“Panicked Play: 1837 and the Beginnings of Mass Entertainment”

Kenneth Cohen
Consortium Fellow, McNeil Center for Early American Studies
Ph.D. Candidate, University of Delaware

Program in Early American Economy and Society Conference
Library Company of Philadelphia
12 October 2007

Portraits of anxiety and loss rightly dominate historians' portrayals of the 1837 Panic. Businessmen who overextended credit, bank officials unable to redeem their notes, and hordes of helpless merchants, farmers, and artisans crushed by subsequent waves of recalled debts lend tragic faces to a crisis that demonstrated the impersonal nature of increasingly integrated national and international economies.

Yet the frenzy of failure did not swallow everyone immediately, nor did it engulf every sector of the American economy. "If an exception to the influence of that mighty incubus which has borne so heavily upon all trades, business, corporations, and professions were demanded, the Park Theatre, in its undisturbed prosperity, would be selected most prominent," stated the *New York Monthly Magazine* in September 1837. "The theatre has, through the entire period of this pecuniary pestilence, met with constant support from a suffering public." From New York to Mobile, theatres enjoyed such a boom that "some folks think the managers of the theatres here are making all the money that is made." Philadelphia Walnut Street Theatre manager Francis Wemyss recorded the city's highest average nightly receipts in over a decade even though he incurred the wrath of panic-stricken crowds. The run on bank specie in May 1837 sent Philadelphians scurrying to anyone with hard money, including theatre managers who executed much of their ticket sales in hard coin. Wemyss refused to give change in silver or gold for ticket purchases, a policy which drew angry crowds "all declaring I had specie enough and would not pay it out." Still, "the citizens had the theatrical mania so strong upon them at this time that, specie or no specie, they were determined to come, buying two tickets, one for present, one for future use, when they could not obtain change for their notes."[1]

Theatres were not the only entertainment businesses to generate profit during the Panic. The number of thoroughbred racetracks and races expanded from 1835 to 1840, with some events doubling and even tripling standard prize purses that had hovered between $500 and $1000 for the past forty years. The hikes in prize money far outstripped inflation rates. Purses of $1200 to $3000 became common, match races for $5000 and $10,000 occurred annually, and the richest race in pre-Civil War America was the $41,000 Peyton Stakes held outside Nashville in 1843.[2] Thoroughbred sales figures matched this escalation, as the *American Turf Register*, the trade magazine for breeders and owners, noted that "the transactions in blood stock appear to be very little affected by

'the pressure.'" Valued in real terms, the cheapest racehorses of the late 1830s cost as much as the most expensive ones at the turn of the century. But high-end thoroughbred prices leaped exponentially, from a record sale of $8000 in 1832 to several sales between $12,000 and $15,000 between 1837 and 1840. As one horse-owner's manual put it, breeding, racing, and selling thoroughbreds was "well worth the attention of any person whose situation will admit of it, for the purpose of making a fortune."[3]

In an economy shocked by tightening credit and specie supplies, the success of America's two largest commercial spectator events poses two questions: Why did these businesses boom instead of bust? And, secondly, what were the consequences of this boom? This essay answers the first question by illustrating the development of a particular entertainment-going experience over the course of the early nineteenth century, one that invited a wide range of people to participate in an array of performances, each of which carried distinct class connotations. The fluid mobility of spectators at these events held particular appeal for white men during the Panic, when economic vicissitudes incited a crisis of masculinity. This appeal explains the success of theatres and racetracks during the brief period of the Panic and its immediate aftermath.[4]

The consequences of the boom were two-fold. First, the banner years of 1837 and 1838 did not translate into continued profitability. Though the process differed in each market, the unusual yield from theatre and racing during the Panic years heightened competition in both sectors. This new level of competition forced the investors financing these activities and the managers overseeing their day-to-day operation to spend more money trying to outdo each other while their share of patrons shrank. At the same time, reverberations from the Panic's credit crunch decreased wages and spiked unemployment, threatening to contract the total pool of potential patrons. Investors and managers resolved these dilemmas in the mid-1840s by consolidating control over venues to reduce competition. They also drew a wider audience and enhanced opportunities for the fluid mobility that had attracted audiences during the Panic by lowering ticket prices.[5]

In sum, the Panic caused a cultural crisis of masculinity responsible for a short-lived boom in theatre and racing. The boom entrenched a social experience created over the first third of the nineteenth century. Investors and managers expanded on this experience when their businesses were imperiled by a combination of the post-Panic

depression and escalated competition caused by the profits of 1837. By the end of the 1840s, their adjustments had turned theatre and racing into "mass entertainment": centralized spectator events offering an indiscriminate, accessible, and uniform experience to all white male customers. Americans' rude introduction to an impersonal economy brokered by the Panic of 1837 also furthered the development of an impersonal mass culture.

However, antebellum "mass entertainment" resembles the classic Frankfurt School definition of "mass culture" in structure more than meaning.[6] Much as Lizabeth Cohen and other scholars have revised old assumptions about the mindless, escapist, "passive" audiences created by twentieth-century mass culture, the antebellum forbear outlined here targeted audiences and provoked action, encouraging white men of all classes to challenge each other and prove themselves.[7] Especially for men confronted with widespread failure and unemployment during the Panic and yet locked in a culture that equated risk and self-assertion with virility, the competitive environments created by the emerging entertainment industry provided places to recover and compete for manliness. Far from providing a means for mere escapism, the anonymous and depersonalized experience of the new mass entertainment appealed on a very personal level. It simultaneously assuaged male egos bruised by capitalistic disaster and fortified the risk culture of capitalism by creating spaces for individuals to pursue impersonal democratic competition.

* * * *

Mass entertainment emerged over a long developmental period that proceeded unevenly in the two activities under investigation here. For this reason, any examination of changes wrought by the Panic must begin with separate overviews of theatre and racing between 1790 and 1837. Still, both entertainments shared two key traits in this period: an increasing number of competitors and a growing desire for profit among wealthy investors.

Theatre

Whereas leading colonial theatre company managers owned small theatres, their post-Revolutionary descendants rented enormous new playhouses built with the pooled capital of "shareholders" expecting a return on their stock. To be sure, these theatres'

wealthy investors originally envisioned making money and solidifying their social authority through “the promotion of a pure and correct taste.” They saw theatre as a potential “School for Virtue” in which performances they sanctioned would preach republican morality while hierarchical seating would reify their claims to social authority.[8]

Yet their hope to construct social order fell victim to their unwillingness to lose money. Whenever profits flagged, investors let managers attract audiences with performance material contrary to the investors’ social goals. Outrageous burlesques and satires mocked the social order. Deference hardly was braced where “clown & Drunkard triumphed,” as one Richmond diarist and regular theatre-goer synopsized a typical show. By the early 1830s, lowbrow oddities such as “the living skeleton” and the “Man-fly” sacrificed moral uplift for shock value.[9] Furthermore, every time investors attempted to turn the esteemed box seats into an exclusive space for the wealthiest segments of the population, they met strident dissent from “the less wealthy portion of the community” opposed to any such “Aristocratic Distinctions.” Newspapers seethed with letters arguing that “a citizen whose coffer will not permit [him] to contribute three hundred dollars per annum to the manager’s purse” did not make “one less noble” and therefore less worthy of a box seat. In every case, fear of losing the general population’s crucial “flattering and splendid support” forced managers and investors to return to inexclusive box seat sales plans in a matter of weeks. The same concerns kept investors and managers from outlawing prostitution or violence in the house. “A ‘third tier’ for prostitutes in a theatre was looked upon as a matter of necessity,” vital for “inducing” strong attendance, just every manager knew “the prospectus of a disturbance, or, as some call it, fun, is the most attractive bill that can be made out.” As the number of theatres steadily grew in the early nineteenth century, this growth of competition left investors and managers unwilling to alienate paying patrons.[10]

Social and economic goals led managers and investors to invite the entire community to visit the playhouse, but the drive for profit in a congested theatre market inspired rampant social mixing instead of a hierarchical social order. “The unruly could stealthily mingle themselves with the respectable,” recalled Philadelphia Chestnut Street Theatre manager William Wood. Likewise, the respectable could mingle among the

unruly, as indicated by an 1830 newspaper column's condemnation of an "officer of the town of Brooklyn," a member of "a charitable family," seen "hovering over the gallery chickens at the Park Theatre." The same year, Boston police reported raucous prostitute-ridden galleries in their city's theatres visited nightly by "50 to 100 who go from the boxes and can return again at pleasure – some of them men, but most of them boys or youngsters such as Merchants' and Traders' Clerks and Gentlemen's sons who have no stated employment."[11]

As early as the 1790s, middling artisans could afford the best seats in the house, and theatre seating sections had become associated with particular kinds of behavior, not particular social classes. **(Image 1)** David Garrick's "Bucks Have at Ye All, or, The Picture of a Play-House" ranked among the most popular monologues delivered in the early republic and pointed out that seating differences had more to do with how a theatre-goer approached the show than their economic or social position. "Your buck o' the boxes sneer and talk aloud...regardless of the play, Ye laugh and loll the sprightly hours away." Box seats provided an elevated perch on which spectators socialized. Seeing and being seen, patrons there were "desiring in common with the scenery, dresses, and decorations, a portion of the house's attention" even when "the Boxes [were] indeed rather shabily fill'd" by the less wealthy.[12] Pit seats on the floor of the playhouse hosted serious observers intent on "critic-like" study. In Garrick' words, "Your bucks o' the pit are miracles of learning, Who point out faults to shew their own discerning." The section's reputation for forthright criticism also welcomed "jovial bucks" eager to share their opinions, having come "flush'd from the tavern, reeling, ripe for sport." Pit-sitters' constant shouts at actors and other patrons periodically erupted into real violence. The dozens of fights, or "rows," in early nineteenth-century theatres almost universally started there.[13] In the gallery, "Ye bucks above, who range like gods at large" asserted themselves to everyone below. Cloaked by their extreme height, a motley assortment of white men joined prostitutes and black patrons restricted to this section and interspersed their own shouted orders to actors and musicians with volleys of rotten produce hurled at pretentious spectators and obstinate performers.[14]

A broadside opposed to separate inferior entrances to the pit and gallery at Philadelphia's Chestnut Street Theatre in 1822 stated the order of motives informing seat

choice and described "how tenacious the public were of their rights" to sit anywhere in the house. "You citizens, whose patronage the drama is proud to acknowledge, and whose inclination, taste, or means may lead to the Pit or Gallery," it read, "Why subject you to an entrance comparatively less respectable than what has been assigned to those whose *assumed* superiority has led to distinctions wherein *no* distinctions are at all justifiable?" Like their response to remonstrances against exclusive box seating, the Chestnut's managers' decision to restructure the entrance suggests they knew the discontents accounted for a large segment of their audience.[15]

Physical confrontations in pits and galleries lured all manner of white men, but made these sections inappropriate for respectable women. Ladies sat only in the boxes, where their presence underscored the section's reputation for polite sociability, a reputation that reinforced their male consorts' claims to respectability even if those men belonged to "the same promiscuous assemblage formerly to be met in the pit." Disputes commonly arose over a patron's suitability for box seats, but such conflicts peaked with "the epithet of 'no Gentleman'" rather than physical abuse. An instigator knew "the presence of Ladies shall again skreen him from the punishment his insolence deserves."[16] Rather than create or reinforce social hierarchy, investors and managers seeking profit in a competitive market turned theatres into places where white men of all backgrounds asserted their opinions and competed for distinction in close quarters.

Racing

By the early nineteenth century, racehorse owners ran their thoroughbreds in front of a similarly inclusive audience. Thoroughbred owners strapped for income during the Revolution had lowered their stud fees and made thoroughbred studs accessible to a whole new range of mare owners from small landowners to tenant farmers and shopkeepers. The profits they reaped from a broader market convinced more wealthy men to buy thoroughbreds and enter the field of commercial breeding in the 1790s.[17]

Between the 1790s and 1830s, races served the popular breeding industry as marketplaces for advertising and evaluating thoroughbred horse stock. The full gamut of mare owners judged horses according to their performance on the track and inspected animals up close at special "shows" conducted on the premises.[18] Breeding to champion racers cost more than average farmers could afford, but breeders displayed more than the

finest racers. They asked less wealthy mare owners to consider less famous, less costly relatives. An 1807 advertisement for the stud horse Orion pronounced his six dollar fee a steal – according the advertiser – since his sire was the “imported Stirling who covered [bred] at 30 dollars the season and one dollar to the groom when Orion was got.” Similarly, Plough-boy charged ten dollars for the 1808 season while his full brother and multiple stakes champion Gallatin recently had sold for $4000 “and is now standing in S. Carolina at a higher Price than any Horse in the State.” The small number of thoroughbred owners in the colonial period had kept sales and breeding prices high to enshrine racehorses as symbols of elite status, but the profit motives of later owners transformed the early republic’s racehorses into living breathing embodiments of the economic bonds between their owners and the general population.[19]

Those bonds gave racehorse owners blocs of “friends,” groups of men invested in their stock by having bred or bought into it. Racing enthusiasts believed races “improved the breed” by demonstrating superior horseflesh, and friends spotted opportunities to race and prove their bloodline. “It will not do for the friends of Crusader to flinch,” implored the Tennessee owner of one of Crusader’s colt when “the friends of a distinguished Stallion” challenged rival studs to a “produce stakes,” a race between young horses of different bloodlines intended to evaluate the parents more than the entrants. Once their horse was scheduled to race, friends declared their confidence through wagers. When Virginian William Ransom Johnson’s prize mare Bonnets o’Blue went up against South Carolina champion Clara Fisher in 1832, Johnson told his friend David Branch, “Clara Fisher is the most splendid animal” he ever saw. Still, at a private dinner amongst wealthy owners in Baltimore, when “bets between high dignitaries across the table were even,” Branch ignored Johnson’s opinion and “goes on to bet upon the bonnets.” To do otherwise would have cast aspersions on his own horses, which were bred almost entirely from Johnson’s stables.[20]

Although wealthy friends left a better record of their advocacy, an owner’s friends most likely extended down to the innumerable small tenant farmers who bred their common mares to part-blooded distant relatives of famous thoroughbreds. After all, a champion’s victory “did honor to the stock from which he sprung” and raised the value of its entire bloodline. Hence Andrew Jackson’s belief that “a filly [sired] by Bolivar,” the

then-President's stud, "if she goes on the course in good order, will make Bolivar worth $10,000." At the other end of the equine ladder, Bolivar's improved reputation benefited poorer owners of part-blooded horses distantly related to him, who could sell such horses for an additional ten dollars or breed them for an extra dollar per mare.[21]

The catalysts of competition and profit permitted fluid social mixing at theatres but at the races they bound men together in hierarchies of horse ownership organized by bloodline. Unsurprisingly, then, choice seating remained more exclusive at racecourses than at theatres in the early nineteenth century. Jockey clubs built or licensed the construction of small stands restricted to members, "their families in the direct ascending and descending lines," and invited guests. Very little evidence suggests regular violation of this exclusivity. One American remarking on the cheap accessible stands in Britain could only wonder at the "contrast to the snobocracy of America," where the jockey club "aristocracy" jealousy guarded entrance to their stands.[22]

Yet jockey club members and their wealthy friends did not restrict themselves to the stands. They descended onto the "concourse" around the track, where "horsemen and wagons" from the local countryside "swarmed like locusts" alongside the "myriads of black, white, and gray" coming on foot from cities and farms. Pseudonymous man-about-town Simon Snipe "got wedged in the midst of the crowd [so] that it was almost impossible to move one way or the other" at the New York racetrack's concourse in 1823. Pressed betwixt "ragged chimney-sweeps" and "a butcher boy," he could not escape a jostled German pie-seller who crashed into him pie-first. Further mixing occurred in the "booths," refreshment stands retailing "an ample provision of eatables and drinkables" along with "indiscriminate gaming." Men aspiring to distinction on the concourse rented or rode their own horses to avoid the jostling crowd, but British traveler Charles Janson found a steed no help on that front at the Washington, D.C. track. "Sharpers in abundance" accosted him anyway. He "was constantly pestered by these sharks" precisely because his mount identified him as a wealthy man and a prime target.[23]

Like theatre pits and galleries, racetrack concourses were spaces of aggressive confrontation and constant striving. In contrast, the elevated jockey club stands resembled similarly situated theatre box seats. **(Image 2)** Their height not only afforded the best view but rendered spectators visible all around the track, which increased the

social value of being there. Offering separation and distinction, the stand was deemed suitable for respectable women who avoided the concourse. Physical confrontation was unheard of in the stands. Gambling occurred, though “the gaming going on there was much more orderly than that pursued elsewhere.” Whether between men or between a man and a woman, in Charleston or in New York, bets in the stands involved goods such as gloves and bon-bons instead of cash values. The difference is significant, since coverture laws entitled married women to moveable goods not liquid assets. Men played by women’s rules in the stands, as they did in theatre boxes. Thoroughbred owners such as Cadwalader Colden had to leave the social constraints and diluted competitive atmosphere of the feminized grandstand “to obtain a more distinct view of the struggle” amidst the unreserved thrills of the concourse.[24]

When the Panic struck in the spring of 1837, theatres and racecourses already had undergone gradual yet significant reorientations. While the accessibility and mobility developed in theatres was not matched by races that ordered spectators according to bloodline and maintained an exclusive space for wealthy owners of top horses, managers and investors in both activities survived rising competition by catering to wider audiences than ever before. To that end, their venues contained distinct spaces aligned with and opposed to notions of “respectability.” Those spaces carried class connotations but hosted mingling among white men of disparate social backgrounds.

*　　　*　　　*　　　*

Such an arrangement held particular appeal for men coping with the economic distress caused by the Panic because theatres and racecourses facilitated cross-class male competition and self-assertion, not just mere mingling. “Substantial tradesmen and mechanics, fresh from their counters or their workshops” bought box seats and “poured in with their merry wives and daughters” to stake their claim to respectability. Commonly, “a boozy hero of fashion or a great duelling-shot” joined “sluyed victuallers, union-fed footmen, or jolly jack-tars” squatting in box seats for which they did not even pay. When the actual ticket holders would “ask him to move, a challenge ensues necessarily,” for the squatter perceived his requested removal as a snobbish affront to his social rank. Similarly, “a most awful phalanx of every shade of colour” joined gentlemen in the

gallery or on the concourse and confronted them there with "the freedom taken, the coarse joke" that presumed equality.[25]

Poorer and marginalized men entered theatre boxes to prove their respectability. Meanwhile, cultural demands for more physical masculinity prompted gentlemen of property and standing to enter spaces known for less refined behavior. In the South, a martial patriarchy based on slavery preserved a value for demonstrations of physical prowess.[26] Northern businessmen and gentlemen faced growing ridicule for "slender" effete bodies created by their sedentary work and overly refined leisure practices. The swelling number of white-collar workers responded by taking sparring lessons, attending gymnasiums, and, later, playing baseball, activities by which their "narrow and contracted chests are soon turned into broad and expansive ones." But gyms were restricted to members and ballfields filtered individual striving into a team sport. Just as refined spaces granted laborers and poor farmers the chance to prove their respectability in front of their supposed betters, mixing and competing in pits, galleries, and concourses granted erstwhile respectable men the opportunity to prove their virility in public, in front of men whose work and means granted them stronger claims to physical masculinity.[27] Better yet, easy mobility between different types of entertainment spaces allowed men to pursue distinct types of masculinity on the same outing. Men could assert their respectability in the boxes, stands, or an elegant gaming house and then find out "who's up to slum" on a trip to the gallery, the concourse, or a gambling dive.[28]

The Panic intensified existing cultural imperatives urging white men of all kinds to prove themselves. Widespread ruin and unemployment brought the specter of failure to haunt virtually every man in the country, and failure cast doubt upon a man's masculinity. For decades, American men had conceived of economic failure in terms of being "unmanned," or "ruined" and "stained" like a defiled woman. Men who managed to escape bankruptcy or severe economic loss still were goaded to prove their masculinity by the carnage of wrecked manhood surrounding them. Simply not failing was not enough. Unless he showed "energy," pursued "prospects," and embraced "go-aheadism," a man merely "got along" or treaded on thin economic ice likely to crack and sink his manliness at any moment. While historians have traced the gendered meanings of economic failure, pursuit, and risk, they have only tracked men's efforts to shore up

compromised manhood through business and work. The apocalypse of manliness unleashed by the Panic also drove men to seek redemption at theatres and racetracks. Like any occupation or business venture, attending theatres and racecourses required men to speculate with their identity as well as their finances. The price of admission was the ante in a social gamble for respectable or physical masculinity. Success depended on a convincing performance that met the behavioral norms of the venue space.[29]

Plenty of aspirants failed. Many who had their claims to respectability shunned "thought it a gross mistake not to have been taken for gentlemen." Frequently, they retaliated. When a gossip sheet writer was dismissed by a "gentleman" at New York's Olympic Theatre for being "nothing but a poor journeyman printer" and thus "unworthy of notice," the writer responded to his rejection by publishing his foe's gaming alias and retorted, "We recognize no person with an alias as a gentleman." Indeed, the low entrance barriers for claiming respectability at New York's Park Theatre and the adjacent upscale gambling houses of Park Row allowed "any wretch, however base" to "go forth with a malicious and poisonous tale and stain the character of his fellow man" as long as he was "attired in the order of a gentleman" and thereby met the bare minimum requirements for legitimacy.[30]

Yet the playing field was not level. Lower sorts had to learn the dictums of respectability through manuals or observation. Without the constant reinforcement afforded to those raised in families with the means and experience to make respectable dress and manners second nature, unpracticed efforts left poorer patrons open to ridicule.[31] Wealthier men experienced similar trouble in unrefined spaces. *The Whip* related the stereotypical story of Spicer Adams and Alphonso Cocket, two young partners in a merchant firm on a theatre outing. The pair bought pit tickets, and having arrived late, they took open seats during the first intermission. Butchers sitting there previously came back after the break, "seized the velvet collar of Mr. Adams's dress garment," and "lugged him from the place," reclaiming their seats through an expression of physical superiority. Adams could only lament, "I wish I could fight," as the ousted merchants slinked up to the "third tier saloon" to reclaim their masculinity amongst the gallery prostitutes. Theatres and racetracks blurred rather than erased or mediated class distinctions. These venues' already-established reputations for accessibility, mingling,

and competition across social boundaries attracted men eager to challenge the alleged inferiorities attributed to their rank while gendered and racial limitations on mobility and contest framed these class confrontations in terms of a shared culture of white masculinity. The Panic-induced paranoia of inferiority only piqued men's inclinations for such experiences.[32]

Not all social assertions and challenges centered on meshing social performance to social space. Wagers anchored social aspirations in economic risk. They upped the economic ante from low admission fees and asked competitors to back up their bravado with a manly self-confident willingness to chance financial assets. Gambling did not help men prove respectable masculinity in stands and boxes where polite sociability mitigated competition and risk. But in homosocial settings from jockey club dinners and posh social clubhouses to public gaming halls and racetrack concourses, white men of all ranks understood betting as a litmus test for masculinity.[33]

Bets exemplified manliness because they reflected confidence. Henry Augustine Tayloe told his brother he was "glad you have gone into large stakes, as it shows confidence in our stock." Wagers on horses publicly declared a man's confidence in a bloodline. Stakes settled over private dinners or through correspondence were leaked to the press or spread by word of mouth on the concourse, since the bet's purpose was to spread the bettor's confidence to the public and thereby raise the public's confidence in – and the value of – a horse and its bloodline. On the concourse, bettors negotiated their wagers in full view of the public. A fond reminiscence in an 1868 Petersburg, Virginia newspaper recalled how a famed owner "paced about the field proclaiming in his firm manly voice and rapid articulation" the odds he offered on his horse, "'One hundred guineas upon the Sir Harry against the field.'" Takers shouted back their willingness to accept those odds, or proposed others. The whole process involved a negotiation that publicly displayed the bettors' degree of confidence in their favored horse.[34]

Men similarly stated confidence in themselves and their friends at billiard matches, card games, and even elections, where "an opinion was rarely hazarded without an instant challenge to back it with a bet, and a refusal to do so subjects you to the taunts and jeers of those around." A man unwilling to defend his skills, political affiliations, or equine investments in a wager admitted a lack of conviction suggestive of dull acumen

and aversion to risk, both of which portended failure and questioned masculinity. Gambler John Morris recalled that no matter the long odds on victory, “the turfman betting against his own entry would be dishonored and such things were not tolerated.” Owners even accepted defeat rather than annul wagers placed by them or their friends. Pennsylvania thoroughbred owner Callendar Irvine thought his horse “was certainly wrong” at the 1835 Trenton races and wanted to pull him from his event. “But for the bets made on Mingo and the certainty that drawing him would be attributed to fear of” his rival “P[ost] B[oy], I certainly would have ordered him back to the stable,” he told his business partner. Irvine had no confidence in Mingo, but knew a withdrawal after friends had laid their bets betrayed those friends’ confidence and exposed both them and the owner to accusations of emasculated fear. For the sake of reputation, Irvine ran Mingo and suffered defeat.[35]

Of course, winning a bet confirmed the victor’s confidence and magnified his reputation for astute risk-taking. But claiming a wager was not the only way gambling helped men prove their manhood. Paying a loss recuperated the loser’s reputation. Since the early eighteenth century, English and American laws had declared gambling losses legally recoverable and gambling winnings legally unrecoverable. That is, winners of wagers had no legal recourse to force payment yet losers could sue to get their money back. As a result, wagers were considered ‘debts of honor,’ obligations freighted with social rather than legal repercussions for nonpayment. Men proved their honor, their standing among other men, by owning up to their verbal promises even when laws did not require it.[36]

Like refusing or winning a wager, how a bettor handled losing bore on his social claims. Gamblers who tried to skirt the code, who tricked others into “losing with those who expected me to pay and winning of those who never meant to do so,” ran a serious social risk. “By way of degradation,” cockfighters put men without money to pay their losses “in a large hamper basket, hung over the pit for that purpose.” Unsatisfied claimants of racing bets exposed “defaulters” by name in racing publications, and pressed “sneakingly dishonorable” holdouts for payment through peer pressure exerted by a “sporting court” of regular bettors. A gambler in the billiard room at Baltimore’s Indian Queen Hotel, whose “habit was to receive all debts won but to pay none lost,” was

warned that “should he fail to redeem his credit, or at least disgorge his winnings, he should be taken to the stable yard and soundly ducked at the pump.” Theatre manager William Wood witnessed the attempt to execute this sentence, the gambler flying “threw the hall at high speed, followed by three or four of the black servants.” Being strung up in a coop, “exposed in every public Place & Print within a hundred miles of his Residence,” or abused by black servants exchanged financial obligation for social “degradation.”[37]

Given these social repercussions, no wonder the father of a Virginia planter with heavy gambling losses told a friend, “I assure you I never even hinted to my Son that he ought not to pay and would have him by all means pay every shilling, even if it took the whole of his property, rather than forfeit his honour.” By the 1820s, debts of honor had become so important to status that men filched on legally enforceable debts in order to pay their gaming losses. This trend inspired the satirical *Guide to the Springs* to musingly advise readers to “never pay any debts if you can help it, but debts of honour.” After all, “by law of nature, man has a claim on society for the necessaries of life and therefore is not bound to pay for them...If the tailor trusts you, good – it is at his own risk.”[38]

A prominent man could renege on gambling debts owed to an inferior if the elite man’s peers agreed the claimant had cheated or was simply beneath recognition. Such rejection humiliated victors from the lower sort just like when they were exposed for imperfect performances of respectability. But the language of honor gave them a weapon with which to fight back. Like the humble man who flung the “epithet of ‘no gentleman’” back at an accuser disputing his respectability, a victorious inferior could publicize his delinquent opponent’s “shameless indifference to the obligations of Honor.” Gamblers notoriously “would challenge a man to honorable combat” – a duel – “as soon as the man had honor to lose.” Such tactics rarely elicited payment or recognition from higher circles, but they asserted and affirmed the less prominent winner’s honorable manhood. Poorer men also fastidiously paid their debts of honor to keep their peers and superiors from questioning their manliness. “With all their bad qualities, I never knew a negro-trader to sue for money lost,” noted gambler John Morris in a typical observation of non-elite gamers.[39]

The opportunity it offered to demonstrate masculinity extended gambling’s popularity during the Panic and the depression of the 1840s. Newspapers reported stakes

between five thousand dollars and ten thousand dollars with greater frequency, and the growth of gaming houses in the decade after 1837 is measurable in city directory listings as well as the formation of anti-gambling organizations created by reform-minded moralists alarmed by "the great number of gambling houses which the law has hitherto been wholly impotent to suppress."[40]

Especially in the years after the Panic, when failures grew exponentially and the press moralized that "our virtues are the virtues of merchants, and not of men," the social and financial risks of participating in commercial entertainment offered an avenue for recouping and securing endangered manhood.[41] These activities demanded real social and financial risk-taking, and were not vehicles for mere escapism. Indeed, their popularity during the Panic underscores the vitality of risk culture in nineteenth-century America. Even in the throes of economic trauma, play-goers and racetrack visitors did not avoid risk. They only wanted more chances to win. Managers' and investors' crafting of diverse accessible spaces that invited men to assert distinct forms of masculinity made theatres and racetracks particularly appealing and profitable in a period when other businesses struggled to survive.

* * * *

The Panic of 1837 caused a cultural crisis of masculinity that benefited theatres and racetracks in the late 1830s. However, the profitability of these venues in an otherwise depressed economy quickly intensified competition in both lines of business. By the early 1840s, cutthroat competition had driven up expenses and divided audiences while the general economic depression threatened to reduce the number of Americans able to afford their interests in theatre and racing. Again, these developments progressed differently in each market and so must be examined separately. But in both cases, successful managers and investors salvaged their business by centralizing control over the market to reduce competition and widening their audience base with lower admission fees and greater opportunities for social mobility and contest. Consolidated control and building on the qualities that had drawn patrons during the Panic combined to complete the prolonged evolution of "mass entertainment": depersonalized, uniform, accessible spectator events intended to earn profit from audiences rather than overtly impress them or arrange them according to an ideological or social order.[42]

Racing

The profitability of thoroughbred racing during the Panic depended on broad popular interest in buying and breeding to blooded stock. Even the appeal of gambling and social mixing on racetrack concourses was grounded in the personal connections and rivalries established by a man's economic interest in a horse. Intense competition for enormous purses dissolved these personal connections and reduced the popularity of owning blooded stock in the years after the Panic, forcing horse owners to develop new ways to maintain popular interest in racing.

Starting in the 1820s, a corps of thoroughbred owners aware of the rising demand for blooded horses elevated the profitability of thoroughbred ownership by taking over day-to-day racecourse management from jockey clubs. Clubs gratefully passed off the costly and time-consuming tasks of organizing races in return for simple rent payments and a hike in club membership fees. The new managers ditched and fenced racecourses to force the growing number of spectators to pay attendance, and added to their revenues by selling space to vendors attracted by the confined throng. All this new money went into creating unprecedented prize purses.[43]

Almost immediately, the number of owners winning the enlarged purses began to shrink. Winners drove up sales prices for fine horses by pouring their winnings into their next purchases. Armed with the finest horses, they virtually monopolized the country's major purses. These top owners then applied their swelling share of prize money to fund additional rounds of costly purchases, cementing their mastery of racing through a perpetual cycle of winning and buying.[44] Moreover, the majority of the triumphant top owners were track managers, whose uncommonly large investments in horseflesh had prompted them to take over racecourse management in the first place. Already by 1822, an observer at the Charleston races noted Virginian William Wynn had won "as usual." In the mid-1830s, the *Turf Register's* reports on the richest races repeated the same two dozen names over and over. By the time of the Panic, the top owners had so cornered the pinnacle of the thoroughbred market that manager John Sawbridge Corbin had to advertise special races "intended entirely for 'Honest Countrymen' who are 'kept out of play' generally, by the 'high trump.'"[45]

Thoroughbred owners “kept out of play” for large purses relied on breeding and horse sales to the general population for their profit. Their stock largely consisted of horses cast off from the top tier of racing but whose relation to famed champions secured general interest. Yet top owners remained dependent on these lesser owners, since they bought the top owners’ underperforming stock. They also constituted the critical link between champion racehorses and the general population whose connection to top racers’ bloodlines underwrote racing’s popularity and the thoroughbred market’s growth.[46]

Top owners understood the importance of the lesser owners, whom they called the “breeder’s interest” in their market analyses. Nevertheless, the top owners’ pursuit of their own profits created two problems that caused lesser owners to pull out of the thoroughbred market during the Panic. First, in order to capture lucrative purses, top owners bred ever-faster horses. About the time of the Panic, observers began to notice the product of their quest for quickness: “fleet but leggy,” svelte horses. Breeding practices in the 1830s actually altered the thoroughbred’s physical appearance and abilities. **(Image 3)** “The times this Spring throughout the country is unprecedented,” manager Henry Tayloe told his brothers in 1838. “I fear we are breeding too much for speed.” Even foreign travelers remarked that “a larger sort of broodmare would, I think, be of more service to them.” Small, sleek horses held little appeal for general buyers, who preferred steeds with “bottom,” or endurance, suited for extensive riding and even fieldwork. Older thoroughbred bloodlines produced stouter animals such as John Hartwell Cocke’s aptly-named “Utilitarian,” wisely advertised as “possessing the essential qualities for the purposes of common and practical life.” As top owners bred utilitarian qualities out of their horses, they jeopardized their ability to supply horses for the general population.[47]

Solid attendance during the Panic allowed top purses and sales prices to remain high in 1837 and 1838.[48] But lesser owners complained that the “sporting gentlemen are too often inclined to consult their individual interest or convenience rather than the general prosperity of the Turf.” Steady purses and sales prices for top horses forced top owners to sell their increasingly unmarketable lesser stock at the same prices as before the Panic, despite a reduction of lower-end breeding and sales prices mandated by the economic contraction. Coupled with the declining utility of the thoroughbred, the high

prices convinced most lesser owners to evacuate the thoroughbred market in favor of new cheaper part-blooded breeds with stronger utilitarian claims, such as pacers and Morgan horses. **(Image 4)** Already by the end of 1837, the *Turf Register* noted "the meagre support afforded to jockey clubs by breeders of blood-horses" and many lesser owners became "anxious to dispose of all this unprofitable property and quit the turf forever."[49]

It took about two years for the lesser owners' withdrawal to affect attendance and sap values at the top of the market. Purses and sales prices held firm through 1839, bolstered in part by steady attendance at the height of the Panic. As one commentator remarked, "In the dearth of every thing else, a race is no bad article of excitement." But starting in the spring of 1838, more and more race reports began to point out that "the attendance was quite thin, notwithstanding the fine purses." Just as the paroxysm of panic mellowed into the doldrums of depression, fewer and fewer Americans owned horses traceable to racing thoroughbreds. Gambling and evaluating, two activities central to upholding masculinity at the racetrack, both were anchored in men's equine investments. The masculine therapy of the races could not treat patients lacking personal economic interest in a horse. Attendance fell. Then purses fell. The record-setting Peyton Stakes of 1843 awarded a $41,000 purse, but it was supposed to be $150,000. Twenty-six of thirty entrants withdrew between signing up in 1839 and race day four years later. Major race meetings offering top purses of $1500 to $3000 in the late 1830s mustered top awards of only $600 and $400 in the early 1840s. Tracks closed, sales prices stalled, top owners failed. The *Turf Register* ceased publication in 1844.[50]

Without broad investment in thoroughbred bloodlines, top owners in charge of racetracks had to invent new reasons for spectators to attend. The task was particularly urgent because the diminished thoroughbred sales and breeding market put more pressure on racing to generate income. Owner-managers pursued three tactics to bring people back to the track. First, they expanded the stands and reduced the prices and social restrictions for sitting there. Public stands had opened at courses across the country in the 1820s and 1830s, but only New York's sat over one thousand people and admission to any of them cost an additional dollar above general admission fees. In contrast, the size of the stands built after the Panic gave rise to the term "grand stand." Most held between one thousand and three thousand people. Managers also reduced the price of stand tickets from one

dollar to fifty or twenty-five cents, and many eliminated the additional general admission fee by 1845. Even after adding the cost of transportation to racetracks typically located outside urban centers, spectators could enjoy stand seating for a dollar or less.[51] The changes opened the stands to a wide range of society. A female visitor to the Metairie track outside New Orleans found "two Irish cab-drivers" sitting near her. And when the grandstand collapsed at the Camden, New Jersey racetrack in 1845, the three identified casualties included a career bank clerk, a tailor, and a cartman. By extending the privilege of stand seating to "a heterogeneous crowd of persons," managers brought racetracks closer into line with theatres. Mobility at the track was no longer the restricted purview of wealthy men coming down from the stands into the concourse. Now aspiring men ascended the stands and claimed respectability, just as they did in theatre boxes.[52]

Track managers did not expect improved opportunities for social mobility to entirely replace the old personal attachments to horses and bloodlines. In an effort to maintain some semblance of identification with horses, managers increased the frequency of inter-regional races. In truth, almost every major purse race involved horses bred or trained in distant quarters of the country. But periodically through the 1820s and 1830s, managers had organized special match races – one-on-one contests – billed as "North-South" events. The original ones allowed stakeholders from the north and south to choose their region's representative. After the Panic, any major match race organized by the owners of two champions from different states won the billing. Besides "North-South" races, managers trumpeted "East-West" affairs and devolved to grand declarations of "the first race between the champions of Louisiana and Kentucky," or Kentucky and Virginia, or Virginia and South Carolina, or Tennessee and Louisiana, all in an effort to recreate some sense of attachment for spectators in lieu of the old personal connection to specific bloodlines. Of course, by tying the spectator to geographic affiliations rather than individual horses, the inter-regional events appealed to more than horse owners. Not only does this fact explain why the pre-Panic North-South events always took place in New York, where many city residents did not own their own horse and so could not be lured to the track by connections to bloodlines, but it also fit the purposes of post-Panic managers desperate to expand their audience rather than simply recover it.[53]

Finally, a gambling innovation helped save horse racing. As personal connections to bloodlines disappeared, the old method of negotiating odds with crowds of takers became a meaningless and tedious process. Track managers remedied the declining attraction to gambling in the 1850s with the introduction of pool-selling, or "auction pool" wagering. Instead of direct betting between two or more parties, auction pools inserted a professional bookmaker as an intermediary. The new method transformed wagering from a public declaration of affiliation and manliness into a private attempt to pick a winner and make money. Now able to move around racetracks to the same degree as at theatres, men did not need gambling to bear the weight of their social aspirations. The pool system worked on simple greed, and its fast easy betting with dependably quick payouts for small bets worked with the accessible grandstand to rejuvinate the popularity of thoroughbred racing. Moreover, tracks licensed their pool-sellers and used the fees to boost their purses. Income from pool betting and higher attendance lifted prize money above its peak in the late 1830s and provided the impetus for the massive post-bellum racetracks at Saratoga, Jerome Park, Pimlico, and Churchill Downs.[54]

Widespread financial difficulties stemming from the Panic and its aftermath ultimately eroded the popular base of thoroughbred breeding, even as the Panic's onset also triggered a crisis of masculinity responsible for maintaining high attendance in 1837 and 1838. But more important than the Panic's role in causing racing's short-term success and later decline were the track management strategies crafted in response to that decline. In the mid-1840s, racetrack managers built on the traditions of gambling and social mingling on the concourse to create a more accessible, more inclusive, and more impersonal experience. Having squandered their broad sales market, they needed to draw the masses back to the track in order to survive. Successful accomplishment of this goal turned horse racing into mass entertainment.

Theatre

If racecourse managers completed racing's evolution into mass entertainment in order to win back spectators alienated by their control of the thoroughbred market, playhouse managers employed similar tactics to reverse a decline rooted in the decentralized and overcrowded theatre market. All over the country, wealthy men not ruined by the Panic sought profit in the prospering theatre business. They financed a

nationwide wave of new theatres between 1837 and 1840. Four opened in New York, two in Philadelphia, and one each in Boston and Baltimore. All these cities except Baltimore already boasted at least two theatres when the Panic broke out. New York had five. Even cities with only one theatre, such as Richmond, Norfolk, and Charleston, replaced their old playhouses in these years. With one exception, all of these new theatres were built with capital fronted by investors. Sometimes acting company managers initiated the recruitment of shareholders, and sometimes a corps of investors hatched the plan themselves. Either way, the well-established profit motives behind theatre investing suggest the new playhouses went up in an effort to cash in on one of the only growing markets of the panic-stricken American economy.[55]

The headlong rush into the theatre market quickly overcrowded it. "The increase of theatres and their foolish rivalry" allowed actors to play them off against each other for higher salaries and led managers to purchase "new scenery, new dresses, new machinery, new music, new decorations" designed to create "tremendous attraction" and outdo competitors. The climbing costs cut into profits. "They started it with a view to cut each other's throats, and they are now reaping the fruit of their own folly," commented touring star actor Louis Tasistro.[56]

Managers spent extraordinary sums to provide a constant parade of "something new," but the distinctions in programming were largely superficial. High-priced touring stars performed the same Shakespearean classics everywhere they went, while lesser stars and stock companies presented melodramas. Managers even quickly routinized the latest fashionable genre of opera enough to make New York theatre reviewers grumble about having "no novelties in the character of the entertainments," just "humdrum melo-dramas at the Park and opera at the National." Offering similar social experiences and similar material, the lack of distinction between a burgeoning number of theatres spread audiences thinly across them. "Two and sometimes three theatres contended for an audience which could at no time could have supported very profitably more than one," surmised Philadelphia manager William Wood.[57]

A tide of failures began to roll in before the 1830s were over. Some New York theatres did not even survive their initial season. Others went through a succession of managers. Between 1838 and 1843, both the Chestnut and Walnut Street houses in

Philadelphia churned through three different managers or managerial partnerships. Each of the ones at the Walnut claimed to have lost between $6000 and $12,000 during their tenure. Of New York's nine theatres in 1837, four closed in the ensuing five years and only one manager remained at the same house in 1843. While managers of Southern theatres did not have to worry about losing their audience to a rival, their cities contained smaller resident populations and hosted far fewer transient visitors. They hoped the same people would revisit playhouses stocked with the brightest stars and the finest productions. But high costs in these small markets spelled the same kind of danger as they did in larger markets loaded with local competitors. Managers rotated through these theatres, which sometimes spent entire seasons unused for lack of an impresario. Unprofitable seasons led shareholders in Charleston's new theatre to default on refurbishment costs following a fire one year after the playhouse's 1837 christening. Everywhere, losses in the late 1830s and early 1840s reversed the 1837 rush into the theatre market. Investors had rebuilt facilities when fires consumed them in the 1820s and 1830s, including a speedy erection of the third Bowery Theatre in 1837. Yet investors replaced neither of the leading New York theatres burned in 1838 and 1841. If fire did not present investors with an escape route out of their fruitless property, they had to sit on it. Investors in Charleston, Baltimore, and Richmond could find no one to buy their depreciated stock until the mid-1840s, when they sold at a severe loss.[58]

Faced with closings and failures, managers instituted significant policy changes in the early 1840s. These new policies reduced head-to-head competition by centralizing control over the theatre market and attracted audiences by enhancing opportunities for social mobility and assertion. Under normal conditions, investors might have prevented managers from making these changes since they strengthened managers' authority at the expense of investors and eliminated whatever appearance of social order remained in playhouses. But the unprofitability of their theatres convinced investors to accept the adjustments. By the end of the 1840s, a centralized theatre market offering uniform material beckoned attendance from a wider swathe of the population than ever before.

The process started with the consolidation of theatre management. In the 1820s and 1830s, Stephen Price of New York's Park Theatre pioneered the operation of multiple companies in multiple locations simultaneously. The plan reduced competitors,

eliminated costly travel, allowed a manager to operate during the most profitable winter season in more than one locale, and permitted gains from one theatre to offset losses at another.[59] However, this strategy required substantial capital, so only managers already successful at one theatre could attempt it. The boom years during the Panic gave several managers the wherewithal to take over struggling competitors once the market started to decline. Price added to his empire by buying into the management of Philadelphia's Chestnut Street house in 1838. James Caldwell parlayed profits from his New Orleans theatre into acquisition of the lease at the city's other Anglophone playhouse. William Burton followed up his successful debut in Philadelphia in 1840 with a New York theatre in 1841, and later ran both the Arch and Chestnut houses in Philadelphia. Francis Wemyss ran playhouses in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and only fell upon hard times after he abandoned the Pittsburgh house in 1839. The next year, he failed at the Walnut Street Theatre, "the sink that swallowed up all the gains of Pittsburgh."[60]

Managers without the capital or connections needed to run two houses still augmented their control over theatres by forsaking expensive touring stars in favor of more stock company productions. Stock companies tied actors to a manager for the whole season, avoiding the weekly comings, goings, and contract negotiations typical among actors of all ranks at the high-water mark of the flooded theatre market. Weekly sums of ten to fifteen dollars also amounted to more predictable and affordable salaries than the percentages of gross ticket sales conceded to free lance performers by managers scrambling to fill casts against a horde of competitors. The declining market and consolidation of management helped managers using stock companies, since failing managers unable to fulfill bigger contracts and a smaller pool of managers to play off against each other convinced many actors to accept modest season-long contracts.[61]

These strategies worked well for able managers, as fewer competitors and moderate predictable contracts improved profitability by the mid-1840s. But, equally important, attendance also improved at the same time because managers lowered ticket prices. Elitist theatre-goers of the 1820s and '30s fussed about sharing their boxes with shopkeepers, clerks, and artisans, "the individual who fitted on her shoes in the morning or dressed her hair in the evening" or the man "I had been used to see behind the counter."[62] Then, "in accordance with the economy of the times," ticket prices began to

drop as early as 1840. Partly due to the remaining competition for audiences and partly due to a twenty-five to thirty-percent reduction in workers' wages, theatre managers joined racecourse managers in lowering admission fees. Even the most venerated houses, such as the Chestnut Street in Philadelphia and the Park in New York, lowered their fees by 1842. In December of that year, a box seat at the Park Theatre cost fifty cents, pit tickets went for twenty-five cents, and gallery seats sold for twelve and one-half cents, a full fifty-percent cut across the board from prices in the late 1830s. In Philadelphia, the Walnut and Chestnut houses entered into a price war that saw box seats sell for as little as twenty-five cents. Suddenly, anyone with a job, even unskilled laborers whose pay fell to about seventy-five cents per day in the early 1840s, could afford a box ticket.[63]

Spending fifty percent or even all of a day's wages on an outing to the theatre might seem prohibitive, especially for workers battling high rates of periodic unemployment. But social historians have chronicled the "leisure preference" of the working class in early America. Workers did not adhere to the dogma of steady savings preached by middle-class reformers, and hard times only deepened their itch to assert themselves through grandiloquent consumption. Lower priced theatre tickets accommodated this demand.[64] In fact, the decline in theatre and racetrack ticket prices coincided with a drop in ferry and railroad ticket costs that brought working class Americans to day-trip resorts such as Hoboken, Cape May, and Nahant. Even postal rates were reduced in the early 1840s to capture working class spenders who were, as much as any prodigal gentlemen, antebellum America's "leisure class."[65] As popular exposé author George G. Foster wrote at the end of the period, "however poor may be the condition of an American family, or however inadequate the reward its members receive for their labor, they manage to be regular visitants two or three times every week to some place of public amusement."[66]

Opening the entire house to an even broader portion of the population did not turn away significant numbers of wealthier patrons. The Philadelphia Brahmin Sidney George Fisher saw the circus, the "violent" Edwin Forrest, and repeatedly paid to see the "quite intoxicating" Fanny Ellsler perform her titillating dances. Fisher limited his social mingling at the theatre to daydreams about Ellsler, but followed his own counsel to be "more independent in your movements" at the racetrack by leaving the grandstand to join

the “rowdies, loafers & blacklegs” on the concourse. Many of his peers chose to similarly mix with their alleged inferiors at the playhouse. New York’s racy newspapers dedicated a whole column to chastising such men, like the “two Gentlemen making themselves familiarly acquainted with the ankle and foot” of a woman in the Park Theatre gallery, and the “gentleman” who exchanged verbal barbs at the Olympic Theatre with a “poor journeyman printer” over proper application of the appellation “gentleman.” Even in more respectable newspapers, the boxes’ more inclusive “crowded array” of b’hoys, sailors, and “the respectable” earned greater comment for the comic juxtapositions it created than the elites it repulsed, as evidenced by the brief tale of a “well-dressed young man” seated “in the second tier of boxes,” who said to his date, “‘Pray excuse me, I wish to go upstairs and get some refreshment – don’t leave your seat.’” The punch-line was: “a Sailor seated in the box near his sweatheart disposed to do the same, [who] rose up, and said, ‘Harkee, Moll, I’m going aloft to whet my whistle; don’t fall overboard while I am gone.” The tradition of interclass mingling and social assertion developed in theatres over the previous fifty years predisposed white men of all ranks to understand, accept, and even relish cross-class contact and contest as a matter of course. As long as racial and gender divisions remained – and they did – expanding the accessibility of this experience attracted rather than turned away audiences.[67]

Reduced prices almost immediately sparked reports of “a succession of good houses,” “better than average” attendance, and theatres “crowded in every part.” Reports of better attendance, seconded by renewed managerial stability, and the opening of entirely new theatres starting in 1844 all contrasted sharply with the tales of “beggarly boxes,” annual managerial turnover, and the rash of closings between 1838 and 1841, clearly pointing toward improving prospects starting in 1843.[68]

Theatres rebounded in the mid-1840s as a result of more accessible and standardized performances staged by managers possessing greater centralized control over the market and their companies than ever before. Yet managers had learned their lesson about the dangers of too much similarity in content and experience, so they carefully crafted distinctions between their playhouses. The new houses opened after 1844 supplanted traditional rows of pit benches with individual seats, following the precedent of French opera houses. Many of them also forbid entry to unescorted women

in an attempt to lock out prostitutes from galleries tellingly renamed "the family circle." These theatres featured only one or two seating sections, and the houses opened by general entertainment entrepreneurs William Niblo, Moses Kimball, and P.T. Barnum sold every seat for the same low price of either twenty-five or fifty cents.[69] The new seating arrangement was "conducted on the pure principle of democracy. Everybody is as good as anybody else there. There are not superior advantages provided for kid-gloverie to the exclusion of horny-fistedness, and yet they both patronise it." But unlike traditional theatres which invited male patrons to enjoy a range of distinct cultural spaces under one roof, fewer distinctions in pricing and seating at the new places confined the entire audience to dictums of 'respectability.' It was as if the whole house was composed of box seats. Aware of the danger posed by having every theatre offer the same range of social opportunities, these managers narrowed their social offerings to target an audience and further reduce competition.[70]

Even the managers of theatres featuring traditional seating sections claimed to offer distinct experiences. Social historians have relied on summary descriptions of the "democratic" Bowery Theatre and the "aristocratic" Park Theatre to argue that each house catered to a different class.[71] Yet the same material, same seating sections, and same range of audiences attended both playhouses. In fact, elite and 'middle class' magazines like *The Knickerbocker* and *The Ladies' Companion* recommended Bowery attendance over the Park during the early 1840s. The two houses both hosted pit rowdiness, gallery prostitution, and boxes with socializing couples, and both welcomed "all classes" in each of those sections.[72] The theatres' class connotations derived less from distinctions of experience than from distinctions constructed in the press. When Bowery manager Thomas Hamblin stopped giving free tickets to newspaper reviewers after his theatre began to recover, the penny-pinching penny press attacked him out of "poor spite." The editors hoped to drive Hamblin back to a free ticket policy through bad publicity, and depicted his house as the sole site of "Oaths, shouts, [and] shrieks from the throats of drunken outcast bands." They publicized Hamblin's adulterous private life and berated the "practised rake and seducer" as an incarnation of Satan himself.[73] Yet the papers' tactics played straight into Hamblin's hands, helping him attract patrons interested in "disorderly houses" while he maintained the opportunities for mobility

represented by the three distinct – though widely accessible – traditional seating areas. The Bowery was not less respectable than the Park. It just had the reputation of being less respectable than the Park. By 1847, the real difference between the two houses was the constant crowd drawn to the Bowery by the theatre's indecorous reputation. Indeed, Hamblin purchased the Park Theatre's lease in 1847 and thereby acquired a monopoly over two similar theatres with drastically different reputations. The sensational penny press, with an unprecedented readership and circulation by the 1840s, indiscriminately bid its assorted readers to participate in a distinctive theatre-going experience when the actual degree of distinction was minimal or even nonexistent. Theatre managers such as Hamblin opportunistically manipulated the new mass media to help them construct the new mass entertainment.[74]

* * * *

By the late 1840s, the Panic's initial spur to racing and theatre attendance, and the subsequent efforts to consolidate management and market these events had given rise to mass entertainment. Low ticket prices, small margins between tickets to various seating sections, and mobility between those sections lumped patrons together as leveled white male citizens possessing equal opportunities to prove their masculinity.

Indeed, these two antebellum entertainments did not impart the kind of elite hegemony scholars usually associate with mass culture. Emerging prior to the so-called "passive" mass media technologies of radio and television, and in the same era in which the liberal individual became a dominant cultural motif, antebellum mass entertainment supports recent analyses suggesting mass culture is less monolithic than previously thought.[75] Far from alienating or constraining the individual, antebellum mass entertainment taught Americans how to define and participate in an economy and culture centered around risk and competition, even while they endured severe economic distress and widening economic inequality caused by that very economy and culture.

But unlike the revised version of twentieth-century mass culture posited by Lizabeth Cohen, antebellum mass culture was not employed by the period's short-lived labor organizations to build class unity. Radical leaders anathematized mass entertainment as a distraction rather than apply it on behalf of their cause. In any event, the Panic and depression crushed America's nascent labor movement.[76] So, although the

distinct spaces at theatres and racetracks carried distinct class connotations, a weak working-class movement unwilling to use mass entertainment allowed class identity at these venues to be refracted by a shared culture of masculinity that urged men of all backgrounds into both types of space and promoted individualistic self-assertion instead of large-scale class confrontation.

In fact, antebellum mass entertainment events helped individuals develop the plural identities and cultural mobility we identify as quintessential characteristics of mass society. Managers of mass entertainment venues crafted those distinct spaces, each of which offered distinct experiences. Admission prices that remained low even after the economy began to recover in the mid-1840s invited virtually every white man to consume whichever experience he desired, while cultural norms and explicitly stated rules limited the mobility of women and African-Americans.[77] Managers targeted audiences by taste not by class, so that the widest range of white male patrons were free to use the mass entertainment venue to create, assume, and assert individual identities as they saw fit. The opportunities for distinct kinds of social role-playing at the racecourse and the theatre promoted the "separation between the man and his profession" and encouraged "men [to] have a half-dozen characters," much to the chagrin of the antebellum moral reformers who noticed the trend.[78]

The fluid identities and cultural mobility of spectators militated against any social hierarchy or cultural hegemony supporting antebellum elites. Wealthy investors behind these capital-intensive activities could have chosen to maintain social distinction by creating significant price barriers to esteemed seating areas. Following the great success of the Panic years, investors in Philadelphia's Walnut Street Theatre refused to renew manager Francis Wemyss' contract until he agreed to raise ticket prices and the margin of difference between the different types of tickets. But after losing six thousand dollars in the first six months of the new pricing, investors allowed prices to return to their previous level, and they agreed to lower prices again amidst the decline of the early 1840s. Similarly, highbrow investors periodically attempted to guide managers into scheduling elitist material. Charleston Theatre managers of the Panic era were "very much under the influence of Dr. John B. Irving, one of our citizens" and a leading trustee who did not "highly esteem Forrest's powers" and had "taste more *a la Macready*." In other words,

Irving favored the subtle intellectual acting style of British-born Charles Macready to the forceful physical manner of American Edwin Forrest. Yet Forrest still made regular trips to Charleston throughout the period.[79] Investors and managers alike knew they had to attract the widest possible audience to survive.

Building on a half-century of precedent, investors in antebellum mass entertainment sacrificed overt construction of social or cultural authority in order to try to make their commercial entertainment ventures profitable. In fact, top thoroughbred owners' aggressive pursuit of profit aggravated their social and economic peers among the more numerous lesser owners enough to effect the top owners' ex-communication from elite society by the late 1830s. Lesser owners labeled them "notorious Gamblers & Racers" and "blacklegs," a colloquialism for professional gamblers who cheated, and they refused to pay debts of honor to top owners on the grounds that those men were not honorable. Gone were the colonial days, when owning a thoroughbred racehorse identified a man as a member of a powerful coherent elite.[80]

Even the risk culture entrenched by mass entertainment was not hegemonic, since it encouraged every man to assert his equality, caused wealthy men to experience downward mobility, and met vehement opposition from mainstream "middle class" reformers. Such a conclusion proposes mass culture's origins were more subversive than supportive of social and cultural authority. Yet the democratization of participation also shrouded the tightened centralized control over these activities. Wealthy investors funding both events sold the opportunities of democratized experience to reap profit for themselves. In the end, this trade-off of social and cultural authority for wealth is the story behind the rise of mass culture in post-Panic America.

[1] *The Knickerbocker; or New York Monthly Magazine,* Sept. 1837, 268-270. *Spirit of the Times*, 20 May 1837, 112. Francis C. Wemyss, *Twenty-Six Years of the Life of An Actor and Manager* (New York: 1846), 273, 308, 277. See also *The Christian Reflector*, 26 Apr. 1839, 3.

[2] For changes in race purses, compare figures listed in the monthly installments of "Sporting Intelligence" (later titled "Notes of the Month") in the *American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine*, 1829-1844. For the Peyton Stakes, see "Notes of the Month," *Turf Register*, Feb. 1839, 107; "Notes of the Month," Apr. 1843, 224.

[3] "Sales of Blood Stock," *Turf Register*, Mar. 1838, 127. For sales prices, see see "Value of Thoroughbred Horses," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1829, 118; "Sales of Horses," *Turf Register*, Jan. 1831, 246; "Sales of Bits o' Blood," *Turf Register*, July 1832, 568-570; "Shakspear," *Turf Register*, Feb. 1832, 267-268; *Turf Register*, Mar. 1838, 115; "Notes of the Month," *Turf Register*, July 1839, 423-424; "Expences," 1829-1837, Daniel Parker Papers, Zaccheus Collins Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). Richard Mason, *The Gentleman's New Pocket Farrier* (Richmond: 1825), 43, cited again in later editions such as J.S. Skinner, *The Gentleman's New Pocket Farrier* (Philadelphia: 1849), 29.

[4] My interpretation suggests distinct spaces communicated equally distinct behavioral codes ("respectable manliness" and "physical manliness") associated with particular classes. In effect, each type of space was a "frame" visited by a vast array of people – not only members of the class associated with the space – who understood the behavioral code articulated by that frame/space. This array of participants visited a range of frames/spaces in order to cope with the trials of economic dislocation and risk culture. For the theoretical background of this interpretation, see Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, MA: 1974), 1-57, 248-291; Rosemarie K. Bank, *Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860* (Cambridge, UK: 1997), 1-10, 84-113; Peter Bailey, "'Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up?' Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working Class Respectability," *Journal of Social History* (Oct. 1979), 343-353; Dell Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (Boston: 1986), 101-162; Henry Glassie, *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (Knoxville: 1975), 13-18. The interpretation also owes much to work on English theatre and racing, most notably, Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (New York: 1986); Mike Huggins, "More Sinful Pleasures? Leisure, Respectability, and the Male Middle Classes in Victorian England," *Journal of Social History* (Oct. 2000), 585-600.

[5] Certainly, some historians would simply attribute the boom, bust, and recovery of theatre and racing to the macroeconomic mechanics of the Panic. The initial credit contraction affected investors and employers first, and took time (as well as a second panic in 1839) to settle into a widespread depression capable of reducing the broad audience upon which theatres and racetracks depended. This analysis is persuasive. Yet it misses the specific cultural conditions and management strategies central to explaining how theatre and racing enterprises coped with larger economic phenomena, and how these businesses impacted the broader scope of social, cultural, and political development in antebellum America. For an overview of the Panic's progress into depression, see Sellers, Charles. *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1848* (New York: 1991), 354-360.

[6] My definition of the structure of "mass entertainment" is based on the classic definitions of "mass culture" in Theodore Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: 1991), 53-114. Dwight MacDonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture," in Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, eds., *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America* (Chicago: 1956), 59-73; C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: 1956), 298-324. I use the term "mass entertainment" instead of "mass culture" partly because this narrow paper cannot project conclusions about two activities onto the broad range of cultural production, and partly to emphasize the contextual and experiential differences between twentieth-century "mass culture" and nineteenth-century "mass entertainment."

[7] Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: 1990), 99-158, 323-349. Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: 2003), 292-397. Michael Marsden, "The Channels of American Culture: Mass Media and American Studies," American Quarterly (Fall 1980), 237; Shane Gunster, "Revisiting the Culture Industry Thesis: Mass Culture and the Commodity Form," *Cultural Critique* (Spring 2000), 40-70.

[8] "Proposals by Messrs. Wignell and Reinagle for Erecting a Theatre in Philadelphia," 17 Oct. 1791, Society Small Collection, Chestnut Street Theatre, HSP. John Hall Diary, 15 Nov. 1785, HSP. For shareholders' returns in other cities, see *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*, 19 Aug. 1794; "Hallam & Hodgkinson Proposal," ca. 1794-1795, New-York Historical Society (NYHS); William

Haliburton, *Effects of the Stage on the Manners of a People and the Propriety of Encouraging and Establishing a Virtuous Theatre* (Boston: 1792), 36. Elisha Sigourney Account, 1796-1798, Boston Theatre Collection, Boston Public Library (BPL); Martin Staples Shockley, "The Proprietors of Richmond's New Theatre of 1819," *William and Mary Quarterly* (July 1939): 302-303. For an overview of investors' social and economic goals, see Heather Nathans, *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* (New York: 2003).

[9] James H. Dormon, *Theatre in the Antebellum South, 1815-1861* (Chapel Hill: 1967), 131; George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: 1928), 3:520-521. William B. Wood, *Personal Recollections of the Stage* (Philadelphia: 1855), 295-297, 362, 401; Wemyss, *Life*, 107, 165, 242. Robert A. Jones Account Book, 5 July 1820, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (SHC).

[10] *Philadelphia General Advertiser*, 19 Feb. 1794, 24 Feb. 1794; *United States Gazette*, 11 Nov. 1811, 30 Oct. 1811; *The Cynick* (Philadelphia: 1812), 8. Olive Logan, *Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes* (Philadelphia: 1870), 538-539; James Fennell, *An Apology for the Life of James Fennell* (Philadelphia: 1814), 405. For other examples of debates over access to box seats, see *New York Daily Advertiser*, 7 Mar. 1794; *City Gazette*, 20 Jan. 1801.

[11] Wood, *Recollections*, 323. *Ely's Hawk and Buzzard* (New York), 3 July 1830. The Boston report is cited in Rev. Thomas Smyth, *The Theatre a School of Religion, Manners, and Morals* (Charleston: 1838), 25. See also *New York Herald*, 19 Sept. 1830; Dormon, *Antebellum South*, 237.

[12] David Garrick, "Bucks Have at Ye All, or, The Picture of a Play-House," in *A Collection of the Most Esteemed Farces and Entertainments Performed on the British Stage* (Edinburgh: 1792), 391. For the show's popularity, see New York Daily Gazette, 29 Mar. 1791; *Charleston City Gazette*, 30 May 1794; *The Mirror of Taste*, Feb. 1810, 181. For the remaining quotes about box seat society, see Robert Waln, *The Hermit in America on a Visit to Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: 1819), 230-231. John Lardner to Alexander Graydon, 10 Dec. 1784, John Lardner Series, Lardner Family Papers, HSP.

[13] Garrick, "Bucks," 391-392. Wemyss, *Life*, 200; *Succinct Account of the Disturbance Which Occurred at the Charleston Theatre* (Charleston: 1817), 6-8; Tyrone Power, *Impressions of America, 1833-1835* (1836), 352-356.

[14] Garrick, "Bucks," 392. For examples of gallery behavior, see William Alexander Duer, *Reminiscences of an Old Yorker* (New York: 1867 [orig. 1847]), 89; Washington Irving, *Letters of Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent.* (Boston: 1977 [1802-1803]), 12; Moreau de St. Mery, *Moreau de St. Mery's American Journey, 1793-1798* (Garden City, NJ: 1947), 15; *Charleston Patriot*, 25 Nov. 1815.

[15] Wood, *Recollections*, 291, 339.

[16] Cynick, 82. *Ely's Hawk and Buzzard*, 3 July 1830, 15 Sept. 1833. For other examples, see *The Theatrical Contributions of Jacques to the United States Gazette* (Philadelphia: 1826), 42; Edward Lloyd VI Diary, 13 Nov. 1826, Miscellanea, Llloyd Family Papers, Maryland Historical Society.

[17] Kenneth Cohen, "Well Calculated for the Farmer: Thoroughbred Racing in the Chesapeake, 1790-1850," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (Oct. 2007), 378-384.

[18] Clover Bottom Broadside, 1807, John Spencer Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (Washington, D.C.: 1926-1935), 1:111-113; John Tayloe to William Weatherby, 1 June 1801, John Tayloe III Letterbook, Tayloe Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society (VHS); Charles P. Lee to William Henry Tayloe, 16 Nov. 1834, William Henry Tayloe Correspondence, Tayloe Family Papers, VHS; *The Gentleman's Stable Directory* (Philadelphia: 1794), 7.

[19] "Orion," 1807, and "Plough-Boy," 1808, Horse Notes, John Steele Papers, SHC. For other examples of lesser horses targeting a poorer market, see "Denmark," 24 Mar. 1795, Zinman Ephemera Collection, LCP; Daniel Brodhead Stud Book, 1799-1802, Brodhead Family Papers, Winterthur; Clark Griffin to Richard Singleton, 10 May 1824, Family Correspondence, Singleton Family Papers, SHC.

[20] L.P. Cheatham to Richard Singleton, 28 Jan. 1832, Singleton Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library. John Stuart Skinner to Richard Singleton, 13 Feb. 1832, Richard Singleton Papers, South Carolina Historical Society. For more examples of friends and betting, see *United States Gazette*, 23 Sept. 1811; *New York Sporting Magazine*, June 1833, 184; Charles P. Lee to William Henry Tayloe, 19 Aug. 1834, William Henry Tayloe Correspondence, Tayloe Family Papers, VHS. Callendar Irvine to Daniel Parker, 11 Jan. 1836, 15 June 1836, Daniel Parker Papers, HSP; William Henry Tayloe to Robert Wormeley Carter, 6 Nov. 1846, Robert Wormeley Carter Correspondence, Carter Family Papers, Special Collections, College of William and Mary (CWM). For racing "improving the breed," see *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 31 Aug. 1761;

Constitution of the Missouri Association for the Improvement of the Breed of Horses (St. Louis: 1835), 1; *Rules of the South Carolina Jockey Club* (Charleston: 1836), 1; Melvin L. Adelman, *A Sporting Time: New York City and the Rise of Modern Athletics, 1820-1870* (Urbana, IL: 1990), 32-33.
[21] *Spirit*, 21 Oct. 1837; Andrew Jackson to Andrew Jackson, Jr., 6 Apr. 1834, *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson*, 5:259. See also "The Baltimore Course," *Turf Register*, May 1831, 254; George Plater Tayloe to William Henry Tayloe, 16 Jan. 1835, William Henry Tayloe Correspondence, Tayloe Family Papers.
[22] South Carolina Jockey Club Rules, 1828, South Carolina Historical Society. John Morris, ed. *Wanderings of a Vagabond* (New York: 1873), 118.
[23] *New York Sporting Magazine*, June 1833, 182-185. Simon Snipe, *Sports of New-York, Containing an Evening at the African Theatre also a Trip to the Races With Two Appropriate Songs* (New York: 1823), 28-29. For booths, see "Patronage of Jockey Clubs," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1837, 556; "Sports of the Turf in America," *Turf Register*, May 1836, 423. Charles William Janson, *The Stranger in America* (London: 1807), 209-210.
[24] "A Peep at the Old Dominion," *Turf Register*, June 1832, 518; "Sports of the Turf in America," May 1837, 423; Tyrone Power, *Impressions of America during the years 1833, 1834, and 1835* (London: 1836), 1:127-128, 2:58-59; Arney R. Childs, ed., *Rice Planter and Sportsman: The Recollections of J. Motte Alston, 1821-1909* (Columbia, SC: 1953), 19-20. Cadwallader Colden to *American Sporting Magazine*, 3 July 1830, reprinted in Frank Forester, *The Horses of America* (New York: 1857), 1:191.
[25] James Boardman, *America and the Americans* (London: 1833), 203-205. *Cynick*, 78. "Sports of the Turf in America," *Turf Register*, May 1836, 422.
[26] Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor* (New York: 1982), 154-164, 339-366; Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Death, Humanitarianism, Slave Rebellions, the Pro-Slavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton: 1996), Greenberg, *Honor*, 1-23, 124-146.
[27] Edward Tailer Diary, 2 Dec. 1848, NYHS, as cited in Brian Luskey, "The Marginal Men: Merchants' Clerks and Society in the Northeastern United States, 1790-1860," (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2004), 263; Peter Gay, *The Cultivation of Hatred: The Bourgeois Experience from Victoria to Freud* (New York: 1993), 96; Harvey Green, *Fit for America: Health, Fitness, Sport, and American Society* (New York: 1986), 10-28, 85-90; Elliott Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca, NY: 1986), 47-56, 129-145; Scott C. Martin, *Killing Time: Leisure and Culture in Southwestern Pennsylvania, 1800-1850* (Pittsburgh: 1995), 9-12; Roberta J. Park, "Healthy, Moral, and Strong, Educational Views of Exercise and Athletics in Nineteenth-Century America," in Kathryn Grover, ed. *Fitness in American Culture: Images of Health, Sport, and the Body 1830-1940* (Rochester, NY: 1989), 134-139.
[28] Waln, *Hermit*, 232.
[29] Toby L. Ditz, "Shipwrecked; or, Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia, *Journal of American History* (June 1994), 66-69; Bruce Mann, *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence* (Cambridge, MA: 2002), 115-122; Scott Sandage, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America* (Cambridge, MA: 2005), 81-88; Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York: 1789-1860* (Urbana, IL: 1987), 77-78.
[30] Godfrey Vigne, *Six Months in America* (London: 1832), 1: 15. *The Sporting Whip*, 28 Jan. 1843. *Ely's Hawk and Buzzard*, 21 Sept. 1833.
[31] Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven, CT: 1982), 92-123; C. Dallett Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessities: A History of Manners in America, 1620-1860* (New York: 1999), 163-164.
[32] *The Whip*, 9 Apr. 1842. See also Stansell, *City of Women*, 94-97.
[33] Brown, *Southern Honor*, 345-350; Jackson Lears, *Something for Nothing: Luck in America* (New York: 2003), 104-109, 112-119; Charlene Lewis, *Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860* (Charlottesville, VA: 2001), 170-188.
[34] Henry Augustine Tayloe to William Henry Tayloe, 16 July 1835, William Henry Tayloe Correspondence, Tayloe Family Papers, VHS. For examples of leaked bets, see *American Farmer*, 19 Nov. 1824; *Turf Register*, June 1831, 506; "Sporting Intelligence," *Turf Register*, Feb. 1834, 317; *Turf Register*, Mar. 1838, 115. "Reminiscences of Petersburg," *Petersburg Index*, 10 Oct. 1868. For the rules of making bets, see *Rules and Regulations of the Metairie Jockey Club* (New Orleans: 1838), 14; *Rules and Regulations Adopted by the New York Jockey Club* (New York: 1836), 7-8; *Rules and Regulations of the Washington Jockey Club* (Washington: 1834), 9-11.

[35] *The New-Yorker*, 25 Aug. 1838. Morris, Vagabond, 134-135. Callendar Irvine to Daniel Parker, 11 Jan. 1836, Daniel Parker Papers, HSP. For another example, see Sol Smith, *The Theatrical Apprenticeship and Anecdotal Recollections of Sol Smith* (Philadelphia: 1846), 150-152.
[36] *The Development of the Law of Gambling: 1776-1976* (Washington, D.C.: 1977), 15-17, 238-247; Dennis Brailsford, *A Taste for Diversions: Sport in Georgian England* (Cambridge, UK: 1999), 168-171; Nancy L. Struna, *People of Prowess: Sport, Leisure, and Labor in Early Anglo-America* (Urbana, IL: 1996), 101-108, 157-163.
[37] Aeneas Mackay Diary, 232 (1814-1815), New York Historical Society. Robert Bailey, *The Life and Adventures of Robert Bailey, from his infancy up to December, 1821* (Richmond: 1822), 142; "Cock-Fighting," *Turf Register*, Jan. 1830, 255-257. "The Defaulters," *Turf Register*, Apr. 1839, 172-180; *Spirit*, 3 Jan. 1846, 532-533; Cadwallader R. Colden, *An Expose of the Measures which Caused Suspension of the Races on the Union Course in October 1830* (New York: 1831), 24, 27; Robert Wormeley Carter to John Sawbridge Corbin, 18 Sept. 1840, and Corbin to Carter 30 July 1845, Robert Wormeley Carter Correspondence, Carter Family Papers, CWM; Corbin to William Henry Tayloe, 15 May 1846, William Henry Tayloe Correspondence, Tayloe Family Papers, VHS. Wood, *Recollections*, 115-116.
[38] Robert Wormeley Carter to John Minor, 11 June 1792, Carter Papers, Library of Virginia. This Robert Wormeley Carter (the uncle of the one named in the footnote above) adjusted his will so his son's estate would pay an annuity to claimants of gambling debts. For this arrangement, see John Browne Cutting, *Argument Delivered Before the Judges of the Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia in the Case of Carter's Executors* (Fredericksburg: 1817). For paying debts of honor before other debts, see *The New Mirror for Travellers; and Guide to the Springs* (New York: 1828), 254-255. See also *Ely's Hawk and Buzzard*, 1 Sept. 1832.
[39] James P. Corbin to William Henry Tayloe, 15 May 1846, William Henry Tayloe Correspondence, Tayloe Family Papers, VHS. Jonathan Harrington Greene, *Gambling Unmasked!* (Baltimore: 1844), 32. Morris, *Vagabond*, 107. See also Colden, *Expose*, 9, 16, 27.
[40] *New York Evangelist*, 25 Feb. 1837. See also *Albion*, 11 May 1839, 146. For wagers on horse races, see "Racing Calendar," *Turf Register*, July 1837, 460; "Spirit of the Times," *Turf Register*, Mar. 1838, 131; "Notes of the Month," *Turf Register*, Aug. 1841, 456-465; "The Fashion and Boston Match," *Turf Register*, July 1842, 367-381; For city directories, see listings under "gaming" and "billiards" in *Dogget's* (New York: 1828, 1829, 1843, 1847, 1850); *McElroy's* (Philadelphia: 1847, 1849, 1850, 1851); *Cohen's* (New Orleans: 1846, 1849, 1851). For the emergence of a reform movement specifically targeting gambling in the 1840s, see Ann Fabian, *Card Sharps, Dream Books, and Bucket Shops: Gambling in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY: 1990), 50-105.
[41] "The Influence of the Trading Spirit upon the Social and Moral Life of America," *The American Review: a Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art, and Science*, Jan. 1845, 97. See also, *Western Messenger*, May 1840, 38.
[42] Adorno, *Culture Industry*, 53-114; MacDonald, "Theory of Mass Culture," 59-73; Mills, *Power Elite*, 298-324. Besides outlining the structural definitions of "mass" society and culture, these works describe how mass culture subtly upholds a power structure and capitalist ideology (I call it "risk culture" in its early nineteenth-century context) rather than potentially sacrificing profit by alienating consumers with an overt imposition of ideology or social hierarchy.
[43] Minutes, undated (1826-1829), Norfolk Jockey Club Minute Book; South Carolina Jockey Club Rules, 1828, 8, SCHS; "The Tree Hill Course," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1829, 149-152; Cadwallader R. Colden, *An Expose of the Measures which Caused Suspension of the Races on the Union Course in October 1830* (New York: 1831), 9, 11, 38; "Hints for the Improvement of the Central Race Course," *Turf Register,* Jan. 1832, 248; *Rules and Regulations Adopted by the New York Jockey Club* (New York: 1836), 11; Statement of Receipts and Disbursements, Feb. 1836-Feb. 1837, South Carolina Jockey Club Records, SCHS.
[44] For example, William Ransom Johnson bought the horse Ariel for $2400 at a sale just before the start of the 1827 Tree Hill Races. The following day, Johnson "won with her the Jocky Club Purse of $1000 & that day week [one week later] entered her for & won the...purse & sweepstakes at Tree Hill, so that in about a week after the purchase, they won with her $1000 more than her cost." Johnson then sold Ariel to another top racer for slightly more than he bought the mare. This next owner quickly resold the mare again, this time to a New York racer. The New Yorker won a $5000 match race with her, offsetting the mare's sale price which had grown with each sale on account of her victories in 1827, then discarded Ariel from the ranks of top racers by selling the now ten-year-old mare to a Georgia planter who intended to breed her. By

racing, winning, and quickly selling horses, top owners added to their prize money with sales prices elevated by victories. Both these streams of income went into the next round of purchases. "Sporting Intelligence," William Bolling Diary, 10 May 1827, Bolling Papers, VHS; "Pedigree and Performances of Ariel," Sept. 1834, 1-18. For another example, see William Wynn's ownership of the racing mare Kate Kearney in "Sporting Intelligence," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1829, 153-163; Feb. 1830, 311; Nov. 1830, 138. Dozens of examples like these two are traceable through the monthly sales and racing records reported in the *Turf Register* from 1829 to 1844.

[45] Robert M. Cahusac to William Porcher, 17 Feb. 1822, SCHS. For top owners' growing dominance in sales and victories, see "Sporting Intelligence," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1830, 140; "Sales of Horses," *Turf Register*, Jan. 1831, 246; "Bona Fide – Sales of and Sums Refused for Thoroughbreds," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1834, 146; "Patronage of Jockey Clubs," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1837, 556; "Sales of Blood Stock," *Turf Register*, Mar./Apr. 1839, 231. John S. Corbin, broadside advertising 1838 Fairfield Races, William Henry Tayloe Correspondence, Tayloe Papers, VHS.

[46] For the differences in stock, compare the stables of top owners William Gibbons and William Ransom Johnson with those of the hundreds of lesser owners whose studs were enumerated in the monthly "Turf Register" listings in the *American Turf Register*. The lesser owners also constantly advertised and validated their stock by publishing its connections to famed racers in this "Turf Register" section. For Gibbons and Johnson, see, *Turf Register*, Jan. 1832, 253-257; July 1834, 579-582; Jan. 1835, 217-224; Jan. 1840, 47-49; Feb. 1842, 81-100.

[47] Richard Adams to Richard Singleton, 8 Feb. 1832, Singleton Family Papers, SHC. Henry Augustine Tayloe to William Henry Tayloe, 23 June 1838, William Henry Tayloe Correspondence, Tayloe Family Papers, VHS. Power, *Impressions*, 2:193. "Utilitarian," John H. Cocke, 1837, Broadsides, Special Collections, University of Virginia. For the importance of "bottom" and "utility" in thoroughbred breeding before the late 1830s, see "Liberty" Accounts, 1786-1796, Holladay Family Papers, VHS; "Tychicus" Accounts, 1834-1835, Horse Papers, Tayloe Family Papers, VHS; *American Farmer*, 12 Nov. 1824, 270; "Race Courses, Rules of Racing &c&c," *Turf Register*, Feb. 1832, 305.

[48] "Racing Calendar," *Turf Register*, July 1837, 459-477; "Racing Calendar," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1837, 569-573; "New Orleans Races," *Turf Register*, Jan. 1838, 31; Mar. 1838, 115, 127; "Turf, Breeding, Etc.," *Turf Register*,Apr. 1838, 145.

[49] *Spirit of the Times*, 8 June 1839. "Patronage of Jockey Clubs," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1837, 556; "High Prices of Stallions," *Turf Register*, Feb. 1839, 61-64. William P. Stewart to James Thomas, 10 May 1837, Mrs. T. Rowland Thomas Collection, Maryland Archives. See also George Plater Tayloe to William Henry Tayloe, 27 June 1837, William Henry Tayloe Correspondence, Tayloe Family Papers, VHS. For lesser owners selling out of the market, see "Sales of Blood Stock," *Turf Register*, Mar. 1838, 127-129; "Stud Sale of William H. Minge," *Turf Register,* Nov. 1838, 482-483; "Notes of the Month," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1841, 636-641; Horse Accounts, 1833-1867, Tayloe Papers, VHS; John Dizikes, *Sportsmen and Gamesmen* (Boston: 1981), 98-101, 105; Lynn Hastings, "A Sure Bet: Thoroughbreds at Hampton," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 89 (Spring 1994), 26, 33-35.

[50] "A Race – A Race," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1837, 555; "Racing Calendar," *Turf Register*, May 1838, 229. For the decline, see "1838," *Turf Register*, Feb. 1839, 91-98; "Review of the Spring Races at the South-West," Oct. 1840, 521; "Notes of the Month," *Turf Register*, Apr. 1843, 224; "Racing Calendar," *Turf Register*, Nov. 1843, 684; "Racing Calendar," *Turf Register*, Feb. 1844, 116-124; "Racing Calendar," *Turf Register*, June 1844, 379-385; *The New Mirror*, 17 June 1843

[51] For grandstands, see James Franklin Beard, ed., *Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper* (Cambridge, MA: 1960-1968), 1:99-103; *New York Sporting Magazine*, June 1833, 182-185; Dale Somers, *The Rise of Sports in New Orleans, 1850-1900* (Baton Rouge: 1972), 25-27; *Camden Mail*, 4 June 1845; *Spirit*, 21 Apr. 1838. For ticket prices, see Adelman, *Sporting Time*, 50; Somers, *New Orleans*, 25-30; *Spirit* 10 Mar. 1838, 7 Jan. 1843, 27 Apr. 1844, 1 June 1844.

[52] Matilda Charlotte Fraser, *Hesperos; or, Travels in the West* (London: 1850), 72. The Camden racetrack victims were named in the *Camden Mail*, 4 June 1845. Those names can be paired with occupations through *McElroy's Philadelphia Directory*, 1845. *Spirit*, 13 Apr. 1850. For another example of the accessibility of the new stands, see *The New World,* 18 June 1842, 25.

[53] For "the Great North-South Match Race" of 1823 that initiated the trend of inter-regional races, see James Franklin Beard, ed., *Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper* (Cambridge, MA: 1960-1968), 1:99-103; John Eisenberg, *The Great Match Race: When North Met South in America's First Sports*

Spectacle (New York: 2006). For later renditions, see "Sporting Intelligence," *Turf Register*, June 1831, 506; "New York Races," *Traveller and Spirit of the Times*, 6 Oct. 1833, 149; "Wagner and Grey Eagle's Races," *Turf Register*, Mar. 1840, 116; "Grey Medoc and Altorf's Race," *Turf Register*, Mar. 1842, 130-136; "The Fashion and Boston Match," *Turf Register*, July 1842, 367-381; "Racing Calendar," *Turf Register*, Feb. 1844, 118.
[54] Morris, *Vagabond*, 134-135; Adelman, *Sporting Time*, 88-89; Steven Riess, *City Games: The Evolution of American Urban Society and the Rise of Sports* (Urbana, IL: 1989), 182-184.
[55] Wemyss, *Life*, 297, 306, 334; *Spirit*, 15 Sept. 1838, 13 July 1839; Peter Buckley, "To The Opera House: Culture and Society in New York City, 1820-1860," (Ph.D. Diss., SUNY Stony Brook, 1984), 144; Dormon, *Antebellum South*, 133, 146.
[56] Wood, *Recollections*, 445, 437. *New York Mirror*, 8 Feb. 1840, 262. Louis F. Tasistro, *Random Shots and Southern Breezes* (New York: 1842), 141. See also Bruce A. McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theatre and Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: 1992), 24.
[57] *Spirit*, 30 Sept. 1839. Wood, *Recollections*, 407. See also Bank, *Theatre Culture*, 98-118; Dormon, *Antebellum South*, 256-274; Wemyss, *Life*, 296.
[58] For northern theatres, see Wemyss, *Life*, 318-319. *The Sporting Whip*, 4 Mar. 1843. Arthur Herman Wilson, *A History of the Philadelphia Theatre 1835 to 1855* (Philadelphia: 1935), 9-26; Odell, *Annals*, vols. 4-5, passim; *New York Mirror*, 23 Jan. 1841. *The Ladies' Companion*, June 1837, 95. For southern theatres, see Thomas Hatcher v. Proprietors of the Charleston Theatre, 2 Feb. 1839, Judgment Roll, South Carolina Archives; *Spirit*, 12 Sept. 1840, 336; Gordon W. Wilson, "The Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore: Chapters from Its History," (M.A. Thesis, Johns Hopkins University: 1949), 66; Dormon, *Antebellum South*, 133-148, 155.
[59] Bernard Hewitt, "'King Stephen' of the Park and Drury Lane", in Joseph W. Donohue, *The Theatrical Manager in England and America: Player of a Perilous Game* (Princeton, NJ: 1971), 112-135; Joseph Cowell, *Thirty Years Passed Among the Players in England and America* (1979 [orig 1844]), 63-64.
[60] Wemyss, *Life*, 304, 311, 334, 351; Wilson, *Philadelphia Theatre*, 25-27; Dormon, *Antebellum South*, 177; *Spirit*, 12 Sept. 1840.
[61] David L. Rinear, *The Temple of Momus: Mitchell's Olympic Theatre* (Metuchen, NJ: 1987), 83-86, 187-195; Thomas A'Becket Diaries, 1842-1845, Performing Arts Collection, New York Public Library; Bank, *Theatre Culture*, 92-95**.** Wood, *Recollections*, 436.
[62] Tasistro, *Shots and Breezes*, 62-63. Fanny Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: 1832), 154. For ticket prices, see *Charleston Courier*, 11 Nov. 1808; *Spirit*, 1 Apr. 1837, 1 Sept. 1838; Wood, *Recollections*, 299; Boardman, *America*, 80; Henry Bradshaw Fearon, *A Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles Through the Eastern and Western United States of America* (London: 1818), 86-87.
[63] *Ladies' Companion*, May 1842, 68-70. *Spirit*, 3 Sept. 1842, 324; *New York Herald*, 5 Sept. 1842; *The Sporting Whip*, 28 Jan. 1843; Wood, *Recollections*, 365, 402. Wemyss, *Life*, 326. These ticket prices also lasted throug the remainder of the decade, even after the economy and wages improved. See *New York Herald*, 13 Oct. 1848; Odell, *Annals*, 5:327, 430. For laborer's wages, see Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class* (New York: 1984), 419; Robert A. Margo and Georgia C. Villaflor, "The Growth of Wages in Antebellum America: New Evidence," *Journal of Economic History* (Dec. 1987), 880.
[64] Gorn, *Manly Art*, 139-140; Bank, *Theatre Culture*, 84-88; Stansell, *City of Women*, 90-94; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 300-301.
[65] David Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth Century America* (Chicago: 2006), 2-3, 18-34; Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed., *A Philadelphia Perspective: The Diary of Sidney George Fisher Covering the Years 1834-1871* (Philadelphia: 1967), 197 ; Brian J. Danforth, "Hoboken and the Affluent New Yorker's Search for Recreation, 1820-1860," *New Jersey History* (Fall 1977), 138-142.
[66] George F. Foster, *New York Naked* (New York: 1851), 143. For the accuracy of observations in sensational works such as Foster's, see J. Paul Ericson, "New Books, New Men: Authorship and Antebellum Sensational Fiction," Paper presented at McNeil Center for Early American Studies Seminar, 23 Feb. 2001, 4-5
[67] *Diary of Sidney George Fisher*, 34, 101, 105, 107, 268. For the quotations on social mixing, see *The Whip*, 29 Jan. 1842. *The Sporting Whip*, 28 Jan. 1843. *The Albion*, 20 Apr. 1844. *Spirit*, 8 Feb. 1845. *New London Morning News* (CT), 13 Mar. 1845. See also *The Theatrical World*, 12 July 1845. Philip English

Mackey, ed., *A Gentleman of Much Promise: The Diary of Isaac Mickle, 1837-1845* (Philadelphia: 1977), 342-344; Isaac Mickle Diary, 23 Aug. 1844, Mickle Family Papers, Camden County (NJ) Historical Society.

[68] For attendance, see *Spirit*, 4 May 1844; *New York Arena*, 24 May 1842; *Ladies' Companion*, May 1842, 68-70. For managers and new theatres, see Dormon, *Antebellum South*, 162-164; Odell, *Annals*, 5:13, 49, 287, 328, 430; Rinear, *Momus*, 13, 186-188; McConachie, *Melodramatic*, 80; Wilson, *Philadelphia Theatre*, 24-37. For "beggarly boxes," see *Sunday Flash* (NY), 17 Oct. 1841.

[69] *Spirit*, 1 Sept. 1838; *New York Herald*, 13 Oct. 1848; *Life in Boston and New England Police Gazette*, 6 Apr. 1850; Bluford Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and the Making of U.S. Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: 1997), 118-119, 136-137; Buckley, "To the Opera House," 145.

[70] *Life in Boston and New England Police Gazette*, 6 Apr. 1850. Richard Butsch, "Bowery B'hoys and Matinee Ladies: The Re-Ordering of Nineteenth Century American Theatre Audiences," *American Quarterly* (Sept. 1994), 373-403; Faye Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses and Audiences, 1790-1870* (New Haven: 1994), 120.

[71] For this interpretation, see Buckley, "To the Opera House," 148-149; Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750-1990* (New York: 2000), 46-60; Dudden, *Women*, 104-111; Bruce McConachie, "The Theatre of the Mob," in McConachie, ed. *Theatre for Working Class Audience in the United States, 1830-1890* (Westport, CT: 1985), 19-21; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 257-258; For some of the most common observations bracing this interpretation, see Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 339-340; Boardman, *Americans*, 79-80, 203-205; Power, *Impressions*, 1:141; Vigne, *Six Months*, 1:14; Walt Whitman, "The Old Bowery," *Prose Works* (Philadelphia: 1892), available at http://www.bartleby.com/229/5014.html.

[72] *The Knickerbocker; or, New York Monthly Magazine*, May 1841, 441-443; *Ladies' Companion*, May 1842, 68-70; Feb. 1843, 210. Bank, *Theatre Culture*, 98-118. See also, *Spirit*, 25 May 1839.

[73] *Sunday Flash*, 17 Oct. 1841, 24 Oct. 1841; *The Whip*, 1 Jan. 1842; *Sporting Whip*, 11 Feb. 1843.

[74] Bank, *Theatre Culture*, 98-102; Dudden, *Women*, 59-60. For the penny press as mass media, see David Henkin, *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York* (New York: 1998), 105-131.

[75] Cohen, *New Deal*, 99-158, 323-349; Cohen, *Consumer's Republic*, 292-397; Henkin, *City Reading*, 174-180; Marsden, "Channels of American Culture," 237.

[76] Cohen, *New Deal*, 323-349; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 255-325. See also the classic (though perhaps overdrawn) distinctions between "loyalist," "traditionalist," and "radical" workers in Paul Faler, "Cultural Aspects of the Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts Shoemakers and Industrial Morality," *Labor History* (Summer 1974): 367-394.

[77] Due to limited space, the exclusion of African-Americans from box and pit seats, as well as racecourse grandstands, has been noted but not thoroughly explored here. For more on their exclusion in and from theatres, see Dormon, *Antebellum South*, 233-236; Shane White, *Stories of Freedom in Black New York* (Cambridge, MA: 2002), 68-127. Their exclusion from racetrack stands is implied not explicitly stated. Even the array of persons described on the new grandstands never includes an African-American, though their presence on the concourse was recorded regularly. See *Turf Register*, May 1837, 422; *New York Sporting Magazine*, June 1833, 182-185; James Stuart, "Bad Roads, Loose Morals, Sadism, and Racetrack Discipline, 1830," in Thomas D. Clark, ed. *South Carolina: The Grand Tour, 1780-1865* (Columbia, 1973), 159-160.

[78] Henry Ward Beecher, "The Benefits and Evils of Commerce," *Hunt's Merchants Magazine* (Feb. 1851), 154, cited in Sandage, *Born Losers*, 42.

[79] Wemyss, *Life*, 318-320, 326. William Gilmore Simms to James Lawson, 15 Nov. 1843, in Mary C. Simms Oliphant, Alfred T. Odell, and T.C. Duncan Eaves, eds., *Letters of William Gilmore Simms* (Columbia, SC: 1952-1982), 1:387-389; Dormon, *Antebellum South*, 163-164.

[80] William Bolling Diary, 5 Aug. 1828, Bolling Papers, VHS; George Plater Tayloe to William Henry Tayloe, 2 Feb. 1838, Tayloe Papers, VHS; William P. Stewart to James Thomas, 10 May 1837, Mrs. T. Rowland Thomas Collection, Maryland Archives; John S. Corbin to Robert Wormeley Carter, 22 July 1840, 28 Feb. 1842, Robert Wormeley Carter Correspondence, Carter Family Papers, CWM. For colonial racing, see T.H. Breen, "Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling among the Gentry of Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly* (Apr. 1977: 239-257), 251.