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The Saloons of Hartford's East Side 1870-1920

Gergely Baics

"The poor man [...] finds no resource of recreation and change of scene so convenient or so persuasive as the saloon; and the saloon by every possible device, offers itself for the satisfaction of the social instinct." (Calkins Intr IX)

The period roughly from the civil war until prohibition came into force on January 5, 1920 nurtured a peculiar social institution in urban America: the saloon. During the peak of the saloon era, in the last third of the nineteenth century, the number of saloons in the US tripled (Rosenzweig 95). As the above quote from the report of the Committee of Fifty pointed out the saloon was the poor man's club. It was a genuine working class establishment. The rise of these working class leisure institutions can be best understood if one considers the key economic and social transformations of the era: industrial capitalism, urbanization and European mass immigration.

Patronizing saloon was most popular among male urban immigrants. In fact, for many of them saloons represented the only affordable form of social recreation. This paper is a case study on the drinking establishments of Hartford's immigrant neighborhood. Being a middle-sized industrial city with significant immigrant population during the period, Hartford is an ideal site for such research. Between 1870-1910, the period observed in this study, the East Side served as the city's port of entry. Through these forty years, one can follow a tremendous change in the neighborhood's ethnic composition. Changes in ethnicity often resulted in changes in neighborhood business establishments. However, a close look at Front-street, the heart of the East Side, reveals that besides groceries, saloons were the most numerous businesses in the neighborhood. Also, they were the most permanent despite all the changes that occurred in the East Side's ethnic composition. Extensive data confirms that from 1870 until prohibition, saloons in the East Side were key neighborhood institutions. They fulfilled many of the basic social needs of the neighborhood's diverse and changing immigrant population. Besides in taking extensive use of quantitative primary sources and some secondary studies on Hartford immigrants, this paper also applies the related findings of schol-

ars on other Northeastern urban centers to fill the gaps between the quantitative data of censuses and directories.

Ethnic Composition¹

Until the 1830s there was little manufacturing in Hartford. With the 1840s, however, Hartford's industrial and urban growth speeded up as the railroad came into town: the city's size more than doubled between 1840-1860. By 1850 a network of tracks connected Hartford to Manchester, Willimantic, Putnam, Norwich and New London. With these constructions a mass of Irish laborers also settled in Hartford. The city's first major pre-Civil war industrial operation, Samuel Colt's enormous Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company, opened in 1855. Later, however, the Civil War occupied much of Hartford's energy. When the war ended industrial and urban development accelerated. By 1880 there were altogether 800 factories of all sizes and descriptions within the city. Some of them were nationally known: Weed Sewing Machine Company, Hartford Machine Screw, Hill's Archimedean Lawn Mower Company, National Stove Company, Hartford Steam Heating Company, Hartford Electric Light Company. The Pope Manufacturing Company settled in Hartford in 1890; Pope's first gasoline-engine automobile in 1895, the Pope-Hartford, marked the beginning of the American automobile industry. In 1901 Underwood Typewriter and in 1906 the Fuller Brush Company also moved to Hartford. (Grant 47-54, Weaver 102-107). As this list suggests, Hartford not only enjoyed an incredible industrial growth during the period, but its industries were remarkably diverse. Hartford also became the central city of the American insurance business. As a result, during the period Hartford became one of the richest cities in the United States.

Thanks to this massive industrialization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Hartford's population increased rapidly. As Hartford's industries relied heavily on European immigrant labor, the city's ethnic character changed tremendously: as opposed to its rather homogeneous pre-industrial society, by the late nineteenth century Hartford became an increasingly multiethnic city. In 1870 the total population of Hartford was 37,178 people. The population increased to 42,105 by 1880, to 53,230 by 1890, to 79,850 by 1900 and reached almost one hundred thousand – 98,915 - by 1910.

The city's first significant influx of immigrants was the Irish, who arrived in large numbers from the 1850s and worked mostly as unskilled laborers. In 1870 the total number of foreign born in Hartford was 10,343. Among them were 7,438 Irish. Besides the Irish in 1870 Hartford's German (1,458), English (789), Scottish (299) and Canadian (299) communities were also significant. The East Side can be identified in the census as wards 5 and 6. By far the heaviest concentration of the foreign born was in these wards. (Ninth

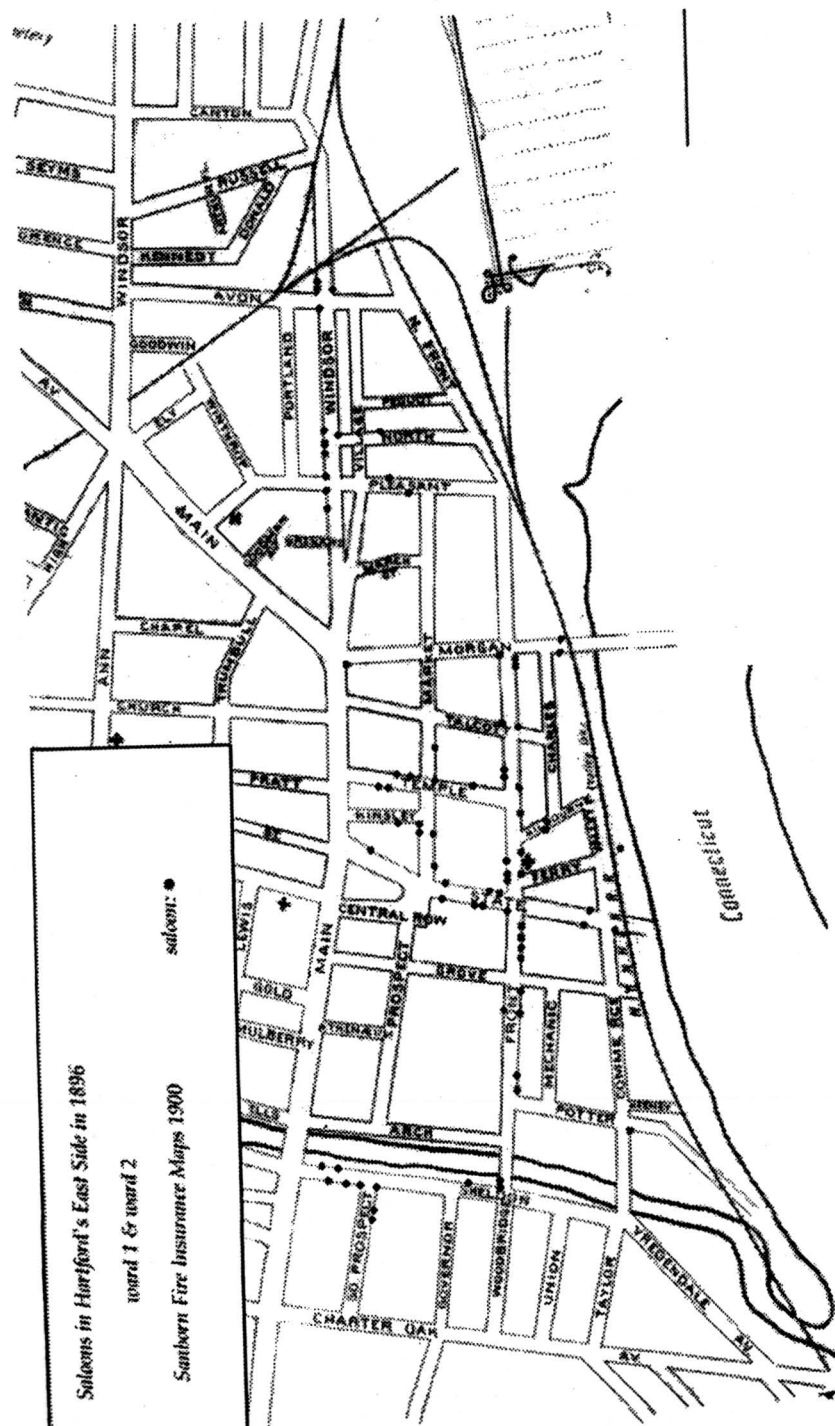
Census of the US, Population and Social Statistics 94, 386-387). These demographic tendencies continued throughout the 1870s: by 1880 Hartford's total population increased by 13%, the city's ethnic composition remained almost unchanged (Tenth Census of the US, Population 113, 540, 682).

The 1890 census reveals somewhat new population dynamics. The total population reached fifty thousand partially as a result of a significant increase in the foreign born population (13,608). Some new immigrant communities also arrived: 515 Swedish, 272 Danish and 350 Italians chose to settle in Hartford. Overall, 56% of Hartford's population was either born abroad or were of foreign parentage. This ratio was by far the highest in the East Side wards: 74% in ward 5 and 84% in ward 6 (Eleventh Census of the US, Population Part I 453, 670-673).

The real demographic shift came with the 1890s. The 1900 census reports tremendous changes in the ethnic composition of Hartford. The city's total population almost reached eighty thousand, which indicates a 50% population growth since 1890. The number of foreign born almost doubled within ten years. By this time, the Irish, although still Hartford's largest immigrant community (7,613), represented not more than one third of the total foreign born. The German, Canadian and Scottish communities grew only a little. On the other hand, the census reports the arrival of 2,260 Russians including the Lithuanians – the great majority of them were Jews fleeing Europe from persecution –, 1,914 Italians and 1,714 Swedish. There were also 506 Poles and 664 Austrians, probably many of them Jews. Overall, by 1900 63% of Hartford's population was first or second-generation immigrant.

In 1895 Hartford restructured its ward system; ward 5 and 6 – now 1 and 2 – were both significantly enlarged and now were among the most populous wards, with their 8,364 and 9,771 inhabitants. 80% of the inhabitants of ward 1 and 82% of ward 2 were first or second-generation immigrants. Importantly, in these two wards 57% of the foreign born were males, suggesting that many of the new immigrants were young men without families.

This year's complete census returns show that except for the Russian Jews, Hartford's immigrants did not form homogeneous ethnic enclaves. Being the axis of East Side, Front Street is an ideal place to observe the settlement patterns of the immigrants. The southern part of Front Street still had a significant Irish population, mostly second-generation. They lived primarily among the Germans and to a lesser degree among Italians, Austrians, some Hungarians, a few Russians, Scandinavians and Romanians. Walking northward on Front Street this heterogeneity increased even more; the Germans and the Irish were still the most numerous, but the presence of Italians and Russians became very apparent. The greatest ethnic heterogeneity was in the very heart of the East Side that was inhabited by Italians, Germans, Russians, and to a lesser degree by the Irish. Talcott Street marked the borderline between the two wards: South of Talcott was ward 1 and North of Talcott was



ward 2. Continuing northward on Front Street the ethnic composition changed tremendously: the Russians and to a lesser degree the Italians dominated the area. Interestingly, only the Russian Jews lived in a rather closed community (Twelfth Census of the US, Population Part I 648, 796-799; Complete Census Returns for 1900).

Within the next ten years Hartford's population reached almost one hundred thousand. By 1910 two third of Hartford's residents were first or second-generation immigrants. The Russians almost tripled in number, reached 6,647 and gave 21% of all the foreign born. The Italian population demonstrated similar growth, reached 4,521 and represented 14% of the foreign born. The East Side's ethnic composition mirrored these population shifts. The percentage of first and second-generation immigrants was 92% in ward 1 and 91% in ward 2.

The Italians were very heavily concentrated in the East Side; the two wards housed 63% of all the Italian born in Hartford. The complete census returns reveal the Front Street area almost completely Italian. In fact, by 1910 the heterogeneity of the neighborhood was largely gone; only the southern part of Front Street shows some of the ethnic variety of the previous decade. North of Temple and especially north of Talcott Street the Russian presence was increasingly felt; the Northern part of the East Side became predominantly an Eastern European Jewish neighborhood (Thirteenth Census of the US, Population Volume I 263, Complete Census Returns for 1910).

To conclude Hartford's ethnic composition dramatically changed between 1870-1910. Hartford's port of entry, the East Side mirrored these tremendous demographic changes. In the 1870s and 1880s the East Side was a primarily Irish and to a lesser degree a German and Canadian neighborhood. Natives still lived in the area but their number gradually decreased with the arrival of new immigrant groups. The Scandinavians settled in the area in the 1880s and 1890s. By this time the Irish, the German and the Canadian middle-class started to move out. By 1890 a little less than 80% of the East Side's population was first or second-generation immigrants. From the late 1890s the Italians and the Eastern European Jews gradually became the dominant communities of the neighborhood. As the complete census returns for 1900 reveal, the East Side for a decade was remarkably multiethnic; only the Eastern European Jews settled in rather separated communities in the Northern part of the East Side. Meanwhile the Irish, the Germans, the Scandinavians and the Canadians almost completely left the area. In 1910 one cannot talk about a multiethnic East Side anymore: the northern sections housed mostly the Eastern European Jews, while the central and southern sections were the home of the Italians. Overall, by 1910 more than 90% of the East Side's inhabitants were first or second-generation immigrants. The East Side also became an increasingly male neighborhood. Still, the highest male and female ratio was 57 to 43, not terri-

bly different from Hartford's other wards.

East Side Businesses

The great majority of European immigrants who came to Hartford worked as unskilled laborers. When one considers immigrant businesses in Hartford, thus, it is important to keep in mind that the immigrant entrepreneur was rather rare. Still, the East Side had a great number of businesses run by immigrants. A closer look at Front Street gives a general picture about the kinds of businesses immigrants owned or managed in Hartford between 1870 until 1914.²

Throughout the period saloons and groceries were the neighborhood's most prominent businesses. In these forty years Front Street had 12-18% of all the saloons in Hartford. Their number was remarkably stable: between 18-25. As liquor stores and saloons were often confused categories it is worth mentioning that Front Street also had over 10% of all the city's liquor stores, between 1-8. The number of groceries on Front Street was similarly high: between 21-31. This is especially noteworthy when one adds the overlapping category of markets: there were between 4-14 of them located on Front street. Overall, Front Street had more than 10% of all the groceries and markets in Hartford. Thus saloons, liquor stores, groceries and markets were not only the most numerous businesses on Front Street, but throughout the period, at least 10% of the city's total were located on this single street. They were the only businesses whose presence did not fluctuate significantly with the changes of the East Side's ethnic composition.

Barbers and hairdressers were also visible businesses on Front Street. Still, their number fluctuated to a much greater extent - between 2-14. The 1870 and 1880 censuses reveal that Germans were especially involved in this business (Ninth Census of the US, Population and Social Statistics 724; Tenth Census of the US, Population 828). The real increase, however, came with the Italians who opened a great number of barbershops throughout the city; in 1914 fourteen of them were located on Front Street. The bakeries showed similar tendencies: their number between 1880-1914 varied between 2-6 that represented 4-14% of the city's total.

Many Front Street businesses can be connected to particular ethnic groups. Clothes cleaning and laundry was an important business for the Irish until around 1880. By the late 1880s almost all the launderers in town were Chinese; by 1900 they completely disappeared from Front Street. In the peak year of 1875 the directory listed 17 laundries on Front Street. Dry goods, clothing and furniture were especially important businesses for the Jews (Silverman 78-84). Front Street clothing enjoyed a great peak between 1896-1910 when 6-15 businesses - 21-31% of all the businesses identified in the directory under the category clothing - were located here. To a lesser degree

the same pattern applies to dry goods and furniture. Restaurants on Front Street started to open in 1890 and were mostly run by the Italians: by 1914 11 restaurants, that is 17% of the city's total, were located here. Finally, the number of lodging houses on Front Street also increased tremendously with the arrival of the new immigrants: between 1900-1914 almost one third of all lodging houses were located here; in 1914 there were 11 of them located on Front Street.

The preceding analysis confirms that most of the businesses on Front Street followed the population shifts of the East Side. As older immigrants moved out and were replaced by new groups, particular businesses gradually declined to give way to new ones. Only saloons, groceries, markets and to a lesser degree barbershops remained stable and characteristic businesses of the neighborhood. This is because these establishments, particularly the saloons, were both economic operations and neighborhood institutions at the same time.

East Side Saloons

For the purpose of this paper, the most important task is to distinguish between those saloons that functioned as genuine neighborhood institutions and those that drew their clientele from throughout the city. This differentiation is often hard to make. However, there are a great many indications that the East Side housed many genuinely neighborhood institutions.³

Most important is the fact that the number of saloons located on the East Side was remarkably high. As already indicated Front Street was the very center of the East Side business life. Throughout the period it had more than 10% of all the saloons in Hartford. The East Side saloons were located on a rather well definable area around Front Street: the area was between Morgan and Grove Streets from the North to the South and between Market, Commerce and Charles from the West to the East. Throughout the period, especially around 1900, this was the East Side's ethnically most diverse section.

There were other areas in Hartford where a lot of saloons were located. Still, these saloons had certain characteristics that raise doubts about their genuinely neighborhood character. Hartford's downtown was the second most important area of public drinking in the city. The only street that had more saloons than Front Street was Main Street. Main Street from the late 1880s until the end of the period had between 27-33 saloons, about one-third more than the number of saloons located on Front Street. However, Main Street was not the core street of one particular neighborhood but that of the whole city. The Downtown saloons around Main Street extended to Asylum, Trumbull, Pearl and Mulberry Streets.

These downtown drinking spots were businesses of a very different nature from the neighborhood institutions. They emerged with the removal of residential life from the financial districts that was facilitated by convenient pub-

lic transportation systems. By the 1890s Main Street became a real financial district, bustling with energy (Baldwin 41). This explains why saloon life in downtown was a relative latecomer in comparison to the Front Street neighborhood. As city commuters spent their daytime working in downtown Hartford, saloons became prominent businesses in the area. These saloons specialized in servicing a great variety of city commuters among whom many were casual passersby, and in fact, they had a lot of saloons to choose from. Quick food and drink were of great importance as many just left the office to grab something to eat. Saloon loyalty was not the key issue. Instead of assuming roles of sociability, downtown saloons operated as businesses in the literal sense (Duis 184-192). Downtown Hartford was also the home of many hotels, theaters and clubs creating a lively night scene from which saloons could profit as well. Many soliciting saloons, gambling houses and a few brothels were located in the area (McCook Poor Law Administration).

Besides the Front Street area and downtown, there were other parts of Hartford that had a share in public drinking. Another East Side saloon area was concentrated on Windsor Street and extended to Pleasant, Village and North Streets. South to Little River, still on the East Side, was Sheldon Street with quite an impressive number of saloons. However, as opposed to the Front Street area, where saloon business was a key kind of entrepreneurship throughout the period, Windsor Street and Sheldon Street saloons started to open in the late 1870s and flourished only from the 1890s. Outside of the East Side there were three other key locations of public drinking: Spruce Street, Park Street and Albany Avenue.

There seems to be one important difference between the public drinking establishments of the Front Street neighborhood and those of the above listed streets, namely that except for Spruce Street these streets were at the same time the locations of Hartford breweries. The growth of alcohol retail on these streets coincides with the opening of the breweries during the 1880s and 1890s. While the overall number of Hartford saloons started to decrease around 1895, these streets continued to be the locations of many new businesses in the 1890s and even after. The trend toward breweries gaining control over alcohol retail by directly opening subsidiaries or forcing saloons into dependent positions was not unknown in Boston and was very common in Chicago (Duis 29-40). A 1901 profile of Hartford saloonkeepers and saloon proprietors shows that a few of these saloons were in fact brewer owned establishments (McCook Poor Law administration). It is impossible to judge whether the great majority that were not owned by the breweries were dependent or independent businesses. However, throughout the period there was one single brewery in the Front Street neighborhood: this was located on State Street and closed down as early as the late 1870s. This circumstance suggests that in the Front Street area public drinking establishments were stan-

dard neighborhood necessities.

A somewhat closer look reveals the third factor that indicates the neighborhood nature of the saloons of the Front Street area, which has to do with the unique stability of demand for such public drinking establishments. Including State Street, the Front Street neighborhood had between 40-65 saloons throughout the period. Already in 1870, when the city's total number of saloons was only 97, the Front Street area had 51 saloons registered. Between 1875-1900 the area had 54-65 saloons. At the same time, the number of saloons in the city climbed up to its peak of 176 in 1895. Thus, while the number of saloons in the Front Street area remained stable and remarkably high, between 50-60, a great number of new saloons opened citywide. This phenomenon clearly suggests that at least until the late 1890s saloons were a Front Street neighborhood necessity: the demand for them was largely independent of the structural changes that brought into existence many of Hartford's other public drinking places.

This stability in the number of saloons in the Front Street area is especially remarkable if one considers the instability of the individual businesses. Until the late 1890s the majority of the saloons stayed in business for less than five years and only around one-third of them managed to stay in business for ten years. This trend changed greatly with the late 1890s, suggesting that saloons became step-by-step more spatially stable, business-like operations. By 1909 80% of them had been in business for five years and two-thirds of them for more than fifteen years.

Another indication of this transformation is the saloonkeepers' commitment to the neighborhood. The directories of 1870-71 and 1875 showed every saloonkeeper who ran their businesses on Front Street to have resided on the same address where their saloons were located. From 1879, however, the directories testify to a slow but gradual increase in the number of saloonkeepers who chose to live at a different address nearby. The real change comes again with the 1890s. By 1900 a little more than 50% lived elsewhere than Front Street and somewhat less than one-third outside of the East Side. By 1914 those who lived right next to the saloons they managed were the exceptions, although still, about the half of them were East Side residents. Importantly, Worcester saloonkeepers demonstrated the same dynamics (Rosenzweig 52-53).

Finally, criminal statistics and personal accounts of social reformers also reflect the high level of public drinking in the East Side. In fact, public drunkenness was an important issue in Hartford: about 60-65% off all police arrests were made for drunkenness, which means that the number of offenders arrested for public drinking was about 2,000-3,400 a year between 1879-1905.⁴ John James McCook consistently attacked alcoholism for such social evils as tramping, pauperism, venality and violence (The Duty of a Hartford Citizen,

One Slum Neighborhood, The Liquor Business, Drink and Pauperism: 1893). Based on his own experiences McCook concluded that alcoholism and the Front Street neighborhood were intertwined. "In one spot these saloons reach hands to one another." So "how long can you be in the neighborhood on the corner of Front and State without seeing at least one drunkard? I have counted a dozen within a few minutes staggering along from saloon to saloon" (The Duty of a Hartford Citizen 14).

Without a doubt, the Front Street area was the most prominent location of public drinking in Hartford. The preceding analysis clearly indicates that the East Side saloon life that concentrated around Front Street was a result of a particular demand by the neighborhood's residents. The East Side maintained its own separate city center around Front, Market, State, Temple and Talcott Streets extending to the smaller side streets nearby. The saloons, these key neighborhood institutions, concentrated right here, in the heart of the neighborhood to give a very special character to the downtown East Side.

Over-crowdedness and Ethnicity

"Hardly more than a long stones throw from one principal thoroughfare the alert eye can see sights not surpassed and not often equaled by what takes place in darkest New York" (McCook, The Duty of a Hartford Citizen 13). The East Side was notorious for its terrible housing conditions, for its tightly packed tenements. Baldwin cites a nationwide study carried out by Robert W. Deforest and Lawrence Veiller. The study concluded that Hartford had, for its size, the worst housing conditions of any American city. According to the report many of the buildings mirrored the devastating conditions of the New York "dumb-bell" tenements (Baldwin 41-42).

The census figures approve the findings of the report. Already in 1880 Hartford with its 7.32 persons per dwelling was clearly among the most crowded cities of the United States (Tenth Census of the US, Population 672). This ratio became even higher by 1890: an average of 8.12 persons lived in a dwelling meanwhile an average family had 4.59 persons (Eleventh Census of the US, Population Part I. 932). The complete census returns for 1880 and 1900 reveal that most families on Front Street took one, two, occasionally even three lodgers into their homes to share the costs of living. Just for comparison the persons per dwellings ratio in Bridgeport was significantly lower: 6.37. By 1910 the crowdedness of the East Side wards became even worse: 13.7 persons per dwellings in ward 1 and 14.8 in ward 2. Although in other wards crowdedness was also a major problem, their averages came nothing close to those of the East Side (Thirteenth Census of the US, Population Volume II 263).

No doubt, over-crowdedness was a major factor behind the East Side's high demand for saloons. "In many a tenement-house block the saloon is the one

bright and cheery and humanly decent spot to be found [...] within its doors only is refuge, relief" (Riis 198). Or as Raymond Calkins put it: "The saloon is the centre of the social life of hundreds of thousands of the dwellers in our cities. If the question is asked, Where do the other thousands who are not patrons of the saloons find their social recreation? The answer is easy. They have comfortable homes." (45).

Still, cultural factors are just as important in explaining the very high demand for alcohol consumption of the East Side residents. Calkins seemed to have recognized this element: "The foreign quarters of any large city contain numbers of small drinking-places where the men come to smoke and talk" (20). The immigrants brought over the Atlantic many of their institutions and customs. Leisure was mostly concentrated in the saloon life as social drinking was for many a traditional custom. Among Hartford's immigrants the Irish, the Germans, the English, the Scandinavians, the French Canadians, the Italians and to a much lesser degree the Eastern European Jews all came from societies in which congenial social drinking and alcohol were traditions of great importance.

A more precise way of estimating the role ethnicity played in these drinking establishments is to look at the ethnicity of the Hartford saloonkeepers and bartenders. In 1880 Hartford employed 55 American born, 43 Irish born and 32 German born saloonkeepers from whom the American born could easily be of foreign, presumably Irish parentage. In 1880, out of the city's 18 brewers 14 were Germans, suggesting that they brought overseas their traditional appreciation for lager beer (Tenth Census of the US, Population 928). In 1901, as McCook's research reveals, Hartford had only 30 American saloonkeepers – he classified all second-generation immigrants according to their parents' ethnicity –, as opposed to 80 Irish and 48 Germans. The other ethnicities were almost invisible (Poor Law Administration). Finally, in 1910 65% of the saloonkeepers in Connecticut were foreign born and 28% were natives of foreign parentage. This suggests that by the early 1910s Italians and the Eastern European Jews also became involved in the saloon business (Thirteenth Census of the US, Population, Occupation Statistics 444). The Front Street sample for 1914 confirms this: the names reveal that about one-fifth of the street's saloonkeepers were Italians and another one-fifth were Eastern European Jews (Geer's 1914: 1282-1283).

To conclude, over-crowdedness and ethnic heritage were the most important reasons that explain why there were so many saloons in the Front Street area. Saloons were the most deeply rooted institutions among the Irish and the Germans. From the late 1890s as the new immigrants arrived, the Irish and the Germans already started to abandon the neighborhood; still, German and Irish saloonkeepers remained in business, some of them opened new saloons, many of them continued to live in the neighborhood. A few Italian

and Eastern European Jews also became involved in the saloon business. At the same time, the saloons were gradually assuming more business-like characters. Overall, from around the turn of the century, East Side residents patronized saloons that were ethnically less engrained in the neighborhood than a couple decades earlier. The saloonkeepers who ran these businesses were rarely from the same ethnicity and often lived in different neighborhoods from their patrons'.

East Side Saloon Life

According to Rosenzweig there was no such thing as a 'neighborhood saloon.' Instead there were as many different kinds as there were neighborhoods (145). Taking a closer look at the ethnic saloons the picture is even more diverse: in Boston the Irish and German saloonkeepers, operating saloons widely dispersed around the city, hosted a rather multiethnic, mixed clientele, while the Italians, Swedes, Poles and Bohemians patronized ethnocentric institutions (Duis 143-151). Instead of rigidly categorizing the saloons, it seems more fruitful to study them from two different angles: ethnicity and the services they provided for their patrons.

Opening a saloon, especially in the 1870s-80s, required relatively little capital. As the demand was high enough to keep in operation between 50-60 saloons on the East Side until the late 1890s, the saloon business must have provided decent revenues. As shown the Irish and the German were by far the most involved ethnicities in the saloon business because they drew on stable clienteles from their fellow countrymen. For the saloonkeeper the ethnic bond had vital importance since it assured the loyalty of his clientele. This relation was strengthened by the fact that a typical East Side saloonkeeper shared the fate of his clients: until the late 1890s most saloonkeepers lived at the same address where their saloons were located. One indication of this close relationship between the saloonkeepers and their patrons is the success of Irish saloonkeepers in local politics. Relying on the support of their fellow countrymen the East Side saloonkeepers became important local leaders in the neighborhood: between 1875-1896 they gave 5 aldermen and 5 councilmen to their wards (Geer's 1875: 262, 1879: 278, 1885: 540, 1890: 554, 1896: 641).

A closer look reveals most of the saloons until the 1890s as remarkably unstable operations: only a very few of them remained in business for longer than five years. It is possible that some of the establishments listed as saloons in the directories were in reality nothing more than the 'kitchen barrooms' similar to those of Worcester. In Worcester the majority of such businesses were unlicensed operations. Since Irish traditions designated a central role for women in such kitchen sales the kitchen barrooms were most likely to be managed by Irish women (Rosenzweig 41-44). Hartford in this regard should not have been very different from Worcester. Probably the East Side had many

such kitchen sales, the majority of which remained unlisted by Geer's directories. It is more than likely, for example, that Miss. Winkler in the 1879 directory was operating such a small kitchen business (Geer's 1879: 230).

The East Side's early saloons were small-scale, small capital operations. Many of them probably operated in the dwellings of the saloonkeepers and those that opened directly to the streets were most likely to be very simply furnished bars. There is no reason to believe that the Irish or German saloons of the East Side were much different from those of Boston's ethnic neighborhoods. Thus Duis' findings are useful to describe the basic characteristics of these places (153-154). According to him the Irish bars were the least spectacular and least decorated stand-up saloons. They served mostly whiskey, but over time they accepted the German's brew as well. Also, they were strictly only male territory. As opposed to the dimly illuminated Irish bars, the German places were brighter, quieter and much more family oriented businesses. They were also furnished with tables. And of course, they served most of all beer. In the 1870-71 Hartford directory almost every German Front Street saloonkeeper found it important to advertise his saloon as a 'beersaloon', a 'lagerbeersaloon' or a 'beerroom' (Geer's 1870: 449).

Some German and Irish saloons were also ethnic political clubs. Hartford's Irish immigrants, like the Irish elsewhere, were very active in unionizing (Calkins 9, Clouette 90-95). So far there is no evidence of any East Side Irish saloon that regularly hosted such union meetings. Still, the saloons were typically among the most common birthplaces and meeting points of ethnic charities and labor unions (Powers 127-133, Calkins 10). One example of such a combination of the ethnic political club and the saloon was the German Republic House on Front Street run by George Giszewski in the 1880s and 1890s (Geer's 1885: 378-379, 1890: 473-474, 1896: 591-592). When by the late 1890s most Germans abandoned the East Side, the German Republic House on Front Street also ceased to operate.

After the late 1890s East Side saloons became increasingly business-like operations. By this time many of the Front Street saloonkeepers, still mostly Irish and German, lived in middle-class or lower middle-class communities. No surprise, then, they were much less involved in the neighborhood's affairs. This is also indicated by the fact that the East Side wards stopped electing Irish and German saloonkeepers as their aldermen or councilmen. Not until 1909 would an East Side saloonkeeper again become engaged in local politics, but by that time the most active were those of Jewish origin (Geer's 1909: 1068). As saloons became better capitalized, they also became spatially more fixed places and stayed in business longer. The Eastern European and Italian newcomers lacked the resources to invest in the increasingly costly saloon business. As a result, around the turn of the century the new immigrants patronized saloons that were managed almost exclusively by German and Irish

saloonkeepers. This was also the time when the East Side was a remarkably multiethnic neighborhood. It is very likely therefore that the saloons of this period hosted an ethnically very diverse clientele.

The complete census returns for 1900 reveal several examples of such ethnically mixed clienteles. One of the East Side's most steady saloons was located on 60 Front Street. The saloon was under a lodging house. Hyde Andrew, who managed the saloon did not live on the same address. The lodgers were all males, mainly first and second-generation German and Irish immigrants. The downstairs saloon was most probably patronized by all of them, regardless of ethnicity. Another saloon at 61 Front Street managed by the second-generation Irish William Hudner probably drew on a similarly diverse clientele. Hudner and his family lived on the same address where the saloon was located. The building was home to Irish, Italian and Hungarian families. It is hard to imagine that in such a multiethnic surrounding this saloon would have served only Irish patrons. Similarly, at 119 Front Street the Scottish James Govan run one of the East Side's most prominent public drinking establishments. His family lived above the saloon along with families from Poland, Russia and Germany. The building also had two Irish lodgers. Again, these circumstances suggest that this saloon also had a rather multiethnic clientele.

An interesting example of ethnocentrism was a Swedish saloon and lodging-house on 80 Front Street, another one of the oldest and most stable drinking places in the neighborhood, run by Gustaf Olson, 34 and John Jacobson, 27. Olson and Jacobson managed both the lodging-house and the saloon. The lodgers were all Swedish born males between 20 and 40. One Swedish family with two children also lived in the building. The sole female lodger was also from Sweden and worked as a servant, perhaps in the lodging house. These factors clearly suggest that this saloon was an only Swedish establishment. And probably not by mistake: both in Boston and Worcester, the Swedish saloons were among the most ethnocentric drinking establishments (Duis 146, Rosenzweig 112).

The Italians of Boston and Chicago ran the most notably ethnocentric bars. While their presence in the East Side saloon business was hardly felt before the 1910s, by that time, the Italians managed about one-fifth of the Front Street saloons (Geer's 1914: 1282-1283). It is important to add that Italians also run most of the street's restaurants, which places also served alcoholic beverages and provided space to socialize. As most Italian households stored the community's staple beverage, red wine, the Italian saloon was less of a drinking place than a space for social gathering where the immigrants had their beer and played card games. Most typically, Italian saloons served as employment agencies and by doing so occasionally they became involved in the famous 'padrone' business (Duis 146-148).

For the Eastern European Jews saloons were much less important social institutions than for the other immigrants (Duis 162-164). Although by 1914 one-fifth of the saloons of Front Street were managed by Jewish saloonkeepers, the Jews were more likely to spend their free time in one the many alternate institutions they maintained (Geer's 1914: 1282-1283). Like most American Jewish communities Hartford Jews had also a great variety of institutions to choose from whenever they wanted to socialize, such as the YMHA and the YWHA (Silverman 51). The Jewish saloonkeeper therefore was more an entrepreneur than a social reference point for the community.

Ethnicity was a very important aspect of saloon life. However, it was only one of them. The others were also essential to creating an atmosphere of congenial society and comfort. The milieu of the saloon as a center of sociability largely depended on the personality of the saloonkeeper. A good saloonkeeper functioned as a cultural magnet for his fellow countrymen or the neighborhood (Powers 59). "He is above all else a man of the people. He knows his men and knows them well. He knows their families and their circumstances, and thus has a hold on their sympathies" (Calkins 11). A good saloonkeeper knew what it meant for the poor immigrant to be treated with respect. He called his faithful patrons by name, asked personal questions and engaged in conversations with them. For the newly arrived the local saloonkeeper was the key to becoming acquainted with other members of the community. Saloonkeepers were also essential sources of information for the community; besides everyday gossips they distributed key information about new hiring, politics or local issues (Calkins 8-20, Powers 65-70, Rosenzweig 53-57).

One should never forget that unlike any other institutions, saloons were typically open from 5-6AM until midnight making available a remarkable range of services for their patrons. Besides being centers of congenial socializing the majority of the saloons were regularly supplied with newspapers that the patrons could read and discuss right on the spot; in some ethnic saloons the saloonkeeper even provided newspapers from the home country (Duis 147). Often saloons were the poor immigrants' post offices and thus key institutions for the immigrants to maintain ties with relatives overseas. Many saloonkeepers ran basic bank services such as cashing paychecks or establishing small credit accounts for the loyal patrons. In some saloons there were safes available for the immigrants to keep their valuables secure. An interesting combination of a banking and saloon business in East Side Hartford is that of Donato Leroy. Donato was registered as a saloonkeeper at 212 Front Street from the turn of the century until the end of the period studied. At the same time he was a steamship ticket agent and later a banker. By 1909 his steamship ticket agency was listed at the same address as the saloon and right in the next building Donato ran his banking operation (Geer's 1900: 705-706; 1905: 855-856; 1909:1035-1036; 1914: 1282-1283). Some saloons

functioned as labor bureaus where the laboring man out of employment could turn for assistance; this service was a particularly important attraction of the Italian saloons. Many saloons provided back rooms for club and organizational meetings and so contributed a great deal to the birth of immigrant organizations, trade unions and fraternal clubs. The German Republic House was probably such an establishment (Calkins 8-20; Powers 65-70, 119-133; Rosenzweig 53-57).

The most remarkable of all services saloons provided for their clients was the so-called free lunch. If a saloon patron bought a drink he was free to help himself to the food. Even though the free lunch was the least spectacular in the Northeast, usually only cold food, it still contained a selection of the followings: bread, crackers, wafers, cheese, bologna sausage, wienerwurst, cold eggs, sliced tomatoes, cold meats, salads, pickles and other relishes. The food often varied with the ethnic composition of the saloon patrons (Calkins 15-16). If one considers the fact that for the price of a beer one could find relief in a warm, comfortable setting, eat food for free and use more or less clean public toilets, it is no surprise that saloons were extraordinarily popular. The other available option for most tramps were the police lodgings, where treatment was most likely to be terrible and no food was served (McCook, *Chief of Police re Tramps and Drunkenness* 1892). Some saloons also provided cheap lodging; examples of saloons combined with lodging-houses were numerous in Hartford's East Side as well.

As already indicated saloons were important political stepping-stones for many saloonkeepers to enter local politics. Thomas Monahan for instance served two terms as alderman for Hartford's fifth ward (Geer's 1879: 278, 1885: 540). Meanwhile he maintained his saloon at 70 Front Street and continued to live right next door to his saloon throughout the period. The political career of the saloonkeeper-aldermen like Monahan was deeply rooted in the immigrant community. These saloonkeepers played vital role in politicizing the neighborhood by mobilizing voters to influence election outcomes or by shaping public opinions (114-142).

Some saloons also provided extra leisure services. Many saloons provided up-to-date news on sports. Others had a billiard or a pool table. Rock Teroux's saloon on Front Street offered "pool room, cigars and tobacco" (Faude 82). Still, such extra was rather the exception for the East Side saloons, at least according to the Geer's directories, which listed no billiard or pool saloons in the neighborhood. Gambling was also a characteristic feature of saloon life. Although Hartford's gambling places were almost all associated with saloons, only two of them were located in the East Side: the German Republic House at 165 Front Street by that time owned by the Jewish Isaac Rosenfeld and F. B. Smith's saloon on the corner of Market and State Streets (McCook, *Poor Law Administration*). Saloons were also often associated with brothels. Based on

George B. Thayer's report from 1892, Baldwin states that there were about twelve brothels in Hartford, all concentrated around State Street (66-68). McCook's findings indicate similar conditions in 1901 (*Poor Law Administration*). At this time State Street alone had five brothels, all located closed to Front Street at the very heart of the East Side neighborhood. Still, among all the brothels in Hartford, only one was clearly connected to a saloon: Russell's saloon also on State Street. McCook also identified five Hartford soliciting places, all of them tied to saloons. Two of them were found on the East Side: one was Russell's saloon, already listed as a brothel, the other was Cronin's Saloon on 70 Front Street that was one of the neighborhood's oldest and most prominent drinking establishments. According to McCook the brothels were not typically immigrant run businesses. On the other hand Irish saloonkeepers run four out of the five soliciting places and seven out of the eleven gambling houses. Still, the East Side saloons rarely assumed the extra services associated with the gambling houses, soliciting places or brothels.

Beyond all the important public services, political roles and even extra leisure services saloons provided for their patrons, they were more than anything else the poor man's club. In general, they were all male territory; women were supposed to enter in the ladies' entrance only in male company. In the East Side saloons thousands of Hartford's poor immigrant laborers gathered every night to spend their leisure hours in an atmosphere of congenial society and comfort. These neighborhood saloons were genuine working-class institutions based on a value system of such core principles as mutuality, friendliness and communality (Rosenzweig 59). For the poor immigrant the saloon meant an alternative to the world of market exchange and competition. When he entered an East Side saloon he finally received the treatment and the respect he deserved. Drink rituals such as treating ensured a genuine atmosphere of mutual respect and reciprocity, values unknown for him outside of the saloons. Collective acts like clubbing by treat, clubbing by collection, singing, joking, storytelling, talking, playing cards and shooting billiard were all based on the norms of equality and solidarity as opposed to individualism (Rosenzweig 57-64). For many saloon patrons the ethnic saloon also meant an alternative to assimilation. In short, whenever the poor immigrant needed relief, the saloon was his first choice to find it.

Conclusion

At this point there can be no conclusion: too many interesting questions and details remained unanswered. However, it is clear that Hartford's East Side nourished a peculiar saloon life based on the neighborhood's special demand. This demand was due to economic and cultural factors such as the saloon patrons' ethnic heritage and to the poor living conditions that denied most East Side residents the relief of comfortable homes. It is safe to conclude

that ethnicity and class status were key factors behind the lively saloon life of the neighborhood. Certain East Side saloons functioned as ethnic social centers, while the others were rather multiethnic neighborhood institutions. However, the actual stories one wishes to tell about the individual saloons will require much more work. Pictures, newspaper articles and perhaps reminiscences could flesh out the research done so far. Temperance organizations are another possible direction to go. Police records might also reveal some of the less pleasant details of East Side public drinking. Another possibility is to take a look at the careers of the saloonkeeper-aldermen and perhaps to follow the local election news. No doubt, there are great many directions to pursue in the spring semester to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the saloons of Hartford's East Side.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 The following analysis is based on the population statistics of the cumulative censuses of 1870, 1880, 1890, 1900 and 1910; and on the complete census returns for 1900 and 1910.
- 2 The analysis is based on the Geer's directories listing of businesses in a sequence of every five years (1870-71: 433-456, 1875:225-248, 1879: 217-248, 1885: 361-382, 1890: 441-480, 1896: 553-608, 1900: 704A-706F, 1905: 801-864B, 1909: 977-1040F, 1914: 1217-1294). The analysis deals only with those businesses from which Front Street had at least 10% share of the city's total.
- 2 The analysis is based on the listing of saloons by the same sequence of Geer's directories that was used for the analysis of Front Street businesses (1870-71: 449; 1875: 237-238; 1879: 230; 1885: 378-279, 1890: 473-474; 1896: 591-592; 1900: 705-706; 1905: 855-856; 1909:1035-1036; 1914: 1282-1283). It is important to add that the following figures slightly overestimate the number of saloons in Hartford because the Geer's directory lists the businesses according to the managers and occasionally a single saloon might be registered twice under two saloonkeepers' names. Concerning the Front Street saloons the figures are corrected. Nevertheless, the difference is statistically not significant.
- 4 Some of the Geer's directories contained police and criminal information (1879: 284; 1885: 541, 1890: 555; 1896: 624; 1900: 735; 1905: 893).