expected similar accommodations and conveniences to their own homes and hotels in those cities.⁸³

Regardless, the hotels of Atlantic City seemingly lagged behind their urban counterparts in adopting certain amenities, like private baths, and even construction methods, like the usage of brick, iron, steel, and later concrete for fireproofing. The reasons for this delay are twofold. First, despite increasing popularity throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Atlantic City was still a young, rather unproven town. With a population of 13,055 in 1890, Atlantic City was only just beginning to earn

⁸² Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 246-247.

⁸³ While Sandoval-Strausz and Berger both argue that consumers replicated in their homes the styles and technology they first experienced in luxury hotels, they both primarily analyze luxury hotels between 1850 and 1870. As this chapter addresses hotels between 1890 and 1910, it is reasonable that visitors—particularly the wealthier middle and upper classes—already adopted some earlier hotel features in their own homes. Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 242-247; Berger, Chapter 5: “Production and Consumption in an American Palace, 1850-1875,” *Hotel Dreams*, 111-140.

its status as a city.⁸⁴ However, it, too, was rapidly urbanizing, and by 1910 it counted 46,150 year-round residents.⁸⁵ Second, Atlantic City's breakthrough as a winter resort in the 1890s—in addition to its prestigious summer season—necessitated adequate heating technology, precluding the construction of larger buildings until the 1880s and into the 1890s. As tourists' demand for rooms increased, hotel owners expanded their buildings, first through dramatic renovations, and finally by constructing entirely new wings and annexes.

Haddon Hall and the Chalfonte Hotel exemplify the themes presented in this chapter. Both began as cottages in Atlantic City's early days as a resort dedicated primarily to health and recuperation, expanded multiple times before 1890, underwent extensive remodeling and updates at the turn of the century, and existed well after many of their neighbors and rivals had been demolished. Their histories intertwine: built directly across from each other on North Carolina Avenue, they competed for decades before merging in the 1920s as Chalfonte-Haddon Hall (Figure 3). Perhaps, most importantly, the two straddled the line between the past and the future for the city's hotels. While Haddon Hall represented the previous era, the Chalfonte represented an awkward middle ground: its modernity was the ultimate of the previous generation, but not quite the initiator of the next.

⁸⁴ Bureau of the Census, "Preliminary Results as Contained in the Eleventh Census Bulletins" (Washington, D.C.: Census Printing Office, 1891), 6, accessed January 14, 2018, Google Books.

⁸⁵ Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population by Counties and Minor Civil Divisions 1910, 1900, 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1912), 335, accessed January 14, 2018, Google Books.



Figure 3: The Chalfonte Hotel (left) and Haddon Hall (right) as they appeared in 1904. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Elisha and Elizabeth Roberts first constructed the small, wood-framed, three-story cottage, called the Chalfonte House, in 1868 on North Carolina Avenue. Chalfonte House, like other cottages in Atlantic City, served patrons for the next thirty years. It moved closer to the beach twice, in 1879 and 1889.⁸⁶ It was extensively renovated and expanded several times, and by 1887, it had added a fourth floor and sun parlor on the east side of the building. The most dramatic reconstruction came in 1900, when Henry and Sarah Leeds, owners of Haddon Hall, purchased the building. The owners moved the

⁸⁶ “First Atlantic City Casino – A Resorts AC History,” *Resorts AC*, accessed December 21, 2017, <https://resortsac.com/history/>.

original Chalfonte building away from the beachfront to make room for a new structure. Completed and opened in 1904, the new buildings of the Chalfonte Hotel complex had been designed by Addison Hutton, a prominent Philadelphia architect.⁸⁷

The new Chalfonte Hotel was modern in every sense of the word. The C-building, named for being the new main “Chalfonte,” towering at ten stories high, was Atlantic City’s first skyscraper, overshadowing the other buildings that rarely surpassed six stories in height. It incorporated an iron frame and used brick for the exterior walls. The F-building, also designed by Hutton, connected the C-building to the original Chalfonte Hotel. According to the Historic American Buildings Survey, “The ‘F’ derives from the ‘fireproof’ iron and brick construction” that it shared with the C-building (Figure 4).⁸⁸ The complex also included an extension to the boardwalk. The C-building represented the newest in modern hotel design, but it did not entirely let go of traditions from the previous century. While luxury hotels in the major cities had begun sectioning private bathrooms for individual rooms around the same time, the Chalfonte incorporated both private and hall bathrooms for its estimated accommodation of 600.⁸⁹ The hotel offered rooms individually or as suites; some even had balconies that provided views of the ocean. Only three guest rooms on each chamber floor faced the interior of the island,

⁸⁷ Michael Brooks, “Chalfonte Hotel, Pacific & North Carolina Avenues, Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ,” Historical and Descriptive Data, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1980, 1, from Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS No. NJ-869; <https://cdn.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/nj/nj0800/nj0889/data/nj0889data.pdf>, accessed January 16, 2018). Hutton designed numerous private and public buildings in Philadelphia and its surrounding areas, including the home of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; “About Us,” *Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, accessed January 14, 2018, <https://hsp.org/about-us>.

⁸⁸ The F-building was named thus due to its being fireproof unlike the original Chalfonte building. While the new C-building was also fireproof, it derived its “C” denotation from the hotel’s name. This shows that the owners saw the new C-building as the new Chalfonte, rendering the original Chalfonte building to be utilized for other services.

⁸⁹ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 164-165; “Chalfonte, Atlantic City, N.J.,” *Pittsburg Press* (Pittsburgh, PA), July 19, 1904, 6, Newspapers.com.

opposite the beach side. The building's U-shape, distinctive among the older, stretched hotels, ensured that even rooms not directly facing the ocean would still have decent views of it.

Newspapers reported the opening of the hotel with short columns in addition to the usual advertisements. On July 17, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran a small article detailing the “newest and most handsome hotel in Atlantic City,” particularly noting its modern accoutrements. The author detailed the building's size and construction, declaring it made of “absolutely fire-proof material throughout.” Unlike smaller advertisements that normally noted brick or iron to justify the claim of being fireproof, this article mentioned that “the floors are concrete and cement and the roof is made of tiles.” This form of fireproofing became popularized in the previous decade, but quickly caught on with designers of skyscrapers and public buildings in major cities.⁹⁰ On the visible end of the hotel's technological advancements, the article mentioned its “three plunger elevators of the latest type” as well as the presence of electric wiring evident by the “two electric lights permanently attached to [the chamber bureau], one on each side of the mirror.”⁹¹

⁹⁰ Sara Wermiel, “The Development of Fireproof Construction in Great Britain and the United States in the Nineteenth Century,” *Construction History* 19 (1993): 15-19, accessed January 10, 2018, JSTOR.

⁹¹ “New Chalfonte Now Open,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 17, 1904, 6, Newspapers.com.

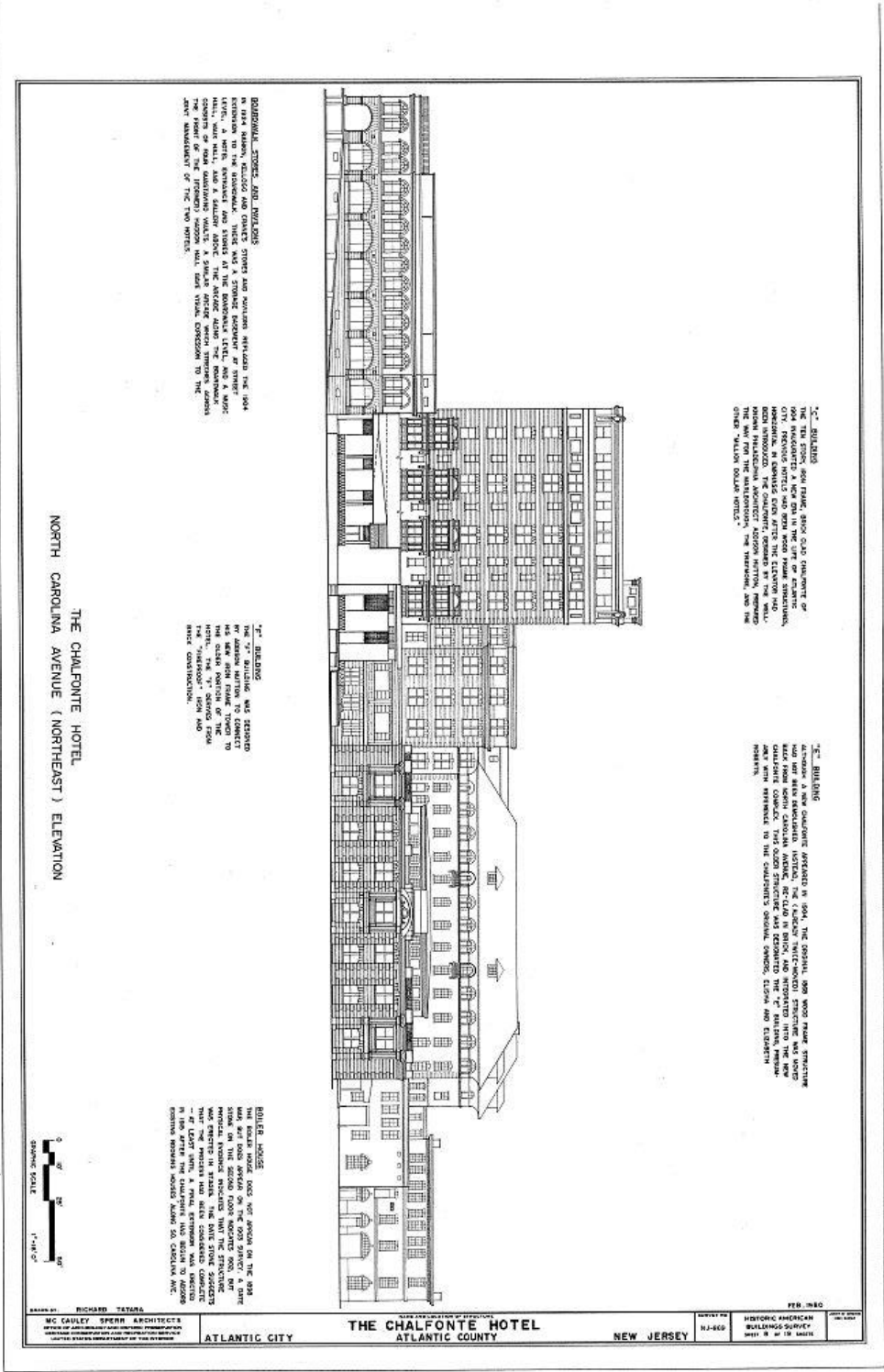


Figure 4: The Historical American Buildings Survey, conducted shortly before the Chalfonte’s demolition, included a number of drawings of the complex. The tall building is the C-building. The building with the slanted roof is the original Chalfonte. They are joined by the six-story F-building. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

The Chalfonte represented the ultimate in the previous generation's definition of modernity. The ten-story hotel maximized views of the beach, as hoteliers expected visitors to spend more time on the premises than before, incorporated fireproofing, provided private bathrooms for roughly 50 percent of its rooms, and not only made electric lighting available in guest chambers, but also redesigned the lamps for better efficiency and style. The Chalfonte both ended and began a chapter in the history of Atlantic City's modern luxury hotels, serving as the symbol for the previous generation and as the inspiration for the succeeding generation.

While the hotels of the 1900s utilized various architectural styles, they seemed to follow several basic patterns that prioritized views of the beach. In common parlance today, beachfront hotels and motels delineate between oceanfront and ocean-view rooms. An oceanfront room must look directly upon the beach and ocean, whereas an ocean-view room can be located on any side of the building as long as the ocean is still within view. Visitors generally request oceanfront rooms, and the high demand consequently begets higher cost. This presents a fundamental problem, however: on a lot that is longer along the street and shorter along the beachfront, how can a hotel provide ample oceanfront and ocean-view rooms and thus maximize its profits? Today, the issue is resolved simply by building higher. Indeed, whereas the tallest hotels in 1900 were fewer than ten stories, Atlantic City's current tallest building, the Ocean Resort Casino, stands at fifty-seven stories or 710 ft.⁹²

⁹² The Ocean Resort Casino originally opened in 2012 as the Revel Casino Hotel. Along with several other resorts, it declared bankruptcy in 2014, adding to the city's financial woes. It was purchased and renamed in January 2018. "Revel Casino Hotel in Atlantic City Sold for \$200 Million," *Hotel News Resource*, published January 9, 2018, <https://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article97979.html>.

Building upwards was only a partial solution to the issue, although it became the most popular. Architects found other ways to remedy this. The Chalfonte's U-shape was one example (Figure 5). This shape allowed up to nineteen of the twenty-two rooms on a typical chamber floor to have an ocean view, although the views from the rooms closest to the building's rear would eventually become obstructed as other skyscrapers were constructed. Even so, eight rooms per floor were directly oceanfront. The Marlborough Hotel, located several blocks away on Ohio Avenue, offered only four oceanfront rooms per floor, albeit of a greater size.⁹³ This pattern, however, would be followed by other hotels in the years to come, utilizing both upwards construction and angled rooms and windows to provide visitors with unimpeded views of the ocean.

Another selling point for hotels was their capacity. Atlantic City's popularity had become clearly defined before 1900. In fact, aside from reformers' critiques of the city's vices, overcrowding was an oft-repeated complaint by visitors and commentators. One reporter for the *Indianapolis News* wrote, "The past week [August 17, 1895] has conclusively shown that, generously proportioned as this city and everything in it is, it is entirely too small in many ways for the mighty throngs that are now making an August pilgrimage to the sea. ... At the present time every one of the 610 hotels the city boasts are filled to repletion, more than repletion."⁹⁴ Hotels constantly announced new additions and renovations, and advertisements commonly listed the exact number of rooms they made available or their maximum capacity (generally, twice the number of rooms). While

⁹³ "Marlborough Hotel, Boardwalk at Park Place, Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ," Measured Drawing, Historian American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1979, from Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS NJ,1-ATCI,8- (sheet 4 of 13); <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/hhh.nj0004.sheet.00004a/>, accessed January 16, 2018).

⁹⁴ "In Their Summer Retreats," *Indianapolis News* (Indianapolis, IN), August 17, 1895, 12, Newspapers.com.

this was not a new practice in itself, the presumption was that guests would associate capacity with building size. In March 1900, the Grand Atlantic advertised its “350 beautifully furnished rooms.” The Hotel Rudolf, located on the beachfront, listed its capacity at roughly 600.⁹⁵ Combined with services like elevators, these hotels demonstrated their ability to accommodate large numbers of visitors without excessive strain on or burdensome crowding in their facilities. However spacious these hotels were, the usual dangers associated with high concentrations of people plagued Atlantic City like any other urban environment.

⁹⁵ Advertisement for the Grand Atlantic Hotel, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), March 18, 1900, 23, Newspapers.com; Advertisement for Hotel Rudolf, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), March 18, 1900, 23, Newspapers.com.

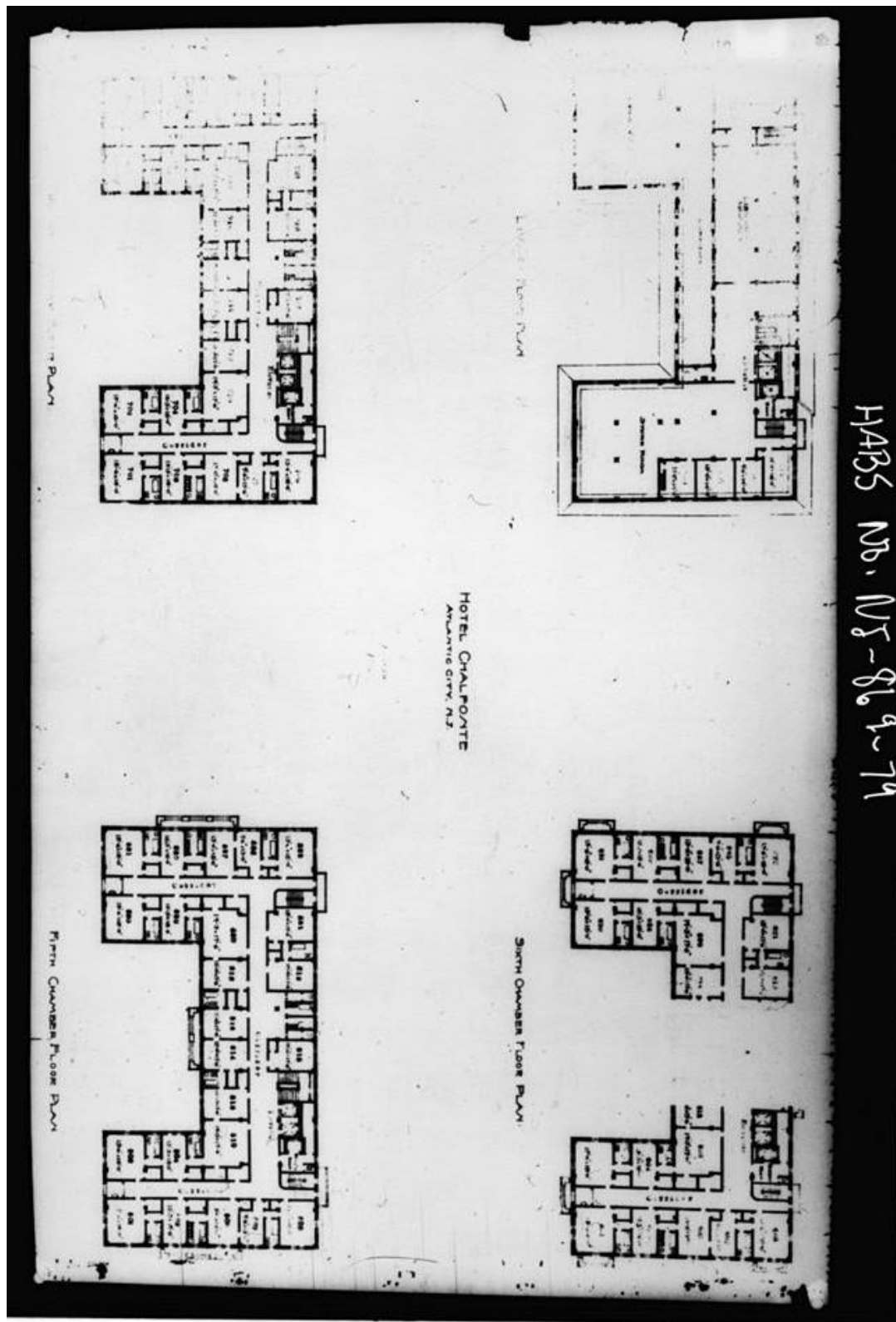


Figure 5: The original 1904 floor plan for the Chalfonte showing the third through sixth chamber floors. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Hoteliers' definitions of the modern hotel extended beyond the accommodations to the actual construction of the buildings, specifically to the utilization of fireproof materials like iron, steel, brick, and concrete. As the United States rapidly urbanized in the second half of the nineteenth century, cities—with private residences located close to factories, all constructed of wood, stone, and brick—grew increasingly vulnerable to devastating fires. Historian Sara Wermiel estimates that “In the nineteenth century, ... the United States averaged about one conflagration per year—conflagration defined in this case as a fire involving groups of buildings that destroyed property valued at the time at \$1 million or more.”⁹⁶ Unlike the major cities surrounding them, the barrier islands of New Jersey were, by the late-nineteenth century, rather undeveloped—few large structures existed in Cape May, for example, with the exception of a few new hotels. As developers constructed new buildings to accommodate swelling visitor populations, they turned to the resource abundant in the immediate vicinity: lumber. Wooden structures composed the majority of buildings, including the cottages that later expanded into large hotels and the boardwalks.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, wood has the tendency to burn, especially when paired with electricity. Electrical wiring, even when installed correctly, can be quite dangerous. On the coast, exposure to salt air degrades the wiring much faster than in the interior of the country, making it prone to shorting and sparking. And as many hotels and bathhouses advertised hot baths, they needed to have boilers onsite. Boilers, of course,

⁹⁶ Sara E. Wermiel, *The Fireproof Building: Technology and Public Safety in the Nineteenth-century American City* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 1.

⁹⁷ Brooks, “Chalfonte Hotel,” HABS No. NJ-869, 11.

could be rather temperamental. Indeed, like its larger neighbors, Atlantic City was no stranger to conflagrations.⁹⁸

In Atlantic City in 1898, as so often happens, a boiler fire did not contain itself to its metal confines, and the oscillating cold and hot air and the pervasive fuel source aided the fire's spread in a matter of minutes. The fire purportedly began at Moore Brothers' bathhouse near the boardwalk and quickly spread to several other buildings in the immediate vicinity. Several small stores, two merry-go-rounds, and even a hotel were damaged either by the fire or by firefighters' attempts to douse the flames. Within minutes, the fire had grown so rampant that the Atlantic City Fire Department requested assistance from fire departments in both Philadelphia and Camden. Before either could reach the city, the brigade brought the blaze under control thanks to a providential change in the wind. In the end, the fire caused "a loss estimated at \$250,000, on which there was less than \$75,000 insurance."⁹⁹ At this staggering price tag, it was reported in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* as "the most threatening and the most destructive fire ever known in Atlantic City's history" to that point.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ The historical study of fire is not quite a hot topic; nevertheless, there have been published several interesting and informative works. Sara Wermiel's *The Fireproof Building* details the rise of fire safety in American cities through fireproofing of buildings, the adoption of escape accesses, the expansion of firefighting, and so on. She particularly addresses various building materials and styles that prevented fires from spreading within and beyond individual structures. In *Eating Smoke: Fire in Urban America, 1800-1950* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), Mark Tebeau analyzes urbanization and fire safety from a cultural perspective, specifically addressing the relationship between firefighters and fire underwriters and their approaches to fire safety. Beyond the United States, Anna Rose Alexander's *City on Fire: Technology, Social Change, and the Hazards of Progress in Mexico City, 1860-1910* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016) examines the impact of industrialization and urbanization on Mexico City and its relation to fires. Whereas Wermiel and Tebeau analyze smaller facets of urban fire safety, Alexander addresses wider cultural aspects of both fire safety and industrialization itself, using the debate over fire prevention to describe wider social change in Mexico City and the country at large.

⁹⁹ Adjusted for inflation, this would be over \$6,000,000 and \$2,000,000, respectively: Bureau of Labor Statistic, "CPI Inflation Calculator," *United States Department of Labor*, accessed January 3, 2018, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

¹⁰⁰ "Atlantic City's Big Fire," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), October 9, 1898, 1, 12, Newspapers.com.

Although the blaze occurred in October, well into the offseason, the report made the front pages of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the Ohio-based *Piqua Daily Call* (although it erroneously attributed it to “Atlantic City, NY”) and page ten of the *New York Times*.¹⁰¹ Readers of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* would find it hard to miss, and as Philadelphians tended to travel to the beaches of South Jersey more frequently than other urbanites, they would certainly be aware of the potential danger fires posed at the shore. Even so, minor fires occurred frequently during the summer season. Many were the result of small boiler fires or cooking accidents. While these fires were essentially omnipresent, the Atlantic City Fire Department responded rather quickly to such incidents, according to reports in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

In response to the 1898 incident, Atlantic City hotels actively advertised their fireproofing. The following year, advertisements for hotels in papers like the *Philadelphia Inquirer* explicitly identified their inability to burn. Bleak House, which opened in mid-July 1899, devoted larger print to its statement that it was “strictly fireproof” before it even opened and well into September.¹⁰² As the hotel had started construction sometime the year before, it was the only one able to respond as quickly. By 1900, however, other hotels chose to advertise their fireproofing over other amenities, as well. The Hotel Sterling, “built of stone and brick,” was “absolutely fire-proof,” and the Waldorf-Astoria was “strictly fire-proof in every sense” while maintaining “every

¹⁰¹ “Atlantic City’s Big Fire,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), October 9, 1898, 1, Newspapers.com; “Valuable Property at Atlantic City Destroyed by Fire,” *Piqua Daily Call* (Piqua, OH), October 9, 1898, 1, Newspapers.com; “Atlantic City’s Big Fire,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), October 9, 1898, 10, Newspapers.com; Interestingly, while other newspapers attributed the blaze to the Moore Brothers’ boiler room, the *New York Times* claimed that “discharged employes [sic] of one of the firms whose place was burned out started the blaze for revenge.”

¹⁰² Bleak House advertisement, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA) July 8, 1899, 12, Newspapers.com; Bleak House advertisement, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA) September 4, 1899, 13, Newspapers.com.

appointment, hot and cold sea and fresh water baths; elevators to street.” Another hotel, Woolton Hall, mimicked the language of Hotel Sterling almost exactly.¹⁰³ The following year, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* added its price for resort advertisements to the top of the page. At fifteen cents per line, hotels rephrased longer statements about fireproofing more concisely. In July 1901, Woolton Hall, for example, advertised its location along the beachfront, its amenities including baths with every appointment, and that it was entirely “built of brick,” relying on the reader to make the connection.¹⁰⁴

The threat of fire was omnipresent, so business owners, residents, and city officials rebranded these incidents—few of which were deadly—as opportunities to rebuild the outdated buildings as new resorts with modern accommodations. After a fire much larger than the 1898 blaze devastated twelve hotels, several businesses, and part of Young’s Pier in April 1902, hotel owners vowed publicly to rebuild using fireproof materials. In an article from May 11, 1902, a correspondent to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* commented,

Like many other calamities the fire which swept away several blocks of building from the Atlantic City beach front really was a blessing in disguise. Nor does it require an all-powerful optimism to take this view of the Phoenix-like rise which that section of the resort is making from its ruin. Rather would it be the part of pessimism to doubt the efficacy of the remedy for the long-recognized defects, however heroic its character.¹⁰⁵

Hotel owners and city officials shared this reporter’s sentiment that Atlantic City would rise gold-studded from the ashes. Charles F. Cope, the owner of the Grand Atlantic Hotel,

¹⁰³ “Hotel Sterling,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA) July 4, 1900, 11, Newspapers.com; Waldorf-Astoria advertisement, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA) July 4, 1900, 11, Newspapers.com; Woolton Hall advertisement, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA) July 4, 1900, 11, Newspapers.com.

¹⁰⁴ Woolton Hall advertisement 2, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA) July 4, 1901, 9, Newspapers.com.

¹⁰⁵ “New Atlantic City as Result of Fire,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), May 11, 1902, 6, Newspapers.com.

one of the largest and most famous hotels in the city that often advertised in the *Inquirer*, announced that a new wing would be constructed of brick and iron to ensure customers' safety. The intention was to slowly replace the wood-framed buildings with brick. Atlantic City's transformation was not to be limited merely to the physical—it was extended to “a deeper side—a moral side.”¹⁰⁶

The adoption of iron and brick construction mirrored similar moves in larger cities, although significantly delayed. Major cities like New York, Philadelphia, and particularly Chicago following the Great Fire in 1871, adopted new construction practices prioritizing fireproofing.¹⁰⁷ In Atlantic City, where two large fires in four years devastated local businesses, hoteliers like the Chalfonte's Henry Leeds recognized that adopting modern fireproof materials—iron, steel, and cement—and construction methods would ensure financial security, both through minimizing potential and by attracting customers with promises of safety.¹⁰⁸ But, as the authors of the Historic American Buildings Survey for the Chalfonte pointed out, “When Leeds advertised that his new hotel was fireproof, he meant simply that it was built of iron, brick and stone.”¹⁰⁹ The materials, in other words, played only a part in the building's overall fireproof status. The hotel also incorporated a 20,000-gallon tank of water for the sprinkler system and a fire escape, the first of its kind in the city. The fire escape, though it did not reach ground level, provided guests with the ability to descend several floors to where fire and smoke, theoretically at least, may not have spread or to where ladders could reach. The modern

¹⁰⁶ “New Atlantic City as Result of Fire,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), May 11, 1902, 6, Newspapers.com.

¹⁰⁷ Sara Wermiel, “The Development of Fireproof Construction,” 16.

¹⁰⁸ Brooks, “Chalfonte Hotel,” HABS No. NJ-869, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Brooks, “Chalfonte Hotel,” HABS No. NJ-869, 15.

hotel, then, did not put stock only in fire prevention but also in building safety.¹¹⁰

Whereas material and building practices were technologies less visible to guests, the fire escape was a clear indication of a hotel's modernity that guests could see before even entering the building.

As a guest moved into the interior of a hotel, the building's modernity would be made evident by certain visible technologies. No technological innovation better demonstrated the ups and downs of industrialization than the elevator, and many hotels advertised this machine to demonstrate their progress. While smaller hotels and cottages attempted to convey their stylish accommodations with general statements like "modern in every detail," or, "new and modern," specifically mentioning the elevator supported these basic claims. The resorts advertisements in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on March 11, 1900, contained over forty advertisements for Atlantic City hotels. Of these, fifteen included their elevators in the advertisements alongside prices and locations relative to the beach and boardwalk. Historian Andreas Bernard has argued that the mere presence of an elevator implied other modern amenities, as well: "The simultaneous appearance of advances such as central heating, sewerage, intercoms, elevators, and, a little later, electricity ensured that from the 1870s on, the interior of the building was crisscrossed by a complex of pipes, cables, and shafts. Beneath the visible surface there arose an invisible network that organized the circulation of energy, data, and people." The elevator was not possible without this basic infrastructure, and Americans would have been aware of that fact.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Brooks, "Chalfonte Hotel," HABS No. NJ-869, 15-16.

¹¹¹ Andreas Bernard, *Lifted: A Cultural History of the Elevator* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 14.

While a number of Atlantic City’s hotels utilized elevators despite verticals of four to six stories, the Chalfonte, at ten stories tall, absolutely required elevators. Had the architect neglected to include elevators, any assurances that the Chalfonte was modern could be safely ignored, while the hotel’s competitors made easy trips from ground level to the top floor with heavy luggage and without exertion. The Chalfonte had three plunger elevators, two for passengers and one for baggage.¹¹² While the *Philadelphia Inquirer* article from July 17, 1904, specifically mentions the hotel’s three elevators, the Chalfonte’s own advertisements for the month of July do not include them.¹¹³ Instead, advertisements from July 12, 18, and 22 mention the hotel being “NEW; COMPLETE; TEN STORIES; FIREPROOF; ALWAYS OPEN” with no deviation or alteration.¹¹⁴ By emphasizing the building’s newness, completeness, and its height, the advertisement reduces the presence of the elevators to an implication that must no longer be made explicit in defining modernity. Other aspects of modernity in plain sight—unlike elevators—but often ignored today are bathing facilities.

By the early 1890s, most “modern” hotels advertised onsite hot and cold seawater baths. Today, one may consider a room dedicated explicitly to bathing accommodations a necessity in any home or hotel. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Americans, particularly those of the upper classes, valued cleanliness; by the end of the century, standards for personal hygiene shifted as industrialization made bathing more accessible with the creation of items like mass-produced bar soap. “As technological advances made

¹¹² Brooks, “Chalfonte Hotel,” HABS No. NJ-869, 15.

¹¹³ “New Chalfonte Now Open,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 17, 1904, 6, Newspapers.com.

¹¹⁴ “Chalfonte,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 12, 1904, 11, Newspapers.com; “Chalfonte,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 18, 1904, 11, Newspapers.com; “Chalfonte,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 22, 1904, 12, Newspapers.com.

soap and water more widely available,” writes Jackson Lears, cleanliness took on a more intense definition than the simply hygienic, implying a “certain kind of cleanliness, purged of any decadent, hedonistic associations, oriented toward productive activism and a broader agenda of control.”¹¹⁵ Cleanliness was an indication of status and morality. More importantly, the inclusion of bathing facilities hearkened to the early days of not only Atlantic City, but also most of New Jersey’s shore resorts.

With conditions in the country’s cities slowly deteriorating over time, wealthier urbanites sought to escape these unhealthy environments for short periods in which they could stave off vicious diseases and rejuvenate their fragile compositions. In the 1850s, Dr. Jonathan Pitney, a physician, established the beginnings of a health spa resort on Absecon Island, and with the connection of the Camden and Atlantic Railroad that same decade, Atlantic City emerged as a prominent destination for urbanites seeking to preserve and restore their health.¹¹⁶ While the connection between indoor plumbing and the city’s founding was less explicit for visitors in 1890 than in 1860, it indicated hotels were slowly improving by adding modern conveniences like indoor plumbing.

While today booking a room in a hotel or motel implies access to a private bathroom, at least in the United States, this was not the case in most hotels well into the twentieth century. Indeed, separate water closets were only introduced in the most prestigious hotels, like the Astor House in New York City, in the 1830s and 1840s, and even then only sparingly. “Primarily residential hotels,” Sandoval-Strausz points out,

¹¹⁵ Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 164.

¹¹⁶ John T. Cunningham, *This Is New Jersey*, fourth ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 241-242; For more on the creation and rise of summer resorts as health spas in the middle of the nineteenth century, see Cindy S. Aron’s first chapter, “Recuperation and Recreation: The Pursuit of Health and Genteel Pleasures,” in *Working at Play*, 15-44.

“advertised baths in every room in the 1870s and 1880s,” but these, too, were luxury hotels in the largest cities.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, the popularity of private bathrooms influenced hoteliers in Atlantic City to adopt them—along with indoor plumbing—beginning in the 1890s and rapidly expanding in the first decade of the 1900s. Even then, though, communal bathrooms were present in all but the newest hotels in Atlantic City well into the 1900s.

The Chalfonte, at least upon its completion in 1904, embraced the demand for private bathrooms, though not entirely. Each chamber floor generally had about twenty-two rooms that could be rented individually or as suites with separate bathrooms. Of these bathrooms, thirteen existed between two rooms, with access points that could be opened or closed on either side. If thirteen rooms were rented with bathrooms *en suite*, then the occupants of the other nine rooms—rented without private bathrooms—had to use the two communal bathrooms located along the rear wall off the main corridor. The Chalfonte’s adoption of private baths mirrored, in part, urban luxury hotels’ integration of private baths; however, many of the big-city hotels provided private bathrooms for every room. If the Chalfonte’s owners realized this, then they attempted to bridge the gap by providing other amenities common to big-city hotels, such as its incorporation of electric lighting.

The hotel’s usage of electricity was not entirely new to the city. It was instead the way the Chalfonte incorporated electric lights into the guest chambers that garnered attention. “Instead of having a jet, or light, alongside of each bureau, as is the custom,” stated an article in the *Atlantic City Daily Press*, “there are to be two electric lights

¹¹⁷ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 164-165.

attached to and fixed on each bureau.” Whereas other hotels affixed lights to the walls, by putting lights on the bureaus that could then be moved about the room the Chalfonte ensured the efficient lighting of the bed chamber “by simply removing a plug.” The author of the *Daily Press* article believed this to “prove highly popular...with the fair sex, who usually twist the glass around many ways to see if their hats are on straight.” The bureaus contained mirrors for preening, and rather than having to adjust wall fixtures for better lighting, the guest could rely on light fixtures in close proximity.¹¹⁸

Despite the Chalfonte Hotel’s dramatic reopening in 1904, it did not last long as the premier modern luxury hotel on Atlantic City’s boardwalk. The Marlborough Hotel actually preceded it as “the first major hotel in Atlantic City to be conceived and built as a unit whose form was related to its use,” using similar fireproofing to the Chalfonte and containing many of the same accommodations. In 1906, the owner of the Marlborough, Josiah White, merged the hotel with its newly completed annex, the Blenheim, to create the Marlborough-Blenheim. While the Marlborough’s style was distinctive, its overall architecture did not differ from its predecessors, featuring an elongated, horizontal main structure that stretched toward the beach rather than along it. The Blenheim (Figure 6), on the other hand, was something else entirely.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Brooks, “Chalfonte Hotel,” HABS No. NJ-869, 15.

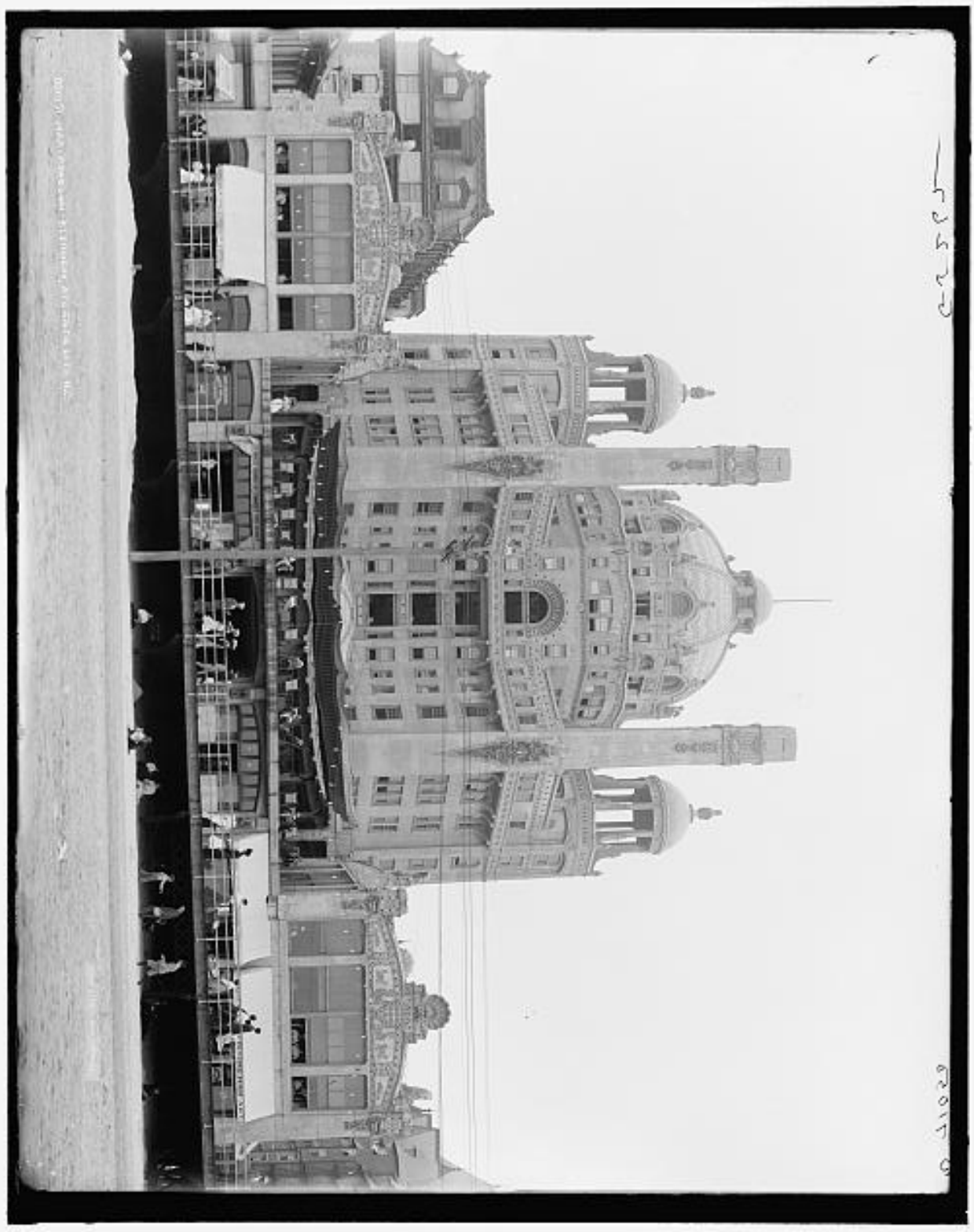


Figure 6: The Blenheim Hotel as it appeared shortly after opening. The Marlborough is just off camera on the right.
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Apart from electricity and other technological conveniences, the Blenheim refined several modern accoutrements. After the calamitous fire of 1902, Josiah White intended, and architect William Price designed, the Blenheim to be fireproof.¹¹⁹ To that end, the Blenheim utilized reinforced concrete as the primary mode of construction, largely because a steel strike in 1905 had rendered that particular material expensive and difficult to attain. The use of concrete was still experimental, but Price's successful design of the Blenheim, achieving functional fireproofing while preserving luxury, became the norm for the city's hotels. As with its fireproofing, the Blenheim beat out the Chalfonte by providing private baths to each room, with a few exceptions. Price accomplished this by utilizing "the bedroom-bath-bath-bedroom rhythm that lines baths back to back and permits a simple plumbing system."¹²⁰ The inclusion of private baths for every guest room put the Blenheim leagues ahead of the Chalfonte despite the latter's opening only two years before the former. While the Chalfonte had managed to capitalize on the standards for modernity in the 1890s to 1904, the Blenheim redefined them for the rest of the city's heyday.

Indeed, such was the hotel's fame for style and modernity that other manufacturers touted their participation in constructing it. In a nearly full-page advertisement in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the Philadelphia-based Gimbel Brothers department store referenced the Marlborough-Blenheim on the first line: "When the palatial Marlborough-Blenheim Hotel at Atlantic City was to be carpeted, this house won

¹¹⁹ Josiah White's other hotel, the Luray, had been destroyed in the 1902 fire. George E. Thomas, "Blenheim Hotel, Ohio Avenue and Boardwalk, Atlantic City, Atlantic County, New Jersey," Written Historical and Descriptive Data, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2, from Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS No. NJ-864; <https://cdn.loc.gov/master/pnp/habshaer/nj/nj0000/nj0002/data/nj0002data.pdf>, accessed January 14, 2018).

¹²⁰ Thomas, "Blenheim Hotel," HABS No. NJ-864, 9.

the Million-dollar order on merit alone. The service that has won, and held to the store, friends in a dozen States, is yours.”¹²¹ This indicates three things about the advertiser’s line of thinking. First, the reputation of the Marlborough-Blenheim—and Atlantic City, for that matter—was pervasive enough that the advertiser expected the average reader of that day’s *Philadelphia Inquirer* to readily recall knowledge of the hotel, with its distinctive architectural style among Atlantic City’s skyline. Second, Gimbels’s participation in the hotel’s furnishing was itself a signifier of the department store’s status as a topnotch producer. Third, the connection between Gimbels and the Marlborough-Blenheim would serve to bolster both the status and reputation of both parties among Philadelphia’s consumers. As historian Sandoval-Strausz indicated, luxury hotels hallmarked stylistic trends, and by incorporating new styles into modern hotels, these styles became modern. Additionally, a producer or manufacturer connecting with the styles of such hotels bridged the gap between the hotel and the home, indicating to visitors that modernity was not just technological but also stylistic.¹²²

The death knell for the cottage-hotel rang with the opening of the Blenheim in 1906. So distinctive was it in appearance and style that it ushered in a new era for Atlantic City’s hotels, one shaped by the modern conveniences and accommodations contained within the urban palaces astride the boardwalk.¹²³ The dramatically renovated or newly constructed hotels that followed the Blenheim—like the Traymore, also designed by William Price—followed the pattern of increasingly modern, urban style.¹²⁴

¹²¹ “Carpets and Rugs: The Great Summer Sale,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), June 24, 1906, 9, Newspapers.com.

¹²² Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 246-247.

¹²³ Thomas, “Blenheim Hotel,” HABS No. NJ-864, 5-6.

¹²⁴ George E. Thomas and Susan Nigra Snyder, “William Price’s Traymore Hotel: Modernity in the Mass Resort,” *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 25 (2005): 190.

These hotels reigned until Atlantic City became the home of casinos. While some hotels were converted to house casino hotels—like the Haddon Hall building constructed in the 1920s, which is still the Resorts Casino—others had decayed past the point of no return. By 1980, developers had demolished most of the city’s modern luxury hotels erected in the first decade of the twentieth century, including the Traymore, Marlborough-Blenheim, and the Chalfonte.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, though, these hotels represented the transition between the two centuries. Whereas the nineteenth century “modern” hotel was a long, wooden building with rooms intended for transience, the modern hotel of the twentieth century was tall and fireproof, and its guests were presumed to spend more time in their private rooms, utilizing the electricity that powered the lights in their separate bathrooms. These hotels mirrored their big-city sisters, bringing the convenience of modern urban living to the shore, where one who could afford the price could enjoy the rejuvenating aspects of the seaside town without losing contact with the “real world.”

Chapter Three, “What the Public Wants”: Social Engagement at the Shore

Reading the Sunday issue of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, one would be assured of Atlantic City’s popularity: “Of a truth Atlantic City is the maddest, merriest, gayest resort in the world—and she is the most versatile.” During the summer months, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* published reports from the “bejeweled siren” every Sunday. These full-page spreads that often filled half the following page were packed with descriptions of the city’s goings-on, snippets of interesting stories, factoids, and extensive lists of the prominent individuals vacationing there. The article above—from August 12, 1900—praised the entertainment in the city, when soaring temperatures precluded outside activities. Euchre contests occupied visitors during the day. Musical performances by popular artists whose voices had “been heard in the choirs in this city as well as in Philadelphia” engaged them at night, running far into the evening. Socialites and persons of note filled the hotels’ rooms. “Everywhere one strays there he will find people of prominence in business or social life from every quarter of the civilized world,” continued the article. “Atlantic City is no longer Philadelphia’s exclusive resort.”¹²⁵

Articles like this appeared every Sunday in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* between March and September and were typically headed by lithographs or photographs depicting respectable individuals—usually women—on the city’s beach or boardwalk. They both heralded and ended the seasons, indicating to readers when Atlantic City was at its height with tantalizing narratives of the city’s party-like atmosphere.

¹²⁵ “Atlantic City at Night,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 12, 1900, 2nd section, 8, Newspapers.com; “Parlor Pastimes,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 12, 1900, 2nd section, 8, Newspapers.com; “Personal Pickings,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 12, 1900, 2nd section, 8, Newspapers.com.

Although the city's hotels remained open through the winter and advertised almost continuously, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* advertised Atlantic City seasonally in its Sunday editions, focusing predominantly on the spring and summer seasons, with emphasis on the latter. In the off-season, news about the city was combined with other cities and towns on the New Jersey shore; this was similar to a significantly smaller section dedicated to Maryland's happenings. For example, in 1900, beginning March 18, the paper ran reports about one full page in length detailing the "Lenten Throng" visiting the resorts at the shore as the weather warmed. The same heading appeared each of the next four weeks around page 14 of the paper's second section, though with various iterations of the subheading, "Events and Gossip of a Week in New Jersey," changing very little, with the exception of an Easter Sunday spread containing photographs, lithographs, and little text. By late May, the columns devoted specifically to Atlantic City grew longer as summer rapidly advanced. In mid-June, the "gossip" headings had been eliminated, replaced by new headings featuring Atlantic City's common nicknames or, simply, "Atlantic City." The June 17 edition, for example, featured a lithograph of a young woman sitting inside of a boat on the ocean. The lithograph incorporates the city's name, and roughly half of the page is dedicated to the lithograph and the article on Atlantic City. To the left and right, though, are columns about Asbury Park and Wildwood.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ "Atlantic City's Lenten Throng," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), March 18, 1900, 2nd section, 14, Newspapers.com; "Events and Gossip of a Week in New Jersey," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), April 1, 1900, 2nd section, 16, Newspapers.com; "Atlantic City as Society's Easter Resort," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), April 15, 1900, Colored section 1, 4, Newspapers.com (Here, "colored section" does not refer to race, but to the use of colored inks in photographs); "Ebb and Flow from Jersey Cities and Towns," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), May 20, 1900, 2nd section, 15, Newspapers.com; "Atlantic City," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), June 17, 1900, 2nd section, 13, Newspapers.com.

After July 4, the summer was in full swing. The only complaint to be rendered was in jest: “There is only one thing that the Mayor can be blamed for. That is this job of scorching hot weather which has been dumped into the town with charming regularity every morning this week, and which has had a debilitating effect upon starched linen.” Whereas in previous years overcrowding had been a major concern, the correspondent reported that the Fourth’s crowd “has been quite satisfactory,” with more than enough events to preoccupy them in the coming days.¹²⁷ From jumping contests, yacht races, and swim contests to beauty contests, dances, and card games like euchre, summer was “the period of fads down by the sea.” And the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported on these activities every Sunday, as Atlantic City gained its own full-page spread, relegating other New Jersey resorts to later pages.¹²⁸

The *Philadelphia Inquirer*’s Sunday spreads implied it was a democratic, middle-class utopia, and as such, it was a landscape in which middle-class visitors defined, reinforced, and changed a collective class identity. These portrayals of middle-class sociability in Atlantic City reflected a wider national trend. Between 1890 and 1910, middle-class Americans embraced modern ideals of regimentation and efficiency in daily life, particularly in a moral capacity, stressing hard work and discipline. Many of these newly middle-class Americans were not very far removed from manual labor—they were, instead, part of the new managerial class, known increasingly as white-collar workers. The working class experienced modernity’s consequences on a daily basis: standardization and wage labor based on hourly rates ruled supreme in America’s big

¹²⁷ “Atlantic City,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 8, 1900, 2nd section, 14, Newspapers.com.

¹²⁸ “Atlantic City,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 22, 1900, 2nd section, 8, Newspapers.com.

cities. Both, though, engaged in what historian Lears calls an “economy of abundance” shadowed by the “standardizing constraints of the scientifically managed corporation.”¹²⁹ This “standardization” spread to the middle-class identity as a whole; from furniture in the home to women’s fashion to “moral” social activities, rigid standards presented through consumer habits characterized middle-class life. As these Americans defined themselves within the new consumer culture, they also defined Atlantic City’s modern image by shaping the culture that existed there through their efforts at leisure, from promenading to dancing to reforming. And Atlantic City’s modern image became defined as much by its standardized middle-class identity as by the lapses of that standardization.

Middle-class ideas of leisure time were not uniform, but a desire for productive leisure was consistent among the middle and upper classes. Charges of idleness dogged those middle-class patrons of the shore. Americans had various concepts of vacationing, especially the middle class. In order to avoid the corrupting influence of idleness, middle-class Americans sought to more directly relate work and leisure. Just as cheap transportation brought the Jersey shore within reach and budget of working class Americans in Philadelphia, so too did it make more isolated areas accessible to Americans with the means to get there—the middle class, in other words, could vacation in places before accessible only to the wealthy, bringing more people into conflict over productive and unproductive leisure by allowing members of the professional and managerial class to break from work. Upper and upper middle-class Americans visited National Parks and historic sites, including Civil War battlefields. The exertion and seriousness that accompanied touring in places like Yosemite and Gettysburg averted the

¹²⁹ The term is from contemporary economist Simon Patten; Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 226.

damaging effects of idle leisure that one could possibly sustain at the shore. These trips, however, were too expensive for most middle-class Americans and all but impossible for the working class.¹³⁰

Atlantic City, then, became a destination primarily for middle-class Americans, reflected in the segregation of public and private space (i.e. hotels) and the imposition of middle-class propriety on seaside social activities and dress. Indeed, middle-class notions of leisure were defined as much by exclusion as they were by inclusion. Bryant Simon argues in *Boardwalk of Dreams* that “Understanding [Atlantic City] and its history means seeing how millions of individual decisions about inclusion and exclusion, which together trace the outlines of collective consciousness of the middle class, shaped and continue to shape urban America and its public spaces.”¹³¹ By controlling space—either through the imposition of class or gender—middle-class visitors were able to assert their paternalist impulse over the working class.

The middle-class impetus to “uplift” the working class—to make them almost middle class—affected consumerist habits as well as leisure time. For many Americans of the managerial class, the way to solve inequity in the rapidly industrializing urban areas was to pay the working class enough that they could also engage in the mass consumption of goods that they produced. But as historian Lears notes, “The new commercialized forms of leisure tended to be brief bouts of relief from industrial routine, reinforcing rather than undermining the hierarchies of the developing managerial

¹³⁰ Aron, *Working at Play*, 147-150.

¹³¹ Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams*, 10. Simon goes on to consider in the book the exclusion of African-Americans, working-class whites, and homosexuals by middle-class whites in Atlantic City after the First World War to the 1990s.

order.”¹³² For both the middle and working classes, excursions and vacations were but brief respites from work; upon their return to the cities, members of both classes were expected to be reinvigorated for work. This sense of carnival, then, was intended to act as a short period of intense recuperation after which the worker could work most efficiently. While visitors to Coney Island could count on the relaxation of society’s still-Victorian morals, visitors to Atlantic City could not expect it to the same degree. Coney Island was the destination mainly for working-class and lower middle-class day-trippers, heading to the amusement park after work or on the weekend.¹³³ In *Amusing the Million*, John Kasson writes about Coney Island at the turn of the century:

An essential element of Coney Island’s appeal for virtually all its visitors was the contrast it offered to conventional society, everyday routine, and dominant cultural authorities. Though traces of class and ethnic backgrounds still clung to Coney Island’s amusement seekers, in arriving at the resort they crossed a critical threshold, entering a world apart from ordinary life, prevailing social structures and positions.¹³⁴

Those “prevailing social structures and positions” predominated in Atlantic City. While working-class visitors to the city stayed there for roughly the same amount of time as at Coney Island, Atlantic City’s middle-class visitors usually stayed for longer, often from Friday to Sunday, if not the duration of the week. Whereas at Coney Island the classes mixed more thoroughly and for a shorter duration, in Atlantic City the longer stays of middle-class Americans in their expensive hotels, reported and popularized by the press, reinforced separation of and discrimination against the working class, and as middle-class visitors seemingly monopolized Atlantic City, they directly defined its image.¹³⁵

¹³² Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 273.

¹³³ Kasson, *Amusing the Million*, 37-38.

¹³⁴ Kasson, *Amusing the Million*, 41.

¹³⁵ The mixing of classes, races, genders, and nationalities at Coney Island has been well documented. Kasson’s *Amusing the Million*, of course, remains the singularly best study on the subject. Kathy Peiss

One common aspect of the articles published in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was the presence of extensive lists of guests, many of them female, and most of them probably middle class. The Sunday, July 8, 1900, edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, for example, contained in its Atlantic City article a list of individuals, called “Here and There,” spanning eight columns, four on one page and four on another. The individuals listed ranged from government officials to business owners to bachelors and bachelorettes. Included with many names were short descriptions, varying in lengths. These descriptions usually included various combinations of rather basic information: name; traveling companions, commonly a spouse or family; place of permanent residence or most recent origin; occupation; length and place of stay; and reason for visiting. Depending on the individual, short superlatives attended the basic facts. The following example includes nearly all the above-listed characteristics:

Miss Mary E. Bell, of Harrisburg; Miss Mary N. Young, of Steelton, and Mr. G. Will Henry, of Pennbrook, are at the Grand Atlantic for a period of ten days. These are the successful contestants in the ballot contest for the most popular teachers in Dauphin county [Pennsylvania]. They are accompanied by Mr. Wilbur Crow, editor of the Harrisburg Star-Independent, and the circulating manager W. W. Wallower.¹³⁶

This entry, of slightly longer length than usual, notes the party, place and length of stay, and reason for visiting Atlantic City. But like other entries, it performs a number of social

examines Coney Island’s appeal to young, working-class women in *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), 125-129. George Chauncey addresses Coney Island’s bathhouses and drag shows in his analysis of New York’s male homosexual culture in *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994). Both Cindy Aron and David Goldberg have noted Atlantic City’s popularity among the African-Americans and working-class whites despite exclusionary tactics used by the city’s middle-class visitors and residents; Goldberg, *The Retreats of Reconstruction*, 84-87; Aron, *Working at Play*, 212-213;

¹³⁶ “Here and There,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 8, 1900, 2nd section, 14, Newspapers.com. The *Harrisburg Star-Independent* reported Young’s first name as Maria; “At Atlantic City,” *Harrisburg Star-Independent* (Harrisburg, PA), July 10, 1900, 3, Newspapers.com.

functions for the individuals listed and hotels listed. Not least among them was that by sponsoring the trip in the first place, the *Harrisburg Star-Independent* was directly advertising Atlantic City to a middle-class audience.

The entry's subject had several uses for their name appearing in such articles. At the most basic level, the entry informed the paper's readers that the subject was in Atlantic City and, therefore, not at home. For purposes of communications, this was immensely useful. As many of Atlantic City's hotels advertised that they had telegraphs, telephones, or both, one was never truly isolated from one's home or business. These entries, then, essentially acted as forwarding addresses, allowing individuals back home to contact visitors to the shore. For managers and business owners, this theoretically alleviated some of the stress of idleness. Were a hotel guest to accept a business communique, he could effectively balance out criticism of idleness with assurances that he was, in fact, still on the clock. In short, this century's criticism that employees are never truly disconnected from work was just as true in the last century; valuations of leisure have simply changed.

Vacationing communicated social status, and having one's name appear in a newspaper for no other reason than traveling to the shore certainly affirmed that status. For example, Ms. Bell, Ms. Young, and Mr. Henry, schoolteachers who likely earned between \$15 and \$30 per week, were listed among government employees who earned roughly the same or slightly more as well as private business owners, military personnel, and even a United States District Court judge.¹³⁷ Although they did not pay for the trip themselves, the lower middle-class teachers were reported alongside upper middle-class

¹³⁷ Aron, *Working at Play*, 46-47.

and upper-class visitors, with the added detail that they had won a contest, implying that the vacation was constructive and appropriate.

Additionally, the length of their vacation is similarly suggestive of class status. Even at Henry's theoretical (and optimistic) salary of \$30 per week, staying more than a week in the Grand Atlantic with its American plan would verge on fiscal irresponsibility. The Grand Atlantic, which advertised itself in the *Harrisburg Star-Independent* in June 1900 as having "every modern equipment conducive to the comfort of guests" did not provide its rates during the summer season, like many other hotels in Atlantic City.¹³⁸ Whereas in April it gave its spring rates as "\$12.50, \$15.00, and \$17.50 per week" for the American plan and \$1 per day on the European, in July the Grand Atlantic settled with stating that its "terms are reasonable."¹³⁹ As vacationers flooded into the city during the summer season, it is possible that the hotel raised its rates. Regardless, the teachers were ensconced in a relatively expensive hotel for a period of ten days. Other members of the middle class, including those at the upper end of the spectrum, could afford only one week's vacation per year, two or three of which were spent traveling.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ "The Grand Atlantic Hotel," *Harrisburg Star-Independent* (Harrisburg, PA), June 20, 1900, 7, Newspapers.com.

¹³⁹ "Grand Atlantic Hotel," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), April 1, 1900, 2nd section, 5, Newspapers.com; "Grand Atlantic Hotel," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 7, 1900, 11, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴⁰ Aron, *Working at Play*, 47.

Although the teachers were likely lower middle-class as opposed to working-class, their hold on that socioeconomic position was anything but firm, and their sponsored vacation to Atlantic City demonstrates efforts by the middle class to encourage productive leisure among the lower classes. Urban reformers, questioning the intensity of industrial labor, believed it necessary for workers to have reprieves from work in order to rejuvenate; however, these brief respites were expected to be productive, and reformers sought to control what they saw as working-class frivolity. Charitable organizations in the cities sponsored vacations particularly for young working women, but these vacations were often regimented just as severely as were their jobs. Of those employers who did offer vacation time—usually unpaid—to their workers, most dictated the vacations be spent in particular ways, often resorting to organizing said excursions themselves. Vacations outdoors were preferable, especially camping trips. The beach presented a unique problem, though: mixed-gendered and requiring less restrictive clothing, it undermined the separate spheres of the middle class and, thus, traditional morality. Putting up the teachers—two females, one male—in an expensive hotel and maintaining their supervision by the paper’s representatives ensured middle-class standards of leisure would be reinforced. “Decent abandon” marked their vacation. In the future, perhaps, the teachers would be like the other subjects in the newspapers’ profiles.¹⁴¹

The reputational relationship between hotel and guest was relatively even: both benefited from the reputation of the other. As mentioned above, both the length and place of stay carried implications for guests. By staying in the most luxurious (i.e. expensive) hotels, guests could give off the appearance of being sophisticated and wealthy. On the

¹⁴¹ Aron, *Working at Play*, 186-194, 201-203; “At Atlantic City,” *Harrisburg Star-Independent* (Harrisburg, PA), July 10, 1900, 3, Newspapers.com.

other side, hotels could be defined by the people who frequented them. The Traymore, one of the city's most popular hotels, which had been "extensively enlarged and improved" over the winter of 1899-1900 with "over 50 private baths," a "new dining room enclosed in glass," and "Exchange and sun parlors doubled in size," billed itself both world famous and "unsurpassed on the Atlantic coast for decoration and elegance" between April and July.¹⁴² It was one of the few hotels specifically named in the main text of the July 8 article, with four guests—Mr. and Mrs. B. H. Gaskill and Mr. and Mrs. Francis T. Tully Darley—noted on the hotel's ledger. While the Gaskills' occupation or noteworthiness is not stated, the article notes that Mrs. Darley "was Miss Baldwin, and owned the famous Baldwin mansion on Chestnut street, which was recently sold."¹⁴³ The mansion referenced here no longer stands; however, it was evidently a noteworthy structure, for its sale in the spring of 1900 generated modest press. Particularly of interest to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* was the price for which the buyer acquired the property. As Philadelphians speculated what would become of the mansion—evidently it was demolished, and a theater was built on the site—the press harangued the real estate agent who brokered the deal. After refusing to disclose the buyer's identity or the price, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* concluded, "It is known, however, that for over four years \$1,250,000 has been the price."¹⁴⁴ With a multi-millionaire choosing the Traymore as her summer abode, the hotel could justify its claims as a world-class resort hosting the most sophisticated members of the upper and upper middle-class.

¹⁴² "Hotel Traymore," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), April 8, 1900, 2nd section, 5, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴³ "Here and There," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 8, 1900, 2nd section, 14, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴⁴ "New Theatre in this City," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), March 17, 1900, 8, Newspapers.com.

These lists identified the shore's female visitors, often accompanying their names with short descriptions and superlatives. The July 8 edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* named both married and single women, describing their appearances and relations. "Mrs. [Joseph] Hope is a most attractive woman and dresses with exquisite taste, her gowns being much admired as she promenades the boardwalk in the evening," went one description. Most descriptions, like this one, focused on the woman's attractiveness, dress, and activities. "Miss Adeline Thomson and Miss Elizabeth Norris, who are quite prominent in Philadelphia's most exclusive society circles, ... were tastefully gowned" as they promenaded the boardwalk. "Miss Blanche Nettleton ... and Miss Hecht ... are two charming young ladies at the Anchorage." And "Blanche and Marian Runner are among the pretty Quaker City girls who are sojourning for a greater or less period at the Morton."¹⁴⁵

By the 1890s, Victorian ideals of women as chaste, restrained, and reservedly beautiful had begun to fade, replaced by veneration of the female form (often scantily clad) in the male gaze along with matronly representations in art.¹⁴⁶ The lithographs and photographs in the Sunday editions of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* used women to represent Atlantic City's more risqué nature. The July 8 edition (Figure 7) included both a lithograph and three photographs of young women. The lithograph depicts a young woman standing at the water's edge dressed in what could be considered more casual wear if not a swimming dress. Unlike the women in the photographs, the lithograph has no sleeves with an open neckline. The puffed sleeves are common to women's swimwear

¹⁴⁵ "Here and There," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), July 8, 1900, 2nd section, 14, Newspapers.com.

¹⁴⁶ Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1983), 166-167.

of the time. The women in the photograph, though, are dressed in casual daywear: their arms are covered, collars protect the neck from the sun, and umbrellas filter most of the sun's rays. The posing is also different. Whereas the women in the photographs pose normally, even minimally, the woman in the lithograph has her arms raised and folded behind her head. This posing is suggestive, and the emphasis on the woman's small waist and wide hips is sexually suggestive.¹⁴⁷

The women presented in the July 8 edition photographs wore "respectable" yet fashionable clothing for their public appearances. Antoniette and Louise Patcowsky, pictured center, are shown on the beach wearing bathing dresses. Unlike the swimwear of mid-century, their clothing is common for the 1890s and 1900s. With long sleeves, knee-length skirts, and stockings, the clothing paralleled daywear in its coverage. On the other hand, it was far looser than the casual daywear sported by Irene Smith and Florence McClum, depicted in the bottom photograph. The looseness of the bathing dresses exemplifies the freedom of the beach; however, it was not as morally loose as other swimwear, indicating the respectability and reservation of these women. Historian Patricia Campbell Warner found more "racy" bathing wear at Coney Island to reject much of the flowing looseness of the Patcowskys' clothing: "short (mid-thigh) sleeveless or capped-sleeve dresses with bloomers of the same length, frilled and matching the dress."¹⁴⁸ Whereas Warner concludes that such provocative dress was not meant for activities in the water, the swimwear of the Patcowskys was more likely to be used for its ostensible purpose, despite great difficulties. Middle-class Americans believed the

¹⁴⁷ Banner, *American Beauty*, 130-131.

¹⁴⁸ Patricia Campbell Warner, *When the Girls Came Out to Play: The Birth of American Sportswear* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 77.

looseness of the clothing—at a time when corsets were still the standard—acceptable to facilitate safe swimming. This highlights the conflicting nature of middle-class identity: modern sensibilities of respectable fashion were compromised in order to ensure safety and comfort, thus rendering a public environment less rigid than usual for women.¹⁴⁹

Readers in 2018 will likely find discomfoting the objectification of Atlantic City’s female visitors by the newspapers (although it is still rampant in modern advertising and culture generally); regardless, the “Summer Girl” was oft reported with equal parts admiration and admonition. In a time when advertisers reinforced ideas of domesticity by encouraging women to make purchases that would better themselves and home, the presence of women in Atlantic City—in its hotels, aboard its amusements, or on its beaches—bridged the separate spheres.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, women’s presence in public was asserted through their roles as consumers, and they were active contributors to consumer culture in this way. As hotels combined the privacy of the home with the publicness of a city business, women reinforced their public-private role at the shore just as they did in the major cities.¹⁵¹

Despite conflicting messages regarding their behavior, middle-class women at the shore engaged in activities that were not totally acceptable at home. “At a time when

¹⁴⁹ Warner, *When the Girls Came Out to Play*, 73-78.

¹⁵⁰ For more on advertising’s emphasis on women’s utilization of technology to reinforce the domestic sphere, see Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 167-171; Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 76-78, 183-187; and Emily Westkaemper, *Selling Women’s History: Packaging Feminism in Twentieth-Century American Popular Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2017), 34-36.

¹⁵¹ Nan Enstad’s *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) is an influential study of women’s roles in the public sphere at the turn of the century. While the title suggests a focus on working-class women, Enstad also addresses middle-class (professional and managerial) women to establish urban women’s participation in larger consumer culture. See Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure*, 26-27, 99, 203-205. William R. Leach has also contributed greatly to this topic, particularly focusing on department stores. See “Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925,” *Journal of American History* 72, no. 2 (September 1984): 319-342, EBSCOhost.

middle-class cultural norms dictated a restricted range of activities for women and warned about the dangers of ‘promiscuous’ (meaning mixed gender) entertainment,” writes historian Cindy Aron, “women at summer resorts willingly and eagerly participated in a variety of recreational activities. Moreover, they usually did so in the company of men.”¹⁵² Whereas in the cities middle-class women were expected to maintain their separation, at the shore their presence in public was not so strictly regulated. The beach, particularly, was something of an anomaly: while there was much commentary on swimwear for both sexes, by the 1900s the beach was accepted as a place where strict Victorian decency could not be enforced as working-, middle-, and upper-class Americans intermingled with decent abandon. However, in private spaces like hotels, women and men maintained—partially—the separation of the urban homes.

A significant aspect of middle-class identity that carried over to Atlantic City was the impetus to uplift or reform, and Atlantic City hosted numerous conventions of reform-minded groups. Aside from the perceptions and ideals of modesty, middle class visitors and reformers generally targeted traditionally male-dominated activities, particularly drinking. On August 18, 1901, Carrie Nation, “she of Kansas and hatchet fame,” arrived in Atlantic City to deliver a series of short lectures on a variety of topics. Temperance—drinking in moderation—featured prominently among them. Nation made a reputation for herself as an ardent, fiery supporter of the temperance movement. Her utilization of a hatchet to damage or destroy bars, taverns, and saloons solidified her reputation as a radical. She went so far as to sell toy hatchets on her lecture tours. Her arrival in the city—indicating that it and its audience were large enough to merit

¹⁵² Aron, *Working at Play*, 73.

stopping—sparked some worry amongst its businesses, particularly those that sold alcohol. “Atlantic City is still standing,” quipped a contributor for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* the next day. “Even the tides are as usual. Nothing seems changed.”¹⁵³

Nation’s lectures proceeded normally. She brandished her wit and religiosity to condemn temperance reformers’ usual enemies—drinkers, saloonkeepers, and “corrupt” politicians who allegedly benefited from doing nothing to restrict the consumption of alcohol—as well as restrictive, Victorian fashion styles for women that damaged the body. Nation praised good Christian values, including abstinence from alcohol and tobacco and devotion to family. She listed her many accomplishments in Kansas, citing the decrease in saloons and other “dives.” But “as a lecturer,” wrote the correspondent, “Mrs. Nation is not a success.” Little attention, the writer continued, was paid to her actual lectures, with many people leaving the hall before the “very much disconnected talk” had ended. It was selling the toy hatchets that seemed, in the writer’s eyes, to be Nation’s main goal. “As a business woman she disposes of mementoes in her own behalf with an enterprise that shows nothing short of mercantile genius.” Her reputation as a woman of action—even if violent—seemed more valued than her lecture ability.¹⁵⁴

Likely, it was this same reputation that led the city’s hotels to refuse her accommodation. “All of the proprietors of hotels had heard of her coming and refused positively to give her entertainment at their hosteleries [sic],” wrote the contributor. This

¹⁵³ “Mrs. Nation at Atlantic City,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 19, 1901, 5, Newspapers.com.

¹⁵⁴ “Mrs. Nation at Atlantic City,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 19, 1901, 5, Newspapers.com. The article does not state where Nation delivered her lectures. However, in his 1929 biography of Nation—who died in 1911—Herbert Asbury described Nation’s lectures as occurring impromptu at carnivals and resorts, in theatres and houses of worship, and sometimes atop empty beer kegs; Herbert Asbury, *Carry Nation: The Woman with the Hatchet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 255-257.

was, the writer said, because every hotel was “quite filled up and could not accommodate her.” While this is a satisfactory explanation, it may not be entirely honest. A number of hotels still advertised moderate and reduced rates in that day’s paper, and it is highly unlikely that Nation or her representatives traveled to and inquired at every hotel in the city. More likely, then, proprietors of the hotels she did visit did not wish to host Nation because of her reputation for destroying bars. As historian A. K. Sandoval-Strausz notes, “Selling drinks was by far the most profitable operation in a hotel, and it often supplied the marginal income that kept the books in the black.” This was as true for the hotels in Atlantic City as it was for the modern luxury hotels in major cities that they mirrored. To sustain damage to its alcohol stores or barroom in the summer season would be disastrous for a hotel in Atlantic City. In other words, Nation was too big a risk.¹⁵⁵

But these hotels were not strangers to hosting individuals and groups dedicated to various reform movements, including temperance and prohibition. The Marlborough-Blenheim, for example, hosted a convention conducted jointly by the American Medical Association and the Society for the Study of Alcohol and Other Narcotics in June 1907; neither group seemed to comment on the hotel’s sale of alcohol; both groups focused on reducing alcohol use in medicine. The American Medical Association was just one organization of many professionalized or professionalizing fields, including dentistry and law. Reform groups, too, many of them religiously based, also used Atlantic City’s hotels to host their conventions.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ “Mrs. Nation at Atlantic City,” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), August 19, 1901, 5, Newspapers.com; Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 168.

¹⁵⁶ Martha M. Allen, “Alcohol Discussions, American Medical Association,” *Zion’s Herald* 85, no. 25 (June 1907): 783, American Periodicals.

That hotels hosted conventions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is not surprising. As Sandoval-Strausz notes, hotels at the very basic level “played a distinctive role in organizing civil society because they functioned simultaneously as gathering places and travel accommodations.”¹⁵⁷ Simply, it was practical for translocal groups, as he calls them, to converge in one place for annual meetings, and hotels provided that physical space. Hotels moreover adapted to the rise of convention culture by providing suitable spaces in which conventions could meet. Molly Berger argues in *Hotel Dreams* that “Voluntary and professional organizations began to hold regular meetings and conventions in hotels, and, as a result, architects designed huge new spaces such as separate banquet rooms and exhibition halls.”¹⁵⁸ By closing off certain areas to conventions, hotels were thus making previously public areas of the building private.

Hotels mixed public and private, gendered and non-gendered spaces. According to Sandoval-Strausz, the buildings’ “public spaces were always open to contact among the hotel’s three principal clienteles: transient guests, residents, and locals.”¹⁵⁹ The most public of these was, of course, the hotel lobby, where guests, non-guests, and staff intermingled. These public spaces were gendered according to the hotel’s main characteristics: the status of its clientele, its location at the shore, and so on. While the hotel lobby was a public space, it was not non-gendered: as the central area for business—hotel or otherwise—it was the domain of men. Women were relegated to areas off the lobby while their male companions conducted their business; thus, reading rooms

¹⁵⁷ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 232.

¹⁵⁸ Berger, *Hotel Dreams*, 180-181.

¹⁵⁹ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 166.

and parlors were still to be found in hotels even as they faded from residential homes, preserving a physical aspect of domesticity in hotels' otherwise public atmospheres.¹⁶⁰

Once again, the Chalfonte and Marlborough-Blenheim Hotels illustrate the divide between public and private. The Chalfonte, being the first part of the transitional stage, retained many of the nineteenth-century aspects of luxury hotels despite its other, more modern aspects. Particularly missing is sufficient room for convention space. The C-building took over the main aspects of the hotel, containing both the offices for its administration and the bedchambers for its guests. The lower exchange was located on the ground floor in the well of the C-building, along with a barber's shop, a writing and smoking room, and an amusement room. On the parlor floor (i.e. first floor) were the main exchange, or lobby, with the main office, a parlor, and several rooms. The E-building, the original wood-framed Chalfonte, contained on the ground floor several small dining rooms, a children's playroom, and several other rooms. On the first floor was a large dining room attached to two serving rooms and a kitchen. At 81' x 134', the dining room was certainly large enough to accommodate the hotel's guests and conventions. These spaces served various public and private functions for guests and visitors.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 166-167; Berger, *Hotel Dreams*, 126-127.

¹⁶¹ Michael Brooks, "Photocopy of Original Drawing of 1904 Structure, Ground Floor Plan, C Building. Addison Hutton Collection – Chalfonte Hotel, Pacific & North Carolina Avenues, Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ," Photocopy, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1980, from Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS NJ-869-73; <https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.nj0889.photos/?sp=73>, accessed February 20, 2018); Michael Brooks, "Photocopy of Original Drawing of 1904 Structure, Parlor Floor Plans. Addison Hutton Collection – Chalfonte Hotel, Pacific & North Carolina Avenues, Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ," Photocopy, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1980, from Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS NJ-869-74; <https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.nj0889.photos/?sp=74>, accessed February 20, 2018).

The Blenheim better reflects contemporary movements to accommodate conventions while preserving semi-public, semi-private gendered spaces. The public spaces in the Blenheim were much larger than were those in the Chalfonte. Like the Chalfonte, the main lobby was located not on the ground floor (here called “Boardwalk level”), but on the exchange floor. Unlike the Chalfonte, however, the main lobby was certainly the focal point of the hotel. Whereas the main exchange in the Chalfonte was flanked by smaller rooms, the main lobby of the Blenheim spanned the entire width of the building, roughly 150’. Additionally, the main lobby directed traffic in multiple directions. Two public corridors ran parallel to each other off the main lobby, one on the interior of the building and one on the eastern exterior. Both corridors opened to a library, sitting room, meeting rooms, and restrooms; while the exterior corridor led to a sun parlor and bridge connecting the Blenheim to the Marlborough, the interior corridor continued to two dining rooms and a bar.¹⁶²

Whereas the Chalfonte had only one large dining room, the Blenheim had two: a European plan dining room and a general-purpose dining room that doubled for the hotel’s guests who subscribed to the American plan, the European plan separated charges for room and board, allowing guests to eat off the premises without paying for meals at the hotel.¹⁶³ Were one to choose the American plan, one would pay for both the room and meals prepared by the hotel’s staff. In order to accommodate the guests on the American

¹⁶² “Blenheim Hotel, Ohio Avenue & Boardwalk, Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ,” Measured Drawing, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1980, from Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS NJ,1-ATCI,3- (sheet 3 of 14); <https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.nj0002.sheet/?q=blenheim+hotel&sp=3>, accessed February 20, 2018); “Blenheim Hotel, Ohio Avenue & Boardwalk, Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ,” Measured Drawing, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1980, from Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS NJ,1-ATCI,3- (sheet 4 of 14); <https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.nj0002.sheet/?q=blenheim+hotel&sp=4>, accessed February 20, 2018).

¹⁶³ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 168.

plan, hotels served daily meals over the course of several hours. Per historian Berger, “A patron could breakfast anytime from six to ten in the morning, have dinner from one to five or perhaps two to four in the afternoon, partake of tea from six to nine in the evening, and enjoy supper between nine and midnight.”¹⁶⁴ Indeed, dining in American plan dining rooms was a seriously public affair: For conventioners, the American plan was the obvious choice: for all intents and purposes, the American plan dining room became the de facto convention hall when the hotel had no other space designated to hold such meetings. Hotels adapted to these desires, however. For example, sometime after the completion of the Blenheim, the Marlborough (to which it was attached) converted its main dining room into a large designated conference room, as evidenced by its connection to an adjoining kitchen. The rest of the main floor was comprised of meeting rooms and private offices. Monopolizing dining rooms may come across as an exertion of intense privacy, but these spaces, like others, were very public. European plan dining rooms, serving meals a la carte, were open to the public.¹⁶⁵

The ways these hotels served food in their dining rooms is also indicative of their catering to middle-class visitors. The modern restaurant experience as Americans know it today evolved towards the end of the nineteenth century, but it was reserved mainly for the educated, upper-class elite. To this point, many restaurants incorporated French in their menus, hoping to stress an association between upper-class diners and the culinary elitism of France. But the managerial class’s access to disposable income led, in the first

¹⁶⁴ Berger, *Hotel Dreams*, 2369.

¹⁶⁵ “The Marlborough Hotel, Boardwalk at Park Place, Atlantic City, Atlantic County, NJ,” Measured Drawing, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1979, from Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS NJ,1-ATCI,8- (sheet 3 of 14); <https://www.loc.gov/resource/hhh.nj0004.sheet/?sp=3>, accessed February 20, 2018).

decade of the twentieth century, to an increase in the number of middle-class diners. Slowly, these menus eliminated French or restricted it to the names of the main courses. At Haddon Hall in 1901, for example, a supper menu of sixty-two dishes was rendered entirely in English. Serving a range of seafood dishes (oysters on half shell, broiled blue fish), main-course meats (lamb chops, chipped beef), and fruits (peached stewed or preserved, raspberries, apples, bananas), the Haddon Hall kitchen demonstrated its range of items—printed in English—that would sate the appetites of its middle-class diners. This asserted the hotel’s dining rooms as firmly middle-class spaces by rejecting upper-class notions of dining, further defining space in the hotels as class-based.¹⁶⁶

Both the Chalfonte and the Marlborough-Blenheim included reading rooms, amusement and game rooms, lounges, and a parlor; these spaces were a mix of private and public, but they were also gendered. Libraries and reading rooms like the one in the Blenheim were, according to Sandoval-Strausz, meant predominantly for business, holding “domestic and foreign newspapers, magazines, price lists, shipping reports, and the like,” allowing the hotel’s male guests to stave off idleness by staying updated on economic affairs.¹⁶⁷ Socialization was also a key component, and the two often went hand in hand. The library on the main floor of the Blenheim is noteworthy for its openness and publicness. Whereas the meeting room and ladies’ lounge ran along the opposite exterior wall and opened off the interior corridor, the library ran along the exterior wall that led into the bridge that connected the Blenheim to the Marlborough.

¹⁶⁶ Andrew P. Haley, *Turning the Tables: Restaurants and the Rise of the American Middle Class, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 120-122; Katherine Leonard Turner, “A Matter of Class: Food in the United States, 1870-1900,” in *Food in the American Gilded Age*, ed. Helen Zoe Veit (Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2017): 25-29; “Supper, Haddon Hall, Atlantic City,” July 21, 1901, *New York Public Library*, accessed April 3, 2018, http://menus.nypl.org/menu_pages/2415.

¹⁶⁷ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 173.

Additionally, the library had four portals opening into both corridors. While the meeting room and ladies' lounge were kept to the back to be more private, the publicness of the library encouraged socialization between guests of the Marlborough-Blenheim and even other hotels.¹⁶⁸

Some of these rooms, though, were open only to guests of the hotel and not to the public, serving to separate the middle-class patrons from the working class. The Chalfonte's main exchange floor had one large parlor on the north side of the C-building's beach side, measuring 44' x 38', making it a large public room. Two smaller alcoves in the well of the C-building remained open to the public, as they were just off the main exchange. Past the main office and front desk in the F-building were four more alcoves, measuring 12' x 13'. These spaces were more private; on top of their cozy dimensions, they were beyond the front desk, thus implying they were closed to the public and meant for guests only. And as the hotel was more expensive, the non-guests to be excluded were those who could not afford to stay at the Chalfonte, thus creating a solidly middle-class clientele and cementing these spaces as firmly middle-class in nature.

Hotels in Atlantic City further catered to notions of middle-class identity by providing accommodations (space, food, etc.) for voluntary and professional associations. Sandoval-Strausz argues that "Hotels offered the physical locations that Americans needed in order to meet voluntarily, affiliate translocally, cooperate nationally, and collectively pursue happiness away from the pressures of the market and the attention of the state."¹⁶⁹ However, the hotels in Atlantic City responded to the "pressures of the

¹⁶⁸ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 173.

¹⁶⁹ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 260.

market” by incorporating technological ideals of modernity that customers desired. Convention culture took off in Atlantic City as in the major cities for a host of reasons, with the modernity of the city and its hotels chief among them. As discussed in previous chapters, Atlantic City’s status as a fully modern city with all the benefits of a coastal location drew visitors from its neighboring metropolises. By providing the accoutrements of modernity, hotels engaged in and altered the market for conventions and tourism at large.

To say that national associations of a non-commercial, non-political nature were removed from the market does not follow. In this sense, Sandoval-Strausz specifically addresses churches, whose “large denominational conferences and missionary society meetings depended upon hotels for food, lodging, and meeting space.”¹⁷⁰ As Atlantic City and much of southern New Jersey contained large Methodist communities, the city became a center for Methodist conventions during the summer. In this way, such associations participated in commercial and political practices of the day by patronizing hotels. For example, the *Scranton Tribune* of Pennsylvania reported in May 1900 that at the “quadriennial [sic] conference of the Methodist Protestant church [in Atlantic City] ... The Sabbath observance committee condemned all forms of amusements on Sunday.”¹⁷¹ While some more conservative groups did not differentiate between “forms of amusements,” others targeted particular aspects of leisure, like alcohol. Similarly to Carrie Nation, another convention concluded with “the startling fact that we came to a city of a fixed population of 27,000 that had 220 saloons and no respect for law or the

¹⁷⁰ Sandoval-Strausz, *Hotel: An American History*, 258.

¹⁷¹ “Atlantic City Conference,” *Scranton Tribune* (Scranton, PA), May 23, 1900, 1, Newspapers.com.

Lord's Day by the authorities, another sign of the supreme importance of municipal administration in these days, if we would keep our nation clean."¹⁷²

The battle over the sale of alcohol grew more intense in the first years of the twentieth century; ultimately, though, reformers won a ban on the sale of alcohol on Sundays. However, saloons (and some hotels) did not comply with the law during the summer. After the law's passage in the winter of 1900-1901, Atlantic City's saloons and hotels appealed to both the public and the courts to lift the ban. While alcohol-related businesses complied in places like Cape May and Asbury Park, Atlantic City's saloon keepers eventually opened their doors on Sundays. Interestingly, the violators were not just saloon keepers but also hotels and drug stores. According to the *Philadelphia Times*, "To all outward appearances Atlantic City was just as 'dry' to-day as it was last Sunday. ... [but] the places wore more of an old-time 'wet' Sunday look than a week ago." Hotels served beer in teacups, calling it "iced tea," drugstores openly sold alcohol "freely to all comers," and the police did not intervene.¹⁷³

Although the supporters of dry Sundays eventually won, nominally at least, Atlantic City's illicit alcohol trade continued in both saloons and hotels. This subversion shows that while many middle-class visitors to the shore supported temperance—if not total prohibition—many others joined likeminded working- and upper-class visitors in enjoying alcoholic beverages during their leisure time. This particular example speaks to a larger trend that historians have noted about the middle class: despite commonly held

¹⁷² W. G. T., "New Jersey Anniversaries," *The Watchman (1894-1906)* 81, no 45 (Nov. 8, 1900): 26, American Periodicals.

¹⁷³ "Tiring of Dry Sundays," *Times* (Philadelphia, PA), July 8, 1901, 3, Newspapers.com.

beliefs and shared morals, middle-class Americans shared opinions with both the working-class and upper-class, leading to disunion amongst reform movements.¹⁷⁴

Indeed, while they often led the charge for the temperance/prohibition movements, some middle-class women—what historian Emily A. Remus calls “monied women”—still enjoyed drinking in public, expressing their public roles as consumers and lending a moral respectability to a social activity regarded by their peers as immoral and corruptive. Their participation in an activity usually considered masculine pushed against the social boundaries—public versus private, male versus female—of the previous century, slowly, but not entirely, undermining such boundaries as the twentieth century continued. In a resort where the government hesitantly restricted the sale of alcohol—and where that restriction was publicly flaunted—women’s partaking in alcohol consumption further defined the identity of the middle class, despite its conflicting aspects. And in Atlantic City, where middle-class life was seemingly less rigid than in the major cities, that conflict contributed to the larger image of Atlantic City as a middle-class resort.¹⁷⁵

Between 1890 and 1900, middle-class visitors to Atlantic City changed the city’s culture to appeal more directly to their senses of modern concepts of leisure. By visiting the city for longer periods and maintaining a more visible profile in its hotels, on its boardwalk and beach, and in the press, these middle-class vacationers and convention participants exerted de facto control over the city’s activities and reputation, establishing

¹⁷⁴ McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent*, 43-45. The battle over alcohol—either its sale or its consumption—has been extensively investigated by historians, particularly with a look at efforts by middle- and upper-class reformers; See Eoin F. Cannon, *The Saloon and the Mission: Addiction, Conversion, and the Politics of Redemption in American Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), particularly 62-63 and 138-144; and Ian Tyrell, *Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 68-70.

¹⁷⁵ Emily A. Remus, “Tippling Ladies and the Making of Consumer Culture: Gender and Public Space in *Fin-de-Siècle* Chicago,” *Journal of American History* 101, no. 3 (December 2014): 751-754, EBSCOhost.

it as a resort with modern middle-class sensibilities. The hotels, too, fostered and adapted to these ideals, creating space both public and private that encouraged leisure, socialization, and business while excluding the working class. Ultimately, though, the upper- and upper middle-class visitors to the shore left Atlantic City for other destinations they deemed more socially respectable, and by the 1950s Atlantic City became the workingman's destination at the shore.

Conclusion

Competition defined Atlantic City's growth from its founding in the 1840s to the end of its so-called golden age in the 1960s. At first, the nominal city competed with Cape May, the retreat of Presidents, to the south, and Asbury Park, the amusement destination, to the north. Its attraction of people from the working to the upper classes—the former with its cheap amusements, the latter for its modernity and social status—made it the premier resort on the New Jersey coast through the 1960s.

But for the last fifty years, that competition has not been favorable to the city. Mirroring the great urban crisis of the 1950s and '60s, Atlantic City lost its core demographic—middle-class whites—to other destinations along the coast as white flight gripped the country's major cities. And much like the businesses of the 1890s and 1900s, the businesses of the mid-century—as well as the New Jersey state government—considered many options to regain their grasp on the tourism trade in New Jersey. Consequently, the legalization of gambling in Atlantic City in 1976 made it the Las Vegas of the East Coast, spurring another redevelopment of the city's hotels.

While hotels in the first decade of the century were often moved or renovated to meet public standards of modernity, Atlantic City saw a wave of demolition in the 1970s and early 1980s to make room for the casinos and mega-hotels of today. The Strand Motel on Boston Avenue was demolished to make way for the Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino, which opened in 1980. The Traymore was demolished in 1976; no casino took its place, and the site remains a parking lot. The Chalfonte, both the last of the previous generation of hotels and the indication of the next, came down in 1980; the Haddon Hall tower constructed in 1929 was converted in 1978 to the Resorts Casino Hotel under the

ownership of Resorts International. Even the Blenheim, the true first golden-age hotel, was not safe from casino corporations. Despite attempts to secure status as an historic building, the Blenheim was demolished between 1978 and 1979. Bally's Park Place (Bally's Atlantic City since 2000) was erected on the site as a hotel-casino.

The twenty years between 1890 and 1910 represent a watershed moment for Atlantic City. The city's embrace of middle- and upper-class urbanites who favored the modernity of their big-city homes at moderate prices aided its ascendancy to the ultimate position among New Jersey's coastal resorts. But its attractiveness to the working class brought the classes into conflict as the city defined itself as a modern city by the shore.

The city's emergence as a health resort in the 1840s established it as a tourist destination for the wealthy who could afford weeks-long sojourns to recuperate at the shore, but the city's rapid development to mirror its more modern neighbors attracted fans of the scientific, technological modernity that emerged at the time. From transportation to the city on various railroads to the city's infrastructure, newspapers and magazines assured visitors that their destination was as modern as their homes, without the usual blights that plagued turn-of-the-century urban life. With wide boulevards, access to clean water, and other technological miracles, Atlantic City was seemingly as modern as New York. Unlike Gotham, however, its history as a health spa merged the positives of the modern city with the benefits of a seaside community.

Hotels, too, engaged with each other and their big-city counterparts in a battle over modernity. The shift from long and low, predominantly wooden structures to tall, beach-facing, brick, steel, and concrete skyscrapers was merely the most obvious way that hotels adapted to what they believed were the demands of the American public. The

American public also demanded access to the conveniences available to them—or, they believed, the wealthy upper class—in the cities. Electricity, private bathrooms, and, above all, adequate safety became the staples of the modern hotel in both the major cities and Atlantic City. The advent of the skyscraper with the Chalfonte Hotel indicated a shift in the city's history, heralding the arrival of a new era dominated by enormous hotels and, later, casinos.

Whereas Atlantic City adopted modern standards of urban development, and its hotels strove to adopt modern construction and conveniences, science and technology alone did not appeal to all people's senses of modernity. Indeed, social activities, the ways visitors spent their time in the city, carried the characteristics of modernity that helped to define the city as a modern urban destination at the shore. Hotels catered to these activities; visitors could expect to attend meals in dining rooms and listen and dance to orchestral performances in ballrooms. Should one be in a fraternity, professional organization, or other civic association, one could attend a convention in a fully modern hotel at the shore. Though the Victorian ideals of the mid-nineteenth century slowly faded throughout the early twentieth, its strictest adherents waged war on the modern concepts of leisure and luxury so boldly on display on Atlantic City's beaches and in its hotels.

Appearing modern was paramount for the city and its businesses, and the urban visitors who removed to the resort responded to and engaged with the modernity on display there. The city and its hotels actively portrayed themselves as modern and flaunted their modernity in travel guides and advertisements in newspapers and magazines. Indeed, Bruce Bliven, writing for the *New Republic*, noted that the city

“exists but to please; the men who built it beside the ocean’s cool sands gambled on their knowledge of What The Public Wants. Those who guessed rightly were enriched beyond the dreams of (yesterday’s) avarice. . . . If you would know the best that the American bourgeoisie has thus far been able to dream, then, come to Atlantic City and behold.”

Although “The American Utopia” is a tongue-in-cheek criticism of the utopian, materialistic ideals of authors like Edward Bellamy and Samuel Butler, Bliven acknowledged that Atlantic City was as much a creation of marketing as by urbanization. And while Bliven criticized the evident success by the city’s “congress representing our sturdy middle-class millions,” it is undeniable that their efforts heralded the golden age of Atlantic City that continued for the next four decades.¹⁷⁶

Nevertheless, Atlantic City’s fortune was not meant to be. The tourist economy that flourished for nearly a century collapsed in the 1960s. The completion of the Garden State Parkway made cities and towns along New Jersey’s coast more easily accessible to visitors from New York and Philadelphia who had previously been forced to use small local roads to reach places like the Wildwoods, Seven Mile Island, and Ocean City. The expansion of cheap air travel brought other areas of the country within reach and even revived international vacationing, all but eliminating short trips to the shore and encouraging longer trips to more distant destinations. Even just these two developments exacerbated Atlantic City’s growing poverty rate as middle-class whites fled the cities for the surrounding suburbs. For decades, businesses in Atlantic City, especially hotels, had employed minority workers from larger cities in the Northeast. And with the city’s

¹⁷⁶ Bruce Bliven, “The American Utopia: Atlantic City,” *New Republic* (December 29, 1920), 126. EBSCOhost; Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams*, 19.

declining tourist traffic, residents blamed these groups—particularly African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Asian-Americans—for driving away business.¹⁷⁷

The city's problems have persisted. While the legalization of gambling within the city limits brought casinos, and their financiers certainly revived the tourism industry for several decades, bringing in over \$68 billion since 1978, the economic downturns of the 1990s and 2008 certainly damaged the supposedly invulnerable casinos. Since 2002, eight casinos have closed. Six of these casinos closed after 2011, and four of those closed in 2014 alone. Even the New York real-estate mogul and now President of the United States, Donald Trump, was not immune to the machinations of the market. Trump Marina, Trump Plaza, and Trump Taj Mahal closed in 2011, 2014, and 2016, respectively. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Revel Casino Hotel, opened in 2012, also declared bankruptcy in 2014. The bankruptcies of these casinos—in some cases the largest single employers in southern New Jersey—have only added to the city's perpetual poverty issue by rendering thousands of workers unemployed. Nicholas Huba of the *Atlantic City Press* estimated that “more than 10,000 jobs [were] eliminated” with the closures of the five casinos after January 2014.¹⁷⁸ To say the hotel-casinos have experienced serious setbacks would be an understatement.

Despite the casinos' problems, Atlantic City remains a popular tourist destination. According to the South Jersey Transportation Authority, there were over 24 million trips to Atlantic City by car, bus, air, and rail in 2015. While this number was down by nearly

¹⁷⁷ Gillette, “Suburbanization and the Decline of the Cities,” 278-279; Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams*, 159-160.

¹⁷⁸ Simon, *Boardwalk of Dreams*, 12; Nicholas Huba, “A Year After Taj Mahal Closure, Atlantic City Has a Different Feeling,” *Atlantic City Press* (Atlantic City, NJ), October 9, 2017, www.pressofatlanticcity.com.

one million in 2014, New Jersey as a whole has seen larger tourism-generated revenue as the country recovers from the 2008 recession. Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno announced in March 2017 that “the state’s tourism industry generated \$44.1 billion, a 2.9 percent bump over 2015.” To say that Atlantic City is stable, though, is not a safe conclusion to make. While a number of the casinos that have closed in the last few years are slated to reopen by summer 2018, the consequences of legalized gambling have been hotly debated by academics, city officials, and businesses alike. John Hannigan summarized the city’s issues succinctly: “Rather than returning to its turn-of-the-century glory as a resort city, America’s second gambling capital is still pretty much like it was as depicted in Louis Malle’s 1981 film, *Atlantic City*: seedy, crime-ridden, and going nowhere.” But as Long Branch, New Jersey, native Bruce Springsteen put it, “Maybe everything that dies someday comes back.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Table: Annual Visit-Trips to Atlantic City (in thousands), “AC Research,” Casino Reinvestment Development Authority, accessed February 22, 2018, <http://www.atlanticcitynj.com/about-us/ac-research/>; Samantha Marcus, “New Jersey tourism increased for 7th year in a row,” *NJ.com*, accessed February 22, 2018, http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2017/03/garden_state_tourists_spent_44b_in_2016.html; Hannigan, *Fantasy City*, 163-164; “Atlantic City,” Spotify, track 2 on Bruce Springsteen, *Nebraska*, Columbia Records, 1982.

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