

# Mass Consumption in Milwaukee: 1920-1970

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MASS CONSUMPTION IN MILWAUKEE: 1920-1970

by

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## ABSTRACT

### MASS CONSUMPTION IN MILWAUKEE: 1920-1970

Christopher Chan, B.A., M.A.  
Marquette University, 2013

This study focuses on mass consumption's role in the development of the city of Milwaukee. This study's main focus is on the mid-twentieth century, though this case study will look at mass consumption's role in Milwaukee from its founding to the present. Mass consumption focuses on the actions of buying and selling and how consumer options reflected the city's general development. After studying the composition of Milwaukee's population and income levels, the story of mass consumption in Milwaukee will be told through studying how automobiles and food were bought and sold, as well as how other assorted shopping venues affected the city.

This dissertation illustrates that over the course of the twentieth century, mass consumption in Milwaukee was guided by assorted innovations. Automobiles gave consumers the ability to travel lengthy distances in a relatively short time while carrying large quantities of goods. At the start of the twentieth century, cars were an expensive novelty. By 1970, automobiles were ubiquitous. In 1920, most Milwaukeeans bought their food from small grocery stores in their neighborhoods. Fifty years later, large supermarkets catered to most of the city's consumers. Milwaukee's major shopping venues changed dramatically over the course of half a century. Early in the 1900's, Milwaukee's major shopping venues were mainly department stores located in the downtown business district. Late in the century, the most prominent consumption locations were massive shopping centers and malls spaced throughout the city.

This study also briefly points to the ways in which mass consumption affected the use of space in Milwaukee. As Milwaukee grew and expanded, retail operations followed. As in most American cities, Milwaukee's residential communities (which often included several small stores) as well as a once-bustling downtown business district, were gradually decentralized. As a result, new shopping venues were created to support consumer residential patterns. Changing patterns and venues of mass consumption re-sculpted the city and metropolitan area of Milwaukee. Between 1920 and 1970, Milwaukee's economic history can be divided into four main eras, which may be titled as follows: boom (the 1920's), bust (the Great Depression), war (WWII), and prosperity (the post-war era).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Christopher Chan, B.A., M.A.

When I first started my doctoral studies of history, I had no idea that my studies would lead me to researching the field of mass consumption. I started planning a history of literary antimodernism, but when that proved too unwieldy a subject, I needed to find another topic. After some false starts, I considered exploring an aspect of Milwaukee's local government and journalism that seemed promising, but after a few months of research I discovered— at a conference held at a mansion with almost the same layout as the setting of the board game Clue— that someone else was already hard at work at exactly the same topic. Finally, I discovered the story of mass consumption in Milwaukee, which led to this dissertation.

In the acknowledgements to her first novel, *Whose Body?*, the eminent mystery writer Dorothy L. Sayers wrote:

*To M.J.*

DEAR JIM:

*This book is your fault. If it had not been for your brutal insistence, Lord Peter would never have staggered through to the end of this enquiry. Pray consider that he thanks you with his accustomed suavity.*

*Yours ever,*

*D.L.S.*

I feel the need to echo Ms. Sayers's feelings here. This dissertation is my advisor, Father Steven Avella's fault. Without his influence and insistence, I would never have started this exploration of Milwaukee's economic, cultural, intellectual, and social history; let alone managed to stagger on to the point of completing it. So even though I am not accustomed to suavity, I thank him.

I must also thank my other committee members, Dr. Kristen Foster and Dr. Thomas Jablonsky. I also thank the professors that I have worked for as a research assistant and a teaching assistant: Dr. H. Robert Baker, Dr. James Marten, Dr. Allyson Delnore, Dr. Daniel Meissner, Dr. Phillip Naylor, Dr. Julius Ruff, and Dr. Michael Wert. Thanks also go to Mr. Mark Thiel, my supervisor at the Marquette University Archives, and all the rest of the Marquette University History Department and Marquette University Archives staff.

I am also grateful to my friends, teachers, and professors from the University School of Milwaukee and Lawrence University who cheered me on many times over my graduate school career. Dale Ahlquist, Sean Dailey, Therese Warmus, Mary Brittnacher, and all the other members of the American Chesterton Society also deserve a mention, as does my long-term moderator and

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Special thanks also go to those nameless employees of the central branch of Milwaukee Public Library, who quickly learned to dread the sight of me, because they knew that every time I sauntered up to the information desk I would be requesting the use of approximately two hundred pounds of old, incredibly dusty books that must have required a forklift to bring up from the basement. Also, a lucky decision to purchase a CD of classic Christmas radio broadcasts from the Milwaukee Historical Society on the fateful day of November 11, 2011 prevented this dissertation from remaining permanently incomplete. After a long day of research, my departure was delayed by about ten minutes, thanks to the need to locate a copy of the CD. Had I left without buying the CD, I would have walked towards the bus stop, past an alley at the same moment a bank robber was engaging in a shoot-out with some police officers, and I might very likely have been caught in the cross-fire. And so, I owe Billie the Brownie my life.

Most of all, I need to thank my parents, Doctors Carlyle and Patricia Chan for helping me through this massive endeavor, for which I am more grateful than I can possibly express.

–Christopher Chan

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## **INTRODUCTION: THE MEANING OF MASS CONSUMPTION**

Mass production and mass consumption have shaped the course of modern American life. This dissertation uses Milwaukee as a case study of mass consumption between the years 1920 and 1970. What follows is a concise narrative of how Milwaukeeans have consumed automobiles, groceries, and other household goods during this time. This dissertation uses a rough chronological framework to analyze the evolution of mass consumption in Milwaukee over the course of the mid-twentieth century, focusing on the five decades from 1920 to 1970. These time frames will be followed closely in the first two chapters (automobiles and grocery stores, respectively), but the nature of the third chapter (shopping venues and durable goods) means that this chronology needs to be altered slightly in order to present the information thoroughly and coherently. The half-century is divided as follows: Boom (the 1920's), Bust (the Great Depression of the 1930's), War (1941-1946), and the Post-War Prosperity (1946-1970).

While mass consumption is a feature of every era of Milwaukee's history, these chronological periods have been chosen to make the study more methodologically manageable. Moreover, they are critical eras when the dynamics of mass consumption were affected by disposable income, the creation of more extensive and sophisticated advertising, and the increasing efficiency of mass production techniques. These were the best of times and the worst of times economically. Crafting these time periods is hazardous and innately open to controversy, and as noted above, all the facets of this study will not dovetail

perfectly with these chronological boundaries. Hopefully, however, focusing on the differences between time periods will reveal more about the realities of mass consumption in a large American city and the day-to-day life of the city of Milwaukee itself.

From 1920 to 1970, the structures and locales of mass consumption shaped the dizzying pattern of life in the city and affected the lives of all of the city's residents. For example, mass consumption re-worked the city's landscape as stores provided a social meeting ground for Milwaukeeans and carved out space for automobiles. They also created marketing zones for their products in the city's business districts, downtown, residential neighborhoods, and suburbs. Favorite stores and products "branded" the city as department stores like Schuster's and Goldmann's, food stores like Sendik's and Pick 'n Save, and self-promoting auto dealers like Ernie von Schledhorn (whose advertising jingle told consumers the tale of his business located on "Main Street in Menomonee Falls") etched themselves on the city's collective memory. Some of these local landmarks are closed but still remain in the public memory long after they shuttered their doors. Others still exist today.

Few people stop to think about how every aspect of their lives reflects the consumption choices that they have made and continue to make on a daily basis. Consumption, for many individuals, has become an unconscious habit, where the desire to own something, and the subsequent purchase of that item, is a matter of stimulus and response. City planners and businesspeople often are more attuned to the role of consumption in Milwaukee's success and survival, for many major urban development projects have revolved around promoting consumption.

Despite the ubiquity of mass consumption and consumer culture, these terms and similar phrases are rarely defined in ways that make them and their implications clear. In order to properly understand the impact of consumption on Milwaukee during this time, it is necessary to start with a clear definition of terms.

### **What is mass consumption?**

Mass consumption consists of the processes of buying, selling, and desiring, as well as the effects that these actions have upon the people who participate in them. It is a relatively recent phenomenon, propelled by many factors. One such factor revolves around the rapid changes in human life brought about by improved technology. This led to new production methods that not only made certain goods less expensive, but also gave a much wider swath of society sufficient disposable income to purchase them. Another factor is the population shifts caused by urbanization, which brought people together into communities that needed and wanted to purchase goods. Additionally, these social changes created peer pressure to buy certain items. Advertising and economic planning help people to want to own items, and income and availability help people obtain items. Mass consumption revolves around how potential consumer goods are identified and then made to appear desirable to consumers.

Consumer culture consists of the effects of how mass consumption affects society, as well as how mass consumption perpetuates itself. Location is often an important factor to studying consumer culture, since various regions have different cultural, economic, and other attributes that shape individuals' purchasing habits. Consumer culture histories revolve around the development of

mass consumption in a specific region. Consumer culture is more than simply the action of buying. It is also an attempt to understand why these items are desirable, and how the residents of a particular area justify their buying.<sup>1</sup>

Often, understanding why people do *not* buy certain items can be as helpful to comprehending the intricacies of a consumer culture as determining the reasons why other items are purchased. Studies of consumer culture also reflect the complex emotions that people have towards mass consumption, often enjoying its material benefits while simultaneously feeling morally conflicted over the inherent attitudes of materialism and covetousness that are inextricably linked to mass consumption. Many scholars have explored how consumers and consumption are connected. Lizabeth Cohen comments in *A Consumer's Republic* that a defining characteristic of a consumer culture is how it claims to benefit the consumers who participate in it.<sup>2</sup> Colin Campbell has theorized that the act of mass consumption and the study of consumer culture have long been overlooked by academics for two main reasons. The first is that traditionally, economists have valued the act of production far more than consumption. The second is connected to a lingering cultural prejudice against consumption coming early Puritan suspicions towards material acquisitions.<sup>3</sup> Jean Baudrillard references works such as Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* and writes, "The celebration of affluence and the great lament over "artificial" or "alienated

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Williams, "Consumer," in Consumer Society in American History: A Reader, ed. Lawrence B. Glickman (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America (New York: Knopf, 2003), 15.

<sup>3</sup> Colin Campbell, "Consuming Goods and the Good of Consuming," in Consumer Society in American History: A Reader, ed. Lawrence B. Glickman, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 19-30.

needs,” together have fueled the same mass culture, and even the intellectual discourse on the issue.”<sup>4</sup> Despite varying opinions on the effects of mass consumption on society, there is some general agreement on terminology.

The terms “mass consumption” and “consumer culture” are mutually complementary, but they are *not* necessarily interchangeable. Mass consumption is a process consisting of the combined forces of “wanting” and “having.” Consumer culture is the manifestation of the aforementioned process. Mass consumption fuels the development of a consumer culture. In summary, mass consumption is a social force, and consumer culture consists of manifestations of and reactions to that force. Consumer culture is based upon the human factor, and most of the evidence for the study of consumer culture is intangible and unquantifiable, in contrast to that of mass consumption. These definitions are heavily influenced by the work of Raymond Williams, who has written extensively on the role of terminology in consumer studies.<sup>5</sup>

This dissertation will deal with explaining the facts of buying and selling in Milwaukee, and therefore will focus primarily on mass consumption even though this will only provide a partial picture of Milwaukee’s entire consumer experience. This is necessary in order to properly present the nature of buying and selling in Milwaukee without excessive digressions.

### **How is mass consumption perpetuated?**

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<sup>4</sup> Jean Baudrillard, “Consumer Society,” in Consumer Society in American History: A Reader, ed. Lawrence B. Glickman, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 40.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond Williams, “Consumer,” in Consumer Society in American History: A Reader, ed. Lawrence B. Glickman, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 17-18.

Mass consumption occurs through the combination of economic and social processes. People become consumers by taking their money and exchanging it for goods or services. Scholars of mass consumption such as Cohen have noted that historians began to develop an interest in the subject relatively recently, primarily after the Second World War.<sup>6</sup> Daniel Miller observes in his 1987 work *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* that for decades, many historians and sociologists dismissed the study of mass consumption as “trivial or inauthentic.”<sup>7</sup> It is only recently that the subject has gained more respect from the academy.

The earliest stages of consumption consist of the means of production and the labor that is necessary in order to produce the various objects that are later put up for sale. In order for the means of production to be economically viable, multiple criteria must be fulfilled. First, there must be a market for the product in question. The product must be able to be generated in large quantities at a cost that will allow it to be sold at a price that will allow for both high sales and considerable profits. Toasters or blenders, to cite just two popular examples, are goods that can be generated to a uniform standard in vast quantities and then sold at affordable prices to the general public. Artistic items made by skilled craftsmen, such as a Stradivarius violin or a Fabergé egg in contrast, cannot be mass-produced.\* Only one highly skilled artist or company of artisans can make such items. This requires a considerable amount of time and effort, thereby

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<sup>6</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 10.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (New York, United States: Basil Blackwell, 1987), viii.

\* Not that these items could be made today, they are simply famous examples used to make a point.

producing a rare object that only the very wealthy can afford. Mass consumption by definition requires items that can be purchased by the masses. A quart of milk, for example, has always been affordable for all but the most destitute members of society, and therefore milk is a common mass consumption item. Automobiles, in comparison, began as a luxury item for the affluent, and then mass production made cars more affordable for most people, albeit still a major expense made affordable through various forms of financing. Food and household goods were bought by every Milwaukeean, and automobiles were common purchases as well. It is this ubiquity that makes them important subjects of study.

### **The Effects of a Changing Consumption Landscape**

Milwaukee's residents have always had to adapt their habits of buying and selling in order to adjust to the existing "zone of consumption." The phrase "zone of consumption" is a reference to the localized areas of consumption venues in the city, such as the local grocery stores and other small shops that were almost exclusively patronized by people who lived nearby. A residential neighborhood, often less than a square mile in size, with from one to a few small food stores, and a handful of assorted shops, might constitute a zone of consumption. During the early twentieth century, scores of these zones existed throughout the city. This number increased into the hundreds as the city expanded. Most Milwaukeeans' basic needs could be purchased within the centralized zone of consumption in which they resided, although larger purchases, luxuries, and more obscure items required a trip to the downtown central business district. As traditional

neighborhoods, often defined by ethnicity, widely (but not completely) dissipated over the course of the twentieth century, the boundaries of these zones of consumption stretched and became increasingly flexible as consumers used their automobiles to visit supermarkets and other shopping venues farther from home. This often led to a decrease in neighborhood cohesion as the area decentralized, and stores that used to be community hubs lost business and prominence. The growth of shopping venues across the city sapped the central business district's position of dominance as consumers were drawn to locations far away from the downtown area.

As the central business district's position of dominance declined, consumers traveled widely and bought their household goods all over the city, rather than primarily inside the downtown area. As business was siphoned away from the downtown area, the region lost much of its economic strength. Early levels of downtown trade could have been maintained if a sufficiently large population influx occurred, but no such increase happened. A parallel development was that as increasing numbers of large shopping centers and malls were built throughout the city, no new region took over from the central business district as the city's main consumption hub. The new venues each took a portion of the city's available business. Some of these venues were profitable and thrived for decades. Others did not.

### **Samples of Mass Consumption in Milwaukee**



Three main areas of mass consumed items in Milwaukee are profiled here: automobiles, groceries, and durable goods (e.g. clothing, shoes, furniture, appliances, books, and all sorts of miscellany).

### *Automobiles*

In contemporary America, automobiles serve as a critical commodity for many citizens. People need a means of conveyance in order to travel for both business and pleasure, transport objects, and explore their community. This necessity comes at a price far beyond the original price of the car, but American society has long been convinced that the benefits of the automobile outweigh all of the shortcomings emanating from the car culture.

Americans fell in love with the automobile early in the twentieth century and in the 1920's they became a popular mass consumption item. Auto ownership skyrocketed in Milwaukee during the 1920's and took off even more dramatically in the years after World War II. Indeed, Milwaukee was one of the first cities to embrace and improve upon the automobile, and re-create its urban space to accommodate individual auto ownership. They not only bought and drove them; they manufactured them, serviced them, and cared for them. The people who sold these much-desired machines to Milwaukeeans became important players in the city's mass consumption culture. Auto dealers became major players in urban affairs and a few became some of Milwaukee's best-known and wealthiest citizens.

This study of the effects of automobile consumption in Milwaukee will contain a history of cars in the city, as well as details of automobile component

production and innovation in the area, and the evolution of the automobile dealership. Automobile ownership also served to make mass consumption venues much more accessible.

### *Grocery Stores*

Everybody has to eat. Since hardly anyone in the greater metropolitan Milwaukee area lives on a self-sustaining farm, Milwaukeeans have to buy their food and take it to their homes. Milwaukeeans, like other urban residents, visited different venues to prepare their meals. In the 1920's, consumers needed to patronize their local butcher, baker, greengrocer, fishmonger, and corner store in order to obtain everything they needed in their diets.

Due to limited food preservation technologies, most people had to shop for their food on a daily basis, except during the winter when frigid weather was an all-natural cooling system. The advent of the self-service market began to change the ways in which Milwaukeeans shopped for food and eventually the arrival of the New York-pioneered supermarket, as well as the wider use of food preservation technology (i.e. refrigerators) and the use of preservatives in foods like bread, processed meat, cereals and other items changed the way Milwaukeeans bought their groceries.

More than just food store sizes and names changed. There were many new innovations in marketing, including the creation of wholesale warehouses, improved forms of advertising, discount coupons, and trading stamps. All of these factors played a significant role in the shopping choices of Milwaukeeans. The major families and corporations behind the grocery business, like Roundy's, Kohl's, and Sendik's (to name only a few of the best-known examples), became synonymous with Milwaukee, just as other food chains would leave their mark on individual cities, like Winn-Dixie in the South, Dominick's in Chicago and Safeway in California. Specialty shops, ethnic food stores, and farmers markets continued to attract audiences, but as the century progressed the standard shopping venue tended to grow bigger and increasingly fueled by self-service.

As food shopping venues changed over time, it became increasingly necessary for consumers to travel to food stores. During the postwar era, many small groceries closed, and larger chain stores and supermarkets did not offer home delivery. This once-common service became a rarity. Even in America's dairyland, home delivery for milk faded away, and instead of milkmen delivering bottles to consumers each day, Milwaukeeans had no choice but to leave their homes and buy all of their dairy products from stores. Despite the continued presence of small convenience and specialty stores, grocery shopping is now predominately performed in large venues.

### *Shopping Venues and Durables*

Consumers need places to purchase other necessities, such as clothing, home appliances, cleaning supplies, and tools, not to mention various luxury items. Milwaukee has many venues for consumption of these products. Over time, thousands of small stores and emporia specializing in every conceivable sort of product have opened for business in Milwaukee. Early in the century, Milwaukee's assorted emporia and department stores were scattered throughout the city, and they were generally accessible by public transportation. By the mid-twentieth century, shopping centers and later malls began to spring up on the city's fringes, siphoning customers away from the traditional downtown shopping area with the assistance of privately owned automobiles.

It is important to understand the distinctions between these different locations for buying household goods. A specialty store is relatively small in size, and sells primarily one type of goods, such as clothes, jewelry, or electronics, to name just a few. They are not necessarily physically connected to other stores, though it is possible that they may be. Emporia sell an array of goods, but such shops are generally far smaller than department stores, and therefore their selection is much more limited. A department store is a large building, occasionally but not always containing multiple floors. Although it sells a wide variety of items in different departments, all of the departments are owned and run by the same people or company. Clothing, household appliances, and jewelry are standard commodities in a department store. Examples of Milwaukee department stores are Schuster's and Gimbels in the downtown central business district

(though eventually these department stores would open branches throughout the city), and Goldmann's on Mitchell Street on the south side.

Shopping centers and malls are a collection of different stores all in the same general location and usually sharing walls and roofs.\* The businesses that compose a shopping center are usually owned and run by many different people. The stores in a shopping center are generally separate from each other, and to move from one shop to another a customer has to leave one store, travel a short distance outside (though often under a protective awning or other covering), and then walk through the front door of a different shop. Southgate was Milwaukee's first shopping center, and it was located on 27<sup>th</sup> Street, once the city's western boundary. A mall is enclosed in one very large climate-controlled building, with assorted stores, restaurants, and occasionally entertainment venues. Someone can visit most stores in the complex without traveling outside the main building. The Grand Avenue and Southridge are two examples of prominent Milwaukee malls.

During the second half of the twentieth century, Milwaukeeans were presented with not just new, larger venues for buying all sorts of items, but also new locations for doing their shopping, located a substantial distance from many residents' homes, causing most citizens to use their automobiles to travel to these shopping centers and cart home their newly bought possessions.

Interestingly, the success of the large shopping centers and malls has been linked to the economic health and strength of the city of Milwaukee itself. The administration of Mayor Henry Maier (1960-1988) took a particular interest in

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\* The differences between shopping centers and malls will be defined in Chapter Three.

making sure that the downtown Grand Avenue Mall was successful.<sup>8</sup> Many department stores and shopping centers became Milwaukee landmarks, becoming community hubs for consumption. No matter how popular shopping centers may have during their heyday, continued popularity and economic viability was not guaranteed forever. Well-known department stores like Schuster's and shopping centers like Southgate could not remain popular forever, and they were forced to face their own mortality as buyouts erased their once-famous names and declining sales slashed their economic viability.

Many Milwaukee's major shopping venues have a relatively brief life span of a couple of decades or so. Typically, a mall or shopping center will open to bustling crowds, and serve as a major center of consumption for the better part of a generation (possibly two), and then suffer a gradual decline in customers and sales, steadily lose stores, and eventually close down altogether.<sup>9</sup> The reasons for this will be explored in Chapter Three. Department stores tend to have rather longer longevity, although their ends tend to be a bit more abrupt than those of malls and shopping centers, due to the entire store being sold or an executive decision to cease operations. While they thrived, such shopping venues were local landmarks. When they were sold or ceased being profitable, they faded away into memory.

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<sup>8</sup> Amy Rabideau Silvers, "Karen Lamb, Widow of Mayor Henry Maier, dies," The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 5 February 2009, <<http://www.jsonline.com/news/obituaries/39147412.html>> (28 September 2012).

<sup>9</sup> John Gurda, Cream City Chronicles: Stories of Milwaukee's Past (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2007) 171-175.

All of these case studies illustrate Milwaukeeans' mass consumption habits, but before these subjects are explored, it is crucial to understand what kinds of people made up Milwaukee's population and how much money they had to spend on consumer goods.

### ***INCOME AND DEMOGRAPHICS IN MILWAUKEE\****

From 1920 to 1970, Milwaukee went through four stages that shaped its patterns of consumption: boom, bust, war, and prosperity. Throughout the 1920's, the city experienced a post-WWI boom period of relative comfort. The 1929 stock market crash affected industrialized Milwaukee later than the rest of the country. However, once the Depression gripped the city in the early 1930's, however, the local economy went bust, and many Milwaukeeans were left unemployed and destitute. After a decade of hard times, World War II brought both economic revival and wartime rationing. When the war ended, mass consumption in Milwaukee re-ignited. The economy expanded and strengthened over the next few decades, save for a few brief recessions. The postwar era brought widespread comfort, but despite the healthier economy, there were clear income disparities along racial and gender lines.

#### *1920-1930: THE BOOM YEARS*

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\* Additional information about income and employment in Milwaukee can be found in the appendices to the introduction.

In 1920, there were 457,147 inhabitants in the city of Milwaukee.<sup>10</sup> 228,614 were male (50.0%) and 228,533 were female (50.0%).<sup>11</sup> 99.5% of the city was white.<sup>12</sup>

The United States Census did not compile detailed records of income levels in Milwaukee until the 1940 Census, and prior to that time statistics regarding Milwaukeeans' earnings are either incomplete or nonexistent. The data on income in Milwaukee prior to 1940 is not comprehensive and can only be obtained piecemeal through various sources. Wages varied widely depending on profession.

In 1919, the estimated full-time per capita earnings for men in the state of Wisconsin was \$1,430, and the Census calculated the average wage for all state residents at \$1,100 (\$18,024.28 and \$13,864.93 in 2010 dollars, respectively).<sup>13</sup> Two years later, the estimated male full-time per capita earnings in Wisconsin was \$1,454, and the Census's average wage for all Wisconsinites was \$1,117 (\$17,712.48 and \$13,607.18 in 2010, respectively).<sup>14</sup> The Census further reports that in 1919, there were an average of 84,222 wage earners in all of Milwaukee's manufacturing industries. These factory workers earned approximately \$89,921,000 in 1919. It should be stressed that most statistics on income are estimates based on a segment of the population, and therefore different sources

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<sup>10</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 50.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>13</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Women in Gainful Occupations, 1870 to 1920 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1929), 386.

[http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 386. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).



may produce slightly different numbers. For example, according to the United States Census, the average yearly income of a Milwaukeeans employed in manufacturing was \$1,067.67. (After inflation, this equals \$13,503.43 in 2010.)<sup>15</sup> *The Milwaukee Sentinel* would report an alternative statistic.

*The Milwaukee Sentinel* reported selected industrial-related income information throughout the 1920's. Between 1919 and 1929, the numbers of people working in manufacturing, jobbing, and wholesale business fluctuated dramatically. In this period, the number of Milwaukeeans working in manufacturing ranged from a low of 97,201 in 1921 to a high of 138,378 in 1929. The *Sentinel's* statistics on income were a little higher than those found in the Census. According to the *Sentinel*, the average wage for someone in manufacturing ranged from \$1,193.63 in 1919 (\$15,044.98 in 2010 dollars) to \$1,611.31 in 1929 (\$20,547.12 in 2010 dollars). The number of Milwaukeeans in jobbing and wholesale business ranged from 5,353 in 1929 to 6,321 in 1923; with average wages ranging from \$1,477.16 in 1919 (\$18,618.71 in 2010 dollars) to \$1,923.37 in 1929 (\$24,526.45 in 2010 dollars).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Fourteenth Census of the United States—State Compendium: Wisconsin (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1925), 146. The percentages and inflation calculations were performed by me.

<sup>16</sup> "Industrial Statistics Summary For 1920," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1921, Manufacturing Special Section, 3. All average wage statistics from the *Sentinel* industrial statistics have been calculated by me. "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1920-1921," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1922, Annual Trade Review and World Commerce Number, 3. Note: there appears to be some sort of error with the numbers, because the listed amounts do not add up to the stated total. Since there is no evidence as to what caused this discrepancy, I have simply used the stated total. "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1921-1922," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1923. The newspaper pages on this microfilm were out of order and badly frayed at the top, making identifying the section and page number

At the end of the boom period, the average Milwaukee income earner was a white male working in either the manufacturing or the industrial industries. This would change in the coming decades.

### *1930-1941: THE BUST YEARS*

By 1930, Milwaukee's population had grown to 578,249 residents.<sup>17</sup> 290,648 were male (50.3%) and 287,601 were female (49.7%).<sup>18</sup> The city was 98.4% white.<sup>19</sup>

Though the Census's employment statistics were limited in 1930, income levels for certain jobs were recorded. The Census stated that in 1930, there were 8,669 retail stores in Milwaukee, employing 41,725 workers, and the average

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impossible. "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1922-1923," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1924, Annual Trade Review, 3. "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1923-1924," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1925, Progressive Milwaukee and Annual Trade Review, 3. "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1924-1925," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1926, Progressive Milwaukee and Annual Trade Review, 3. "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1925-1926," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1927, Progressive Milwaukee and Annual Trade Review, 3. "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1926-1927," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 31 December 1927, Annual Trade Review, 3. "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1927-1928," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 29 December 1928, Progressive Milwaukee and Annual Trade Review, 3. "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1927-1928," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 29 December 1928, Annual Trade Review, 3. The earlier version of the 1928 statistics were used in this one case because the microfilms of the later statistics were so faint as to be unreadable. "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1919-1929," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1930, Annual Trade Review, 5, 8-14. Note: some individual digits in larger numbers are blurred, but after examining the totals, these are my best approximations as to the precise printed statistics. Full details on these industrial statistics can be found in the appendices to this chapter. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>17</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Abstract of the Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 98.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

annual salary for a full-time employee was \$1,450.<sup>20</sup> (After inflation, this comes to \$18,933.01 in 2010.)<sup>21</sup>

Comparatively, Wisconsin kept some records on average annual income in Milwaukee County from 1920 to 1936. The 1929 average total income in Milwaukee County was \$2,602 (\$33,293.88 in 2010). Just five years later, average incomes were sliced nearly in half (after inflation the average 1934 income of \$1,418 comes to \$23,153.93 in 2010).<sup>22</sup> In 1935 and 1936, annual income was \$1,569 and \$1,781, respectively (\$24,972.98 and \$27,939.41 in 2010, respectively).<sup>23</sup> By unadjusted dollar amounts, that was a 45.5% drop in income, but only a 30.5% drop in adjusted buying power, which was still a devastating loss for most consumers. The precipitous drop in average yearly incomes from 1929 to 1934 may be attributed to the many unemployed workers who lost their entire income. Additionally, many regularly employed persons took pay cuts.

After nearly a decade of the Depression, Milwaukee's population rose only slightly from 1930, reaching 587,472 inhabitants by 1940.<sup>24</sup> 289,118

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<sup>20</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Wholesale Distribution: Special Series. Multiple Types of Wholesaling: A Study of Establishments Engaged in Two or More Types of Wholesaling (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 37. Further information can be found in the appendices.

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). The cited numbers were adjusted for inflation to 1936 levels.

<sup>23</sup> W. Elliot Brownlee, Jr., Progressivism and Economic Growth: The Wisconsin Income Tax 1911-1929 (Port Washington, New York: National University Publications, Kennikat Press, 1974), 58.

[http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). For more information, see the appendices.

<sup>24</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. II: Characteristics of the Population: Part 7 Utah–Wyoming (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 681.

citizens were male (49.2%) and 298,354 were female (50.8%).<sup>25</sup> Milwaukee's populations remained largely homogenous— 98.4% of the city's residents were white.<sup>26</sup>

According to the United States Bureau of the Census, in 1939, out of 329,602 males in the experienced labor force, 40.2% of working men in Milwaukee made less than \$1,000 per annum (\$15,741.22 in 2010), and 16.0% earned \$2,000 or more yearly (\$31,482.45 in 2010).<sup>27</sup> In comparison, 75.4% of the 66,810-woman female labor force in Milwaukee earned less than \$1,000 in the year 1939, and only 3.3% made more than \$2,000. The female labor force was only 39.2% the size of the male labor force, but the average woman brought home far less than the typical man.<sup>28</sup>

By the end of the bust era, there were still many consumers who were not earning any steady income, and who survived through odd jobs and charities. Most wage earners were still white adult males in industry, though young people of both genders were earning small temporary incomes through New Deal work programs.

### *1942-1945: THE WAR YEARS*

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 685.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 681.

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>28</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. III: The Labor Force: Part 5 Pennsylvania–Wyoming (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 1010. For more information, see the appendices to this introduction.

Historian Richard L. Pifer observes, “For Milwaukeeans the Second World War generally was an era of prosperity... With a few minor dips, average weekly earnings in Milwaukee rose steadily throughout most of the war, and peaked at \$52.52 in March 1945... Between January 1941 and December 1943, average weekly earnings of Milwaukee wage earners rose over 51%.”<sup>29</sup>

Reindustrialization for the war effort revived job opportunities. \$52.52 earned weekly for a year would come to an average maximum salary of \$2,731.04 given full-time employment (these figures equate to \$636.24 and \$33,084.43 in 2010). Many people, of course could not work full-time. Women took over servicemen’s jobs, increasing female incomes and consumption potential, though many of them could only serve part-time due to their need to look after their families.

Pifer observes that despite rising incomes, Milwaukeeans’ actual spending power did not increase much because of inflation. Inflation levels were so high during the war years that despite higher industrial wages, their real value was barely enough for consumers to maintain their standard of living. There was some relief at the grocery store, since the Office of Price Administration (OPA) kept prices low, though rationing prevented consumers from buying some items that they desired. The *Milwaukee Journal* occasionally editorialized that this was a necessary hardship if America was to win the war.<sup>30</sup>

At the end of the war era, for the first time women earned a substantial percentage of the city’s income, since they were temporarily working in the jobs

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<sup>29</sup> Richard L. Pifer, “A Social History of the Home Front: Milwaukee Labor During World War II,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin– Madison, 1983), 157.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

vacated by men serving in the armed forces. The city's workforce remained overwhelmingly white.

### *1946-1970: THE YEARS OF PROSPERITY*

The post-war era was one of unparalleled prosperity, widely enjoyed throughout a growing city. Milwaukee's population rose substantially during the early postwar era, peaking in the 1960's. In 1950, the Census reported that there were 637,392 Milwaukeeans.<sup>31</sup> 311,643 were male (48.9%) and 325,749 were female (51.1%).<sup>32</sup> 96.4% of Milwaukeeans were white.<sup>33</sup> By 1960, the number rose to 741,324.<sup>34</sup> 361,268 were male (48.7%) and 380,056 were female (51.3%).<sup>35</sup> The city was 91.1% white.<sup>36</sup> By 1970, the population fell slightly to 717,372.<sup>37</sup> 341,910 were male (47.7%) and 375,189 were female (52.3%).<sup>38</sup> The

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<sup>31</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States: Census of Population: 1950, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population: Number of Inhabitants, General Characteristics of the Population, Part 49: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 49-54.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 49-54.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 49-58.

<sup>34</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1960; the Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 1-66.

<sup>35</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, United States Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Milwaukee, Wis. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 39.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>37</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts: Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (and Adjacent Areas) (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), X.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., P-1.

African-American population soared, and whites only made up 84.4% of the city.<sup>39</sup>

In 1949, the per capita disposable income in Milwaukee was \$1,638 (\$15,007.38 in 2012), and disposable income levels rose steadily over the next twelve years to \$2,328 in 1961 (\$16,977.74 in 2010), a 42.1% change before inflation.<sup>40</sup> The estimated total city disposable income rose from \$1,417,197 to \$2,478,815 during the same time period (\$12,984,382.73 and \$18,077,608.15 in 2010), an increase of 74.9% before inflation.<sup>41</sup> Total retail sales rose from \$1,104,853,000 in 1949 to \$1,403,433,000 in 1961, a 27.0% rise before inflation. (These numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand, and equate to \$10,122,681,750 and \$10,235,016,260 in 2010.)<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), P-1. Note: The cited population of the city of Milwaukee, “717,099,” is technically incorrect, since while this edition of the census was being compiled, new information showing uncounted numbers was released, making Milwaukee’s population higher at “717,372.” Unfortunately, the miscalculations only came to light after the bulk of the statistics were already tabulated and printed, so all 1970 statistical data regarding race and gender is slightly incorrect. Since only the difference in total population was corrected, and no information is given regarding the race or the gender (or anything else) about the 273 uncounted people, I cannot correct the statistics. Thankfully, since the difference is so small, the statistical discrepancy is minimal.

<sup>40</sup> Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, The Economy of Southeastern Wisconsin (Waukesha, Wis.: The Commission, 1963), 8-10. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 8-10. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 8-10, 38. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). For more details on disposable income, see Appendix N.

In 1950, 193,388 of the 200,515 males in the labor force were employed (96.4%), as were 90,164 of the 92,486 women in the labor force (97.5%).<sup>43</sup> In 1949, the total median income for both sexes was \$2,514, \$3,201 just for males, and \$1,369 for females.<sup>44</sup> These numbers equate to \$23,033.31, \$29,327.62, and \$12,542.80 in 2012 dollars, respectively.<sup>45</sup>

42.7% of income-earning males brought home less than \$3,000 in 1949, and 4.7% made more than \$7,000. In contrast, 91.1% of wage-earning women received less than \$3,000 per year then, and 0.7% earned over \$7,000. (\$3,000 in 1949 equates to \$27,580.21 in 2010, and \$7,000 in 1949 equals \$64,353.82 in 2010.)<sup>46</sup> The earning gap between the sexes is due to glass ceilings, the fact that many women only worked part time, and that they often worked in poorly paid menial positions.

Over the next two decades, more women and minorities worked in Milwaukee, but they generally earned less than the average white male. By 1969, there were 426,374 males in the Milwaukee standard metropolitan area (MSMA). 416,699 of them earned income. Their median income was \$8,307 (\$49,356.71 in

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<sup>43</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1950 United States Census of Population: Census Tract Statistics: Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Adjacent Area (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952), 20. For more information, see Appendix O.

<sup>44</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States: Census of Population: 1950, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population: Number of Inhabitants, General and Detailed Characteristics of the Population, Part 49: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 49-227.

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



2010) and their mean income was \$8,803 (\$52,303.73 in 2010).<sup>47</sup> By 1969, there were 479,994 females in the MSMA, 351,478 of whom earned income. Their median income was \$2,667 (\$15,846.19 in 2010) and their mean income was \$3,395 (\$20,171.67 in 2010 dollars).<sup>48</sup> Of 24,990 black males over eighteen in Milwaukee in 1969, 23,380 earned income. Their median income was \$5,973 (\$35,489.06 in 2010) and their mean income was \$5,748 (\$34,152.20 in 2010).<sup>49</sup> Of 29,402 black females over eighteen in Milwaukee in 1969, 23,243 earned income. Their median income was \$2,820 (\$16,755.26 in 2010) and their mean income was \$3,095 (\$18,389.19 in 2010).<sup>50</sup>

At the end of the prosperity era, most income earners were still white males, but in 1970 increasing numbers of the city's wage earners were blacks and

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<sup>47</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 51-886. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). See Appendix S for more information.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-886. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). See Appendix S for more information.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-887. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). See Appendix S for more information. The numbers used in this chart and the following chart on African-American family income in 1969 differ from the totals in the actual bound copy of the census. The statistics for family income are divided into subcategories, such as "Head, under 25 years old," "Head, 25 to 34 years old," and so forth. Upon checking the statistics to make sure that the figures were correct, I discovered that the totals were actually short, and that for some unknown reason they did not include the "Head, 60 to 64 years old" numbers. Consultations with Marquette University librarians, Milwaukee Public Library researchers, and the U.S. Bureau of the Census confirmed that the number totals in the book are incorrect. I have adjusted all of the numbers to the correct totals, but since I lack the full data behind the "Head, 60 to 64 years old" totals, I cannot be certain if the median and mean census numbers provided by the Bureau of the Census are correct or if they also lack the statistics of the "Head, 60 to 64 years old" section." The median and mean census numbers must therefore be viewed cautiously.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-887. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). See the appendices to this chapter for more information.

females. By 1970, industry and manufacturing were still major sources of employment, but white-collar jobs were steadily displacing blue-collar jobs as the process of deindustrialization began.

The half-century from 1920 to 1970 witnessed a startling change in Milwaukee's population. Not only did the city become substantially more ethnically diverse, but also the average consumer became more affluent. These funds were then funneled towards consuming.

### ***HOW MASS CONSUMPTION SHAPED MILWAUKEE***

Milwaukeeans were united by a shared mass consumption experience, but over time the trends of decentralization led to a slow but steady shift in the consumer experience. As the following profiles of Milwaukee's statistical information and forms of consumption will illustrate, mass consumption helped to build the city of Milwaukee physically and economically, even as the consequences of decentralized buying and selling helped to break many of the social threads that tied the citizenry into a community.

At the start of the twentieth century, the average consumer in Milwaukee tended to shop in one of two places. The first was the "zone of consumption" located around the consumer's place of residence, consisting of the small food stores and other shops located within the neighborhood where the consumer lived. The second was the downtown shopping business district, where the city's department stores and most prominent specialty stores were located. Most Milwaukeeans needed public transportation to travel to and from the downtown

business district. By 1970, consumers used their personal automobiles to shop throughout the city.

Each chapter in this dissertation will illustrate the gradual transformation of the mass consumption experience in Milwaukee over the course of the twentieth century. Privately owned automobiles revolutionized the issue of distance, making shopping easier by giving consumers more control over travel, time, and transport. Cars therefore were the catalyst that made the expansion of mass consumption possible. The dramatic increase in size and selection illustrated in the evolving food shopping landscape demonstrates the explosion of options available to the consumer, as well as the increased role of self-service in the buying experience. Finally, the histories of Milwaukee's shopping venues are emblematic of the development of the city of Milwaukee itself, as the city expanded, and new neighborhoods prospered economically at the expense of traditional shopping districts.

The story of mass consumption in Milwaukee is the history of how life in the city changed over the course of the twentieth century. Consumption was an inextricable part of every citizen's daily routine, and studying the processes of buying and selling leads to a better understanding of Milwaukee's development, daily life in the city, and how changing times and national trends affected the region. Mass consumption was one of the fuels that propelled Milwaukee's expansion and advancement as a city.

## *Notes on Methodology and Review of Literature*

### *Primary Sources*

In order to tell the story of the development of mass consumption in Milwaukee, it is necessary to gather evidence in order to learn more about the city's citizens and their businesses. There is a rich and extensive collection of primary sources regarding mass consumption in Milwaukee. The data regarding Milwaukee's buying and selling practices comes from multiple sources, mainly in the forms of statistics or narratives. Newspapers are a crucial resource for studying consumption of Milwaukee. The *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, the city's two major newspapers from the mid-twentieth century, contain information to the city's consumption habits that cannot be found anywhere else. Statistical information on sales and income was occasionally printed in business reports reflecting the city's economic condition. Brief human-interest pieces on entrepreneurs, and profiles of local businesses can also be found sporadically in the newspapers, and their snapshots of various shops and sellers provide glimpses into consumer mindsets that might otherwise be lost to posterity.

The *Journal* and the *Sentinel* are a crucial source for gathering the details behind the development of mass consumption in Milwaukee. Though the newspapers provide a vast amount of information that cannot be found anywhere else, they have to be viewed with a critical eye. The newspapers provide a contemporaneous account of events, which provides both potential gold mines and pitfalls for researchers. Many of the stories, quotes, and perspectives in

newspaper articles can contribute fascinating and compelling details for scholarly study, but even the best newspapers have inaccuracies. No editor can catch all of the little mistakes that might make their way onto the pages of a paper, such as a numerical mistake caused by striking the key next to the one intended, or possibly a misquote caused by hastily scribbled notes. Even the most responsible and conscientious journalists are under the constraints of deadlines and space limitations, and interviewees may not always tell the whole truth. Often, newspaper articles are meant to advertise businesses or people by portraying them positively, thereby ignoring aspects of controversy or glossing over problems that ought to be discussed in a scholarly study. Therefore, it is necessary to regard these newspapers with caution, looking for possible biases or omissions, and factual and statistical information found within them ought to be confirmed where possible.<sup>51</sup>

Scattered throughout the archives of Milwaukee's mayors are assorted files pertinent to the study of mass consumption in the city. In particular, the records of Mayor Daniel Hoan, held at the Milwaukee County Historical Society, contain details on the state of food consumption in the city, including the city government's attempts to run a local market and form committees to overview local eating habits.<sup>52</sup> The "Food" sections of the Milwaukee County Historical Society archives contain large quantities of Hoan's correspondence with various

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<sup>51</sup> The Milwaukee Journal. The Milwaukee Sentinel.

<sup>52</sup> "Hoan, Daniel Webster, 1889-1966," Mss-0546, Box 16, Folders 379-382, "Food, 1916-1918, 1933-1938, 1941," "Food – Milk, 1932-1936," "Food – Milk, 1937-1940," "Food – Milwaukee Milk Survey, 1936," Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

citizens about food-related subjects, ranging from his own breakfasting preferences to the fluctuating prices of staple foods. Another former mayor, Frank Zeidler, has left many records regarding his term in office, including a recorded interview for Marquette University where he discusses, among other topics, the role of automobiles and public transportation in the city.<sup>53</sup> Henry Maier's mayoral administration records contain details of his plans to revitalize the Milwaukee's downtown business district through building the Grand Avenue shopping mall.<sup>54</sup>

Archival records from the Wisconsin Historical Society, the Milwaukee County Historical Society, the Milwaukee Public Library, and the University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee have provided a substantial amount of records regarding the city's businesses and economy. The Milwaukee County Historical Society has extensive records on local department stores and shopping centers, such as Chapman's, Gimbels, and Schuster's, with smaller stores included in their Business Collection.<sup>55</sup> The Milwaukee Public Library has rare pamphlets and booklets connected to local shops and stores, including Gimbels' history of itself, *It All Began With Adam*, Schuster's self-produced anniversary book *Our Golden*

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<sup>53</sup> "Frank Zeidler," interview conducted 12/9/1993, Wisconsin Politics Oral History Collection, compact disc, 2 of 2, Marquette University Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>54</sup> "Records of the Henry W. Maier Administration, 1960-1988," Milwaukee Series 44, "Downtown 1960-74," Box 73, Folder 15, "Grand Avenue News Conference, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1982," Box 228, No. 36, UW-Milwaukee Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>55</sup> "Business Collection, ca. 1860-ongoing," Mss-0764, "Capitol Court, 1951-2000," "Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986," Mss-0430, Mss-2995, "T.A. Chapman Company, 1881-1982," Mss-810, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

*Years, 1884-1934: A Personalized Memory Record of the Three Schuster Stores in Their Fiftieth Year*, and assorted publications on being an intelligent food shopper, such as the Milwaukee Public Schools' book *Food Preparation, Meal Serving and Housewifery*, and wartime rationing announcements from the United States Office of War Information War Production Board.<sup>56</sup> The department store histories are booster sources, but they have extensive historical content about the department stores' development that cannot be found anywhere else.

The Wisconsin Historical Society holds numerous resources on cars, such as motor vehicle and dealer registration information from the Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Department, an unpublished manuscript and research notes by automobile Historian W.C. Greb, and personal files from the inventor Bornett L. Bobroff, who invented a couple of devices to make vehicles safer.<sup>57</sup> The University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee's Archives hold several documents connected to local small businesses, ranging from the Dexter-Roundy Family Papers detailing the history of the Roundy's food business, files from Frank A. Aukofer's and Frank

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<sup>56</sup> *Gimbels Midwest, It All Began With Adam* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gimbels Midwest, 1972-1974), all pages. *Our Golden Years, 1884-1934: A Personalized Memory Record of the Three Schuster Stores in Their Fiftieth Year* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Edward Schuster & Co., 1934), all pages. Household Arts Department, Milwaukee Public Schools, *Food Preparation, Meal Serving and Housewifery* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1920), all pages. United States Office of War Information War Production Board, *News Releases– War Production Board, Wisconsin Branch (August–December 1942)*, January 3, 1943.

<sup>57</sup> "Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Dept.: Motor Vehicle and Dealer Registrations, 1912-1959," Series 1117, "Wisconsin Secretary of State: Automobile Registrations, 1905-1911," Series 370, "W.C. Greb, *Wisconsin on Wheels, A Motor Vehicle History of the Badger State*," ca. 1948, SC 1239, "Bornett L. Bobroff Papers, 1904-1946," Mss 110, Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin.

Sinclair's *Journal* columns on automobiles in Milwaukee, and the papers of Richard and Ethel Herzfeld papers connected to Boston Store.<sup>58</sup>

Another useful source of information about Milwaukee's history is the Milwaukee Public Library Digital Collections, consisting of thousands of photographs from throughout the city's history. Many of these photographs are images of shopping venues and other locations relevant to the city's mass consumption processes, coupled with captions containing background information about the locations in the photographs.<sup>59</sup>

Unfortunately, despite the vast holdings of the major archives in Milwaukee, many potential sources are either scarce or do not exist (or at least are not readily available to the public), such as records and memoirs of small grocery stores and automobile salesmen. Though the existing evidence provides some helpful factual data, the intangible aspects of mass consumption cannot be recorded, such as customer relations and reactions to business policies. At best, consumer and businessperson recollections come closest to recording the intangible aspects of the city's mass consumption experience.

As useful as these primary sources are, they are not infallible. The Census records have at least one error, probably caused by faulty arithmetic, and the statistics in the newspapers have a couple of unexplained errors, or at least

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<sup>58</sup> "Dexter-Roundy Family Papers," Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 108 and Milwaukee Micro Collection 57, "Frank A. Aukofer Papers," Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 189, "Frank Sinclair Papers, 1938-1964," "U.S. Mss 128AF, Richard and Ethel Herzfeld papers, 1847-1980," UWM Manuscript Collection 232, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee Archives, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>59</sup> Milwaukee Historic Photos: Milwaukee Public Library Digital Collections, Milwaukee Wisconsin.



unanswered questions. All of the discovered discrepancies have been noted where they appear. Many of the Gimbels and Schuster's records are filled with booster sources, so the records are largely, but not uniformly filled with positive store-related information. A few letters from dissatisfied customers can be found in the Boston Store records. Though the available primary sources are a treasure trove for the historian of mass consumption, they need to be viewed with a critical eye.

### *Secondary Sources*

The secondary sources used in researching this dissertation can be divided into two categories: works that explore the history and theoretical underpinnings of mass consumption, and works that recount the history of Milwaukee. Only a handful of sources fall into both categories, illustrating the limited amount of existing research regarding mass consumption in Milwaukee. Much of the literature on mass consumption is not directly relevant to this dissertation, but it helps to illustrate the development of consumerism in America, and therefore, Milwaukee's place in this progress.

### **Mass Consumption: History and Theory**

There is a wide range of literature on mass consumption and how it connects to the whole of society. Intellectuals have long recognized that America was a comfortable and prosperous place for most of its citizens, but the effects that luxuries have on the population is a major point of debate amongst scholars.

Thorstein Veblen's 1899 *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* was one of the first works to explore consumption, before the explosion of mass consumption in the twentieth century reshaped the processes of daily life. Though Veblen's work does not address topics such as mass-produced automobiles, supermarkets, and malls due to it being a product of the late-nineteenth century, his work is an intellectual foundation for consumption studies, and Veblen is widely credited with coining the phrase "conspicuous consumption." Veblen's work focuses on the social effects of purchases made with disposable income, reflecting how what one owns reflects one's place in society. This is not a work of history, but a cultural commentary by a scholar with a background in economics and sociology, and it has been an extremely influential work on the intellectual theory of consumption.<sup>60</sup> Veblen's work is thought-provoking, but like many theoretical works on consumption, it provides virtually no hard data on this dissertation's case studies, and nothing on Milwaukee's history, despite the fact that Veblen was born in Wisconsin.

David Potter's *The People of Plenty* (1954) is a collection of essays exploring how comfortable economic circumstances shape the mentality of citizens and direct the fates of nations. Potter observes that the mobility provided by the automobile proved to be a pivotal force for reshaping the American consumer experience.<sup>61</sup> At the heart of Potter's work is his belief that abundance—

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<sup>60</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), all pages.

<sup>61</sup> David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American*

a surplus of necessary (and some unnecessary) goods– is a crucial influence on the formation of societies. Abundance, Potter argues, is more than a mere source of material comfort. It is a crucial prerequisite to a stable democracy.<sup>62</sup> Potter’s analysis of abundance suggests that the social effects of consumption may be far greater than mere expressions of desire. Consumption may have a positive unifying impact upon society, although its divisive impact ought not to be forgotten.

Vance Packard’s *The Hidden Persuaders* (originally published in 1957, revised in 1980) explores how mass consumption was promoted through advertising and the psychological manipulation of consumers. Packard provides some information about the nationwide impact of the three main subjects of study here, and refers to one Milwaukee advertising executive’s declaration that women will happily buy a \$2.50 container of skin cream, but consider twenty-five cents the maximum acceptable price for a bar of soap. This anonymous executive believed that soap brought cleanliness, but the skin cream offered physical attractiveness, and the “women are buying a promise.”<sup>63</sup> Another Milwaukee advertising executive declared that the “systematic creation of dissatisfaction” was instrumental in propelling America towards “greatness.”<sup>64</sup> Packard devotes a great deal of attention to dealing with gender differences in advertising tactics and consumer behavior, and concludes his book by raising questions about the morality of American advertising culture and in creating consumers who were

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Character (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 93.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, all pages.

<sup>63</sup> Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: Pocket Books, 1981), 5-6.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

propelled by inexplicably powerful desires. Thought processes play a major role in consumption, and Packard indicates that advertisers' success is fueled by a perceptive knowledge of psychology.

John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* (originally published in 1958, but frequently revised) analyses how economic theory affects society once it is put into practice. Galbraith provides a history of how economic ideas entered the public consciousness, declaring that his goal is to "ruling economic ideas of our time in their historical framework."<sup>65</sup> Galbraith connects the morality (or amorality) behind consumption to broader worries about social justice. He constantly expresses concern over the effects of wealth on the portions of society who possess it, frequently suggesting that money can have a soporific effect on one's social conscience, and blind one to the problems of the impoverished, writing that, "In a generally affluent society we must expect the affluent to reward not poverty but affluence...wealth is the relentless enemy of understanding."<sup>66</sup>

George Katona's 1964 book *The Mass Consumption Society* declares that there are three original and distinctive features found in a mass consumption society: affluence, consumer power, and a knowledge of the importance of consumer psychology.<sup>67</sup> Katona believed that America did not become a mass consumption society until a few decades before he wrote his book, but Katona does not accept the claims of some pundits who believe that mass consumption is

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<sup>65</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), xi.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, xxix-1.

<sup>67</sup> George Katona, *The Mass Consumption Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 3.

contrary to the ideals of the agrarian-supporting American Founding Fathers.<sup>68</sup> Katona calls many consumer items “artificially created wants,” since people could not possibly desire items like automobiles before they were invented (though they might have hoped for a faster means of conveyance).<sup>69</sup> As is generally the case with mass consumption studies, Milwaukee is absent from this work, and the three subjects of study are only lightly addressed.

David Riesman’s book *Abundance For What? And Other Essays* (1964) discusses various topics connected to mass consumption. Riesman was a sociologist, also known for his 1953 book *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, which was co-written with Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney.<sup>70</sup> In *Abundance For What? And Other Essays*, Riesman addresses some of the case studies addressed by this dissertation. For example, in the essay “Careers and Consumer Behavior,” Riesman discusses grocery shopping, and mentions research such as the fact when children are allowed to select twenty items from a grocery store, they do not simply choose candy but also products that they have seen their mothers purchase.<sup>71</sup> This indicates that children learn consumer behavior through watching adults buy items, and that kids may seek to emulate their parents. In Riesman’s essay “Autos in America,” Riesman writes that many people viewed the mass consumption of automobiles

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 7, 50.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 54-55.

<sup>70</sup> David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1953), all pages.

<sup>71</sup> David Riesman, *Abundance for What? And Other Essays* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 113-114.

negatively. Supreme Court Justice Brandeis once railed against the way that automobiles empowered the citizenry.<sup>72</sup> In contrast, many black people embraced cars as a weapon against Jim Crow and segregation, since automobiles allowed them to move away from their old neighborhoods and take up new employment.<sup>73</sup> Riesman also observes that pundits may not be able to predict the paths that mass consumption may take—Milton Friedman once informed Riesman that in 1908, some experts once believed that cars could not become any more popular than they already were.<sup>74</sup> Like most of the other studies of mass consumption, these essays are applicable to all of America, and Milwaukee is not specifically mentioned.

E.F. Schumacher's 1973 book *Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered* is a well-known critique of consumerism. Schumacher was an economist, but his title reflects his belief that the prevalent belief that largeness is not necessarily equivalent to economic success and stability. Schumacher is openly critical of consumerism, writing that, "in the excitement over the unfolding of his scientific and technical powers, modern man has built a system of production that ravishes nature and a type of society that mutilates man."<sup>75</sup> This book explores the philosophy and morality of consumerism, and therefore there is no historical research on automobiles, grocery stores, shopping venues selling durable goods, or Milwaukee.

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>75</sup> E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 277.

Rosalind H. Williams's *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (1982) does not address the time period or locale addressed in this dissertation. It does, however, provide a useful comparative perspective by presenting a world that was very different from twentieth-century Milwaukee. Mass consumption was not a solely American phenomenon. In 1852, the wealthiest members of French society could visit the prototypical department store, Le Bon Marché.<sup>76</sup> Williams is deeply concerned about the morality of mass consumption, and concludes her book by calling for society to reject consumerism and embrace “a collective shared austerity that will emphasize equity among men and harmony with nature.”<sup>77</sup>

Roland Marchand is one of the most prominent historians of mass consumption, known for works such as *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (1985), which explores how advertising became an integral part of American life, and how American society's ideals and values were reflected in advertisements. Some of Marchand's principal sources are the print advertisements used in major campaigns during the early twentieth century.<sup>78</sup> As is generally the case with books about American mass consumption, this information is useful for describing the nation as a whole, rather than just Milwaukee.

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<sup>76</sup> Rosalind H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 405.

<sup>78</sup> Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), all pages.

Daniel Miller's *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (1987) seeks to make the study of mass consumption respectable amongst academics, for it was long considered "trivial or inauthentic."<sup>79</sup> Miller criticizes previous studies of mass consumption for directing a disproportionate amount of attention on production rather than consumption.<sup>80</sup> Miller's work also focuses on widespread national developments rather than a single city, and only briefly addresses this dissertation's main subjects of study. For example, Miller notes those connections between social status and consumer choices, such as food purchases and how they may relate to people's positions in society.<sup>81</sup>

Susan Strasser is another respected historian of consumption and is the author of the book *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (1989), and the articles "Customer to Consumer: The New Consumption in the Progressive Era" (1999) and "Making Consumption Conspicuous: Transgressive Topics Go Mainstream" (2002). Strasser has noted how mass consumption was connected to the patterns of everyday life. Many consumer goods were labor-saving devices, and therefore led to significantly less work for people, especially women who were responsible for household tasks. The revolution in free time changed American life as much as the increase in disposable income.<sup>82</sup> Strasser's book, like most of the other histories of mass

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<sup>79</sup> Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (New York, United States: Basil Blackwell, 1987), viii.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>82</sup> Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), all pages. Susan Strasser, "Customer to Consumer: The New Consumption in the Progressive Era," *OAH Magazine of*



consumption studied here, provides negligible information specific to Milwaukee's history, but it is still a useful resource for comparing Milwaukee's experience with consumerism to the rest of the nation, particularly when she covers nationwide advertising campaigns.

Gary Cross has explored mass consumption and consumer culture in *Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture* (1993) and *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (2000). Cross explores how a new era of increased income led to a revolution in the social order by giving members of all levels of society more leisure time and freedom to explore interests and entertainment. During the twentieth century, many pundits theorized that new technology and means of production might eliminate the need for manual labor, thereby creating a more utopian society. These ideas never came to pass, and Cross traces the reasons why society moved in a different direction, where people still worked, but at the same time had more chances to obtain material goods. Cross argues that there is no reason to suggest that the centrality of consumption to today's lifestyle will abate anytime soon.<sup>83</sup>

Jennifer Scanlon's 1995 book *Inarticulate Longings— The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* focuses on the role that *The Ladies' Home Journal* played in American society over the early twentieth

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History 13, no. 3 (Spring, 1999): 10-14. Susan Strasser, "Making Consumption Conspicuous: Transgressive Topics Go Mainstream," Technology and Culture 43, no. 4 (October, 2002): 755-770.

<sup>83</sup> Gary Cross, An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), all pages. Gary S. Cross, Time and Money: The Making of Consumer Culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), all pages.

century. During this time, *The Ladies' Home Journal* was the most popular women's magazine in the nation, and the articles and advertisements led many women to desire the consumer goods being described in the periodical.<sup>84</sup> The magazine developed a broad readership in part by ignoring or minimizing the various distinguishing factors amongst women, and treating them as a homogenous consumer base.<sup>85</sup> Scanlon looks at the social lessons *The Ladies' Home Journal* taught, noting that it tended to be skeptical of women working outside the home, promoted marriage as the best means of women finding lasting joy, but acknowledged that making a marriage work took a great deal of effort.<sup>86</sup> This book is helpful for determining how advertisers viewed the typical female consumer; though the book's focus on the period from 1910-1930 means that changing social mores over the mid-twentieth century are not taken into account. Milwaukee is only mentioned once, in one 1893 incident where *The Ladies' Home Journal's* owner attempted to drive up readership of Milwaukee by distributing a sample of his magazine's work to everyone mentioned in Milwaukee's Blue Book and social register.<sup>87</sup>

David Blanke's 2000 book Sowing the American Dream: How Consumer Culture Took Root in the Rural Midwest, an adaptation of his 1996 doctoral dissertation "Sowing the American Dream: Consumer Culture in the Rural Middle West, 1865-1900," explores the growth of consumerism in the agricultural areas

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<sup>84</sup> Jennifer Scanlon, Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 153, 168.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

of states such as Wisconsin.<sup>88</sup> With the stress on the rural versus the urban, Milwaukee only receives slight attention. Blanke's thesis is that between 1820 and 1900, farmers in the Midwestern states accepted the development of American consumerism and used it to strengthen their own profits from their harvests. Blanke further argues that farmers embraced changes in order to make better profits from their harvests.<sup>89</sup> Blanke's work helps to outline how Americans went from a culture of subsistence to a capitalist economy in the face of deep-seated traditions against this shift. Thoreau, for example, saw this change as an abandonment of a simple and virtuous means of existence.<sup>90</sup>

Scholars of consumption often debate the means by which mass consumption becomes consumer culture. Do individuals from a position of power dictate mass consumption habits by controlling the items available for purchase, or do ordinary consumers shape consumer culture through millions of purchases? Tom Pendergast's *Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture, 1900-1950* (2000) argues that individuals from all levels of society contributed in shaping consumerism, ranging from businessmen to ordinary individuals to advertisers. The center of Pendergast's study is how

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<sup>88</sup> David Blanke, *Sowing the American Dream: How Consumer Culture Took Root in the Rural Midwest* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), all pages. David Paul Blanke, "Sowing the American Dream: Consumer Culture in the Rural Middle West, 1865-1900" (Ph.D. diss., Loyola University, Chicago, 1996), all pages.

<sup>89</sup> David Blanke, *Sowing the American Dream: How Consumer Culture Took Root in the Rural Midwest* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

popular magazines affected consumer choices through advertisements and articles.<sup>91</sup>

Stuart Ewen's 2001 book Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture, a revised version of his 1974 dissertation "The Captains of Consciousness: The Emergence of Mass Advertising and Mass Consumption in the 1920's," focuses on how industrialism and mass culture affected American mass consumption.<sup>92</sup> Mass consumption, in Ewen's view, is a result of a changing economic landscape. Ewen writes, "Modern advertising must be seen as a direct response to the needs of mass industrial capitalism."<sup>93</sup> As is generally the case in these studies, Milwaukee's history is absent from the pages of Ewen's work. Ewen places special emphasis on advertising, and how ads were crafted to affect their target audiences. Advertisements directed towards women, for example, tended to self-beautification and self-disparagement.<sup>94</sup>

Lizabeth Cohen's *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (2003) argues that political actions and consumer choices are tightly intertwined. Cohen's title comes from her belief that from the post-WWII era onwards, mass consumption came to be an unavoidable

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<sup>91</sup> Tom Pendergast, Creating the Modern Man: American Magazines and Consumer Culture 1900-1950 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), all pages.

<sup>92</sup> Stuart Ewen, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture (New York: BasicBooks, 2001), 3. Stuart Baer Ewen, "The Captains of Consciousness: The Emergence of Mass Advertising and Mass Consumption in the 1920's" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York at Albany, 1974), all pages.

<sup>93</sup> Stuart Ewen, Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture (New York: BasicBooks, 2001), 42.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 224-229.

component of participation in American society. Cohen pays special attention to the segmentation of the American populace, and how race and gender proved to be defining influences in buying patterns. Mass consumption did not make for a more thoroughly egalitarian society, she argues, since women and minority groups still remained disenfranchised in many ways for a considerable period of time.<sup>95</sup> As is the case with nearly all of these studies of mass consumption, this book is about all of America rather than Milwaukee, though the subjects of study are addressed to varying degrees.

Fr. Steven M. Avella's *The Good Life: Sacramento's Consumer Culture* (2008) is one of the few studies that explores the development of mass consumption in a single city. *The Good Life* served as a partial template for this dissertation, for it studies the development of automobile sales, grocery shopping, housing, and department stores and shopping malls. (This dissertation did not cover housing sales because numerous other Milwaukee researchers have recently covered housing in Milwaukee.) The title stems from the widely-held belief that consumption led to happier citizens, and "The quality of life in Sacramento has often been defined by the kinds of things Sacramentans could buy."<sup>96</sup> Though *The Good Life* provides no information about mass consumption in Milwaukee, it helps to put Milwaukee's mass consumption experience into perspective, since the general outline of the evolution of mass consumption in Milwaukee and Sacramento was remarkably similar in many respects, such as the waning

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<sup>95</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 3-15.

<sup>96</sup> Steven M. Avella, *The Good Life: Sacramento's Consumer Culture* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), xi.

influence of the downtown business district in both cities.<sup>97</sup> Despite numerous minor points of distinction, comparisons with Sacramento drawn from *The Good Life* indicate that Milwaukee's mass consumption development was not an isolated case, and may very well mirror that of other major American cities.

This is far from the first dissertation to study mass consumption. In the dissertation *Learning to Spend: From Thrift to Consumer Education in the Era of Emerging Mass Consumption* (1983), Lee Moore Hunter discusses how America's consumers have learned how to be smarter shoppers. Hunter believes that consumer movements promoting thriftiness are a natural result of the residual culture created by the Great Depression and other times of scarcity from the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>98</sup> Advertisers realized the importance of reaching consumers when they were young, for they made some ultimately unsuccessful attempts to put advertisements in textbooks.<sup>99</sup> In 1919, at a NEA meeting in Milwaukee, teachers were encouraged to teach children of all ages how to be economical with their purchases.<sup>100</sup>

Alan Roy Berolzheimer's dissertation "A Nation of Consumers: Mass Consumption, Middle-Class Standards of Living, and American National Identity, 1910-1950" (1996) envisions early twentieth-century American mass consumption as a largely middle-class phenomenon. The first half of the twentieth century was a time when a large segment of the nation started earning

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 133-134.

<sup>98</sup> Lee Moore Hunter, "Learning to Spend: From Thrift to Consumer Education in the Era of Emerging Mass Consumption" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1983), 8.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 21.

more than the bare minimum to survive, and the new presence of disposable income proved to be a major force for cultural change. Berolzheimer argues that much of society came to interpret the changes as a form of progress, though some segments of the population came to question the morality of living in a culture of affluence.<sup>101</sup>

Charles Francis McGovern's dissertation "Sold American!: Inventing the Consumer, 1890-1940" (1993), traces the development of the American consumer, arguing that American mass consumption was most profoundly influenced by two kinds of people: consumer advocates and advertisers. These people shaped mass consumption by encouraging the populace to spend its money in particular ways.<sup>102</sup>

The study of mass consumption is not limited to life in the United States. The dissertation "Rise of Mass Retail: Canadians and Department Stores, 1890 to 1940" (2006), by Donica Belisle, focuses on the development of mass merchandising and advertising in Canada. Belisle contends that the development of mass consumption in Canada was marked by strengthened societal capitalism, and that department stores enforced patriarchal attitudes.<sup>103</sup>

The aforementioned dissertations barely reference Milwaukee, though dissertations that do are included in the section on Milwaukee's history. The

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<sup>101</sup> Alan Roy Berolzheimer, "A Nation of Consumers: Mass Consumption, Middle Class Standards of Living, and American National Identity. 1910-1950" (Diss., University of Virginia, 1996), iv-xv.

<sup>102</sup> Charles Francis McGovern, "Sold American!: Inventing the Consumer, 1890-1940" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1993), 1-10.

<sup>103</sup> Donica Belisle, "Rise of Mass Retail: Canadians and Department Stores, 1890 to 1940" (Ph.D. diss., Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Native Studies, 2006), ii-iii.

relevance of most of these dissertations is to compare mass consumption in other areas to that of Milwaukee.

There are many short articles that discuss mass consumption and how mass consumption affected American history. Robert S. Lynd's "The Consumer Becomes a "Problem"" (1934) opens with a brief overview of the development of mass consumption and intellectual theory, touching upon authors such as Veblen, Samuel Johnson, and Adam Smith. Lynd's article merges history with current events— this essay was written during the Depression, and most of the essay revolves around the history of business in the United States and the growing role of the federal government in American life.<sup>104</sup> Alissa Karl's 2008 article "Modernism's Risky Business: Gertrude Stein, Sylvia Beach, and American Consumer Capitalism" takes a look at the intellectual history of mass consumption, ranging from Henry Ford's use of psychology and advertising in order to turn the automobile into a central facet of American everyday life, and how writers like Stein and Beach portrayed consumerism as part and parcel of the American psyche.<sup>105</sup>

Some articles apply the theory of mass consumption to one of the main topics explored here, such as William R. Leach's "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925," (1984) which provides a brief overview of the development of the department store while arguing that as women accepted their new powers as consumers, they were able to

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<sup>104</sup> Robert S. Lynd, "The Consumer Becomes a "Problem,"" Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 173 (May, 1934): 1-6.

<sup>105</sup> Alissa Karl, "Modernism's Risky Business: Gertrude Stein, Sylvia Beach, and American Consumer Capitalism," American Literature 80, no. 1 (2008): 83-109.



move away from the traditional gender roles that asked them to live in self-denial as a means of being morally pure.<sup>106</sup>

There are many anthologies and collections compiling the writings of some of the major scholars of mass consumption. Some prominent anthologies include the Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears-edited *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (1983); *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (1998) edited by Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt; *The Consumer Society* (1996), edited by Neva R. Goodwin, Frank Ackerman, and David Kiron; *Cultures of Selling: Perspectives on Consumption and Society Since 1700* (2006), edited by John Benson and Laura Ugolini, and the Lawrence B. Glickman-edited *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (1999). All of these works contain essays– or at least excerpts from longer works– regarding aspects of mass consumption, ranging from brief definitions of terminology to case studies of mass consumption in action. Some essays deal with the theory of consumption, others with consumption in practice, and though none of these essays deal specifically with Milwaukee, some of them address issues connected to the subjects addressed in this dissertation.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> William R. Leach, “Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925,” *Journal of American History* 71, no. 2 (1984): 319-342.

<sup>107</sup> Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), all pages. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt, eds., *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), all pages. Neva R. Goodwin, Frank Ackerman, and David Kiron,

As a general rule, any study of mass consumption that is not specifically about Milwaukee (or Wisconsin, or even the Midwest) tends to mention Milwaukee tangentially or not at all. Therefore, the existing historiography on mass consumption proves to be principally useful in comparing Milwaukee's mass consumption experiences with those of the rest of America. The aforementioned works illustrate the broad trends and patterns affecting the nation, and the combined image that they present creates the impression that Milwaukee's story of mass consumption generally follows the same highs, lows, and other developments of the United States. This dissertation seeks to illustrate how the outside forces affected the patterns of buying and selling in Milwaukee, as well as how Milwaukee refined standard business practices or made them more effective for their own markets.

The development of automobiles, grocery stores, and major shopping venues selling durable goods in Milwaukee was similar to that of the rest of the nation, though with numerous distinctive points. Therefore, closer research into Milwaukee's patterns of mass consumption ought to lead to a better understanding of the development of mass consumption throughout the nation. Most of the literature on automobiles, grocery stores, and durable goods is not specific to Milwaukee, but to reiterate, in general, speaking mass consumption in Milwaukee followed a very similar pattern to that of the rest of the nation. The

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eds., The Consumer Society (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1997), all pages. John Benson and Laura Ugolini, eds., Cultures of Selling: Perspectives on Consumption and Society Since 1700 (Aldershot, England and Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2006), all pages. Lawrence B. Glickman, ed., Consumer Society in American History: A Reader (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), all pages.

following works on automobiles, grocery stores, and durable goods serve as useful comparative studies rather than helpful sources of information for research on Milwaukee.

### *Mass Consumption Subjects of Study*

#### **Automobiles**

Many of the histories of the automobile in America have focused on describing the different kinds of cars that traveled the nation's streets. More recently, scholars have taken an interest in determining the specific ways that cars changed American society, and how automobiles shaped the psychology of the people who drove them. All historians of the automobile agree that cars have radically affected most aspects of American life, although the extent of these changes is debatable.

James J. Flink is one of the leading historians of the automobile and how it affected American life. Flink discusses the connections between Americans and their vehicles in *America Adopts the Automobile, 1895-1910* (1970), *The Car Culture* (1975), and *The Automobile Age* (1988). In *The Car Culture*, Flink notes that his thinking about cars is due in part to the work of the automobile historians John B. Rae and Blaine A. Brownell.<sup>108</sup> Brownell has observed that it as the 1920's unfolded, the downsides of "mass personal automobility" became evident to many drivers.<sup>109</sup> Cars made it easier to move about the city by reducing travel times significantly. The automobile allowed people to travel wherever they

<sup>108</sup> James J. Flink, *The Car Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975), ix.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

wanted whenever they wished, allowing drivers to set their own schedules. This promoted the culture of independence and solitude that would come to shape the average consumer experience. Cars separated travelers from those around them by encasing drivers and passengers in metal and glass, and the control drivers enjoyed over their schedules and routes reflected the independence that would soon be omnipresent in self-service shopping. Flink connects America's automobile obsession with the nation's widespread acceptance of mass consumption in general, but he contends that the average citizen did not start to think critically about the negative aspects of automobile-centered society until the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>110</sup>

Numerous scholars have analyzed the connections between automobile usage and the general trends of mass consumption in general. Peter J. Ling's *America and the Automobile: Technology, Reform and Social Change* (1990) opens by saying that the "major contention of this study is that the automobile was the latest in a series of transport innovations designed to expedite the flow of goods and services and thus to accelerate the circulation of capital and its eventual accumulation."<sup>111</sup> Ling also stresses class differences in car usage. He posits that the "Babbitts of Main Street" saw automobiles as a useful toy, but migrant workers saw cars as the means by which they could eke out a living.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 183, 191.

<sup>111</sup> Peter J. Ling, *America and the Automobile: Technology, Reform, and Social Change* (New York: Manchester University Press, Distributed by St. Martin's Press, 1989), 1.

<sup>112</sup> Peter J. Ling, *America and the Automobile: Technology, Reform, and Social Change* (New York: Manchester University Press, Distributed by St. Martin's Press, 1989), 33.

H.F. Moorhouse's "The 'Work' Ethic and 'Leisure' Activity: The Hot Rod in Post-War America" (1999) takes a look at consumers and their connections to their automobiles. Moorhouse's comments on the fantasies that people have about their cars, and talks about the "main myth of the [car] culture," which for many people consists of buying an inexpensive used car, and then with some spare parts and bit of effort, repairing and transforming the car into the automobile of one's dreams.<sup>113</sup> This is not a universal dream, for many people have no desire to tinker about refurbishing cars, although most people like to find a good bargain.

Mark S. Foster's *Nation on Wheels: The Automobile Culture in America Since 1945* (2003) covers various different aspects of America's relationships with its cars, ranging from changing technology to the ways that cars are depicted in movies and other forms of culture. Foster explores both the past and future of automobiles, and suggests that Americans have embraced all of the side effects and cultural impacts of cars without thoroughly scrutinizing them. Foster concludes his book by saying that, "Given the rapidly expanding world population pressures and the enormous environmental challenges accompanying this growth, the automobile will have to accommodate to humankind's requirements rather than, as has been the case all too often in recent decades, the other way around."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> H.F. Moorhouse, "The 'Work' Ethic and 'Leisure' Activity: The Hot Rod in Post-War America," in *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader*, ed. Lawrence B. Glickman, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 283.

<sup>114</sup> Mark S. Foster, *Nation on Wheels: The Automobile Culture in America Since 1945* (Belmont, CA: Thomson, Wadsworth, 2003), 213.

Clay McShane has published extensively on the history of the automobile, including *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (1994), *The Automobile: A Chronology of Its Antecedents, Development, and Impact* (1997), and *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (2007). McShane states in *Down the Asphalt Path* that his interest in automobile history stemmed from the work put into his 1975 book *Technology and Reform: Street Railways and the Growth of Milwaukee, 1887-1900*. McShane's work provides a great deal of information on the development of the automobile and how cities changed– or refused to change– to accommodate cars. A city equipped to accommodate streets filled with horses is very different from a city prepared to take care of thousands of automobiles. Unfortunately, the narratives in some of his work, particularly *Technology and Reform* and *Down the Asphalt Path* end well before 1920. Nevertheless, McShane is one of the few scholars to discuss the early history of the automobile in Milwaukee in depth, and his work is vital to understanding the car's development in the city, and how the city changed to support all of the new automobiles.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Clay McShane, *Technology and Reform: Street Railways and the Growth of Milwaukee, 1887-1900* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1975), all pages. Clay McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), all pages. Clay McShane, *The Automobile: A Chronology of Its Antecedents, Development, and Impact* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997), all pages. Clay McShane, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), all pages.

John Heitmann wrote *The Automobile and American Life* (2009) in response to Flink's work, particularly *The Automobile Age*.<sup>116</sup> Flink argues that the 1950's were a time when increasing numbers of Americans began to question their devotion to their automobiles.<sup>117</sup> Heitmann qualifies this view, citing that during the 1950's the nascent civil rights movement led to many blacks seeing automobiles as emblematic of freedom, and that the 1950's were "a golden era" for American cars given their postwar return to centrality in daily life.<sup>118</sup> Heitmann further argues that by the late 1950's the American automotive industry was in a state of malaise, as many U.S. cars failed to live up to consumer needs and expectations.<sup>119</sup> Heitmann also cites various ways that cars failed to meet the needs of consumers, ranging from long-standing safety problems to the fact that from 1915 to 1938, automobiles were particularly susceptible to robbers.<sup>120</sup>

### Grocery Stores

Food's centrality to everyday life has long been recognized by academics. Historians, economists, and scholars of American culture have all contributed to the growing literature on food shopping and the role of consumption on society. Local governments and university researchers traced food sales and trends sporadically over the course of the twentieth century, but historical research on

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<sup>116</sup> John Alfred Heitmann, *The Automobile and American Life* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2009), 2.

<sup>117</sup> James J. Flink, *The Car Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975), 191.

<sup>118</sup> John Alfred Heitmann, *The Automobile and American Life* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2009), 133-135.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 51, 171.

the subject began to proliferate in the 1960's, when supermarkets had become ubiquitous and their effects became noticeable. Most of the histories of grocery stores and food consumption in Milwaukee have been profiled in depth throughout this chapter.

Frank J. Charvat's *Supermarketing* (1961) traces the history of the supermarket, focusing on the early chains and the careers of people who launched this new way of selling edibles. Of particular interest is Charvat's recognition of how supermarkets utilize psychological approaches such as carefully crafted mirrors, lighting, and displays in order to encourage people to purchase certain items. Charvat notes that at the time of writing, an estimated twenty-five percent of all supermarket sales were not premeditated, since consumers discovered new items during the process of shopping, and decided to purchase them.<sup>121</sup>

Economics studies of the grocery store have attempted to chart various trends and to understand when certain shopping habits became ingrained in American culture. Daniel I. Padberg's *Economics of Food Retailing* (1968) presents statistics on food sales and uses them to trace the evolution of the industry. Padberg argues that the data suggests that supermarkets began to steadily dominate the nation's food market in the 1930's, but by the 1960's the supermarkets had reached a saturation point where they were no longer able to make inroads into the clientele of certain small shops and specialty stores.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Frank J. Charvat, *Supermarketing* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 60-61.

<sup>122</sup> Daniel I. Padberg, *Economics of Food Retailing* (Ithaca, New York: Food Distribution Program– Cornell University, 1968), 17.



Rom J. Markin's 1968 book *The Supermarket: An Analysis of Growth, Development, and Change, Revised Edition*, suggests that the supermarket is a natural outgrowth of American trends of mobility and independence.<sup>123</sup> Markin also takes pains to define his terminology, stating that a supermarket (by 1968 standards) ought to be viewed as a food store that sells over \$500,000 of merchandise annually. Markin notes that accepted definitions disagree on how much a store needs to sell in order to qualify for supermarket status; before 1962 the *Progressive Grocer* posited that supermarkets needed to sell over \$375,000 a year. Furthermore, the Supermarket Institute holds that \$1,000,000 of sales ought to be the minimum level for classification as a supermarket, and additionally the store must be divided into sections based on food type, and most of the groceries need to be self-service.<sup>124</sup> Comparatively, in Markin's terminology a "small store" can be classified as a store that sells food (either independently owned or part of a chain) that sells under \$150,000 annually. Markin notes that several years earlier, he would have set \$75,000 as the yearly sales limit for a "small" store.<sup>125</sup>

The often-tenuous connection between the ordinary consumer and the faceless food stores they patronized was critiqued in Jennifer Cross's *The Supermarket Trap: The Consumer and the Food Industry*, first published in 1970 with a revised and enlarged edition in 1976. Cross freely stated that she was biased towards the consumer, who was often confused by the strategies that

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<sup>123</sup> Rom J. Markin, *The Supermarket: An Analysis of Growth, Development, and Change* (Pullman, Washington State University Press, 1968), 52.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

supermarkets used to draw in customers and potentially confuse them about value. Cross goes so far as to call a supermarket a “bewildering, enticing, craftily packaged trap that awaits every housewife.”<sup>126</sup> The book is filled with consumer demands that later came into fruition, such as concerns for added regulations over food purity and nutritional information on packages.<sup>127</sup>

Hugh S. Peak and Ellen F. Peak’s 1977 study *Supermarket Merchandising and Management* tracks the development of food consumption in America from trading posts (the Peaks place this era as from the start of European settlement up to 1700) to general stores (1700-1860) to specialty food stores (1860-1918) to the chain stores (1918-1932), to combination food stores (1920-late 1930’s), to the supermarket (from 1940).<sup>128</sup> Throughout these designated eras, the Peaks trace the changing role that the consumer had to play in buying food.

Studies of ethnic food stores include Gordon Falk Bloom and F. Marion Fletcher’s *The Negro in the Supermarket Industry* (1972), which analyzes the statistical data of African-Americans who worked in or owned food stores. Many African-Americans worked in low-level positions, and Bloom and Fletcher note that supermarkets offered four primary jobs for new, inexperienced employees. One was as a meat-cutting apprentice, and the other three were clerking jobs in produce, other groceries, and checking out customers.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Jennifer Cross, *The Supermarket Trap: The Consumer and the Food Industry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), ix.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-96, 131.

<sup>128</sup> Hugh S. Peak and Ellen F. Peak, *Supermarket Merchandising and Management*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977) 3-13.

<sup>129</sup> Gordon Falk Bloom and F. Marion Fletcher, *The Negro in the Supermarket Industry* (Philadelphia: Industrial Research Unit, Wharton School of Finance and

*The American Grocery Store: The Business Evolution of an Architectural Space* (1993) by James M. Mayo provides some profiles of major figures and chains in the national supermarket business, as well as some in-depth look at statistical trends on store growth and location.<sup>130</sup>

Andrew Seth and Geoffrey Randall have devoted a great deal of attention to the growing power of supermarket chains on the broader food market. Their book *The Grocers: The Rise and Rise of the Supermarket Chains* (1999, revised edition 2001), focused mainly on tracing the growth of supermarkets in the United Kingdom. *Supermarket Wars: Global Strategies for Food Retailers* (2005), charts how several prominent supermarket chains rose to prominence. They note several consumer habits, such as that in the United States, on average individuals will walk a maximum of two hundred yards, and beyond that point they prefer to use automobiles.<sup>131</sup> The authors note the quandary that many shoppers face in having to choose between value and quality, citing Mark Dixon, Southwest Regional Manager for Whole Foods, who declares that “either we want the cheapest groceries in town or we want the best.”<sup>132</sup> Seth and Randall believe that supermarkets will eventually drive most small stores out of business, saying that “modern retailing with efficient supply chains and a range of formats in the

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Commerce, University of Pennsylvania; distributed by University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 77.

<sup>130</sup> James M. Mayo, *The American Grocery Store: The Business Evolution of an Architectural Space* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1993), all pages.

<sup>131</sup> Andrew Seth and Geoffrey Randall, *Supermarket Wars: Global Strategies for Food Retailers* (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 123.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

outlets, will gradually take over from traditional shops and retailers in all markets.”<sup>133</sup>

Another ethnic study can be found in Alfred Yee’s 2003 book *Shopping at Giant Foods: Chinese-American Supermarkets in Northern California*, exclusively profiling the stores described in the subtitle. Yee notes that no other ethnic group has earned any comparable measure of success in that region, and attributes this accomplishment to the Arata Brothers wholesalers originally agreeing to provide merchandise to Asian stores decades ago when other wholesalers refused to, as well as Chinese-American grocers having access to inexpensive labor in the form of family members and other Chinese immigrants.<sup>134</sup>

Tracy Deutsch’s 2010 book *Building a Housewife’s Paradise: Gender, Politics, and American Grocery Stores in the Twentieth Century* looks at the social impact and development of food shopping, with a particular focus on the markets of Chicago. In her introduction, Deutsch writes that, “I argue that politics (of many kinds) must frame any understanding of grocery stores and of shopping more generally.”<sup>135</sup> By “politics,” Deutsch refers to the complex and often difficult relationships between shoppers and stores. Deutsch places particular focus on women, how they shopped for food, how they shaped the places where

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>134</sup> Alfred Yee, *Shopping at Giant Foods: Chinese-American Supermarkets in Northern California* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 3, 156-157.

<sup>135</sup> Tracey Deutsch, *Building a Housewife's Paradise: Gender, Politics, and American Grocery Stores in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 3.

they purchased food, and how the grocery stores responded to their female customers.

Deutsch makes a number of assertions about the nature of purchasing provisions. She stresses her belief that food stores were inherently “deeply political,” and states that grocery stores inculcated ideas of acceptable behavior for women.<sup>136</sup> One political aspect of grocery stores is how the federal government collected funds by instituting a tax on groceries. Other political aspects included means of participation in the public sphere. Deutsch argues that the act of buying food was more than simply gathering sustenance, but it came to be representative “of the mid-twentieth century state and its increased dependence on top-down standardized, and predictable consumption,” for “grocery stores make clear that consumption was as much about daily necessities and daily struggles as it was about commercial pleasure.”<sup>137</sup> Deutsch has produced other research on this subject. *Building a Housewife's Paradise* was preceded by her 2001 dissertation “Making Change at the Grocery Store: Government, Grocers, and the Problem of Women's Autonomy in the Creation of Chicago's Supermarkets, 1920-1950,” and a 1999 article “From ‘Wild Animal Stores’ to Women's Sphere: Supermarkets and the Politics of Mass Consumption, 1930-1950.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>138</sup> Tracey Ann Deutsch, “Making Change at the Grocery Store: Government, Grocers, and the Problem of Women's Autonomy in the Creation of Chicago's Supermarkets, 1920-1950” (Unpublished dissertation, 2001), all pages. Tracey Deutsch, “From ‘Wild Animal Stores’ to Women's Sphere: Supermarkets and the

### Shopping Venues and Household Goods

Going shopping is such a commonplace action that many consumers are completely unaware of the complex history behind it. One of the earliest histories of shopping venues is John William Ferry's *A History of the Department Store* (1960), which contains information about many of the major department stores in America, as well as numerous statistics about their sales and development.<sup>139</sup>

Another relevant study is Leon Harris's 1979 book *Merchant Princes— An Intimate History of Jewish Families Who Built Great Department Stores*. This study is a collection of brief profiles of the major figures in the development of America's department stores. The Gimbels family is covered extensively, with several references to their work in Milwaukee.<sup>140</sup> Similar coverage of the America's department stores can be found in Robert Hendrickson's 1979 *The Grand Emporiums: The Illustrated History of America's Great Department Stores*.<sup>141</sup>

Issues of gender in regards to shopping venues are growing scholarly concerns. In Susan Porter Benson's 1986 book *Counter Cultures— Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940*, Benson explores how women were involved in multiple aspects of the shopping

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Politics of Mass Consumption, 1930-1950," *Business & Economic History* 28, no. 1 (1999): 143-153.

<sup>139</sup> John William Ferry, *A History of the Department Store* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), all pages.

<sup>140</sup> Leon Harris, *Merchant Princes: An Intimate History of Jewish Families Who Built Great Department Stores* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), all pages.

<sup>141</sup> Robert Hendrickson, *The Grand Emporiums: The Illustrated History of America's Great Department Stores* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), all pages.

experience, and argues that department stores were not only profitable businesses, but also important social venues where women (both shoppers and clerks) could interact in unique ways.<sup>142</sup> Benson also notes that women in the department store workplace were often viewed critically, since there was a widespread assumption that because their jobs exposed them to all sorts of people, female clerks were in acute danger of becoming prostitutes.<sup>143</sup> Milwaukee is only mentioned once in Benson's work, where she notes that in the late 1930's, approximately three-quarters of the female department store saleswomen in Milwaukee were either students, married women, or part-time workers. Additionally, at that time many of Milwaukee's saleswomen were able to maintain their careers for as much as two decades.<sup>144</sup>

One of the most acclaimed studies of the department store in American life is William Leach's 1993 book *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*. Covering roughly the half-century from 1880 to 1930, Leach also traces America's religious and economic histories in order to chart the development of the consumerist mindset and its entrance into the nation's popular culture. Popular expressions of the increasingly prevalent "anything goes" attitudes such as theosophy and mind cure are traced, as are literary and other cultural depictions of such mindsets. Leach describes consumer capitalism as a culture that is sharply antagonistic to the traditional past, "a future-

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<sup>142</sup> Susan Porter Benson, Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 7.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

oriented culture of desire that confused the good life with goods.”<sup>145</sup> America’s nineteenth-century culture was heavily permeated by Christian morality and republicanism. Consumer capitalism challenged this perspective, and eventually became the nation’s dominant ethos.<sup>146</sup>

Consumer capitalism, Leach asserts, was marked by “a cult of the “new.””<sup>147</sup> It took root during a time when the nation’s conception of wealth was shifting. As most of the eastern half of the country had been divided up and passed into the property of private owners, one’s affluence increasingly became seen not in terms of how much real estate one possessed (due in part because it became harder to increase one’s land holdings), but instead in terms of one’s money and goods.<sup>148</sup> Consumption, consisting of continually obtaining new possessions, became the dominant socially prescribed way of achieving happiness.<sup>149</sup> Leach credits a “culture of amoralism” with the changing social mores, led by a “brokering style” which justified profits and hedonism.”<sup>150</sup>

Bill Lancaster’s *The Department Store: A Social History* (1995) purports to be the first historical review of the department stores in Great Britain.<sup>151</sup> Lancaster believes that the development of British department stores closely

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<sup>145</sup> William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), xiii.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>151</sup> William Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 1.



mirrored that of American department stores, at least according to the historical work of William R. Leach.<sup>152</sup>

David Monod's *Store Wars— Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing 1890–1939* (1996) explores the development of gender roles in new forms of shopping venues. Monod notes, “as early critics from Emile Zola to Theodore Dreiser observed, the department stores were also the ultimate symbols of the feminized market.”<sup>153</sup> The department store, Monod argues, became a place where women were given free rein to act as consumers, making choices about the items they bought and connecting the freedoms brought about by wide varieties of consumer options. Monod further suggests that some political figures in the early twentieth century promoted consumerism as a means of personal empowerment.<sup>154</sup>

There is a small but growing literature on the history of shopping venues in Milwaukee. Not all of this is based on historical research. Some notable contributors to this subject are geographers, economists, journalists, and business scholars. Many of these researchers do not center on addressing patterns of consumption, but instead address the history of shopping venues as part of their research on broader social or economic trends.

David Host's masters' thesis “The Treatment of the Boston Store Strike by the *Milwaukee Journal* and the *Milwaukee Leader*” is primarily a study of two

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>153</sup> David L. Monod, *Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 116.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 287.

different newspapers, but it provides an important look at how political views shaped Milwaukeeans' shopping habits, and how the news media attempted to influence consumption. Late in 1934, Milwaukee's downtown Boston Store was wracked by a six-week strike, as employees protested for higher salaries. The *Leader*, being a socialist paper, might be expected to be sympathetic to the strikers, and the *Journal* had a reputation for being defensive of business interests, but Host argues that the *Journal* was far less conservative than many other major newspapers, and the *Leader* was not nearly so radical as other American newspapers of a similar political persuasion.<sup>155</sup> Host argues that it is "impossible to prove bias" in the two newspapers' coverage of the event, and that the news coverage (not the editorials) that the two papers provided was essentially similar, with little distinguishing marks in tone or content.<sup>156</sup> Host provides insight into the daily workings of the store (most employees were happy with their jobs, save for their pay), and the varying reactions of customers illustrates how different shoppers bought their political beliefs and personal opinions with them as they shopped.

Donald George Leeseberg's 1961 dissertation "Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee: 1948-1959" is an extremely extensive overview of the history of shopping in Milwaukee during the postwar era. This dissertation is a gold mine of statistics regarding the number and kind of stores, locations, and profits. While all observers agree that the coming of the shopping centers

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<sup>155</sup> David Host, "The Treatment of the Boston Store Strike by the Milwaukee Journal and the Milwaukee Leader" (M.A. diss., Marquette University, 1937), ii.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-191.

siphoned sales from the downtown business district, Leeseberg provides multitudes of numbers and other statistics in order to illustrate changing patronage statistics, as well as extensive numerical data on sales. Leeseberg's dissertation is limited to the postwar era, so the wealth of information he offers does not extend to the beginning or end of the twentieth century.

The "general trends" that Leeseberg discerned in Milwaukee's retail sales included the fact that upper-income Milwaukeeans were relocating to suburban neighborhoods, or at least further away from the center of downtown. As people with money moved, so did businesses. While much has been made of Milwaukeeans traveling across town to visit the earliest shopping centers, Leeseberg notes that nearly all new major shopping venues were built with the knowledge that the people who lived within five minutes of driving time would form the backbone of their patronage. Leeseberg concludes that if the downtown business district were to survive economically, it would need to redevelop all aspects of the area in order to make residents wish to visit them more often. Simply adding better stores could not revive the central business district. The entire downtown would need to be revitalized with more jobs and better housing situated in that area.<sup>157</sup> While people might be willing to travel extensive distances to shop, shopping venues needed to realize that the bread and butter of their customer traffic came from people who lived or worked near such venues and as such could visit them easily.

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<sup>157</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 360-362.

Paul H. Geenan's *Schuster's & Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved*

*Department Stores* (2012) provides a detailed overview of the histories of Milwaukee's two most prominent department stores, using the records held in the Milwaukee County Historical Society and interviews with former employees as the primary sources for the book.<sup>158</sup> This is a crucial resource for studying the history of department stores in Milwaukee.

Racial issues connected to Milwaukee's consumption habits are studied in Angela M. Dentice's research paper "The Negro Market in Milwaukee," written in 1968. In her paper, Dentice tracks where Milwaukee's African-American population lives and shops, and also provides extensive statistics regarding income levels. Dentice observes that the vast majority of African-Americans lived in the region of the city known as the Inner Core, and noted that many African-Americans obtain their news and entertainment media from different sources than white consumers, and consequently advertisers must account for these differences in potential markets.<sup>159</sup>

Leonard Pettyjohn's thesis "Changing Structure of Selected Retail Activities in a Racially Changing Neighborhood (1967) also tracks ethnicity as a factor in how Milwaukeeans chose shopping venues, though Pettyjohn's work devotes most of his attention to grocery stores, barber shops, and taverns, with comparatively limited attention to other venues. Pettyjohn puts special stress on

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<sup>158</sup> Paul H. Geenan, *Schuster's and Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved Department Stores* (Charleston, South Carolina: History Press, 2012), all pages.

<sup>159</sup> Angela M. Dentice, "The Negro Market in Milwaukee— What, How, Why" (Research paper, Marquette University, 1968), all pages.

the phenomenon of “white flight” occurring in tandem with a rise in African-American populations.<sup>160</sup>

Patrick George Ashwood’s 1991 dissertation “Downtown Redevelopment, The Public-Private Partnership, and the Downtown Mall Solution: A Comparison of the Redevelopment Process in Minneapolis and Milwaukee” is a comparative study of two major shopping venue projects in Midwestern cities: the Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis and The Grand Avenue in Milwaukee. Throughout his work, Ashwood is critical of Milwaukee’s government and private sector approaches to developing downtown shopping venues, as well as the city’s race relations and methods for dealing with poverty. Milwaukee’s attempts to revitalize its downtown and provide new service sector jobs to replace the vanished industrial jobs are compared unfavorably to those of Minneapolis. Ashwood further argues that the powers that be in Milwaukee, both governmental and business, neglected to develop a full business and social plan for strengthening the downtown area through the Grand Avenue, and the standards of living in several local neighborhoods failed to share in the success of the downtown redevelopment.<sup>161</sup>

### **The Historiography of Milwaukee**

Many cities have a reputation that precedes them, although the accuracy of

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<sup>160</sup> Leonard F. Pettyjohn, Changing Structure of Selected Retail Activities in a Racially Changing Neighborhood: Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Milwaukee: UW-Milwaukee, 1967), all pages.

<sup>161</sup> Patrick George Ashwood, “Downtown Redevelopment, the Public-Private Partnership, and the Downtown Mall Solution: A Comparison of the Redevelopment Process in Minneapolis and Milwaukee” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, 1991), 372.

these presumptions may be based as much in myth as in fact. Mention London, Paris, New York City, Los Angeles, or several other major cities, and images and stereotypes will pop into the heads of even those people who have never visited the region. Milwaukee has no such hold in the national and worldwide public imagination. Milwaukee is often unfairly caricatured as a suburb of Chicago, with little atmosphere and history of its own. Numerous historians have attempted to capture the nature of the city, and they have painted dramatically different pictures of Milwaukee.

One early history of Milwaukee is John Goadby Gregory's 1931 work *History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin*. It consists of four volumes, the first two containing an extended narrative of the city's development, and the latter two are filled with profiles of prominent Milwaukeeans. Due to the publication date, Gregory only covers only the first decade of the time period studied here. Only a few of the chapters address topics connected to mass consumption, such as Chapter II, "Fur Traders at Milwaukee," and Chapter VII, "Early Media of Exchange." "Fur Traders at Milwaukee" describes the city's early economy, and "Early Media of Exchange" covers the further development and modernization of the city's trade systems.<sup>162</sup> Elsewhere, Gregory lists some of the fluctuating wholesale food prices in the city, though this list is brief.<sup>163</sup> The biographical volumes contain some profiles of major figures in local mass consumption, including a lengthy summary of the life of T.A. (Timothy Appleton) Chapman,

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<sup>162</sup> John Goadby Gregory, History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Volume I (Chicago: Clarke Publishing Co., 1931), 19, 181.

<sup>163</sup> John Goadby Gregory, History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Volume II (Chicago: Clarke Publishing Co., 1931), 1294.

founder of the self-named department store. Gregory notes that Chapman changed some shopping habits. For years, retail businesses tended to be open until nine in the evening, but Chapman started to close his business at six P.M., and many other stores followed suit.<sup>164</sup> The profiles of Milwaukeeans are largely laudatory, often referring to how well-respected or admired the subjects are. These glowing character tributes ought to be viewed critically. The essay on the city treasurer John I. Drew, for example, describes him as “a man of sterling integrity and high ideals.”<sup>165</sup> About two years after Gregory’s work was published, Drew was arrested for embezzling approximately half a million dollars from the city funds.<sup>166</sup>

There are several other extensive and lengthy histories of Milwaukee, including William George Bruce’s *History of Milwaukee, City and County* and his follow-up volume, *A Short History of Milwaukee*. These works trace Milwaukee’s development from its founding to the time of writing, and the changing population and government.<sup>167</sup> Bruce’s long and short histories were published in 1922 and 1936, so they do not cover large portions of the period studied in this dissertation.

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<sup>164</sup> John Goadby Gregory, History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Volume III (Chicago: Clarke Publishing Co., 1931), 65.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>166</sup> Floyd J. Stachowski, The Political Career of Daniel Webster Hoan (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1966), 157-158. Stachowski mistakenly refers to Drew as “Joseph” instead of “John.”

<sup>167</sup> William George Bruce, History of Milwaukee, City and County (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922), all pages. William George Bruce, A Short History of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1936), all pages.

William George Bruce's work only covers Milwaukee up to the Depression era, although he does address multiple issues regarding mass consumption. The origins of trade in the region are addressed, starting with the initial trade with the Native Americans, as well as how the early traveling traders evolved into merchants with stores.<sup>168</sup> This dissertation will pay special focus to the declining status of Milwaukee's downtown business district as alternative shopping venues were created throughout the city. Bruce states that the city's downtown retail trade district was always less centralized than that of similar American cities, though he does not cite much evidence to support his position, and indeed, some scholars might disagree with Bruce's conclusion regarding Milwaukee's layout in comparison to other cities.<sup>169</sup> Bruce also explains the reasons why it is difficult to compile accurate statistics about sales in Milwaukee, for the earliest records frequently fail to differentiate earnings from trade, commerce, and industry. Additionally, the human factor leads to many inaccuracies in sales numbers, such as arithmetic errors, or an attempt to circumvent taxes.<sup>170</sup> Bruce's comments are a useful warning for any scholar—evidence cannot always be taken at face value. Bruce's study covers less than half of the time period studied here, and few individual businesses are profiled, but Bruce's summary of the city's early economic activity is a valuable resource for this study.

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<sup>168</sup> William George Bruce, *A Short History of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1936), 106-110.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.



Bayrd Still's *Milwaukee: The History of a City* (1948) covers all aspects of the city's history, but two chapters specifically address mass consumption issues: Chapter Three (Commercial Foundations) and Chapter Seventeen (The Economic Base).<sup>171</sup> Still praises Milwaukee's people and governance, attributing the city's success to strong planning and widespread good character amongst the populace. Still writes that in the early days of settlement in Milwaukee, trade was difficult in Milwaukee. Both money and durable goods were often in short supply during the city's frontier era, and food prices were erratic due to sudden shortages.<sup>172</sup> Still also provides a detailed overview of how Milwaukee was affected by the Great Depression, arguing that the city's economic collapse was slower than that of the rest of the country, though the destruction of Milwaukee's local economy was "ultimately more complete" than that of the remainder of the nation.<sup>173</sup> Still further suggests that Milwaukee's mass consumption economy was crippled by the nearby presence of Chicago and its extensive consumption venues, which hindered Milwaukee's shopping locales from selling beyond southeastern Wisconsin. Still concludes that, "Contraction of the city's sphere of commercial influence was a significant factor in slowing the recovery of the community in the post-depression thirties."<sup>174</sup> Still's massive work is an excellent overview of Milwaukee's history up to the pre-World War II era, and his summaries of the city's economy are very helpful when studying mass consumption, although he

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<sup>171</sup> Bayrd Still, *Milwaukee, the History of a City* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1948), 52, 476.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-55.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 476-478.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 514.

provides negligible information, if any, about car dealers, food stores, and prominent shopping venues.

Anthony Orum's *City-Building in America* (1995) assesses the triumphs and tribulations of Milwaukee from its founding to the time of writing. Titling his case study "The Rise and Fall of Milwaukee," Orum argues that from the middle of the twentieth century onwards the city was in a condition of "decline," Orum traces the city's problems and lists the challenges that need to be addressed if Milwaukee is to have a chance at a successful future. Orum often implies that he believes that the city's odds of overcoming its problems are slight at best. Furthermore, Orum often emphasizes class struggle in the development of Milwaukee, arguing that the story of the city is primarily about class struggle, mainly revolving around the rich and powerful against the disenfranchised laborers.<sup>175</sup> Orum also spends a considerable amount of time critiquing the late twentieth century's influx of minority groups to the city, asserting that unless the city addresses the income disparity and unofficial segregation that divides the city, Milwaukee is unlikely to prosper.<sup>176</sup>

A much warmer view of Milwaukee, its people, its past, and its future, can be found in the work of John Gurda, a lifelong resident of Milwaukee who has written an extensive history of the city in *The Making of Milwaukee* (1999) and a collection of vignettes about notable aspects of the city in *Cream City Chronicles* (2006). Gurda's affection for his hometown is evident throughout his writings.

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<sup>175</sup> Anthony Orum, *City-building in America* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), 41.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 133, 140.

Gurda acknowledges that Milwaukee has always had serious problems and continues to wrestle with them, but Gurda regards Milwaukee's future far more optimistically than Orum does.<sup>177</sup>

Additional perspectives on the history of Milwaukee can be found in books by and about the city's major mayors. Two major works about Mayor Hoan are Edward S. Kerstein's book *Milwaukee's All-American Mayor; Portrait of Daniel Webster Hoan* (1966) and Floyd J. Stachowski's dissertation *The Political Career of Daniel Webster Hoan* (1966). Both cover the major political and social events of Milwaukee over the course of Hoan's tenure. Kerstein's work is an outspoken defense of Hoan and his policies, whereas Stachowski is more impartial in his assessment of the mayor's career and legacy. Stachowski is an academic historian, whereas Kerstein is a longtime Milwaukee journalist.<sup>178</sup>

Mayors Frank P. Zeidler and Henry W. Maier's respective memoirs, *A Liberal in City Government: My Experiences as Mayor of Milwaukee* (2005) and *The Mayor Who Made Milwaukee Famous: An Autobiography* (1993). Both mayors use their autobiographies to explain and justify their policies during Milwaukee's postwar era. Maier is more aggressive in his defense of his legacy, repeatedly attacking the news media, particularly the *Milwaukee Journal* for what he considered its

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<sup>177</sup> John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), all pages. John Gurda, *Cream City Chronicles: Stories of Milwaukee's Past* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2007), all pages.

<sup>178</sup> Floyd J. Stachowski, *The Political Career of Daniel Webster Hoan* (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1966), all pages. Edward S. Kerstein, *Milwaukee's All-American Mayor; Portrait of Daniel Webster Hoan* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), all pages.

unfair coverage of his tenure in office.<sup>179</sup> All of these works contain useful information about mass consumption in the city, such as the Hoan biographies, which discuss the short-lived city-run food markets, and Maier's push to revitalize the city's downtown business district by building new shopping venues.

*Trading Post to Metropolis—Milwaukee County's First 150 Years*, edited by Ralph M. Aderman, consists of six lengthy essays on various aspects of Milwaukee's evolution and development. The topics include subjects as diverse as medical treatment, leisure time, and transit, as found in essays like Fr. Steven M. Avella's "Health, Hospitals, and Welfare Human Services in Milwaukee County," Harry H. Anderson's "Recreation, Entertainment, and Open Space: Park Traditions in Milwaukee County," and Harold M. Mayer's "Travel by Water, Land, and Air: Transportation For Milwaukee County." This anthology is not a comprehensive overview of the history of Milwaukee, but these essays go into depth on topics that are only given cursory attention in standard histories of the city, thereby giving much-needed glimpses into the ordinary lives of the citizenry.<sup>180</sup> The information directly pertaining to the relevant mass consumption subjects is brief, such as Anderson's descriptions of how many of

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<sup>179</sup> Frank Zeidler, *A Liberal in City Government: My Experiences as Mayor of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee Publishers, LLC, 2005), all pages. Henry Maier, *The Mayor Who Made Milwaukee Famous: An Autobiography* (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, distributed by National Book Network, 1993), all pages.

<sup>180</sup> Ralph Aderman, ed., *Trading Post to Metropolis* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1987), all pages.

Milwaukee's parks were transformed into "victory gardens" during World War II in order to supply the citizenry with fresh produce.<sup>181</sup>

*Perspectives on Milwaukee's Past*, edited by Margo Anderson and Victor Greene, consists of multiple essays on Milwaukee's history, grouped into three main categories: the political history of Milwaukee, the ethnic groups that made up Milwaukee, and cultural forces and traditions that shaped the city. Of particular interest is an essay by Anderson at the end, which outlines numerous subjects that have largely been overlooked by historians of Milwaukee.<sup>182</sup>

Milwaukee's history composes a significant portion of the six-part History of Wisconsin series, though the narrative covers the state as a whole. The series is composed of Alice E. Smith's *The History of Wisconsin, Volume I– From Exploration to Statehood* (1973), Richard N. Current's *The History of Wisconsin, Volume 2– The Civil War Era* (1976), Robert C. Nesbit's *The History of Wisconsin: Volume III, Urbanization and Industrialization, 1873–1893* (1985), John D. Buenker's *The History of Wisconsin: Volume IV– The Progressive Era, 1893–1914* (1998), Paul W. Glad's *The History of Wisconsin: Volume V– War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914–1940* (1990), and William F. Thompson's *The History of Wisconsin: Volume VI– Continuity and Change, 1940–1965* (1988). Only Glad's and Thompson's entries cover the time periods at the center of this dissertation. Mass consumption is only touched upon in these works, such as in passages discussing food being shipped from Wisconsin farms to cities.

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>182</sup> Margo Anderson and Victor Greene, eds., *Perspectives on Milwaukee's Past* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 317-330.

Economic history forms a significant portion of all of these studies, and the ways that automobiles and roads transformed the state are also discussed. The history of Milwaukee only makes up a small fraction of this series. Thompson's most prominent coverage of Milwaukee comes in his discussion of the civil rights movement, which focuses mainly on race issues in the state's largest city.<sup>183</sup>

Other monographs study eras of the city's past. James I. Clark's *Wisconsin Meets the Great Depression* (1956) is a brief pamphlet that outlines the hardships of the era, along with many attempts to assuage the situation, such as local charities, state relief efforts, and federal work programs.<sup>184</sup> Richard W. Cutler was a lawyer and a prominent figure in the debates over annexation and defining the city of Milwaukee's boundaries. Cutler provides a personal look into the struggle to expand Milwaukee in his 2001 book *Greater Milwaukee's Growing Pains, 1950-2000: An Insider's View*, which mixes memoir and the

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<sup>183</sup> Alice E. Smith, *The History of Wisconsin, Volume I– From Exploration to Statehood* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1973), all pages. Richard N. Current, *The History of Wisconsin, Volume II– The Civil War Era* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976), all pages. Robert C. Nesbit, *The History of Wisconsin: Volume III, Urbanization and Industrialization, 1873–1893* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1985), all pages. John D. Buenker, *The History of Wisconsin: Volume IV– The Progressive Era, 1893–1914* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1998), all pages. Paul W. Glad, *The History of Wisconsin: Volume V– War, a New Era, and Depression, 1914–1940* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1990), all pages. William F. Thompson, *The History of Wisconsin: Volume VI– Continuity and Change, 1940–1965* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1988), all pages.

<sup>184</sup> James I. Clark, *Wisconsin Meets the Great Depression* (Madison, Wis.: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1956), all pages.

history of city planning.<sup>185</sup> Susan Certo's brief 1972 report *Consumerism in Wisconsin* provides insight into the business and economic status of that time.<sup>186</sup>

Byron Anderson's 1981 pamphlet *A Bibliography of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations of Milwaukee Topics, 1911–1977* is an extremely useful tool for historians studying Milwaukee. Over the years, many scholars have researched aspects of Milwaukee's past, ranging from topics such as local government, arts and culture, ethnicity, and many other subjects. Anderson has compiled a collection of hundreds of scholarly theses and dissertations about Milwaukee, arranged by subject. No details are provided about these works other than bibliographic information. Though this is a helpful research guide, it is now incomplete thanks to the plethora of theses and dissertations on Milwaukee's history that have been written since 1977.<sup>187</sup> Unfortunately, some of the works listed in this booklet have been misplaced by the university libraries that house the only copies available to the public, so several of the theses are now effectively lost.

Some of the earliest dissertations to address themes of mass consumption include Raymond Wayne Robinson's "Costs and Efficiency of Wholesale Milk Distribution in Milwaukee With Particular Reference to Problems of Wholesale Pricing" (1957), which explores the changes in milk sales and distribution over

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<sup>185</sup> Richard W. Cutler, Greater Milwaukee's Growing Pains, 1950-2000: An Insider's View (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 2001), all pages.

<sup>186</sup> Susan Certo, Consumerism in Wisconsin (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Council on Urban Life, 1972), all pages.

<sup>187</sup> Byron Anderson, A Bibliography of Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations of Milwaukee Topics, 1911–1977 (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1981), all pages.

time. Glass bottles were heavy, fragile, and unpopular with retailers, so they were phased out in favor of paper containers.<sup>188</sup> Robinson also addresses how Milwaukee moved away from home delivery of dairy products and towards near-exclusive sales in stores.<sup>189</sup> Donald J. Curran’s “The Financial Evolution of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area” (1963) analyzes how various localities in the Milwaukee area grew, developed, and transformed into business and shopping districts.<sup>190</sup>

In recent years, there have been numerous doctoral dissertations on the history of Milwaukee. Kevin David Smith’s 1999 dissertation ““In God We Trust”: Religion, the Cold War, and Civil Rights in Milwaukee, 1947-1963,” provides a social and cultural history of Milwaukee during the turbulence of the postwar era.<sup>191</sup> John McCarthy’s 2005 dissertation “The Reluctant City: Milwaukee’s Fragmented Metropolis, 1920-1960,” analyzes Milwaukee’s urban development, city planning, and changing ethnic landscape over four decades.<sup>192</sup> This dissertation was revised and expanded into the 2009 book *Making Milwaukee Mightier: Planning and the Politics of Growth, 1910-1960*, which

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<sup>188</sup> Raymond Wayne Robinson, “Costs and Efficiency of Wholesale Milk Distribution in Milwaukee With Particular Reference to Problems of Wholesale Pricing” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin– Madison, 1957), 2, 146.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>190</sup> Donald Joseph Curran, “The Financial Evolution of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin– Madison, 1963), 1.

<sup>191</sup> Kevin David Smith, ““In God We Trust”: Religion, The Cold War, and Civil Rights in Milwaukee, 1947–1963,” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin– Madison, 1999), all pages.

<sup>192</sup> John McCarthy, “The Reluctant City: Milwaukee’s Fragmented Metropolis, 1920-1960” (Ph.D. Diss., Marquette University, 2005), all pages.



further discusses the connections between local politics, city design, and urban renewal.<sup>193</sup>

Paul-Thomas Ferguson's "Leisure Pursuits in Ethnic Milwaukee, 1830-1930" (2005) provides a social history of how Milwaukeeans entertained themselves, as well as an overview of how the ethnic composition of the city shifted over time.<sup>194</sup> Ferguson's descriptions of how Milwaukeeans spent their disposable income provide useful insight into the citizenry's potential for spending.

Daryl Webb's dissertation "'A Great Promise and A Great Threat': Milwaukee Children in the Great Depression" (2006) covers the Depression era through the eyes of the city's youths, focusing on the disruption caused by the economic turbulence, juvenile delinquency, and youth activism.<sup>195</sup> Christopher Miller's 2007 dissertation "Milwaukee's First Suburbs: A Re-interpretation of Suburban Incorporation in Nineteenth-Century Milwaukee County" discusses the development of early small residential communities in Milwaukee, noting that modern suburbs (or at least conceptions and stereotypes about them) are very different from the suburbs of the nineteenth century.<sup>196</sup> Jason Hostutler's "Smokestacks and Steeples: A Case Study of the Reciprocal Relationship

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<sup>193</sup> John M. McCarthy, Making Milwaukee Mightier: Planning and the Politics of Growth, 1910-1960 (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), all pages.

<sup>194</sup> Paul-Thomas Ferguson, "Leisure Pursuits in Ethnic Milwaukee, 1830-1930" (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2005), all pages.

<sup>195</sup> Daryl Webb, "'A Great Promise and A Great Threat': Milwaukee Children in the Great Depression" (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2006), all pages.

<sup>196</sup> Christopher Mark Miller, "Milwaukee's First Suburbs: A Re-Interpretation of Suburban Incorporation in Nineteenth-Century Milwaukee County" (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2007), all pages.

Between the Catholic Church and Industrial Milwaukee, 1870-1929” (2009), studies the rise and fall of aspects of Milwaukee’s industrial economy, with particular emphasis on its connection to local Catholicism. Hostutler provides some useful information on how people working in Milwaukee’s industry spent their earnings.<sup>197</sup> In general, however, most of these dissertations provide very little information pertinent to the study of mass consumption in Milwaukee, and their primary value to the historian of consumerism is to provide a more thorough portrait of Milwaukee’s development and of the city’s residents.

A scholarly study of Milwaukee and the mass media can be found in Peter R. Janecky’s 2012 dissertation “Mayors and the Media: A History of Their Symbiotic Relationships in Milwaukee, 1948-1988.” Here, Janecky studies postwar Milwaukee history with a focus on the Frank Zeidler and Henry Maier mayoral administrations, as well as their often-tenuous relationship with the newspapers and television. Though this study primarily explores the links between the media and political power, Janecky’s analysis of the coercive power of media might conceivably be applied to studies of mass consumption and advertising.<sup>198</sup>

Many dissertations, theses and other major papers by graduate students outside of the field of history cover aspects of Milwaukee’s history that are highly relevant to this study. Donald George Leeseberg’s 1961 D.B.A. dissertation

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<sup>197</sup> Jason Hostutler, “Smokestacks and Steeples: A Case Study of the Reciprocal Relationship Between the Catholic Church and Industrial Milwaukee, 1870-1929” (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2009), all pages.

<sup>198</sup> Peter R. Janecky, “Mayors and the Media: A History of Their Symbiotic Relationships in Milwaukee, 1948-1988” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2012), 64.

*Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959* is a treasure trove of information and statistics about Milwaukeeans' shopping practices in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>199</sup> Robert Steven Johnson's 1967 paper "The Regional Shopping Center Versus the Discount Department Store: A Comparative Analysis of Retail Competition in the Suburbs," provides valuable information about the changing role of location in consumers' shopping practices.<sup>200</sup> Paul Gilmore's 1995 dissertation "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" is an incredibly in-depth look at food shopping venues in Milwaukee.<sup>201</sup> An extensive study of why Milwaukee's consumers picked certain supermarkets can be found in Ronald W. Stampfl's 1967 paper *Supermarket Patronage Motives Among New Residents*. Stampfl's work is based on extensive questionnaires submitted to consumers who recently moved to Milwaukee.<sup>202</sup>

There are numerous publications that provide statistical information and other data about life in Milwaukee during the twentieth century. The Milwaukee Common Council released annual reports on the city of Milwaukee, containing statistical information on the city's population, budgetary information, and

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<sup>199</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, *Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959* (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), all pages.

<sup>200</sup> Robert Steven Johnson, "The Regional Shopping Center Versus the Discount Department Store: A Comparative Analysis of Retail Competition in the Suburbs" (Seminar paper presented in lieu of a M.B.A. thesis, UW-Milwaukee, 1967), all pages.

<sup>201</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), all pages.

<sup>202</sup> Ronald W. Stampfl, *Supermarket Patronage Motives Among New Residents* (Seminar paper submitted in lieu of a M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1967), all pages.

various other basic facts about the city's condition.<sup>203</sup> The United States Census released reports on retail trade in Wisconsin during the latter decades of the twentieth century, aside from the basic Census data.<sup>204</sup> The Milwaukee Urban Observatory, sponsored by the University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, has published tables on population demographics and assorted maps of the area in sources like *The Metropolitan Milwaukee Fact Book: 1970*.<sup>205</sup> The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission released in-depth studies of economic conditions in the region in *The Economy of Southeastern Wisconsin* and *The Population of Southeastern Wisconsin* series, released in the 1960's and 1970's.<sup>206</sup>

Local studies of mass consumption specific to Milwaukee are rather sparse, but there are handful of glimpses into Milwaukee's buying and selling practices mentioned in assorted histories of the city. A small number of articles, most of which are published in the periodical *Milwaukee History*, address the

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<sup>203</sup> Municipal Government and Activities of the City of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wis.: Common Council, 1922-1931), all pages. Municipal Activities of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wis.: [Common Council], 1932-1942), all pages. Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wis.: [Common Council], 1944-1954), all pages. Directory and Report of City Affairs (Milwaukee, Wis.: [Common Council], 1955-1967), all pages. Directory and Report of Milwaukee's Progress (Milwaukee, Wis.: [Common Council], 1968-1972), all pages.

<sup>204</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, "A Social-economic Grouping of Gainful Workers in Cities of 500,000 or More: 1930" (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1938), all pages.

<sup>205</sup> Frances Beverstock and Robert P. Stuckert, eds., Metropolitan Milwaukee Fact Book: 1970 (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Urban Observatory, 1972), all pages.

<sup>206</sup> Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, The Economy of Southeastern Wisconsin (Waukesha, Wis.: The Commission, 1963), all pages. Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, The Economy of Southeastern Wisconsin (Waukesha, Wis.: The Commission, 1972), all pages. Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, The Population of Southeastern Wisconsin (Waukesha, Wis.: The Commission, 1963), all pages. Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, The Population of Southeastern Wisconsin (Waukesha, Wis.: The Commission, 1972), all pages.

stories of notable local businesses and consumer experiences. Some of the most important of these include Erwin W. Kieckhefer's "Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir" (1993), Gayle Koprowski-Kraut's "The Depression's Effects On a Milwaukee Family" (1980), Harry H. Anderson's "Milwaukee's Green Markets in 1943" (1994), and Kathy Warnes's "'Let's Go By Schuster's'— A Milwaukee Tradition" (1983).<sup>207</sup> John Gurda's 2000 book *The Humphrey Legacy* profiles the career of Glenn Humphrey, one of the city's most successful automobile dealers, and is about the only in-depth monograph of a car dealership in Milwaukee.<sup>208</sup>

Very few shopkeepers left memoirs of their days in business, but the handful of existing reminiscences have been included here. Catherine Otten's *The Corner Grocery Store* provides an intimate view of the workings of a neighborhood food store, as Otten recounts stories of growing up in her parents' shop.<sup>209</sup> A witty and irreverent look at life as a car salesman can be found in Phil Hunt's memoir "*No Thanks, I'm Just Looking*": *The True Confessions of a Car Salesman*.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Erwin W. Kieckhefer, "Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir," *Milwaukee History* 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 34-44. Gayle Koprowski-Kraut, "The Depression's Effects On a Milwaukee Family," *Milwaukee History* 3 no. 3 (Autumn, 1980): 84-92. Harry H. Anderson, "Milwaukee's Green Markets in 1943," *Milwaukee History* 17 no. 1 (Spring, 1994): 26-32. Kathy Warnes, "'Let's Go By Schuster's'— A Milwaukee Tradition," *Milwaukee History* 6, no. 2 (Summer, 1983): 58-68.

<sup>208</sup> John Gurda, *The Humphrey Legacy* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Glenn and Gertrude Humphrey Foundation, 2000), all pages.

<sup>209</sup> Catherine Otten, *The Corner Grocery Store* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: T/D Publications, 1975), all pages.

<sup>210</sup> Phil Hunt, "*No Thanks, I'm Just Looking*": *The True Confessions of a Car Salesman* (St. Francis, Wisconsin: Full Court Press, 1981), all pages.

Some researchers and statisticians, most of whom have worked or studied in some capacity for the University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, have compiled some extremely useful statistical information on sales data and consumer behavior. Ralph E. Brownlee’s *Survey of Retail Food Prices in Milwaukee* analyzes how food prices varied across Milwaukee during the 1960’s.<sup>211</sup> Gordon E. Bivens’s *Food Price Competition in a Local Market: Milwaukee, A Case Study* contrasts various food stores’ prices in the 1960’s.<sup>212</sup> Most of the statistical information on Milwaukee’s population numbers, income, and ethnic composition comes from reports compiled by the United States Census. The statistical information used in this study is essential to understanding the buying power of Milwaukeeans, as well as the fact that the citizenry are so diverse that there is no type of consumer that can be judged “typical.”

Many studies of gender and ethnicity contain useful perspectives on mass consumption in Milwaukee. Elizabeth Hooper-Lane’s dissertation “Domestic Modernism in Middle America: Midwestern Women in Their Postwar Homes” (2009), focuses on women’s consumer choices, using Milwaukee as one of multiple areas of study.<sup>213</sup> “Wall of Exclusion: The Persistence of Residential Racial Segregation in Metropolitan Milwaukee,” Greg J. Carman’s 2010 dissertation, tells the history of post-WWII race relations in Milwaukee, noting

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<sup>211</sup> Ralph E. Brownlee, *Survey of Retail Food Prices in Milwaukee* (Milwaukee: Better Business Bureau of Greater Milwaukee, 1967), all pages.

<sup>212</sup> Gordon E. Bivens, *Food Price Competition in a Local Market: Milwaukee, A Case Study* (University of Wisconsin: Milwaukee, 1967), all pages.

<sup>213</sup> Elizabeth Hooper-Lane, “Domestic Modernism in Middle America: Midwestern Women in Their Postwar Homes” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin– Madison, 2009), all pages.

that Milwaukee has long had major issues with segregation, and Carman is highly critical of local housing authorities.<sup>214</sup>

Popular histories of Milwaukee also provide useful information about the city, though they are researched and written with distinctly different styles and research methods, and should not be viewed in the same manner as more scholarly research. One major problem with popular histories is that they often do not include citations. Though entertainingly written, Robert W. Wells' 1970 book *This is Milwaukee* is unquestionably an example of popular history. *This is Milwaukee* contains overviews of assorted eras and incidents from the city's history. Though written in a colloquial and journalistic manner and though its coverage of Milwaukee's history is sporadic, it provides glimpses as to the different attitudes and opinions held by the city's residents over this time.<sup>215</sup>

Another journalistic portrait of the city's early years can be found in H. Russell Austin's 1946 book *The Milwaukee Story: The Making of an American City*. Austin notes that the very start of the "boom" era in Milwaukee began with the very brief post-World War I depression of 1920, declaring it, "but a brief, unhappy interlude. It quickly gave way to the brighter, then dazzling days of "the new, permanent prosperity.""<sup>216</sup> He concurs in the widespread belief that when the Great Depression struck Milwaukee, it "sidled into Milwaukee hesitatingly...

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<sup>214</sup> Greg J. Carman, "Wall of Exclusion: The Persistence of Residential Racial Segregation in Metropolitan Milwaukee" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2010), all pages.

<sup>215</sup> Robert W. Wells, *This is Milwaukee* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970), all pages.

<sup>216</sup> H. Russell Austin, *The Milwaukee Story: The Making of an American City* (Milwaukee, WI: The Milwaukee Journal, 1946), 187.

but moved in unmistakably by the early '30's."<sup>217</sup> Austin does not provide many specific details about Milwaukee's mass consumption businesses, but he does make some incisive comments about the state of the local economy.

There are two major histories of the city's largest newspaper, the *Milwaukee Journal*: Robert W. Wells's *The Milwaukee Journal: An Informal Chronicle of its first 100 Years* (1981); and Will C. Conrad, Kathleen F. Wilson, and Dale Wilson's *The Milwaukee Journal: The First Eighty Years* (1964). These are journalistic studies, and both books, though engaging, are told in a largely anecdotal manner without citations. Though both focus primarily on the *Journal's* development, issues such as politics in Milwaukee, racial issues, and city development are frequently addressed through the lens of newspaper coverage.<sup>218</sup>

The aforementioned works depict the history of the city of Milwaukee's development, as well as its political, economic, and social history. After studying the history of Milwaukee, it is necessary to understand the history of the individuals who formed the city's population.

### *Class, Race, and Ethnicity in Milwaukee*

Other crucial aspects of Milwaukee's history and development are class, race, and ethnicity. These subjects emphasize the divisions in Milwaukee's

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>218</sup> Robert W. Wells, *The Milwaukee Journal: An Informal Chronicle of its first 100 Years* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Milwaukee Journal, 1981), all pages. Will C. Conrad, Kathleen F. Wilson, and Dale Wilson, *The Milwaukee Journal: The First Eighty Years* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), all pages.



population and issues that impacted mass consumption habits. In order to understand mass consumption, one has to understand its consumers. Since it is impossible to track the consumption habits of each individual consumer, it is necessary to divide the populace into segments in order to track their buying patterns.

Class in Milwaukee is based primarily on wealth. Like the rest of America, there is no hereditary aristocracy (though there are many wealthy families in the city), nor any sort of enforced caste system. Theoretically, someone could rise in social class through making large sums of money, or decline in status due to profligacy or poor investments. There are no universally agreed-upon income levels that divide people into economic classes, terms like “lower-class,” “middle-class,” and “upper-class” have a distinct degree of subjectivity to them. Terms such as “working-class” are more commonly defined, referring to people who earn their livings through manual labor or working in industry.

There are several studies of Milwaukee’s working-class residents, though research on the wealthier segments of the city is scarcer, aside from some newspaper articles and magazine profiles. Articles covering the city’s working-class include Robert Roesler’s 1993 essay “Manufacturing in Milwaukee: A Metamorphosis;” Thomas Hyclak and James B. Stewart’s “Ethnic Discrimination and Women’s Wages in Milwaukee Laundries, 1911-12” (1994); Lois M. Quinn, John Pawasarat, and Laura Serebin’s 1995 report “Jobs for Workers on Relief in Milwaukee County, 1930-1994;” Darryl Holter’s “Milwaukee Labor After World

War II” (1999), and Kevin D. Smith’s 2003 article “From Socialism to Racism: The Politics of Class and Identity in Postwar Milwaukee.” Most of these articles provide mainly basic factual information about segments of Milwaukee’s workforce, though Smith argues that issues of class and race intertwined in order to provoke social unrest of African-American disenfranchisement in the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>219</sup>

In Richard Dewey’s 1948 article “Peripheral Expansion in Milwaukee County,” Dewey writes that Milwaukee is largely physically divided by class, saying that, “Both as to class and status groups, Milwaukee is divided sharply on a north-side–south-side basis. One gains in prestige by moving to the north side, and to particular areas of the north side... The suburbs to the south and southwest... are industrial towns peopled for the most part by laboring groups... The suburbs to the north and west... are residential suburbs peopled by the upper economic classes.”<sup>220</sup> The city has changed a great deal since 1948, though many affluent people still live in Milwaukee’s North Shore.

The Milwaukee working-class experience has been studied in longer

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<sup>219</sup> Robert Roesler, “Manufacturing in Milwaukee: A Metamorphosis,” *Milwaukee History* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 48-62. Thomas Hyclak and James B. Stewart, “Ethnic Discrimination and Women’s Wages in Milwaukee Laundries, 1911-12,” *Eastern Economic Journal* 20, no. 3 (Summer, 1994): 325-336. Lois M. Quinn, John Pawasarat, and Laura Serebin, “Jobs for Workers on Relief in Milwaukee County, 1930-1994,” *Employment and Training Institute: Division of Outreach and Continuing Education Extension*, February 1995, <[www4.uwm.edu/eti/reprints/JobsCCCNVA.pdf](http://www4.uwm.edu/eti/reprints/JobsCCCNVA.pdf)> (9 January 2011). Darryl Holter, “Milwaukee Labor After World War II,” *Milwaukee History* 22 no. 3-4 (Autumn & Winter, 1999): 95-108. Kevin D. Smith, “From Socialism to Racism: The Politics of Class and Identity in Postwar Milwaukee,” *Michigan Historical Review* 29, no. 1 (Spring, 2003): 71-95.

<sup>220</sup> Richard Dewey, “Peripheral Expansion in Milwaukee County,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 54, no. 2 (Sept. 1948): 119.

works as well. Richard L. Pifer's 1983 doctoral dissertation "A Social History of the Home Front: Milwaukee Labor During World War II," and his 2003 book *A City at War: Milwaukee Labor During World War II* look at the travails of people making a living in the wake of an employment resurgence after a decade of economic depression.<sup>221</sup>

Many scholars have stressed the important of considering race when studying mass consumption. In Isabell Cserno's 2008 dissertation "Race and Mass Consumption in Consumer Culture: National Trademark Advertising Campaigns in the United States and Germany, 1890-1930," she argues that, "racial tensions have always been at the core of the American social and cultural fabric and consumer culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reflected racial and ethnic tensions about cultural and political citizenship of nonwhites and recent immigrants."<sup>222</sup> Cserno's dissertation critiques black food product mascot, such as Aunt Jemima and the chef Rastus from Cream of Wheat, and explores what messages— racial and cultural— these often-stereotypical images conveyed to consumers across America.<sup>223</sup>

Like grocery stores and dry goods shops in Milwaukee's white neighborhoods, in the early twentieth century most stores located in residential neighborhoods catered mainly to the customers who lived nearby. Small,

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<sup>221</sup> Richard L. Pifer, "A Social History of the Home Front: Milwaukee Labor During World War II" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin— Madison, 1983), all pages. Richard L. Pifer, *A City at War: Milwaukee Labor During World War II* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2003), all pages.

<sup>222</sup> Isabell Cserno, "Race and Mass Consumption in Consumer Culture: National Trademark Advertising Campaigns in the United States and Germany, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2008), 14.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 14.

independent, black-owned businesses had trouble making profits when challenged by bigger, better-funded white businesses that could provide competitive prices and utilize substantial advertising budgets.<sup>224</sup> Advertisers and white-owned business generally directed their attention towards potential white consumers. Throughout the mid-twentieth century, the models and drawings in advertisements almost invariably depicted white people. It was not until late in the twentieth century that these advertisements diversified. Cserno professes to be influenced by prominent historians of mass consumption, such as Richard Wightman Fox, T.J. Jackson Lears, Roland Marchand, and Susan Strasser.<sup>225</sup> There were often racial and ethnic tensions in Milwaukee. During the 1960's, racial tensions were high throughout the city during the civil rights movement. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that racism and hostility were not universal across the city, and there were many cases of people of different ethnic backgrounds getting along well throughout Milwaukee's history.

Joe William Trotter, Jr. has written extensively on African-American economic life in Milwaukee, first in his dissertation *The Making of an Industrial Proletariat: Black Milwaukee, 1915–1945* (1980) and his revised book version, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945* (1985). Trotter focuses on the Milwaukee black community's "proletarianization,"

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<sup>224</sup> Michael Bonds, "Looking Beyond the Numbers: The Struggles of Black Businesses to Survive: A Qualitative Approach," *Journal of Black Studies* 37, no. 5 (May, 2007): 589.

<sup>225</sup> Isabell Cserno, "Race and Mass Consumption in Consumer Culture: National Trademark Advertising Campaigns in the United States and Germany, 1890-1930" (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2008), 3.

identifying the process as “the process by which blacks became urban-industrial workers.”<sup>226</sup>

Greg J. Carman’s dissertation *Wall of Exclusion: The Persistence of Residential Racial Segregation in Metropolitan Milwaukee* focuses on the reasons why the black and white residential divide in Milwaukee is so sharply drawn. Carman contends that, “a lethal combination of virulent racism, economic and social discrimination, and institutional barriers contributed to residential racial segregation in metropolitan Milwaukee.”<sup>227</sup> During Milwaukee’s early years, the black population made up only a tiny fragment of the community, totaling just ninety-two people in 1860, scarcely two-tenths of one percent of the total population.<sup>228</sup> Carman argues that limited job prospects and opportunities for prosperity in general were a consistent barrier against African-American economic success, and therefore proved major restrictive influences on their mass consumption experiences. The more disposable income one has, the greater the number of opportunities one has to spend and purchase, and the imposition of a glass ceiling over wage-earning capacity by necessity slashes the economic power and influence over an entire group. While many other urban regions received a substantial influx of African-Americans during the World Wars periods, Milwaukee only received a relative trickle of black population growth, a factor

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<sup>226</sup> Joe William Trotter, Jr., *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915–45* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 115. Joe William Trotter, Jr., “The Making of an Industrial Proletariat: Black Milwaukee, 1915–1945” (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1980), all pages.

<sup>227</sup> Greg J. Carman, “Wall of Exclusion: The Persistence of Residential Racial Segregation in Metropolitan Milwaukee” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 2010), iii.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

Carman attributes to Chicago acting as an absorbent buffer, with the Illinois city's larger size, greater number of job opportunities, and larger existing African-American community as reasons for the primarily Southern-originating black exodus for not moving further north. After World War II, Milwaukee's African-American population increased dramatically, expanding seven hundred percent from 1945 to 1970, composing about 10% of the city's population by 1970.<sup>229</sup>

Race relations in Milwaukee are studied in the work of Patrick D. Jones, first in his 2002 doctoral dissertation ““The Selma of the North”: Race Relations and Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee, 1958-1970” and in his 2009 book The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee. These work discuss the civil rights movement in Milwaukee, focusing on local figures such as Father Groppi and other activists, as well as how the city dealt with issues such as housing and de facto segregation in schools and workplaces. Issues such as violent versus non-violent means of protest are discussed, with a particular focus on the fights that led certain commentators to nickname the city “The Selma of the North.”<sup>230</sup> Jones continues to tell the story of the civil rights movement in Milwaukee in ““Get Up Off of Your Knees!”: Competing Visions of Black Empowerment in Milwaukee During the Early Civil Rights Era” in the 2010

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>230</sup> Patrick D. Jones, ““The Selma of the North,”: Race Relations and Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee, 1958-1970” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin– Madison, 2002), all pages. Patrick D. Jones, The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), all pages.

anthology Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level.<sup>231</sup> Another overview of the African-American experience in Milwaukee can be found in Jack Dougherty's essay "African-Americans, Civil Rights, and Race-Making in Milwaukee," in the Margo Anderson and Victor Greene-edited Perspectives on Milwaukee's Past (2009), which also contains Joseph A. Rodriguez and Mark Shelley's essay "Latinos and Asians in Milwaukee."<sup>232</sup>

Numerous masters' theses in history, mostly from the University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, have charted the story of Milwaukee's African-American population. Paul Geib seeks to carry on the study of the African-American working experience in Milwaukee where Trotter left off chronologically with his master's thesis "The Late Great Migration: A Case Study of Southern Black Migration to Milwaukee, 1940–1970." The earlier decades of the Milwaukee black experience during the twentieth century have also been studied in Thomas R. Buchanan's 1974 thesis "Black Milwaukee, 1890-1915," Robert E. Weems Jr.'s 1982 thesis "From the Great Migration to the Great Depression: Black Milwaukee, 1915–1929," Keith Robert Schmitz's 1979 thesis "Milwaukee and Its Black Community 1930-1942," Roy L. Hamilton's 1981 thesis "Expectations and Realities of a Migrant Group: Black Migration from the South to Milwaukee,

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<sup>231</sup> Patrick D. Jones, "“Get Up Off of Your Knees!”: Competing Visions of Black Empowerment in Milwaukee During the Early Civil Rights Era," in Neighborhood Rebels: Black Power at the Local Level, edited by Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 45-66.

<sup>232</sup> Margo Anderson and Victor Greene, eds., Perspectives on Milwaukee's Past (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 131-191.

1946–1958,” and Erica L. Metcalfe’s 2010 thesis ““Coming Into Our Own”: A History of the Milwaukee NAACP Youth Council, 1948-1968.”<sup>233</sup>

The subjects in this overview are parts of rapidly expanding fields— mass consumption studies and the history of Milwaukee are increasingly popular topics of research and many new additions to existing literature are published every year. By focusing on the case study of mass consumption in Milwaukee and the types of people who made up the city’s consumers, this dissertation means to be a useful addition to the research on all of the aforementioned topics.

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<sup>233</sup> Paul Edward Geib, “The Late Great Migration: A Case Study of Southern Black Migration to Milwaukee, 1940–1970” (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, 1993), all pages. Thomas R. Buchanan, “Black Milwaukee, 1890-1915” (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, 1974), all pages. Robert E. Weems, Jr., “From the Great Migration to the Great Depression: Black Milwaukee, 1915–1929” (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, 1982), all pages. Keith Robert Schmitz, “Milwaukee and its Black Community 1930–1942” (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, 1979), all pages. Roy L. Hamilton, “Expectations and Realities of a Migrant Group: Black Migration from the South to Milwaukee, 1946–1958” (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, 1981), all pages. Erica L. Metcalfe, ““Coming Into Our Own”: A History of the Milwaukee NAACP Youth Council, 1948-1968” (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, 2010), all pages.



## CHAPTER ONE

### ***“A PRACTICAL INSTRUMENT OF SERVICE WITHIN REACH OF MOST”: AUTOMOBILES IN MILWAUKEE***

#### *INTRODUCTION*

Throughout the mid-twentieth century automobiles became a prominent fixture of life in Milwaukee, mirroring the rest of the nation. The American love affair with automobiles has been well documented by many historians, and the entire history of cars in the United States is far too lengthy and complex to present here.<sup>234</sup>

This narrative opens with the development of automobiles in Milwaukee, although due to the complex nature of this story a strictly linear narrative is impossible. After a concise overview of the automobile’s history in Milwaukee, a description of Milwaukee’s growing use of the automobile will follow, featuring statistics on motor vehicle registrations and automobile purchases. Coverage of local car dealerships will next be addressed, followed by information on local car manufacturers and designers, ancillary industries connected to automobile consumption, promotional events like the annual Milwaukee Auto Show, and an exploration of the ways that cars reshaped the city and its transportation systems.

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<sup>234</sup> James J. Flink is a preeminent scholar of the history of American automobiles. His major works include *America Adopts the Automobile, 1895-1910* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1970), *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), and *The Car Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975). Another strong resource is John Heitmann’s *The Automobile and American Life*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2009).

Occasionally in this analysis there will be brief glimpses of the ways that different types of Milwaukeeans adapted to automobiles, as well as the ways that Milwaukee's car consumption mirrored or differed from the rest of the nation.

Milwaukee began the automobile age with the rest of the nation, and as the years passed, public cars supplanted streetcars, one of the city's main forms of public transport. The streetcars that connected the city for decades began to be discontinued during the late Depression era and during the World War II years, and streetcars were completely gone from Milwaukee's streets by 1958.<sup>235</sup> After the last streetcars were decommissioned, aside from taxis the only citywide form of public transportation in Milwaukee was its bus system, for unlike many other major cities, Milwaukee has no subway system or light rail or anything else along those lines.

Early in the twentieth century, the city's government realized that the city needed more paved roads for the growing number of automobiles. The old roads that supported horses needed to repaved in order to support cars' rubber tires, and smoother streets were important during the winter months, when the roads needed to be cleared of snow in order for vehicles to travel safely. During the early 1910's, the city opened a municipal quarry to gather materials to pave new roads.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 328-329.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

At the turn of the century, most of the roads in Wisconsin were, in the words of historian Ballard Campbell, “little more than mud-clogged byways.”<sup>237</sup> During the latter decades of the nineteenth century, most roads were composed of dirt, which quickly filled with holes and water in the wake of heavy horse-related traffic and precipitation. Wisconsin’s constitution expressly prohibited the state government from funding the development of roads, and this legal barrier to construction was buttressed by the prevalent assumption that lengthy journeys could best be handled by railroads. The Wisconsin state government did have the power to legislate certain aspects of the driving experience at this time. In 1903, laws were passed in order to have all cars registered with the government, and impose speed limits of twelve miles per hour within cities and twenty-five miles per hour along country roads.<sup>238</sup> Four years later, an attempt was made to lower these speed limits, but the Milwaukee Auto Club’s objections prevented this legislation. A 1913 movement to slightly raise speed limits was struck down by Governor James O. Davidson, who believed that it would be “highly improper and dangerous” to allow motorists to travel at eighteen miles per hour within city limits.<sup>239</sup>

Building roads was the exclusive purview of local governments. Occasionally, private construction companies were hired by the city government for major undertakings or by private individuals for small projects. The simplest roads consisted of being land being cleared down to dirt, but a few companies

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<sup>237</sup> Ballard Campbell, “The Good Roads Movement in Wisconsin, 1890-1911,” The Wisconsin Magazine of History 49, no. 4 (Summer, 1966): 273.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

made plank roads— streets paved with wooden boards— that were temporarily sturdier, though the wooden boards rarely lasted very long.<sup>240</sup> Notably, at the end of the nineteenth century, one of the major reasons for improving roads was increased traffic from bicycles, which needed reliable surfaces to be used safely.<sup>241</sup> Additionally, throughout the state, farmers argued that investing in roads was not the best use of the state’s resources. Many farmers feared that improved transport routes to the major cities would lead to a perversion of morals in the country.<sup>242</sup>

During the early years of improved road construction, automobiles were not yet a mass consumption item. Campbell argues that the membership of the Milwaukee Auto Club in 1908 indicates that only the affluent could afford a car then, since the members of the Club were almost exclusively car salesmen and people from high-paying professions in the city of Milwaukee. At this time, the automobile was widely seen as an expensive toy, a machine for sporting events and adventure rather than a reliable means of conveyance. Milwaukee’s automobiles in the first decade of the twentieth century were not built for journeying lengthy distances, and in any case most cars needed frequent refueling and maintenance at a time when garages and stores selling gasoline were scarce. Campbell writes, “Poor roads were partly responsible for this limited distribution of early automobiles, not only because they often made motoring a frustrating

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 276, 278.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 279-281.

challenge, but also because most autos were intentionally built to withstand the punishment of rough roads– and these sturdy models were expensive.”<sup>243</sup>

Another problem making roads difficult to travel in the early twentieth century was the fact that very few of them were clearly marked. Without set government standards for constructing signs and making them visible, long stretches of roads were left without identification markings. In the days before extensive lighting and reflective surfaces, it could be nearly impossible to navigate down certain roads in the dark. Sometimes private citizens took it upon themselves to put up directional signs. In 1907, James T. Drought, the Milwaukee Auto Club’s secretary and a founding member of the Wisconsin State Automobile Association, drove between Milwaukee and Madison and installed brightly colored directional signs on telegraph posts and other structures in order to assist future motorists.<sup>244</sup>

It was not until 1908 that Wisconsin voters granted the state government the authority to build and create roads. University of Wisconsin geology teacher William O. Hotchkiss and other like-minded individuals created the Wisconsin Good Roads Association the previous year, and quickly drummed up support for a constitutional amendment for better roads through state authority.<sup>245</sup> Campbell notes that at this time automobiles were not widely owned in the state– approximately 5,600 cars were in Wisconsin in 1908.<sup>246</sup> Throughout the boom

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 287-289.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 290.

years, the state government authorized the construction of new roads across the city of Milwaukee.

In 1923, city planner Charles Whitnall released a plan for eighty-four miles worth of new roads along the city's scenic areas.<sup>247</sup> Over the course of the boom period, paved roads filled Milwaukee's streets. When the Depression hit the city, the local government's depleted funds led to a sharp decline in road construction and maintenance. During the Depression, the federal government used the Works Progress Administration to hire Milwaukeeans to build more roads and highways.<sup>248</sup>

From 1944 to 1946, the State Highway Commission released reports calling for the construction of major expressways, one along Sixteenth Street and another between Highland Avenue and Clybourn Street.<sup>249</sup> During the postwar years of prosperity, the state of Wisconsin worked on constructing new highways, led by the State Highway Commission, which planned road locations and allocated funds. It was not enough to build new highways—previously constructed roads tended to fall into disrepair after extended use, so funding was necessary in order to keep existing roads useable. In 1953, the state Legislature allocated about \$53,000,000 for road construction, approximately \$42,600,000 of which was used to repair or create roads for the state trunk highway, and another

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<sup>247</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 269.

<sup>248</sup> James Marten, ed., "'A Chance to Grow': Recollections of the WPA Handicraft Project in Milwaukee," Milwaukee History 29, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer, 2006): 14.

<sup>249</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 331.

\$10,300,000 was meant to improve other roads.<sup>250</sup> (These sums equate to \$432,845,240, \$347,909,570 and \$84,118,980 in 2010 dollars, respectively.)<sup>251</sup>

Expressways were soon built, but though they were initially popular, further construction soon became very controversial. In 1969, the Expressway Commission declared that, “In the early 1960’s, the Commission heard vocal and strident demands for accelerated freeway design and construction. In 1969, equally loud voices were heard, only this time directed toward other goals— design the freeway elsewhere, don’t design it at all, build a mass transit system instead, call a moratorium on all construction, provide good housing before a single additional person displacement is made.”<sup>252</sup>

The traffic light system evolved over the decades, often through trial and error, as the city learned what helped drivers and pedestrians move efficiently and safely. The first traffic signals appeared in Milwaukee in 1922 at some of the city’s busiest intersections downtown.<sup>253</sup> Some of the first traffic lights were naturally placed at the intersections with the most automobile and foot traffic. For example, prototype traffic lights were placed at the intersection of Third Street and Grand Avenue in 1926, in the midst of the downtown shopping area. Though at least one anonymous pedestrian wrote to the *Sentinel* in order to complain that he did not like being told by a blinking light when he could cross the street, the

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<sup>250</sup> Harold L. Plummer, “The State Highway Commission of Wisconsin,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 37, no. 2 (Winter, 1953-1954): 77.

<sup>251</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>252</sup> John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 395.

<sup>253</sup> John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 251, 331.

*Sentinel* editorialized that “Most pedestrians have taken kindly to the experiment, have good naturedly [sic] acquiesced in the police requests that they wait for the clear signal to cross and have been gratified by the ease and safety with which the corner can be negotiated.”<sup>254</sup>

Traffic lights were installed gradually throughout the city, and they occasionally provoked resistance. In 1930, Fire Chief Peter Steinkellner campaigned against Alderman John Koerner’s suggestion to install traffic lights at the intersections of Sixth and Wells Streets, on the grounds that the lights constituted a fire hazard because they forced fire engines to stop and wait, and that four-way stop signs would be a better option. Steinkellner declared that, “So many traffic lights are installed that firemen are having trouble responding to alarms... Automobiles line up waiting for the signals to change and the apparatus can hardly get through.”<sup>255</sup> As a result of Steinkellner’s objections, the police traffic bureau and the city’s illumination bureau launched investigations into traffic safety and lighting efficiency. As time passed, traffic lights came to be regarded as a necessary safety device and they would gradually become increasingly common throughout the city.

In 1949, parking meters came to Milwaukee. Five hundred forty-eight meters were placed by parking spaces along the Milwaukee River, with many more coming over the next few years. In the year 1952 alone, the city collected

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<sup>254</sup> “For Mutual Benefit,” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, 22 March 1926, sec. A, 8.

<sup>255</sup> “Traffic Lights a Fire Hazard,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 24 January 1930, sec. A, 6.



about \$350,000 from parking meters.<sup>256</sup> (This equates to \$2,879,984.91 in 2010 dollars.)<sup>257</sup>

From 1920 to 1970, the rapidly changing city increased its demand for cars and automobile consumers were able to buy their cars in different parts of the city. Cars increasingly opened up new avenues of consumption to the city's residents, and are widely regarded as crucial to mass consumption, hence their placement in the first chapter of this dissertation. They were also critical to the modernization and development of Milwaukee, for without them, the region would never have become the metropolis it is today.

#### *MILWAUKEE BEFORE 1920: THE BIRTH OF THE AUTOMOBILE*

When the first functional automobiles came into being in the late nineteenth century, the Milwaukee area saw many examples of the new technology being developed and entering the public consciousness. In 1948, Wisconsin's state centennial automotive committee, led by Robert A. Olen, a truck manufacturer from Clintonville, publicized several automotive innovations that originated in Wisconsin. Olen crafted a list of "firsts" regarding the state's contributions to the development of the automobile, though it is possible that some of his statements were hyperbolic due to his attempt to play up Wisconsin's role in automobile history. Olen wrote:

"The first successful steam driven highway vehicle in the nation was made in Racine in 1872.

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<sup>256</sup> John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 331.

<sup>257</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

The first practical gasoline powered automobile in America was built in Milwaukee in 1889.

The first automobile sale in the nation was made to a Wausau physician in 1895.

The first “auto” race in the world was held in Wisconsin in 1878.

Wisconsin was the first government to subsidize automotive research (1879).<sup>258</sup>

The “first practical gasoline powered automobile” was created by Gottfried Schloemer of Milwaukee, a barrel maker by trade, with an avocation in mechanical experimentation. Crafting a new style of buggy that could utilize the newly invented internal combustion engine for power, Schloemer’s creation, known as the “auto wagon,” could travel at speeds as high as twelve miles per hour. Schloemer’s invention rests in the Milwaukee Public Museum.<sup>259</sup> The placard in front of the Schloemer car in the Milwaukee Public Museum’s Streets of Old Milwaukee, implies that there is some ambiguity over the date of the car’s invention, which means that it may not definitely be the first gasoline-powered car in America, but it was certainly a major achievement in Milwaukee’s progress in automobile experimentation and development.<sup>260</sup> Determining the “firsts” in history is a hazardous undertaking, and booster sources should never be taken at face value. Other inventors, most notably Charles E. Duryea of Springfield,

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<sup>258</sup> Frank Sinclair, “The Automobile and Its Birth in Wisconsin,” The Milwaukee Journal, 8 August 1948, Centennial Exposition Edition, 2. It should be noted that this was essentially a “booster project” meant to celebrate the state and promote its accomplishments, and the accuracy of some of Olen’s claims ought to be viewed with a degree of skepticism.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>260</sup> John Lundstrom, caption from the Schloemer Automobile, “The Streets of Old Milwaukee,” (May, 2011), Milwaukee Public Museum.

Massachusetts, are often cited with producing the first gasoline-fueled automobile, though this title is controversial due to conflicting evidence.<sup>261</sup>

Milwaukeeans were quick to buy cars once personal automobiles started to be produced en masse. Driving was initially viewed as a male's job, though women were not restricted from operating vehicles. In the summer of 1903, two women, Mrs. Nettie Hoyt and Mrs. George Rowe, made headlines for driving a car by themselves between Beaver Dam and Milwaukee. The journey took three days, and was no easy task due to inferior roads and the propensity of cars at that time to break down frequently.<sup>262</sup> The notoriety of this trip is due in part to the fact that such excursions were viewed as outside the standard women's sphere for the time. The typical car buyer was a male at the start of the twentieth century, though the passage of time would swiftly bring about gender equity in terms of automobile usage and purchasing, as cars would go from being a novelty for a wealthy few to a crucial need for the masses.

In 1901, approximately two hundred cars were in use in Milwaukee, compared to 4,192 in the entire United States.<sup>263</sup> Milwaukee's residents, therefore, possessed nearly five percent of the nation's cars. To put this in perspective, the United States Census calculates that the entire resident population

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<sup>261</sup> Dorothy V. Walters, "Devil-Wagon Days," The Wisconsin Magazine of History 30, no. 1 (September, 1946): 69.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>263</sup> Frank Sinclair, "The Automobile and Its Birth in Wisconsin," The Milwaukee Journal, 8 August 1948, Centennial Exposition Edition, 2.

of the United States in 1900, just one year earlier, was 76,212,166.<sup>264</sup> In 1900, Milwaukee was the fourteenth-largest city in America, and its population was 285,315.<sup>265</sup> Therefore, Milwaukee only made up 0.37% of the nation's population in 1900, yet the number of cars traveling its streets in 1901 was roughly thirteen-and-a-half times higher than it would have been if the city's percentage of the car population was proportionate to the city's national population. Of course, cars were more common on the paved roads of urban areas than they were in the country, which partially explains the numerical imbalance, but the numbers indicate that cars figured prominently in Milwaukee's local landscape in the twentieth century's early decades.

Though it is indisputable that automobiles were an increasingly common sight on Milwaukee's streets during the first decades of the 1900's, the evidence regarding the first automobile dealership in Milwaukee is contradictory. Frank Sinclair's centennial history asserts that Milwaukee's primary car salesman in the early twentieth century was Theodore Jonas, proprietor of the T. Jonas Cycle Co., located on National Avenue. Jonas's business opened either in 1900 or sometime very close to that year.<sup>266</sup> However, the T. Jonas Cycle Company is not listed in the "Automobile Manufacturers and Dealers" section of *Wright's Milwaukee City Directory* for 1900. Two other businesses are mentioned in the aforementioned

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<sup>264</sup> "History: 1900 Fast Facts,"

<[http://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/fast\\_facts/1900\\_fast\\_facts.html](http://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/1900_fast_facts.html)> (26 May 2011).

<sup>265</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900. Population—Part I (Washington, D.C.: United States Census Office, 1901), 432.

<sup>266</sup> Frank Sinclair, "The Automobile and Its Birth in Wisconsin," The Milwaukee Journal, 8 August 1948, Centennial Exposition Edition, 2.

portion of the 1900 *City Directory*, the Brown T.H. Co., located on 4<sup>th</sup> Street; and the Milwaukee Automobile Co., situated near St. Paul Avenue and 19<sup>th</sup> Street. There are no mentions of any automobile manufacturers or dealers whatsoever in the years prior to 1900. Dealerships would become much more common over time. According to Wright's Milwaukee City Directory, in 1970, sixty-eight businesses are listed under "Automobile Dealers." Eighty-two businesses are listed under "Automobile Dealers– Used Cars."<sup>267</sup>

The early car dealerships were very different from those that would proliferate throughout the later decades of the twentieth century. Whereas later car dealerships would consist of large lots with dozens, even hundreds of cars of varying makes and models, the first car dealerships were both simpler and smaller. In the 1910's, the average car dealership consisted of a small showroom with a single car prominently displayed, a desk where the salesman could work, and a repair area behind the dealership with enough room for five or six cars, since early car models frequently broke down. The dealership only sold the one kind of car– if a potential buyer was not pleased with that type of automobile, the consumer went someplace else. The car on display was not for sale itself. After a purchase, a car would generally be shipped by freight and delivered to the buyer, which could be a hazardous undertaking on bad roads. People who entered the car dealership business usually needed about five hundred dollars in capital for start-up expenses, and large quantities of energy and determination in order to

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<sup>267</sup> Milwaukee City Directory, (St. Paul, Minn.: Wright Directory Co., 1970), 112-113.

get– and keep– the business going.<sup>268</sup> (If an entrepreneur wanted to start a car dealership in 1913, the initial costs of the business would equate to \$11,012.93 in 2010.)<sup>269</sup>

In the early days of car dealerships in Milwaukee, the buying experience was unlike today's in one major respect– with only one sample car, many dealerships were not able to allow prospective customers to test-drive the desired vehicle. Consumers could look, but not test. The contemporary process of buying and selling cars is quite different from that of buying and selling other consumer goods. Test-driving is an inherent part of the automobile sales experience, but in comparison, clothing stores rarely allow a customer to put on a coat, step outside the store, and walk up and down the street to see how well the garment holds up to the winter wind. Additionally, negotiating over the price is a common practice between automobile dealers and consumers, but few consumers check out at a grocery store anticipating haggling over the price of foodstuffs. Car dealerships remain one of the few shopping venues in Milwaukee where haggling is an accepted part of the processes of buying and selling.

By the 1920's, automobiles had become sufficiently inexpensive to become a mass consumption item for the general public. This did not mean that most consumers were immediately able to purchase an automobile outright. Since most people could only afford to pay for their cars a little at a time, it was necessary for automobile dealerships to allow for financing programs. There

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<sup>268</sup> Wally Rank/Jerry Holz, prod. and dir. by Jane Bieterman, 26 min., WMVS/WMT, 1995, videocassette.

<sup>269</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

were multiple ways that financing might be arranged. One common method was the chattel mortgage, where a bank or finance company would loan funds to a client in exchange for collateral. This collateral usually consisted of a mortgage on the car being bought, or possibly on a car already owned by the client.<sup>270</sup> During the pre-World War I period, problems arose due to disreputable finance companies, vaguely worded contracts, and differences in state laws. At times, it became difficult for the authorities to determine who obtained ownership of a car in the event of a defaulted loan: sometimes possession could revert the automobile dealership, the finance company, or the buyer. This led to calls for clearer and more comprehensive legislation regarding automobile financing, but it took decades for reforms to come into effect.<sup>271</sup> In 1955, Frank H. Yarnall, the president of the National Automobile Dealers' Association (NADA) mourned the absence of widespread state regulation of automobile financing at the American Finance Conference's twenty-second annual convention, which allowed for disreputable automobile dealerships to make exploitative deals.<sup>272</sup>

Some Milwaukee banks, such as First Wisconsin, specialized in arranging for automobile financing. In a 1939 newspaper advertisement, First Wisconsin advertised its "TIME-CREDIT Plan," offering "*low bank rates... with lower monthly payments!... No confusing red tape... no commission... no unexpected*

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<sup>270</sup> Robert M. Barton, "Automobile Dealer Financing and the Bona Fide Purchaser," Michigan Law Review 43, no. 3 (December, 1944): 605-606.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 607-612.

<sup>272</sup> "Need for State Control of Auto Financing Near," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 19 November 1955, part 2, 6.

“extras.”<sup>273</sup> Automobile loans and reasonable payment plans were increasingly important during the Depression, when many clients needed leniency in order to obtain the cars they needed to keep their jobs. During the Depression, the classified advertisements and automobile sections often prominently displayed notices from finance companies and dealerships proclaiming their reasonable rates and flexible terms for financing cars.

Dealerships were not the only way that people could purchase cars. People who wished to sell their own used cars always had the option of selling those vehicles themselves. A significant number of used automobiles were sold through the use of classified advertisements placed by their owners. The *Journal* actively encouraged readers to post in the classifieds. In 1929, the *Journal* declared that its clients “will invariably obtain quick, competent replies to your own little classified ads.”<sup>274</sup> By 1946, a weekday page of classified ads might be half-filled with postings from people who wanted to buy cars, sell cars, rent cars, or obtain spare parts. Since clients paid by the word, classified ads were economically written, such as “DODGE 1933 sedan, \$100, as is below ceiling. West D495M. 541 N. 54<sup>th</sup> St.”<sup>275</sup> (After inflation, this equates to \$1,118.24 in 2010 dollars for a car thirteen years old, at a time when consumers were desperate for good automobiles.) Towards the end of the century, improved printing techniques made it possible for people to include photographs of the cars they

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<sup>273</sup> “First Wisconsin Plan Automobile Loans,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 11 July 1939, sec. M, 4.

<sup>274</sup> “Milwaukeeans Negotiate Sales in Classified Ads,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 31 December 1929, sec. I, 9.

<sup>275</sup> “DODGE 1933 sedan,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 20 January 1946, Classifieds, 7.



were selling. Though the average issue of the *Milwaukee Journal* might contain hundreds of classified advertisements for automobiles, there is no way to gauge how many of these advertisements resulted in a mutually satisfactory sale. Whatever the success rate of the advertisements, a substantial portion of Milwaukee's newspaper readership must have continued to believe in the effectiveness of advertising bought by private individuals, because throughout the twentieth century, as many as hundreds of classified ads regarding cars might be placed every week. The *Milwaukee Journal* was the most prominent venue for placing such advertisements. In 1924, the paper printed a statement attesting to the scope of its advertising reach, stating that:

“In 1924 The Milwaukee Journal printed a total of 17,630,937 lines of paid advertising.

The second and third Milwaukee newspapers, taken together, printed only 13,532,016 lines. The Journal, therefore, led the other TWO papers COMBINED by more than 30%...

In classified advertising which is recognized as the most dependable gauge of the value of any newspaper as an advertising medium, The Journal printed more than 2 ½ times as much as the other two papers [the second and third highest-selling papers in Milwaukee] combined.”<sup>276</sup>

Classified advertising had the potential to allow car owners to sell their vehicles themselves and keep the proceeds themselves. Given certain circumstances, a buyer might be able to purchase a used automobile through classified advertising for less than it would cost at most dealerships, although they could not be assured of the warranties or repair services that a dealership might offer. Purchasing a car through classified advertising might be an economical

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<sup>276</sup> “Where Do Advertisers In Milwaukee Get the Most for Their Money?,” The Milwaukee Journal, 11 January 1925, 7.

move for some consumers, but the principles of caveat emptor applied. Since an automobile was an expensive purchase that conceivably could be used for several years, wise consumers had to select their vehicles carefully.

Milwaukeeans swiftly took to buying automobiles, but though there were numerous inventors and entrepreneurs who developed different kinds of cars in Milwaukee, the city's automobile production industry only made up a tiny fraction of the city's industrial economy. Journalist Frank Sinclair posits that had Milwaukee embraced the automobile manufacturing industry, the entire economic history of the city might have been dramatically altered.<sup>277</sup>

According to one rumor, Milwaukee came very close to becoming the automobile capital of America, although this story may have become inflated by legend.<sup>278</sup> According to Frank Sinclair's romantic account of the automobile's history in Wisconsin, Ford is rumored to have considered building his factories in Wisconsin due to the number of automotive innovations in the region, as well as the plethora of talented German mechanics who had settled in the area.<sup>279</sup> Though it is possible that Ford would have selected his site elsewhere in the state, because of its size and proximity to shipping routes, Milwaukee would have been a likely spot to set up operations. Had Ford gotten the necessary financing, he might have set up shop in Wisconsin, but as the state centennial automotive committee wrote, "The conservative bankers and persons of wealth in Wisconsin apparently did not

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<sup>277</sup> Frank Sinclair, "The Automobile and Its Birth in Wisconsin," The Milwaukee Journal, 8 August 1948, Centennial Exposition Edition, 2.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

believe in the possibilities of the motor vehicle.”<sup>280</sup> Ford did find financial backing to the east of Lake Michigan, and he settled there. Possibly Ford merely considered eastern Wisconsin as an option, nothing more. Several of the leading histories of Henry Ford and the Ford Motor Company make no reference whatsoever to Ford looking elsewhere for a home for his business, and it is possible that the incident Sinclair references is based on some misunderstanding or distorted memory, and that Ford never seriously considered setting up operations in Wisconsin.<sup>281</sup>

What is not in doubt is the fact that the entire state of Wisconsin quickly took to automobiles. By 1910, for every eighty-four families in the state, one owned an automobile. Ten years later, the statistics had altered rapidly, with approximately half of all Wisconsin families owning cars. In 1930, the car-to-family ratio in the state was one to one.<sup>282</sup> Despite the popularity of the automobile, driving on Milwaukee’s streets was not always easy. Inclines in the road could stall early cars. As many cars’ gasoline tanks were unable to function properly when tilted, even slightly.<sup>283</sup> While the natural, hill-filled landscape of the city provided some problems for early cars, the weather provided more

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>281</sup> Douglas Brinkley, Wheels for the World: Henry Ford, His Company, and a Century of Progress, 1903-2003 (New York: Viking, 2003), all pages. Keith Sward, The Legend of Henry Ford (New York: Rinehart, 1948), all pages. Ray Batchelor, Henry Ford, Mass Production, Modernism, and Design (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), all pages. Henry Ford and Samuel Crowther, My Life and Work (Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Co., 1987 [c1922]), all pages.

<sup>282</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 252.

<sup>283</sup> Dorothy V. Walters, “Devil-Wagon Days,” The Wisconsin Magazine of History 30, no. 1 (September, 1946): 71.

unpredictable hindrances to driving. In the early days of driving, motorists did not have recourse to heating, windshield wipers, or antifreeze, and if snow filled the streets then drivers often had to step out of the car every few yards and shovel the road themselves until it was passable. Early twentieth-century cars often handled Milwaukee's wintry roads so poorly that drivers left their automobiles on blocks for the colder months, which often comprised the majority of the year.<sup>284</sup>

The winter weather did not lead Milwaukeeans to assume that the automobile was impracticable for their city. On the contrary, as cars grew even more popular, Milwaukee became the home of numerous new cars and automobile components. Indeed, dozens of unique types of cars were produced and developed in Milwaukee by private manufacturers and inventors. Since many of these cars were sold primarily in the Milwaukee area, Milwaukeeans who wanted to purchase a locally made automobile had plenty of options during the early decades of the twentieth century, though most cars were made far away from Milwaukee.<sup>285</sup> Some prominent Milwaukee-made automobiles include two Briggs & Stratton models, the Superior, first made in 1908, and the Flyer, produced from 1918 to 1921.<sup>286</sup> The Ogren Motor Car Company developed

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<sup>284</sup> W.C. Greb, Wisconsin on Wheels, A Motor Vehicle History of the Badger State, ca. 1948, WIHV95-A1072, SC 1239, Box 1, Folder 1, Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin, 8-9. Note: this is an unpublished manuscript in an archival collection, where not all of the pages are numbered consecutively, some pages are not numbered, some pages have the same number on them, and some are not numbered at all.

<sup>285</sup> An extensive list of automobiles that were manufactured and designed exclusively in Milwaukee can be found in Appendix A.

<sup>286</sup> W.C. Greb, Wisconsin on Wheels, A Motor Vehicle History of the Badger State, ca. 1948, WIHV95-A1072, SC 1239, Box 1, Folder 1, Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin, 4, 27.

various luxury models that only the very wealthy could afford, starting in 1919 and continuing until 1922. Most Milwaukee car-manufacturing companies had a relatively short life span, and their vehicles soon became collectors' items, viewed as novelties as notable as the first cars to travel on Milwaukee's streets. By the end of the 1910's, cars were no longer a curiosity. They were a fact of life in Milwaukee.

### *1920–1930: THE RISE OF AUTOMOBILE CONSUMPTION*

The Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Department kept statistics on vehicle registrations by county from 1921 to 1952. From 1921 to 1952, the number of car registrations in the area increased by slightly over five and a half times. In 1921, there were 44,255 cars registered in Milwaukee County. Registrations grew considerably, though not always steadily over the course of the 1920's, but the Great Depression stopped the trend, for in 1930, when the number of registered cars fell very slightly to 142,586 from 142,791 the previous year. Registrations would dwindle for the next few years, reaching a low of 121,550 in 1933 that would never again be matched. From 1934 to the start of World War II, automobile registration numbers would fluctuate up and down from year to year, reaching a high of 189,722 in 1941. The war years would curb automobile registrations, with numbers falling as low as 150,928 in 1944. After the war, registrations rose steadily, reaching 244,359 in 1952.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Calendar Year Motor Vehicle Registrations by Counties Jan. 1, 1921 to Date (Madison: State of Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Department, 1952), 2-32. A full list

The rising registration numbers illustrate just how widespread automobile ownership was becoming. Buying a car soon became an option available to all but the poorest members of society. The very popular Model-T Ford cost two hundred sixty dollars in 1925.<sup>288</sup> (This equates to \$3,239.69 in 2010 dollars.)<sup>289</sup> Since in 1925 the average yearly wage of the 119,480 Milwaukeeans working in manufacturing was \$1,513.36, and the average yearly wage of the 6,076 Milwaukeeans serving in jobbing and wholesale business was \$1,740.50.<sup>290</sup> A car therefore cost the average manufacturing worker 17.18% of a year's salary, and the average person in jobbing and wholesale business had to use up 14.94% of one year's pay for a Model-T. A car was therefore a major investment, but one that many people thought was worthwhile. However, not everyone spent two hundred sixty dollars on a Model-T. Indeed, by the 1920's, many consumers had grown tired of Henry Ford's monochromatic and undifferentiated selection (the famous quip, "You can have it in any color as long as it's black" allowed for no consumer choice in appearance), and sought out distinctive cars with different features and capabilities.<sup>291</sup> There were many other options for the automobile consumer in southeastern Wisconsin, and a substantial number of alternative vehicles were made in Milwaukee for people who wanted to support their local

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of motor vehicle registrations in Milwaukee from 1921 to 1952 can be found in Appendix B.

<sup>288</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 252.

<sup>289</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>290</sup> "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1925-1926," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1927, Progressive Milwaukee and Annual Trade Review, 3.

<sup>291</sup> John Gurda, The Humphrey Legacy (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Glenn and Gertrude Humphrey Foundation, 2000), 7.

industries. Additionally, automobile components and other innovations were developed in the city, making cars safer and more user-friendly.

Changing technology altered driving habits. In a commemorative publication for their hundredth anniversary, machine parts manufacturer Johnson Controls asserted that the removal of the hand crank (an apparatus that needed to be continually wound to keep the automobile moving) in 1925 made driving more attractive to women, since motorists no longer had to step out to the front of the car and turn the crank, a tedious and sometimes dirty job that apparently was an off-putting chore for many females.<sup>292</sup> This indicates that the conventional wisdom amongst automobile manufacturers is that women were less willing to put up with manual labor in their automobiles than men were.

Regardless of the gender of the driver, cars needed to be properly stored when not in use. When Milwaukeeans were not traveling, they needed places to park their vehicles. With increasing numbers of people owning cars, Milwaukeeans had a corresponding need to build spaces to store and protect their automobiles. Houses, therefore, changed at the start of the twentieth century, as driveways and garages were added to the landscape. While homeowners had to pay to build the necessary new shelters for their cars, other driving necessities had to be covered by the state and local governments. The roads needed to be made as safe as possible, so automated traffic signals were first installed on Milwaukee's streets beginning in 1922. Parking was also a major issue. Downtown areas needed sufficient new parking lots and garages to hold vehicles.

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<sup>292</sup> Johnson Controls: 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary– 1984 Annual Report, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Johnson Controls, Inc., 1984), 23.

Parking spaces would become increasingly important as more cars were used throughout the city, as travelers needed a place to park their cars as they visited their destination. As for street parking, parking meters were soon installed to control the duration of time that cars would remain on the streets, and also to bring the city some additional revenue.<sup>293</sup>

In his research into the history of Milwaukee's business practices, Donald George Leeseberg provided statistical research as to the number of parking spaces in a couple of square miles of Milwaukee's downtown business district, inside the boundaries of State, Jefferson, Clybourn, and Eighth Streets between the years of 1937 and 1958. In 1937 there were 11,712 parking spaces in this region (a combined total of parking structures, garages, parking lots, and curbside spaces), and this number went slightly down and up for two decades, eventually declining to 11,423 spaces in 1958. The numbers fluctuated as old parking venues were destroyed for new building projects, and new parking structures were built to replace them. It is, however, notable that the number of curb parking spaces declined by over forty-two percent over twenty-one years (2,674 spaces in 1937, to 1,542 spaces in 1958), while the numbers of parking lots, garages, and parking structures grew moderately (the number of spaces in parking structures and garages rose from 2,625 in 1937 to 2,772 in 1958 (not including one municipal parking structure), and the number of spaces in parking lots rose from 6,412 in

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<sup>293</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 251, 331.



1937 to 7,109 in 1958).<sup>294</sup> The total number of parking spaces in the area declined slightly while the number of automobiles in the area rose dramatically, indicating that convenient parking may have become increasingly challenging to find in downtown Milwaukee over this time.

Adequate parking was not the only renovation Milwaukee needed to make in order to accommodate drivers. As soon as consumers bought cars, fuel became an essential commodity. It is hazardous to determine what was the first gas station in Milwaukee, since many garages, hardware and drug stores, and other retail businesses sold cans of gasoline. In any case, the city directories do not keep records on gasoline filling stations until 1916.<sup>295</sup> Before pumps became common, gasoline was often inconvenient to obtain since only a handful of businesses kept it in stock, and it had to be purchased by the can. The first gasoline pump in Milwaukee was installed on 5<sup>th</sup> and State Streets by the druggist George H. Kesten. Gasoline purchasers had to operate a hand crank in order to fill their tanks.<sup>296</sup> Gas sales rose correspondingly in order to keep the city's growing fleet of cars fueled and running.

Over time, the number of cars in Milwaukee continued to climb, although different sources provided different numbers for how many vehicles were

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<sup>294</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 77. For more information, see Appendix C.

<sup>295</sup> Rachel, <AskALibrarian@oclc.org> "Library Question - Answer [Question #8186588]," 28 November 2012, personal e-mail (28 November 2012).

<sup>296</sup> W.C. Greb, Wisconsin on Wheels, A Motor Vehicle History of the Badger State, ca. 1948, WIHV95-A1072, SC 1239, Box 1, Folder 1, Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin, 8. Unfortunately, Greb does not provide the year of the first gas pump's installation.

registered in the area. By 1926 Milwaukee County's car registration exceeded 100,000 vehicles. At this time, Milwaukee County contained twenty percent of the registered cars in the state.<sup>297</sup> In 1931, one report claimed that the city of Milwaukee was home to 114,665 cars and trucks. The vehicles came to a total value of \$34,759,928, or an average value per vehicle of \$303.14.<sup>298</sup> (Adjusted for inflation, this average value would be worth \$4,348.78 in 2010.)<sup>299</sup>

Milwaukeeans were certainly spending significant amounts of money on cars, and in order to be informed consumers, they needed a way to discover new car designs and technology. The start of the twentieth century saw the beginning of a Milwaukee tradition. From its inception, the Milwaukee Auto Show would be a popular venue for people who wanted to learn more about what sorts of cars were on the market, as well as to better understand the new innovations and trends that were reshaping the industry. The Milwaukee Auto Show took place annually, usually in January or February.

The *Journal* ran a special annual section for the Auto Show, profiling some of the new cars being depicted and publishing other articles on new developments in the automotive world. By the mid-1920's, the *Journal* observed that the automobile had transformed and expanded the city by eliminating the limitations caused by traveling distances. Cars had become sufficiently affordable so that people of all income levels could purchase one. In a front-page

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<sup>297</sup> John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 251.

<sup>298</sup> "Average Car Here Is Worth \$303.14, Assessor Estimates," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 11 January 1931, Local News, 1.

<sup>299</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

commentary, the *Journal* wrote of the decentralization of the city, as previously hard-to-reach areas became easily accessible, declaring that,

“In Milwaukee, as elsewhere, the automobile has opened the way to the suburbs, to outlying residential districts. Homes have been built in good surroundings, that would not have been possible except for the motor car. Folks have gone far up and down the lake shore, the Milwaukee river, westward to Wauwatosa and beyond, southward through Bay View, to make homes. The automobile has made these districts accessible, has extended the home life of the city.

In industry, too, the automobile has played a large part. Men no longer need cluster about factories to work in them. They may live almost anywhere in the city, yet reach their places of employment by motor car. And many do. For the automobile no longer is the rich man’s toy. It is [sic] become a practical instrument of service within reach of most Americans.”<sup>300</sup>

The Auto Show sought to make Milwaukeeans more informed automobile consumers. In 1930, one *Journal* reporter identified only as “Brownie” wrote:

“Automobile shows are the annual opportunities for motorists to learn what the designers and engineers of the world’s greatest industry have discovered, tested and approved as real advances. The Milwaukee show this year is exceptional in the great number of new things presented for the motorist to see and learn. Since the automobile has become one of the most inevitable and one of the largest items in the budget of the average family, it is the part of wisdom to attend the show and get the low down on this year’s developments.

The show is the greatest educational opportunity that the individual has in his wise purpose to keep along with the times, to fortify himself with knowledge about all the cars, to get the correct information that will be most valuable when next he must decide the recurring question of new car investment. The show management properly puts the automobile foremost and all but exclusively; providing, to be sure, a beautiful setting for beautiful products, but making it an educational exposition rather than a vaudeville week or mere scramble for “sales prospects.”<sup>301</sup>

<sup>300</sup> “Milwaukee: The Automobile,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 17 January 1925, 1.

<sup>301</sup> Brownie, “All Cars Fine at Automobile Show for 1930: Good Opportunity to Learn of Latest Tested and Approved Advances for Motorists,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 12 January 1930, Auto Show Edition, 1.

The *Journal* argued that the celebration of all things automobile-related was more than just a major display of consumerism, it was a recognition of how much American society had come to depend on cars. In 1931, Herbert Hoover announced that ten percent of all Americans' livelihoods relied on the automobile industry, either directly or indirectly.<sup>302</sup> Unfortunately for many Americans, they were about to lose their livelihoods due to the Depression.

#### *1930–1941: HARD TIMES CAN'T STOP MILWAUKEE'S LOVE OF CARS*

Changing times led to new consumption patterns for Milwaukee's automobile consumers, and some of the events that most shook up the consumption of cars in the city originated outside of Milwaukee. The Great Depression and the Second World War were the most disruptive international forces to affect the city's car buying. In the first case, a significant portion of the consumer market abruptly lost its income, and therefore, its spending ability. In the second case, the federal government imposed restrictions as materials necessary for driving were redirected towards the war effort.

In 1931, the U.S. Census calculated that two years earlier, fifty-four automobile dealerships in Milwaukee sold \$40,104,643 worth of cars.<sup>303</sup> (Adjusting to 2010 levels of inflation, that sum equates to \$511,406,903.)<sup>304</sup> Milwaukee's economic slump in the wake of the Depression would lead to a steep

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<sup>302</sup> "The Auto Show and What It Means," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 11 January 1931, sec. 1, 1.

<sup>303</sup> "Milwaukee's Wholesale Trade Over Half Billion," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 4 May 1931, Markets section, 3.

<sup>304</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

reduction in sales. Though harder economic times led to a decline in all forms of consumption, in 1932, the *Journal* observed that Milwaukee's retail sales were generally significantly higher than the national average, observing that the city's automobile sales were eighteen percent above the national average, though the national average sales numbers were not mentioned.<sup>305</sup> As the Depression continued, many people sold their old cars themselves, and since many of these transactions were not recorded, any statistics regarding automobile sales during the Depression would be incomplete.

During these difficult times, not only the number of new vehicles but also the prices of cars varied significantly. At different time periods, such as during the early days of motoring or the Depression, bartering was used instead of cash. Bartering is often viewed as a sign of a weak economy, since people involved in trading goods they already own for goods they need either have little ready money or they have little faith in the enduring stability of their currency's value. In those times, it was not unusual for some dealers to accept trades in livestock. In the 1910's, some dealers were willing to sell a car in exchange for two lambs, or possibly a pig. Non-animal items were also used as trade-ins. On one occasion, a dealer was willing to swap a car for a piano.<sup>306</sup> This form of bartering was revived in the wake of the Great Depression. In 1935, West Side Buick Pontiac ran an advertisement declaring that "We trade for anything... even for horses and

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<sup>305</sup> "Retail Trade Here Is High," The Milwaukee Journal, 26 June 1932, sec. II, 8.

<sup>306</sup> Wally Rank/Jerry Holz, prod. and dir. by Jane Biertman, 26 min, WMVS/WMVT, 1995, videocassette.

cows!”<sup>307</sup> Dealerships that used only cash, checks, bonds, and other forms of paper currency could store it easily in a safe or register. In contrast, a business that used the barter system needed to be capable of storing large items such as pianos or livestock. In the latter case, the dealers had to make sure that the livestock were properly fed and cared for until they could be sold or transported.

Automobile prices naturally varied depending on the model, the condition of the car, and the dealer. Sometimes widespread economic conditions had a major impact on car prices. In the middle of the Depression, some dealers sold used cars for less than fifty dollars. Though fifty dollars sounds like very little today, during the Depression many potential consumers were unable to pay that amount as a lump sum. Dealers were compelled to institute financing and installment plans. A standard plan might require five dollars down and a weekly payment of five dollars, possibly a little more or less, until the balance was paid.<sup>308</sup> (In 1935, fifty dollars would have had the purchasing equivalent of \$795.82 in 2010 dollars.)<sup>309</sup> The expense of an automobile meant that dealerships often had to offer flexible payment plans and to be prepared to endure the inconveniences and losses that might arise if a customer defaulted on payments and left town with the automobile.

Other than a home, automobiles remain by far the most expensive item that most consumers buy, and most drivers invest in several cars over the course

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<sup>307</sup> “We Trade for Anything... Even for Horses and Cows!,” The Milwaukee Journal, 20 October 1935, sec. III, 6.

<sup>308</sup> Wally Rank/Jerry Holz, prod. and dir. by Jane Biertman, 26 min, WMVS/WMT, 1995, videocassette.

<sup>309</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

of their lifetimes. During the Depression, many of the people fortunate enough to be employed (sometimes part-time at multiple locations) needed cars for the daily commute to their jobs. By the mid-1930's, many consumers could only buy the least expensive cars, which tended to be the oldest and most worn-out vehicles. In 1938, auto dealers in Wisconsin claimed that old cars endangered the public, and that consumers needed to be encouraged to buy new ones. Dealers were also worried that too many dealerships were opening in urban areas, thereby creating too much competition and threatening the health of all dealerships. Louis Malan, executive secretary of the National Automobile Dealer's Association (NADA), said that it was necessary to limit the number of dealerships, "otherwise dealers are going broke... Until this obsolete car problem is solved, the dealer and manufacturer will not make much progress in stimulating automobile sales and automobile trades employment... There is a saturation point under present economic levels with new car sales blocked by the growing number of old cars still in use."<sup>310</sup> What the local automobile dealers do not mention (at least in this article) is just how limited many consumers' finances were during this period.

At a time when some people barely had enough income to make it from day to day, it was a tremendous feat to find the money to buy and maintain the automobiles needed to travel to and from work. Automobile owners who could not afford the maintenance costs might have sold their cars for a fraction of their value, or possibly sold them for scrap. In the event of an accident, people often could not afford to repair their cars, let alone replace a car if it were utterly

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<sup>310</sup> "Auto Dealers Settle Quarrel," The Milwaukee Journal, 30 September 1938, sec. L (Local News), 2.

wrecked in a crash. For motorists in perilous economic conditions, it became even more crucial to drive with caution.

Automobile safety was always a problem. 1937 alone saw 2,110 automobile accidents in Milwaukee, and one hundred twenty-three people died as a result of these collisions.<sup>311</sup> Since speed is one of the major causes of accidents and auto-related deaths, local governments have frequently seen fit to regulate speed limits, which has in turn sparked significant debate by drivers and the police who enforce these restrictions. For example, in 1930, the Milwaukee council's judiciary committee proposed setting speed limits at "20 miles [per hour] in the downtown district, 25 miles [per hour] on Lincoln Memorial drive [sic], and 30 miles [per hour] on a few arterial highways."<sup>312</sup> In a front-page editorial, the *Milwaukee Journal* commented upon the new limits, stating that the paper approved of new speed regulations if they helped to make the city's roads safer, but that in the past, the city's police had not shown adequate judgment in enforcing these laws, and that Milwaukee's local government had not set speeds at reasonable rates in the past. The *Journal* wrote:

"Whatever the council does about speed limits, it should put an end to the unjust situation that has prevailed for years: Absurdly low limits on the books, then non-enforcement by the police— until, some bright morning, the police suddenly decide on promiscuous arrests.

Thus some Milwaukeeans have been arrested for traveling at a speed that had become common, because some motorcycle officer or his superior suddenly took a notion to change his concept

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<sup>311</sup> Peter S. Cajka, "Riding with St. Paul in the Passenger Side: The Archdiocese of Milwaukee Enters the Automobile Age, 1920-1965," seminar paper, (Marquette University, 2009), 35.

<sup>312</sup> "Milwaukee: Slow-Speed Ordinance," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 9 January 1930, sec. I, 1.



of the law. Some men have paid fines for offenses no greater than the majority of motorists commit every day. That is neither fair play nor reasonable law enforcement.”<sup>313</sup>

New laws would be enforced on drivers with the start of World War II, as government-enforced limitations and guidelines forced consumers to comply with a new era of enforced scarcity.

#### *1942–1945: WAR RATIONING MEANS LESS DRIVING*

During the war years, many of the nation’s automobile manufacturing plants were converted temporarily into munitions factories, and since fewer automobiles were being produced, it became increasingly difficult for consumers to purchase new automobiles, despite the substantial demand for new cars amongst people who could afford them. The federal government oversaw the distribution of the new automobiles to the states, and state and local authorities presided over the sales of cars regionally. In February of 1942, the federal government announced that from the three-month period of Monday, March 2 to Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup> of that year, only 145,500 newly produced automobiles would be released to the general public across the entire nation. Of these 145,500 cars, 3,099 were allotted for the entire state of Wisconsin, and 671 cars were reserved for Milwaukee County. Quota numbers varied from quarter to quarter. Milwaukee’s local authorities, led by people like Stephen G. Swisher, Jr., the deputy administrator in charge of rationing automobiles, had to determine which automobile dealers would receive new cars to sell, and if so, how many a

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 1.

dealership would get. Population was only one factor in determining automobile quotas. The government also apportioned cars on the number of people who needed them to commute to their important war-related jobs. The number of recently registered new cars in a region was also a factor. The government also declared that it was spacing out its release of available new cars so as not to disrupt dealership sales too much, thereby dividing dealerships' fiscal years into times of feast and famine.<sup>314</sup>

The car was not the only commodity under government sales restrictions. Gas rationing, initially instituted mainly to save tire rubber rather than petroleum products, was a significant influence shaping automobile consumption. Additionally, as all available metal was diverted to the war effort, car manufacturing ceased as factories were converted to munitions production. As the metal shortage temporarily killed new automobile production, necessary automobile components were replaced with alternative substances. Without rubber, many consumers utilized wooden wheels, leading to jokes about such tires sprouting in the rain.<sup>315</sup> In numerous locations in the U.S., metal license plates were temporarily replaced with a soybean-based material. This proved to be comically ineffective when dogs and other animals ate the plates right off the cars.<sup>316</sup> As war took cars off of the streets of Milwaukee, scarcity led to increased popularity for public transportation. Overcrowded public transportation led to companies spreading working hours throughout the day so as to prevent the

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<sup>314</sup> "Milwaukee's Quota of New Cars is 671," The Milwaukee Journal, 25 February 1942, sec. L (Local News), 1.

<sup>315</sup> Ed Reed, "Off the Record," The Milwaukee Journal, 7 October 1942, 2.

<sup>316</sup> "Dogs Eat Auto License Plates," The Milwaukee Journal, 6 January 1945, 2.

streetcars and buses from becoming crammed to the bursting point with commuters.<sup>317</sup> People quickly grew tired of paucity and inconvenience, but they could not return to the days of abundance until after the war ended. In 1945, after a few years of wartime rationing, the *Milwaukee Journal* warned its readers not to relax their vigilance in keeping their vehicles in as pristine condition as possible, even though many people nursed overly optimistic hopes that tires would soon become plentiful again. As a warning, the *Journal* published an article headlined “That Old Car of Yours Has Simply Got to Outlast 1945,” urging consumers to act as if wartime scarcities would not abate anytime soon.<sup>318</sup>

#### *1946-1970: POST-WAR PROSPERITY AND THE OMNIPRESENT*

##### *AUTOMOBILE*

John Gurda’s account of the post-war era in Milwaukee provides some statistics on car ownership. Gurda writes that in 1945, with rationing still suppressing the automobile market, there were 177,969 cars registered in Milwaukee County. By 1955, with restrictions lifted and a growing population, Milwaukee County’s registered car total nearly doubled, reaching 319,071 automobiles. A decade later, in 1965, the county was home to 419,638 cars.<sup>319</sup> The Depression’s limitations on car buying were clearly long gone.

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<sup>317</sup> John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 313.

<sup>318</sup> “On Wisconsin: That Old Car of Yours Has Simply Got to Outlast 1945,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 7 January 1945, 1.

<sup>319</sup> John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 328. Gurda’s statistic for 1945 does not match the official State of Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Department number for that year,

After the war, car consumption made a major resurgence. Prominent Milwaukeean Richard Cutler, a public servant and historian, estimated that traffic on Milwaukee's streets doubled from 1945 to 1952.<sup>320</sup> As data presented later in this chapter will illustrate, car sales continued to rise, as did venues to buy cars, or at least parts of cars. The automotive parts industry did play (and continues to play) a major role in the state's manufacturing industry. In 1948, Wisconsin crafted \$227,000,000 in cars and parts, with fifty-seven percent of production taking place in Milwaukee County.<sup>321</sup>

Though the demand for new automobiles was high from the start of the postwar era, automobile availability was low at first due to the after-effects of the war. Many production materials were still scarce immediately after the war, and the automobile manufacturers that had converted their facilities to produce weapons and other war-related products needed to refit their factories to replace their equipment and revert to making cars instead of tanks. During the war, few new cars had been produced, so most of the automobiles on the road were several years old. Consequently, new, reliable cars were in high demand.

Consumers who wished to buy new cars were placed on long wait lists.

The average buyer had to wait between two and four months to obtain a new

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which was 155,146. (Calendar Year Motor Vehicle Registrations by Counties Jan. 1, 1921 to Date (Madison: State of Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Department, 1952), 2-32.) Gurda does not cite where he found his statistics.

<sup>320</sup> Peter S. Cajka, "Riding with St. Paul in the Passenger Side: The Archdiocese of Milwaukee Enters the Automobile Age, 1920-1965," seminar paper, (Marquette University, 2009), 13.

<sup>321</sup> Frank Sinclair, "The Automobile and Its Birth in Wisconsin," The Milwaukee Journal, 8 August 1948, Centennial Exposition Edition, 2.

automobile.<sup>322</sup> Enterprising, albeit unscrupulous, people are always willing to fill a demand for a product, and Milwaukee was home to a bustling “gray market” where certain dealers skirted the government-imposed rules on new car sales. “Gray marketers” would purchase brand new cars from manufacturers. A used car dealer would then buy the automobile for more than list price, and the consumer would buy the new car from the used car dealer, thereby paying hundreds of dollars more than normal for a new car but circumventing the lengthy wait time. The government and car manufacturers viewed this as profiteering, and entrepreneurs who were convicted of “gray marketing” could have their businesses closed. The Milwaukee County Automobile Dealers association launched numerous investigations to see if its members were breaking any rules, and inquiries uncovered many instances of new cars being hidden on used car lots, falsely labeled as used cars. Car manufacturers helped by providing serial numbers and other information that could prove that the cars were new. The “gray market” was not extensive, but a significant number of consumers did participate in it, although as is often the case, illegality makes exact figures impossible.<sup>323</sup> One may assume that the overwhelming majority of consumers wished to follow the letter and spirit of the law, or at least could not afford to obtain a car illegally.

The memories of WWII rationing carried over into the Korean War era. Though the Korean War was not as vast a conflict as the Second World War,

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<sup>322</sup> “‘Gray Market’ in Cars Here,” The Milwaukee Journal, 28 December 1950, sec. A, 1.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

consumers were aware that resources might be directed towards the war effort, thereby leading to automobile scarcity. In 1950, several leading automobile manufacturers, such as Chrysler, Ford, General Motors, and Nash, all raised the prices on their 1951 releases in anticipation of limitations on production. The federal government issued price controls in order to cap escalating car prices, but this action served to shake consumer confidence. Used cars were not affected by these new rules. Some Milwaukee car salesmen reported an increase in sales to consumers who worried that scarcity would return. One salesman declared that, “The demand has been terrific in the last three weeks, even with the price increase... The price factor doesn’t mean too much. People are afraid cars won’t be built in large enough quantities or will be rationed. We can’t get all the cars we want, and a price rollback can only increase the demand.”<sup>324</sup>

The Milwaukee County Automobile Dealers’ association president, Edward Wehe, assessed the state of affairs, saying that,

“There has been a lot of buying since the start of the Korean situation. I don’t like to call it scare buying because most of the buyers actually feel they have great need for a new car.

But dealers have received the inference that there will be a substantial cut in car production. We won’t have our regular quotas. We are resigned to the fact that we will have to get along with fewer autos and we will have to make the old ones last longer. Parts, especially for older makes, have been in short supply for some time...

It seems peculiar that the automobile industry was singled out for this attention (the rollback order)... I don’t know what we’ve done to earn the honor of getting the big stick shaken at us. After all, if it had not been for other increases, the increase in car prices wouldn’t have come along.”<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> “Auto Dealers Eye Rollback,” The Milwaukee Journal, 17 December 1950, sec. I, 19.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

In the wake of the Korean War and the price capping, some representative car salesmen declared that, “The government’s price rollback on new automobiles won’t have much effect on sales in Milwaukee... [but] the government was being unfair to single out the automobile industry for a price freeze.”<sup>326</sup> The federal government did more than just set price limits. The creation of a law known as “Regulation W” led to strict limitations on how credit might be used to buy cars. Under this new legislation, consumers who purchased cars on credit had to pay a third of the price immediately, and the remainder of the cost had to be settled within fifteen months.<sup>327</sup>

These regulations on credit left no noticeable suppressive effects on consumption. From 1948 to 1954, automobile sales jumped dramatically, particularly in the more affluent regions of the city where more people could afford cars. In 1948, there were two hundred eighty-eight car dealerships in the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area (MSMA), sixty-six in the Metropolitan Area Less the Central City (MALTCC), and twenty-three in the Metropolitan Central Business District (MCBD).<sup>328</sup> Six years later, the number of

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>328</sup> Donald Leeseberg provides thorough statistics on the region’s automobile sales, though his terminology needs clarification. Leeseberg defines the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area from 1948 to 1954 as: “Milwaukee County... [including] Cudahy, Fox Point, Greendale, Milwaukee, Shorewood, South Milwaukee, West Allis, West Milwaukee, and Whitefish Bay.” (Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 2.) Milwaukee’s Central Business District is defined as “the area encompassed by Census Tracts 1, 2, and 17” by the U.S. Census and the United States Department of Commerce, but Leeseberg notes that other sources use different definitions. (Ibid., 52). The City

establishments in the MSMA rose to three hundred five, while the MALTCC and the MCBBD's car dealership numbers fell to sixty-one and twenty, respectively. Though these regions lost actual establishments, illustrating the declining presence of car dealerships in crowded urban areas, the average sales per store increased significantly from 1948 to 1954, with the MSMA's sales rising by 27.7%, the MCBBD by 54.2%, and the MALTCC by a whopping 79.0%. Though there were fewer dealerships in the MALTCC and the MCBBD, business transferred from closed firms to other stores, leading to a significant boost in sales throughout the city.<sup>329</sup>

During the 1950's and 1960's, the *Milwaukee Journal* printed yearly statistics on car model sales in Milwaukee County. Fluctuating numbers have to be viewed carefully, for lower sales numbers do not necessarily mean a drop in popularity for a particular make of car, as a consumer might be able to maintain a well-built automobile and would therefore buy fewer of those well-made cars

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of Milwaukee's Bureau of Traffic, Engineering, and Electrical Services, of the Department of Public Works, "defines the Central Business District as the area bounded by North Eleventh Street on the west, Juneau Avenue on the north, Lake Michigan on the east, and the Kneeland Canal and the Milwaukee River on the south." (Ibid., 53). Leeseberg further notes that "The City Planning Division of the Board of Public Land Commissioners, in their comprehensive plan for the Central Business District, dated May 1, 1957, defines the Central Business District as that area bounded by Juneau Avenue on the north, Lake Michigan on the east, Fowler and Detroit Streets on the south, and by the proposed expressway between Tenth and Eleventh Streets on the west." (Ibid., 53). Leeseberg states that he considers all of these definitions too large for his purposes because they all contain significant areas that are not used for commerce. Leeseberg's own definition of Milwaukee's Central Business District focuses on the region that is filled with retail trade, "bounded by Jefferson Street on the east, Michigan Street on the south, North Seventh Street on the west, and Wells Street on the north." (Ibid., 52). Leeseberg only uses his own definition of the Central Business District unless otherwise noted.

<sup>329</sup> Leeseberg, 160. For more information, see Appendix D.



over time. In 1953, the most popular makes of cars in Milwaukee were Chevrolet (7,903 sold that year), Ford (6,948), Buick (3,415), Plymouth (3,292), Oldsmobile (2,868), and Pontiac (2,818). A decade later, in 1964, the top sellers were Chevrolet (10,645), Ford (8,288), Oldsmobile (3,109), Rambler (3,018), Pontiac (2,951), and Buick (2,708). Most of the most popular cars from 1953 were still bestsellers in 1964, and in most of these cases the total sales numbers rose after a decade. The Rambler (also known as the “Kenosha Cadillac,”) a newcomer to the bestseller list, was not invented in 1964.<sup>330</sup>

In 1968, there were 190,799 new cars sold in the entire state of Wisconsin, the second-highest year ever up to that point. The most cars ever sold in Wisconsin in a single year prior to 1968 was 195,444, in 1965.<sup>331</sup> In 1967, 50,048 new automobiles were sold in Milwaukee County, not counting 5,849 domestic station wagons. Of these 50,048 cars, 2,317 were foreign made, 27,877 were from General Motors, 11,333 were made by the Ford Motor Company, 5,829 were from the Chrysler Corporation, 2,631 were from American Motors, and others were classified as “miscellaneous.” In 1968, 54,583 automobiles were sold in Milwaukee County, not counting 6,575 domestic station wagons. 28,345 were from General Motors, the Ford Motor Company made 13,196, 7,449 were made by the Chrysler Corporation, 2,491 were from American Motors, 3,076 were

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<sup>330</sup> 1953-1954: “1954 Good Car Year– Sales Third Highest in History; December Set Record,” The Milwaukee Journal, 30 January 1955, part 4, 8. 1963-1964: “Domestic Car Sales,” The Milwaukee Journal, 31 January 1965, part 4, 12. For more information, see Appendix E.

<sup>331</sup> Doyle K. Getter, “1968 Second Best Car Sales Year,” The Milwaukee Journal, 2 March 1969, part 4, 11.

foreign made, and the rest were categorized as “miscellaneous.”<sup>332</sup> By a substantial margin, most of Milwaukee’s cars came from either General Motors or the Ford Motor Company. This was a local trend that was representative of a general trend.

Consumers, both in Milwaukee and throughout the nation, mostly bought American cars during the postwar era. Foreign cars made up a significant minority of the automobiles that were purchased in Milwaukee during these years. Most foreign cars were manufactured in Europe during the 1960’s— Asian cars would rise in popularity soon afterwards. It is notable that the vast majority of foreign cars bought in Milwaukee were Volkswagens. Volkswagens made up 74.1% of the foreign cars sold in 1963, and 71.8% of the same market in 1964. Some cars were rarely purchased, such as the Aston-Martin or the Rolls-Royce, both of which only sold a single car to a Milwaukeean during 1964.<sup>333</sup> Whether the buyers actually drove these cars, or simply kept them in private car collections as investments is unknown. One may conjecture that people who bought obscure foreign cars may have driven them to make a statement about their personal wealth or uniqueness, or they might simply have nurtured their interest in exotic cars. In any event, the car buyers of Milwaukee during this period overwhelmingly bought American automobiles from dealerships.

When Milwaukeeans bought cars, they often selected salesmen they knew by reputation. The car salesmen listed here are examples of some of the most

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<sup>332</sup> “Domestic Car Sales,” The Milwaukee Journal, 2 March 1969, part 4, 11.

<sup>333</sup> “Foreign Car Sales,” The Milwaukee Journal, 31 January 1965, part 4, 2. For more information, see Appendix E.

prominent and notable members of the trade in Milwaukee. Due to the sheer number of people working in the business, only a handful of the city's most prominent and notable car salesmen are mentioned here. The salesmen noted here have been selected due to a combination of their achievements, noteworthy personal history, and the availability of information about these individuals and their careers. Due to the scope of this project, however, this list of salesmen is by necessity limited to a few locally famous or notable names.

Glenn Humphrey was one of the most prominent car salesmen in Milwaukee's history, being "the leading seller of General Motors cars at a time when General Motors was the largest corporation on earth."<sup>334</sup> Humphrey started his career selling Chevrolet cars in 1923, and over the course of his career he came to run several dealerships, some of which were located far from Milwaukee in Ohio and California.<sup>335</sup> Milwaukee always remained Humphrey's home base, and 1955 Humphrey City opened. Humphrey City was a dealership built upon a two-block lot, located between Wells and Michigan Streets, at the intersection on Thirty-fifth and Wisconsin. In 1956, Humphrey Chevrolet sold 5,344 cars, compared to the yearly GM dealer average of 229.<sup>336</sup> In the mid-1960's, Humphrey City increased its size in over a half-million dollar investment. Its used car department became the biggest in Wisconsin, capable of storing four hundred previously owned vehicles. Humphrey dubbed the expanded complex

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<sup>334</sup> John Gurda, The Humphrey Legacy (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Glenn and Gertrude Humphrey Foundation, 2000), 1.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

“the largest automotive shopping center on one floor, under one roof in Wisconsin.”<sup>337</sup>

The longtime mascot for Humphrey’s dealerships was a giraffe. The animal’s neck symbolized that the business was “long on trades and deals.”<sup>338</sup> In 1965, Humphrey’s businesses sold a combined total of 6,585 cars, both new and used, for approximately \$13,200,000.<sup>339</sup> Toward the end of the 1960’s a consolidation plan began, and many of Humphrey’s dealerships were closed or sold, leaving six, nearly all in northern Illinois or eastern Wisconsin.<sup>340</sup>

Throughout his life, Humphrey was involved in business groups and charities, ranging from serving on the boards of the Green Bay Packers and the United Association for Retarded Citizens, to being a trustee for Marquette University, where the dormitory Humphrey Hall bears his name.<sup>341</sup> Glenn Humphrey died on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1983, aged seventy-eight.<sup>342</sup>

The Heiser family has been a major player in Milwaukee’s automobile consumption for nearly a century. Over the years, the Heiser dealerships have sold various kinds of automobiles throughout the city of Milwaukee. The first dealership on 7<sup>th</sup> and Wisconsin Avenue opened its doors in 1917, and specialized in Model T Fords.<sup>343</sup> In 1917, the Model T cost \$345.00, (or \$5,877.29 in 2010

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>343</sup> “Our History,” <<http://heiser.com/Heiser-Automotive-Family-History/>> (25 May 2011).

dollars).<sup>344</sup> In order to pay for their Model T's, customers would bring in old forms of conveyance in exchange, such as wagons, carriages, and horses. From its downtown location, the Heiser dealership moved to Lisbon Avenue on the West Side, and then to North and Prospect Avenues on the East Side. When wartime rationing led to automobile scarcity, it was common for consumers to bribe vendors for cars, while dealers often reneged on promised sales in exchange for better deals. Heiser built a reputation for keeping his sales promises, and this good name forged him a loyal following once the days of abundance returned. A few of Heiser's employees eventually became well-known car salesmen in their own right, such as Phil Tolkan, who worked as Heiser's Used Car Manager; and Sam Scaffidi, who Tolkan hired as a salesman in 1955 after Scaffidi made a name for himself selling vacuum cleaners. Walter Heiser retired in 1973, and some of his employees and his son William took over the business.<sup>345</sup>

The phrase "Who do you know wants to buy a car?" is very familiar to Milwaukee's automobile consumers. It is the trademark line of Ernie von Schledorn, a German-born man who met and married an American woman who served in the Frankfurt branch of the U.S. State Department. The von Schledorns moved to Milwaukee in 1952, and von Schledorn found a job selling used cars at the Edwards Motor Company, moving to Shorewood's Lou Ehlers Buick in 1955. By 1957 he became the top-selling Buick salesman in the United States. In 1959, he opened a car lot of his own on Milwaukee's 400 E. Capitol Drive, and in 1966

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<sup>344</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>345</sup> "Our History," <<http://heiser.com/Heiser-Automotive-Family-History/>> (25 May 2011).

he moved his business to Menomonee Falls. A second business started elsewhere in Menomonee Falls in 1978. Although von Schledorn's business deals in all kinds of automobiles, the company specializes in Volkswagen and General Motors cars.<sup>346</sup>

Though the city's leading car salesmen tried to maintain a friendly and approachable public image, it was common for some automobile dealers to have strained relationships with their customers. In his book *"No Thanks, I'm Just Looking": The True Confessions of a Car Salesman*, a memoir of his years in Wisconsin's automotive business, local dealer Phil Hunt wrote that, "Car salesmen are forced to be nice to people who think nothing of insulting them every chance they get."<sup>347</sup> Justly or unjustly, the widespread stereotypes of car salesmen are largely negative, and few consumers purchase an automobile believing that the dealership has the buyer's best interests at heart. Hunt's evidence is purely anecdotal and based on autobiographical experience, not on statistical or in-depth investigative research, but his words illustrate the human experience of consumption. Hunt observes that buying a car is unlike any other form of consumption in America today. Other than garage sales and some similar venues, when consumers shop, they pay the price that the merchant demands. The average consumer in Milwaukee does not haggle over the price of a department store's clothing or argue until a grocery store lowers the price of food.

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<sup>346</sup> "About Us," <<http://www.evsauto.com/aboutus.asp>> (25 May 2011).

<sup>347</sup> Phil Hunt, *"No Thanks, I'm Just Looking": The True Confessions of a Car Salesman* (St. Francis, Wisconsin: Full Court Press, 1981), 47.

In contrast, people who buy cars from dealers generally see bargaining and compromising as an integral part of the car-buying experience.

Hunt stresses that the consumer mentality regarding car dealers is essentially– and often needlessly– hostile. Advising his readers that it is best not to think as the car dealer as an enemy, Hunt insists that, “If you get nothing else out of this book, please remember this. Acting like you know all the answers or brow-beating a salesman can cost you a real bundle, whereas an occasional smile and a little common courtesy can save you a fist-full of cash.”<sup>348</sup> Further undermining the consumer’s conventional wisdom about car buying, Hunt writes that “the average customer wouldn’t know a good deal if it punched him in the nose... The American buying public won’t accept a bargain if it doesn’t entail arguing and squabbling over every little detail.”<sup>349</sup> Throughout his book, Hunt observes that consumers expect the worst from car salesmen... and sometimes they are right to do so. Admitting that car dealerships have to bear some of the blame for their own public relations trouble, Hunt says that, “I must admit it’s all our fault. The automobile industry has trained the buying public to believe that paying full list is like throwing money down the toilet.”<sup>350</sup> The relationship between consumer and salesman was not always a cordial one.

Hunt’s experience leads him to conclude that the average car buyer is not an informed consumer, and few people who seek to purchase an automobile really do their homework about what they want, or what to look for in a reliable vehicle.

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 184, 187.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 112.

Hunt suggests that consumers are swayed by charismatic salesmen, and argues that finding a trustworthy salesperson is more important than focusing on the lowest possible cost of a car. He writes, “This business of running all over town comparing prices is without a doubt the silliest habit the modern car buyer has fallen into. While determined to save money, all the shopper accomplishes is wearing out shoe leather, wasting gas and getting himself worked into a complete dither.”<sup>351</sup> Hunt stresses that what often appears to be the “best” deal often is not, since so many dealerships drive up prices with hidden fees and costs, and many consumers are overwhelmed by flashy sales pitches and thereby blinded to hard numbers. This trend causes Hunt to quip, “After making their decision, they never go back to the dealer with the best deal, they just go back to the biggest liar.”<sup>352</sup> Style, in his opinion, was a bigger influence than substance in automobile shopping, so buyers had to be wary.

Automobile consumption was fraught with potential dangers. There were certain aspects of the automobile consumption experiences that left Milwaukeeans calling for reform. Insurance was a highly important commodity for many drivers, though not everyone could afford the additional payments to preserve their automotive investments in the event of an accident. Insurance, however, is only worth the money if a client can be assured that the company will provide the agreed-upon restitution. During the late 1950’s, several Milwaukeeans were dissatisfied with their car insurance, and Frank Sinclair, the *Journal’s* automotive reporter, helped bring the public’s attention to the fact that many insurance

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 119.



companies were not living up to their end of the bargain. On September 15, 1957, Sinclair's article "Hit Insurance Handling of Car Repair Claims" told the stories of various consumers who felt swindled by their insurers. Some insurers forced clients to take their damaged cars only to company-approved garages where the insurance companies would get unusually low rates. The companies would refuse to pay anything higher than the unnaturally low repair estimates, and therefore, consumers often could not go to garages run by mechanic they knew and trusted. The insurer-approved repairmen often did an inferior job, as well.<sup>353</sup>

Sinclair's article sparked a flood of responses, some from outside of the Wisconsin area. Tom Hitchcock, president of the Independent Garage Owners of Minnesota, Inc., wrote to Sinclair, expressing his admiration for the article, and writing about his displeasure regarding the tactics of many car insurance companies, saying that,

"The attitude of the insurance companies towards the policy holders seems to be, we'll insure you but don't have an accident, if you do have a loss we will take care of it at our terms and if you don't like it we will cancel you as a bad risk... We find the larger the company the cheaper the insurance and the more prevalent the above attitude."<sup>354</sup>

In another case recounted in a letter to Sinclair, a man was charged a great deal of money for an automobile insurance policy with Allstate Insurance, but after an accident, the company took the car's title from the owner and sold the damaged car without the owner's knowledge. The insurance company kept the

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<sup>353</sup> Frank Sinclair, "Hit Insurance Handling of Car Repair Claims," The Milwaukee Journal, 15 September 1957, part 1, 30.

<sup>354</sup> Letter from Tom Hitchcock to Frank Sinclair, November 13 1957, Frank Sinclair Papers, 1938-1964, U.S. Mss 128AF, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee.

proceeds, backslid on promises to buy the owner a new car, and paid the policyholder no money. When he complained, they threatened him with lawsuits and criminal prosecution.<sup>355</sup>

Insurance was necessary not just in case of accidents, but also in cases of automobile theft. During the early part of the twentieth century, Milwaukee's automobile theft rates were far below that of the neighboring city of Chicago. In 1932, Depression-related crime wracked Chicago, and cars were stolen at a rate of nearly one hundred each day. Due to the constant theft, Chicago consumers were compelled to pay ten times more in automobile theft insurance premiums for a standard Ford automobile than Milwaukee consumers at that time.<sup>356</sup> Though many people went without insurance due to low income or personal preference, the dangers of driving made insurance a vital commodity for many people.

Automobile safety has always been a major concern, and as more people owned cars, increasing numbers of people were killed or injured in vehicle accidents. From 1914 to 1915 alone, the accident rate of automobile and streetcar collisions skyrocketed by 140%.<sup>357</sup> Ralph Nader's 1965 book *Unsafe at Any Speed* is commonly cited as having a major impact on promoting the consumer movement by calling for automobile safety. In Wisconsin, the American Trial Lawyers association launched a campaign to "stop murder by motor," which

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<sup>355</sup> Letter from Miss Elizabeth Wenzel to Mr. Frank Sinclair, September 21, 1957, Frank Sinclair Papers, 1938-1964, U.S. Mss 128AF, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>356</sup> Leonard D. Savitz, "Automobile Theft," *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science* 50, no. 2 (August, 1959): 140.

<sup>357</sup> John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 252.

involved backing a bill that would allow “implied consent” laws to test drivers’ blood alcohol levels, as well as stronger safety regulations for cars and tires.<sup>358</sup>

Though Milwaukee’s consumers were generally united on issues such as the need for safety, other issues, such as ethnicity, separated them. Racially, there were definite disparities in Milwaukee’s automobile consumption. One study from 1957 determined that Milwaukee’s black population owned disproportionately far fewer cars than whites. While the national rate of automobile ownership was 71% in 1957, a sample of African-American families placed the car possession rate at only 31%.<sup>359</sup> During the 1950’s there were prevalent stereotypes that black ghettos were filled with “spanking new, pastel-tinted Cadillac convertibles,” but sociologist Irwin D. Rinder argues that such stereotypes did not reflect reality.<sup>360</sup> Rinder advances two theories for the persistence of the stereotype of black neighborhoods being filled with expensive cars: “(a) the very incongruity of the new and the shiny amidst the bleakness of the deteriorated slum community has an exaggerated impact upon human perception; or (b) cars and TV sets seem to be present in large numbers because of the population density of slum dwellings, *i.e.*, cars are crowded in the streets because their owners are even more crowded in the dwellings flanking that street.”<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> “Stop Murder by Motor,” The Milwaukee Journal, 3 February 1966, part 1, 18.

<sup>359</sup> Irwin D. Rinder, “Color and Cadillacs: Some Evidence About a Stereotype,” The Midwest Sociologist 19, no. 2 (May, 1957): 99.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

Rinder's 1957 study took the 1950 census, and determined that just over half of Milwaukee's African-Americans lived in just four of Milwaukee's two hundred twenty-two census tracts. The sociologists conducting this study selected four "zones" of the city in order to estimate the statistics of black car ownership in Milwaukee. Zone 1 covered the regions that were half black or more, Zone 2 consisted of the areas that were a quarter to half black, Zone 3 was ten percent to a quarter black, and Zone 4 was between one and ten percent black.<sup>362</sup> The following statistics are only a sample, but they can be used to extrapolate further details about the patterns of black car ownership in Milwaukee. In Zone 1, 30% of car owners possessed low-priced cars, 60% possessed medium-priced cars, and 10% possessed high-priced cars. In Zone 2, 37% owned low-priced cars, 46% medium-priced, and 17% high-priced. In Zone 3, 60% possessed low-priced and 40% high-priced. In Zone 4, 33% owned low-priced and 66% high-priced.<sup>363</sup>

While Rinder hastens to add that his data is insufficiently detailed to draw reliable conclusions about black car ownership in Milwaukee, his major argument is that the available information indicates that the prevalent stereotype of poor blacks spending their limited funds on new luxury cars is largely mythical.<sup>364</sup>

Rinder's study was written in 1957, and though it used information from the 1950 census, the economic situation was closer to what it was in 1959. In 1959, the median income for a nonwhite male in Milwaukee was \$4,057, with the median

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 99. The 66% statistic really should be rounded up to 67, but the information is copied directly from Rinder's article. For more information, see Appendix F.

<sup>364</sup> Irwin D. Rinder, "Color and Cadillacs: Some Evidence About a Stereotype," *The Midwest Sociologist* 19, no. 2 (May, 1957), 98.

nonwhite woman earning \$1,497.<sup>365</sup> The 1959 median income for all Milwaukee males regardless of ethnicity was \$5,377, and the same statistic for all females of all races was \$1,615.<sup>366</sup> African-Americans, therefore, on average had a substantially lower level of income than the average white consumer, thereby limiting the available automobile options for black consumers. This income disparity is reflected in Rinder's statistics that show that few black drivers bought expensive makes of cars. Though income was a factor in their consumption decisions, the race of the car salesmen was not.

Black consumers were not hesitant to buy their cars from white dealers. Indeed, often they had no choice. By 1987, there were just four African-American automobile salesmen who dealt in new vehicles in the entire state of Wisconsin. When Fred Jones, a black man, opened a Pontiac dealership in Brookfield in 1984, he discovered that after three years about ninety percent of his customer base was white. Of the fourteen salespeople he employed, three were black. There were black-run used car dealerships in Milwaukee, though they were quite rare. One of the most famous African-American used car salesmen in Milwaukee was "Super" Bill Suber, who plied his trade in the city's South Side, and catered largely to black customers during the 1960's. Suber was a local celebrity amongst the city's African-American car buyers.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>365</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1960; the Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 1-314.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 1-314.

<sup>367</sup> Richard G. Carter, "Fred Jones set goals, then achieved them," The Milwaukee Journal, 29 April 1987, sec. A, 15.

Like race, gender lines were clearly drawn across Milwaukee's car sales venues. Overwhelmingly, automobile dealerships were a man's world. The vast majority of car salesmen were male, and successful saleswomen were rare in Milwaukee in the mid-twentieth century. In 1966, Mrs. Clara Jaeger Kilbourn was described as "the lone woman in the field."<sup>368</sup> Mrs. Kilbourn served as president of Jaeger Pontiac, Inc. starting in 1959. She inherited the business from her father, who started the Jaeger Motor Car Co. in 1926. By the mid-1960's, the business was located on the city's West Side, on North 27<sup>th</sup> Street and West Lisbon Avenue, and the lot took up three acres of land. Mrs. Jaeger once stated that, "I've never felt at a disadvantage with the men in the business."<sup>369</sup>

Scholar Helene M. Lawson's research on female car salesmen and the ways that they survived in the men's world of automotive dealerships indicates that female car sellers had wide-ranging experiences. Many felt uncomfortable with the lies and distortions that came with convincing shoppers to buy certain cars. Others felt as if they had to exploit their femininity doubly, first by seeming vulnerable in order to be accepted by male co-workers, and secondly by playing up their sexuality in order to gain a rapport with male customers. Many women salespersons grew tired of the flirtatious behavior of potential male buyers, and were further nonplussed by female customers who preferred to work with male sellers. Given time and a willingness to act in a manner contrary to their natural instincts, women could succeed in selling cars, but many women left the

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<sup>368</sup> "Mrs. Kilbourn Matches the Men as President of Auto Dealers," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 31 October 1966, part 2, 9.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 9.

automotive sales business and returned to work as waitresses, store clerks, and other “traditional” women’s jobs, due to feeling thoroughly uncomfortable in the business.<sup>370</sup> There were also societal pressures off the car lot that made women drivers uneasy.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, popular stereotypes about female drivers being inferior to their male counterparts continued to be widespread. Over the years, the *Milwaukee Journal* felt it necessary to refute such opinions. In 1950, the paper printed an article titled “Let the Little Woman Drive: She’s Safer Than You Are, Experts Say.” There, the statistical research of A. R. Lauer was used to argue that husbands ought to let their wives drive during the winter holidays, since women could handle the stress of the season coupled with the additional hazards of snow and ice.<sup>371</sup> A decade later, the *Journal’s* Robert W. Wells wrote that both genders were equally prone to poor automobile usage. In 1960’s “Bless Them All! The Ladies Have No Corner on Eccentric Driving,” Wells wrote that,

“Actually, neither men nor women are very good drivers, on the average, judging from the casualty statistics and the kind of people you meet during the morning rush hour on W. Vliet st. [sic] Perhaps the question should be reworded to make it which are worse drivers, men or women.

Now and then you run into a feminine driver of whom it is said, “she drives like a man.” That is supposed to be a compliment. What it usually means is that she consistently exceeds the speed limit, passes on curves, makes rolling stops at intersections, out-bluffs the opposing cars at four way stops and swears at truck drivers.

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<sup>370</sup> Helene M. Lawson, Ladies on the Lot: Women, Car Sales, and the Pursuit of the American Dream (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 116.

<sup>371</sup> Murray Martin, “Let the Little Woman Drive: She’s Safer Than You Are, Experts Say,” The Milwaukee Journal, 19 December 1950, The Green Sheet, 1.

On the other hand you sometimes find a male who is accused— generally by irate fellow drivers, honking behind him— of driving like a woman. This means that he makes right turns from the left lane, drives 10 miles an hour slower than everybody else and zigs when he should have zagged.”<sup>372</sup>

Even though both of the aforementioned articles meant to defend female drivers, both reflect attitudes that might be viewed as sexist in the twenty-first century, exemplified by the use of the phrase “little woman” and other driving stereotypes. Social attitudes did more than just form popular prejudices. Sometimes factors such as religious beliefs led to the creation of legislation that directly impacted consumption.

Increased concerns about public morality led to “blue laws” that also affected car consumption. In 1959, the Wisconsin State Legislature passed a law making it illegal to sell cars on a Sunday. Three years later, there was talk of challenging that rule soon after a comparable law was ruled unconstitutional in Illinois.<sup>373</sup> However, there was never any full-fledged effort to have the Wisconsin court system overturn the law, and the law was still on the books in 1985. Dealers seemed unwilling to challenge the law, for it seemed that they enjoyed having a day off of work more than they desired an extra day to sell their automobiles.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Robert W. Wells, “Bless Them All! The Ladies Have No Corner on Eccentric Driving,” The Milwaukee Journal, 7 February 1960, Special Auto Show Section, 2.

<sup>373</sup> “Court Fight is Possible on Sunday Car Sales,” The Milwaukee Journal, 29 January 1962, part 1, 4.

<sup>374</sup> Neil H. Shively, “Ban on Sunday car sales is likely to stay,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, part 1, 14.



Like many laws and consumption habits, the physical arrangement of the city of Milwaukee was continually in flux. The shifting dispersal of the city's automobile dealerships illustrates the changes in the city's layout and composition. The earliest dealerships were primarily located downtown, in the central business district. During the 1930's, North Avenue, from Seventh to Twentieth Streets was dubbed Milwaukee's "Auto Row." High traffic roads like Capitol and Silver Spring also were home to major car dealerships, some of which would last throughout the twentieth century. The area around the intersection of Thirty-fifth and Wisconsin was also home to multiple dealerships by 1936.<sup>375</sup> Yet over the course of a few decades, the areas of the city where car dealerships used to thrive gradually closed down, often relocating far away from their initial site. The previously clustered automobile sales districts were thereby decentralized. By the 1970's, the bulk of Milwaukee's car dealerships had moved away from downtown and scattered throughout the city.

There were multiple reasons for this. First of all, the dealerships of the early twentieth century were markedly different in size from the automobile businesses of later decades. The small, one-room dealerships consisting of only a single car gave way to large lots crammed with scores of various automobiles, with a substantial garage for repairs. There was no room for dealerships of this size downtown, where no such lot could be constructed without demolishing buildings. It was easier to build such dealerships, such as Glenn Humphrey's

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<sup>375</sup> John Gurda, The Humphrey Legacy (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Glenn and Gertrude Humphrey Foundation, 2000), 11.

massive Humphrey City, further away from the central business district, where sufficient space could be acquired for a more reasonable price.<sup>376</sup>

Another issue that grew prominent later in the century was crime and changing neighborhoods. By the later decades of the twentieth century, some areas that had formerly held car dealerships were plagued by crime, and were no longer ideal places to display expensive automobiles. Hence, many dealerships chose to build or relocate in lower-crime areas further away from the city's Inner Core, where not only was there plenty of space to develop, but also their valuable merchandise would be safer from theft or vandalism. This was part of a general trend of retail stores leaving the downtown area in the wake of the Milwaukee riots of 1967 and changing demographics, as central city car lots were increasingly surrounded by low-income African-American neighborhoods.<sup>377</sup>

Crime was not the only problem that led car dealership owners to worry about their stocks. Wisconsin weather was another issue. It is not uncommon for Milwaukee to experience severe hail, with hailstones the size of eggs or even softballs. Such precipitation had the potential to dent cars and fracture glass on cars that were left outdoors. If this disaster occurred— and it occasionally did— car dealers had two options. They could spend a considerable amount of money repairing the cars, or they could sell the damaged cars at a discount. Either way, dealerships that left automobiles unprotected from the elements had to expect that, on occasion, nature might inflict an unexpected financial setback upon them. The

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 18-21.

<sup>377</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 371. "Negro Businessmen," The Milwaukee Journal, 3 October 1967, part 1, 16.

threat of damage from the elements did not lead to dealerships where all cars were kept enclosed or even covered by a large roof. Cars often appeared more appealing in the sunlight, so like farmers, car salesmen had to accept the weather as an unavoidable hazard affecting their businesses.

Gasoline sales were not as affected by the weather, but they had been severely restricted by the war. Once rationing was discontinued, gasoline was a profitable business in Milwaukee. In Milwaukee's metropolitan area outside the standard city area, gasoline sales increased from approximately ten million dollars in 1948 to about thirty-eight million dollars in 1954, an increase of 276%. Average sales rose from about thirty-eight thousand six hundred dollars in 1948 to approximately one hundred fifty-five thousand one hundred dollars in 1954, an increase of 301.8%. It should be stressed that the sales numbers refer to the total amount of money brought in by the gasoline service stations and not the total number of gallons of gasoline sold. Therefore, the ever-fluctuating costs of gasoline have to be considered when looking at the rising sales numbers. While the amount of money Milwaukeeans spent on gasoline was skyrocketing, the total number of gasoline service stations in the listed area declined slightly, from two hundred sixty-four in 1948 to two hundred forty-seven in 1954.<sup>378</sup> In 1962, there were an estimated 1,470 gas stations in Milwaukee, and by 1972 there were

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<sup>378</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 329. For more information, see Appendix G.

approximately 1,620 gas stations in the city.<sup>379</sup> The city needed enough gas stations spread throughout the city in order to keep its automobiles moving.

With increasing numbers of cars on the streets, roads were another important issue for the city of Milwaukee to address. An expressway system was first proposed in Milwaukee in 1945, although work on the project did not commence until 1952. Further delays were caused by insufficient funds, dissention between members of the local government, and numerous other problems. The county expressway system did not officially open until 1962.<sup>380</sup> The system was a continuing project, with numerous other additions being developed over the following years.<sup>381</sup> Governor Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin declared that, “It will be a marvelous asset to the city, to its people and its business.”<sup>382</sup>

As Milwaukee became more accessible to car travel, public transportation was affected. The city’s streetcars started to die out during the World War II era. From 1938 to 1946, many streetcars and their tracks and wires were removed and broken down.<sup>383</sup> Despite some thoughts of reviving the streetcar systems after the war, streetcars eventually were considered obsolete due to their inflexible routes

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<sup>379</sup> Rachel, <AskALibrarian@oclc.org> “Library Question - Answer [Question #8186588],” 28 November 2012, personal e-mail (28 November 2012).

<sup>380</sup> “Freeway Delay Was Frustrating: Expressways Here Conceived in 1945,” The Milwaukee Journal, 25 January 1962, part 1, 12.

<sup>381</sup> “20 More Expressway Miles to Be Ready by End of 1965: First Six Projects May Be Set by ’63,” 25 January 1962, part 1, 13.

<sup>382</sup> “Long, Long Wait Is Over; First Freeway Legs Open: Nelson Snips Ribbon, Officials Lead Tour of New Roads; Benefits to Area Cited,” The Milwaukee Journal, 27 January 1962, part 1, 1.

<sup>383</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 328.

and the problems connected to oft-needed repairs. Trackless trolleys were introduced as an alternative, but their seats were generally hard and uncomfortable. They were only in use for seventeen years before being discontinued. After Milwaukee had no more use for the trackless trolleys, the used vehicles were sent to Mexico City, where they served that city's public transportation needs for over three decades.<sup>384</sup> By 1958, all of Milwaukee's streetcars had been decommissioned. On March 4<sup>th</sup> of that year, the city's final streetcar was given a goodbye party on 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Wells. This did not eliminate public transportation in Milwaukee. The city's motorized buses first traveled the streets of Milwaukee in the 1920's.<sup>385</sup> In the 1920's, Milwaukee even had some double-decker buses traveling back and forth on Wisconsin Avenue (which was originally named "Grand Avenue"). In the beginning, the buses were open-topped, but roofs had to be constructed to protect Milwaukeeans from the cold and inclement weather.<sup>386</sup> Once the streetcars were gone, buses became vitally important for Milwaukeeans who did not drive.

Public transportation was a controversial issue in the postwar era. Mayor Frank Zeidler was concerned about keeping Milwaukee's public transportation system healthy, particularly because he himself did not drive. Public

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<sup>384</sup> Milwaukee Transit, 1950-Present, produced and directed by Paul Sendry, 17 min., a University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, Educational Communications Division Production in Association with the University of Wisconsin System, Board of Regents, 1984, videocassette.

<sup>385</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 328-329.

<sup>386</sup> Milwaukee Transit, 1920-1950, produced and directed by Paul Sendry, 23 min, a University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, Educational Communications Division Production in Association with the University of Wisconsin System, Board of Regents, 1984, videocassette.

transportation was a major point of disagreement between Mayor Frank Zeidler and his successor, Mayor Henry Maier. Zeidler once asserted that Maier would have been perfectly willing to let Milwaukee's public transportation systems die out, since Zeidler felt that Maier "couldn't see the political benefits" in an alternative to automobiles, a perspective that rankled Zeidler.<sup>387</sup> Throughout his memoir *The Mayor Who Made Milwaukee Famous*, Maier frequently took umbrage to assertions that his policies were based solely on a desire to build up his own political base.<sup>388</sup>

While public transportation was mainly just a means of conveyance, private cars provided recreational opportunities that public transportation could not offer. Aside from the practical alterations to Milwaukee's landscape, certain areas of the city were marked for automobile use for purely entertainment purposes. The State Fair Park installed an automobile track for racing contests, and organizations such as the Milwaukee Region of the Sports Car Club of America and the Milwaukee Sports Car Club allowed racing enthusiasts to interact with others who shared their interests.<sup>389</sup>

Automobile enthusiasts continued to be able to explore their passion at the annual Auto Show. The Auto Show was meant as a celebration of the car and a

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<sup>387</sup> "Frank Zeidler," Interview conducted 12/9/1993, Wisconsin Politics Oral History Collection, Marquette University Archives, compact disc, 2 of 2.

<sup>388</sup> Henry Maier, *The Mayor Who Made Milwaukee Famous: An Autobiography* (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, distributed by National Book Network, 1993), 1-286.

<sup>389</sup> "Motors in Milwaukee," *Milwaukee (Magazine?)*, Nov. 1966, Misc. Clippings, Frank A. Aukofer Papers, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 189, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Milwaukee, 22.

means for the consumer to discover the purchasing options available to them, as well as a means of entertainment. Over the years, the Auto Show developed multiple ways to keep people coming. By 1960, the Show attracted customers by awarding eight cars (one a day for the eight days of the Show) to the contestants who, in the opinion of the judges, best completed this jingle:

“The glamour ’60 auto show  
That’s just the place we ‘auto’ go.  
Eight princely prize cars sparklin’ neat...”<sup>390</sup>

Entry forms for the contest could be obtained by buying tickets, which were fifty cents for children younger than twelve, and one dollar for people older than that, although people who bought their tickets ahead of time could secure them for seventy-five cents. Before the 1960 show started, 100,000 visitors were anticipated, unless winter weather prevented visitors from coming to the show.<sup>391</sup>

Newspaper coverage of the Auto Show attempted to delineate the differences between male and female automobile consumers, such as in one 1960 article titled “A Shiny Car Sure Shows Difference in the Sexes.” The broad strokes used in this portrait of the gender gap in car consumption show some oversimplifications and stereotyping, but it may reflect some trends, although every trend has exceptions. Upon examining a couple of cars, one woman asked her husband, “But isn’t that car the same kind?” Her husband angrily replied, “Don’t talk! You don’t know what you’re talking about!” The anonymous

<sup>390</sup> “Auto Jingle Contest Set at ’60 Show,” The Milwaukee Journal, 11 January 1960, part 2, 1.

<sup>391</sup> “Autos Being ‘Curried’ for the Annual Show,” The Milwaukee Journal, 3 February 1960, part 2, 1.

reporter commented that, “This vignette characterized more clearly than an essay the gulf that separates the sexes in respect to our major cultural symbol, the automobile.”<sup>392</sup>

In the twenty-first century, the Milwaukee Auto Show remains an annual event, generally located in a large downtown venue. Sometimes a brief preview of the Auto Show is filmed and aired on a local television station. Although contests and free cars are more rare than they used to be (if they occur at all), the basic format of the Auto Show remains similar to what it was in the past. According to the article “A Shiny Car Sure Shows Difference in the Sexes,” at the Auto Show, the men were fascinated by the displays of the latest car models and engines. In contrast, the women preferred to feel the upholstery texture and assess the colors. The article further implied that most women had no clue what a cylinder was, but they assumed that it was important to inquire how many cylinders a car had. Women were supposedly more interested in how comfortable it was to sit in a car, and the ease in which she could climb in and out of it.<sup>393</sup>

The Auto Show was not the only means by which automobile dealerships advertised. Newspaper advertisements, radio jingles, and later television commercials were used to promote cars, although more elaborate promotions, such as contests, could also be used. In his memoir, “*No Thanks, I’m Just Looking*”: *The True Confessions of a Car Salesman*, Phil Hunt recalls one instance where his boss at Bentley Motors wanted to drum up business while also

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<sup>392</sup> “A Shiny Car Sure Shows Difference in the Sexes,” The Milwaukee Journal, 10 February 1960, part 1, 20.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.



getting rid of a car that no one wanted to buy. The car's failure to sell was mostly because it was a shade of pink that only Barbara Cartland could love. The boss decided to bring more people to the dealership by starting a contest. He sent countless car keys to potential customers, along with a note telling them that they would win the car if their key opened the car. The hitch was that the contest was rigged— the boss sent out false keys for months, keeping the contest in the media, thereby upping the dealership's profile, until the boss felt that the time was ripe to send the working key to a pre-chosen (but oblivious) winner: the widow of a recently deceased police officer. The scheme almost failed when the pre-selected winner misplaced the key, then neglected to come to the dealership when she said she would, and then gave the key to her young son to turn. The boy could not turn the key properly, so Hunt had to help him, leading to a comically embarrassing photo op. Miraculously, the chosen winner loved the bright pink car.<sup>394</sup> This story has a gentle irony to it, for by 1970, automobiles were crucial to life in Milwaukee, and even though sales were high, at times it was nearly impossible to give a particular car away.

### *CONCLUSION*

Milwaukee's car consumption patterns have changed somewhat over the years. New buying options and technology are now on the market, ranging from optional items such as GPS systems, remote-controlled locks, and CD/MP3 players; to entirely new kinds of automobiles, like sport utility vehicles and

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<sup>394</sup> Phil Hunt, "No Thanks, I'm Just Looking": The True Confessions of a Car Salesman (St. Francis, Wisconsin: Full Court Press, 1981), 142-143.

hybrid cars. In contrast to the early twentieth century, very few car models are produced in their entirety in Milwaukee, although local car parts manufacturing firms such as Briggs and Stratton and Johnson Controls continue to produce parts for car manufacturers around the nation. Cars were still manufactured in Milwaukee in the late twentieth century, such as the famous luxury car, the Excalibur, a deliberately stylized and retro automobile that was first produced in 1963.<sup>395</sup>

Milwaukee's downtown was the primary location for most of the city's car dealerships early in the twentieth century, but at the start of the twenty-first the trend of dealerships scattering throughout the city has continued. Many dealerships that set up shop in areas that were relatively isolated during the 1960's and 1970's are now in urban districts thanks to continuing patterns of development that cause retail and commercial neighborhoods to be built around them. The annual Auto Show continues to be held early in the year. Although the possibilities of light rail and new trolleys have been debated for years, as of 2012 they remain controversial proposals and no definite plans have been made. People who do not or cannot drive have to rely on taxis and buses and the kindness of friends with cars in order to reach places beyond walking distance, and large tracts of the city are not easily accessible by bus routes.

Most of the city's major shopping venues are accessible by public transportation, but for most consumers, it is much quicker and convenient to travel by private car, and an automobile makes the transportation of purchases far

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<sup>395</sup> Our Own: The Excalibur, produced by Tom Regan, directed by Jim Leser, 30 min. Milwaukee Humanities Program, 1979, videocassette.

easier. It is for these reasons that cars were crucial elements that made mass consumption possible. By the postwar era, when most consumers no longer walked to the local grocery store or took the bus or trolley to the downtown business district, automobiles took shoppers to their preferred supermarket or their shopping venue of choice.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *“A MODERN, ATTRACTIVE MARKET FOR OUR SHOPPERS”:*

#### *MILWAUKEE’S FOOD STORES*

#### *INTRODUCTION– FEEDING MILWAUKEE: THE CHANGING FACE OF GROCERIES*

Before permanent European colonizers arrived, the entire region that would one day be known as Milwaukee was a kind of natural grocery store. Food historians Harva Hachten and Terese Allen describe the area as overflowing with wild edibles:

“Sprinkled liberally throughout, like candy shots on a cake, was a great array of edibles... The woods were chock-full of berries... nuts carpeted the ground in their seasons. There were wild plums, crabapples, May apples, grapes. Wild rice choked lakes and rivers. The honey of wild bees filled hollow tree stumps, and the maples flowed with sweet sap each spring.

Feeding on these riches (and on one another) were more than a hundred species of mammals and fowl... Migrant ducks, Canada geese, and passenger pigeons literally darkened the skies in their travels, so great were their numbers. Cisco, lake chubs, whitefish, smelt, perch, suckers, muskellunge, pike, bass, trout, sturgeon, crappies, bluegills, catfish, and bullheads teemed in the waters.”<sup>396</sup>

In the present day, the food consumer does not need to fish or hunt or forage, though many people find food in the wild, both for recreational reasons and to relieve the strain of grocery bills. It is far simpler to walk into a shop and

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<sup>396</sup> Harva Hachten and Terese Allen, The Flavor of Wisconsin: An Informal History of Food and Eating In the Badger State, Revised and Expanded Edition (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2009), 1.

take a box or bag off of the shelf than to track a quarry or to scrutinize a plant to assure that it is not poisonous.

Since Milwaukee's settlement, food consumption has evolved. In the early years of Milwaukee, residents' options shifted from hunting and gathering, to farming, to purchasing from traveling peddlers. With the advent of general stores, the consumption paradigm shifted to buyers traveling to a shop and purchasing goods, as opposed to people hunting and gathering, or peddlers coming directly to people's homes, though the peddling business dwindled throughout the early twentieth century. During the heyday of peddling, there were food carts such as the waffle wagon man, from whom one could purchase two large waffles with powdered sugar for a nickel.<sup>397</sup> Some bakery carts toured neighborhoods on alternating days, changing their stock in order to offer neighborhoods different kinds of breads and pastries. Ice cream vendors often came by, also selling other treats like frozen candy bars.<sup>398</sup> Traveling vendors were not the only food sellers to travel through neighborhoods. Many neighborhood grocery stores made home delivery within a limited radius upon request.<sup>399</sup>

By the early decades of the twentieth century, larger chain stores trickled into the city. By the middle of the century, the small, independently owned stores had largely but not entirely faded away, and the age of the supermarket had

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<sup>397</sup> Catherine Otten, The Corner Grocery Store (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: T/D Publications, 1975), 24.

<sup>398</sup> Valerie Weber and Beverly Crawford, Shopping in Grandma's Day (Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1999), 24.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

begun. Though the total number of “mom-and-pop” stores dwindled, numerous shops of that description remained in residential neighborhoods, and alternative food buying options such as farmers’ markets were present seasonally. Ethnic food shops and specialty food stores were also sprinkled throughout Milwaukee’s landscape, and “convenience” stores providing a limited number of goods were plentiful.

Throughout this chapter, there will be particular emphasis on the ways and places consumers could buy food. Over time, many groceries and supermarkets remodeled and restructured in order to provide an atmosphere that was more comfortable for customers, easier for shoppers to navigate, and potentially more conducive to the store’s profitability. Additionally, academic research on Milwaukee’s food consumers and shopping venues will be referenced in order to provide numerical and anecdotal evidence regarding the mindsets of representative Milwaukeeans. This chapter will observe how Milwaukee’s grocery stores changed decade by decade. In 1920, most of Milwaukee’s consumers did most of their shopping at the small, independent neighborhood grocery store, local butcher, greengrocer, and fishmonger. By 1970, shoppers patronized stores further away from their homes, almost always including a large chain supermarket with a wide selection. The small grocery store has suffered a reduction in prominence, but it has not vanished from Milwaukee. Many little shops and bodegas still exist in residential neighborhoods, serving a small but loyal clientele of locals. Over the course of the century, food consumption

options widened considerably, thanks to new kinds of stores, new products, and the automobile making travel easier and quicker.

***PRE-1920's MILWAUKEE– FROM HUNTING AND GATHERING TO  
SHOPPING***

The development of food shopping in Milwaukee has been briefly referenced at the start of this chapter. The earliest settlers of European heritage in Milwaukee were initially compelled to live off the land, gathering naturally growing edibles, hunting game, and fishing. As these settlers built permanent residences, many people in the area began growing crops to supplement their diets. When communities began to form, peddlers traveled from house to house with edibles for sale. Once the local population was large enough to support a sustainable business, general stores were built, and consumers could travel to these stores, sometimes on foot, sometimes by horse, in order to buy needed foodstuffs. By the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the city of Milwaukee had grown considerably, and residential neighborhoods had small stores catering to their dietary needs. Most neighborhoods had grocery stores, bakeries, butcher shops, and other food stores located within walking distance of most people's homes. These stores started to sell new products with the advent of processed food, which brought additional variety to Milwaukee's consumers. Larger food sellers were located in Milwaukee's business districts.

In 1900, many prominent and upscale businesses were located in the downtown area. A. Booth & Co., a fishmonger's shop that described its wares as

the “Cheapest Food on the market,” and itself as “the Finest Fish Market in the city” was located downtown on 435 Milwaukee Street. John V. Alcott, a greengrocer’s that specialized in high-quality produce for special occasions, was located on 1215 Wells St. and delivered throughout the city. H. Mahler & Sons, a butcher’s shop that professed that its meats were “CHEAPER at this market than any other,” was found at 136 Mason St. These and many other stores offering either great bargains on food or hard-to-find delicacies were mainly centered in the downtown area. The *Milwaukee Journal* advertised these stores in a regular food section titled “Where to Order the Sunday Dinner,” indicating that the downtown food stores could provide premium food for what might be the grandest meal of the week.<sup>400</sup> Many of the city’s best-known food stores were based in the downtown area, since residents from the North, South, East, and West sides could all meet in the middle of Milwaukee.

Perhaps the most prominent food store in Milwaukee at this time was Steinmeyer’s, whose central building was located in the downtown area starting in the mid-1890’s. Steinmeyer’s on Third Street was one of the largest and most luxurious grocery stores in Milwaukee for decades. William Steinmeyer was a Civil War veteran who entered Milwaukee’s grocery business in 1865 when he became a partner in a grocery on Fourth and Chestnut (the latter street was later renamed Juneau Avenue).<sup>401</sup> Eventually Steinmeyer enacted two major changes

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<sup>400</sup> “Where to Order the Sunday Dinner,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 29 March 1900, sec. A, 10. All capitalizations are as printed in the newspaper. All capitalizations are reproduced as published.

<sup>401</sup> Erwin W. Kieckhefer, “Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir,” *Milwaukee History* 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 40.



to his business practices. First, he stopped extending credit to his customers; an action that critics believed would destroy him, since most grocery stores habitually extended credit to their reliable clients. This policy might have hurt him, if Steinmeyer had not instituted a second new policy— home delivery. He manned his establishment during the day, and once he closed his store for the night he traveled about the neighborhood distributing orders. This saved busy consumers a trip to the store and the inconvenience of carrying their goods home. The response was enthusiastic, and Steinmeyer obtained a partner and used his profits to expand and extend his delivery services (one store utilized fifty-five employees and fourteen horse-drawn delivery carts). The money rolled in, and the company opened its landmark Third Street store not long after Steinmeyer's untimely death in 1892. He was fifty-one.<sup>402</sup>

Erwin W. Kieckhefer described the famous Steinmeyer's store in his account of Milwaukee's grocery shops, writing that:

“Some seem to think Steinmeyer's was comparable to Harrod's Food Halls in London, but it was not that kind of glitzy operation. Customers who came to the store simply sat in the customer service area at small tables of the sort used in soda fountains, and clerks would take their orders and see to the deliveries. The store itself was more like a warehouse, with merchandise stacked high and crowded onto the floors. So it was in a way much like the neighborhood stores with their counters where the customers stated their needs to the clerks. But Steinmeyer's did serve the entire community and would fill orders for delivery anywhere in the nation if called upon to do so. And its salesmen walked the neighborhoods every morning soliciting orders and then would hustle back to the store on foot at noon to spend the afternoon preparing the orders for delivery the next morning.”<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

Though Steinmeyer's might ship foodstuffs across the nation upon request, the vast majority of their business came from serving Milwaukee's public. Chain store competition, coupled with a severe strain on business due to the Depression and World War II rationing, led to Steinmeyer's downfall. The business shut its doors in 1945.<sup>404</sup>

Long before large chain stores posed a serious threat to the economic well-being of the small family-owned shops, the small shops competed against each other. Often there were multiple groceries in a neighborhood, and they might attempt to siphon business away from their competitors through lower prices, premiums, or offering other kinds of services to customers. Alternatively, small stores might fall victim to unscrupulous vendors or wholesalers who might provide tainted merchandise or impose inflated prices. Believing that there was strength in numbers, independent stores banded together to protect their combined interests throughout the city. In April of 1900, the Milwaukee Retail Grocers' Association was formed. The Association's first president, Patrick J. Savage, announced that:

“For a long time the retailers here have been pulling against each other and allowing all kinds of abuses to creep into the business until of recent years they have been making nothing. So we thought that if an organization was formed they would have a chance to become better acquainted with each other and a more friendly feeling would prevail...

The association will take an active interest in all legislation that affects the retailers. For instance, there are a large number of street peddlers who actually pay no license fee, have practically no expenses and do not spend their money here, but send it back to Europe. They carry their goods from door to door and undersell

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 42.

the regular dealers, who pay taxes year after year and do their share toward supporting the community.”<sup>405</sup>

The Milwaukee Retail Grocers’ Association was intended to improve business for independent grocers, although there was also a clear attempt to circumvent their competition. Peddlers, in all likelihood, resented any fees that might have cut into their profits, and grocers similarly resented the fact that peddlers were able to offer lower prices due to their lower overhead costs, such as not having to pay rent. There was a clear animus on the part of the grocers against immigrant peddlers who sent their profits back home across the Atlantic, and Savage further defended his desire to impose a new licensing fee on peddlers because Illinois had recently imposed a substantial license fee, which meant that many Chicago peddlers might pack up and move north to Milwaukee, further saturating the market.<sup>406</sup> The tension between peddlers and grocers may have gone unobserved by the average consumer.

While different food sellers might have had strained relations with each other due to competition, purveyors of groceries were often compelled to be friendly with their customers. Rudeness or even coldness could drive potential customers elsewhere, assuming that another store was sufficiently close. Due to the number of food stores throughout the city and the possibility of home delivery, few small shops held a monopoly on their area’s provisions. Neighborhood grocery stores often had close ties with their communities, for many shoppers patronized the store on a near-daily basis. This was due to the fact

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<sup>405</sup> “Retail Grocers’ Association Will Advocate Licenses for Peddlers,” The Milwaukee Journal, 4 April 1900, 8.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid., 8.

that food spoiled quickly in warm weather, before the invention of artificial refrigeration. Once iceboxes and refrigerators were invented, consumers were able to modify the frequency of their food shopping.\*

Perishable items could also be delivered to homes on a daily basis. Milk, a staple for many households, was often delivered to homes by cart. In the early years of the twentieth century, housewives would wait for the milkman's wagon to reach their neighborhood, and bring containers out to the cart to be filled with milk.<sup>407</sup> In later years, deliverymen would bring bottled milk and often other dairy products like butter and cottage cheese directly to consumer's homes. The glass bottles would then be returned for reuse. During the 1930's, approximately seventy percent of packaged milk purchased in Milwaukee was delivered to consumers' residences, with thirty percent of the city's milk being bought in shops. By 1972, more than eighty-one percent of the city's milk was purchased in stores along with the other groceries, and home delivery for dairy products and most other foods died out soon afterward, save for a relative handful of businesses that included delivery service.<sup>408</sup>

Whether people traveled to food stores or had their purchases delivered to them, grocery stores had to buy their food from somewhere before they were able to sell it, which meant that food wholesalers were an essential first step in the

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\* For more details on new technology and food preservation, see Appendix A.  
<sup>407</sup> Remember When... A Nostalgic Look at Old Milwaukee With a Series of Photos Originally Published in the Milwaukee Journal (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee Journal, 1973), 35.

<sup>408</sup> Robert A. Cropp and Truman F. Graf, Milk Programs of Wisconsin Food Chains (Madison, Wisconsin: Research Division, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1972), 3.

consumption process. Roundy's, one of southeastern Wisconsin's largest wholesalers and food suppliers for decades, has been a prominent figure in Milwaukee's food consumption landscape since 1872. The company's name has changed over the years, beginning as Smith, Roundy & Co. in 1872. In 1898 William A. Smith left the company after being elected as Wisconsin's Governor, and William S. Peckham joined the business, which subsequently changed its name to Roundy, Peckham, and Co.<sup>409</sup> The final name change would come in 1952, with the formation of a new corporation founded to strengthen the business interests of Wisconsin's retail grocers.<sup>410</sup> The 1902 death of Sidney Hauxhurst, a partner in the business from the beginning, led to Charles J. Dexter's company presidency and another name change to Roundy, Peckham & Dexter.<sup>411</sup> As the decades passed, the business grew steadily, and eventually entered the direct-to-the-consumer retail business themselves in 1975 with the introduction of the Pick'n Save chain of supermarkets. Pick'n Save cut overhead costs by requiring shoppers to bag their own groceries, thereby saving the business money on checkout baggers.<sup>412</sup> This development was characteristic of the times. From 1920 to 1970, Milwaukee evolved from a city filled with tiny neighborhood stores to a city largely supplied by large supermarkets.

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<sup>409</sup> Lydia Engelman, The History of Roundy's Inc. (Roundy's Inc, 1987), Dexter-Roundy Family Papers, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 108 and Milwaukee Micro Collection 57, Folder 14- Miscellaneous, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, 1.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid., 8.

### ***THE 1920's–THE AGE OF THE SMALL STORES***

The age of the small stores started in the late nineteenth century, when Milwaukee had been settled and permanent buildings had been constructed. Though peddlers would continue to tour neighborhoods, they only provided a small fraction of people's food. In his research on mid-century grocery store employees in Milwaukee, Paul Gilmore notes that Milwaukee's food shoppers primarily bought their supplies from small, independent food shops until the Great Depression, but these habits were changing fast.<sup>413</sup> During this era chain stores began to open up in various locations around the United States. The growth of the chains was rapid, increasingly so by the 1920's. Though chain stores sprung up most densely in the Northeast and Midwest, chain stores in Wisconsin were among the most sparsely situated in the aforementioned regions during the 1920's.<sup>414</sup>

Catherine Otten's memoir *The Corner Grocery Store* gives a detailed perspective of the day-to-day workings of a small, independently owned food shop in Milwaukee. Set during the early decades of the twentieth century, mainly the 1910's and early 1920's, *The Corner Grocery Store* describes what it meant to run such an establishment during this time. The title shop, like most small food stores, was a "mom-and-pop" business run and staffed by a single family. Otten's parents lived right behind their store, on the southern edge of Milwaukee. Otten describes the South Side shop as the "center of all neighborhood activities... like

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<sup>413</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984," (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 15.

<sup>414</sup> James M. Mayo, *The American Grocery Store: The Business Evolution of an Architectural Space* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1993), 85.

a town hall...” where her Papa and Mama served as “advisors, mediators, confessors and sometimes even referees to many of the customers.”<sup>415</sup> By befriending their customers and providing personal service, the family gained an extremely loyal clientele. They performed favors for friends, such as allowing parents to hide Christmas presents in the shop’s basement until Christmas Eve, thereby keeping the gifts out of the sight of inquisitive children.<sup>416</sup>

The family store was located in a diverse neighborhood, and German, French, Polish, Irish, and Swedish families were all customers.<sup>417</sup> There was a close bond between the store’s owners and their customers, a relationship that was fueled by trust. Often, shoppers lacked sufficient funds to pay for their groceries, so the store sold items on credit. Otten describes her father’s credit system as a stiletto behind the counter. Whenever shoppers could not pay for their purchases, the name of the customer was written on a piece of paper, along with a list of the purchased items and their total cost. The paper was then stuck on the stiletto. When the bill was paid, usually on payday, the customer would not only get the debt paper back off the stiletto, but, additionally, a small cone of candies would be provided for the customer’s children. Leniency was often extended to loyal customers, who would receive extra time to repay during hard times. There were two grave sins that could ruin someone’s credit. The first one was a failure to repay at all, the second was for people with outstanding debts to be seen carrying

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<sup>415</sup> Catherine Otten, The Corner Grocery Store (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: T/D Publications, 1975), 5.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

home groceries from the local “Cash and Carry” store before they had paid off their obligations from the stiletto.<sup>418</sup>

Otten’s parents’ store was contained a small selection of perishable and non-perishable goods, a couple of glass counters for sewing materials and gourmet sweets, as well as wooden iceboxes for meat, eggs, and dairy products. This is notable because the additional expense of continually filling storage containers with ice was often too much for small stores, and deterred them from carrying perishable goods other than produce. Many grocery stores only sold fruit, vegetables, and packaged foods, leaving consumers to rely on home dairy delivery and the local butcher shop and fishmonger. Many butcher shops allowed customers to select whatever cut of meat they wanted, and it would be cut off the carcass, wrapped in paper, and presented to them. In order to absorb blood and bone dust, the floors of many butcher shops were covered with sawdust, and bits of cheap cured meat like bologna or hot dogs were often given away as rewards to loyal customers.<sup>419</sup>

Though free samples might bring people to shops, small stores often had to be creative in the ways they attracted customers. Otten’s parents once found a particularly large tarantula nesting inside a shipment of bananas. The arachnid was captured rather than killed, and placed on display. It soon drew the interest

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<sup>418</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>419</sup> Remember When... A Nostalgic Look at Old Milwaukee With a Series of Photos Originally Published in the Milwaukee Journal (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee Journal, 1973), 9.



of many locals.<sup>420</sup> Sometimes shops had to rotate their stocks to address seasonal needs. *The Corner Grocery Store* recounts how each Fourth of July, much of the candy stock was temporarily removed in order to provide sufficient room to sell fireworks.<sup>421</sup> Other seasonal attractions included chocolate marshmallow Easter eggs, which usually contained a pale-colored filling. Buyers would bite into the candy egg in front of the store clerk, and if it had a pink filling, they would win a free egg.<sup>422</sup> Another way to attract customers was to function as a community hub. Many stores catered to the ethnicities of their customers, and fashioned themselves as community centers for neighborhood gossip, or news from “the old country.”<sup>423</sup>

In rare instances, a small store might expand into a chain. In the mid-1920’s, Max Kohl, a Polish immigrant, opened a food shop on Lincoln and Kinnickinnic Avenues. Over time, Kohl’s business moved and expanded. Kohl professed that his business strategy was “quality products and courteous service.” Shortly before the Second World War, there were three Kohl’s grocery stores on the city’s north side, one of which was widely viewed as a prototype supermarket due to its size and layout.<sup>424</sup>

Other changes in food shopping involved the location of the consumer’s primary food store. In the days before widespread automobile ownership, people

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<sup>420</sup> Catherine Otten, *The Corner Grocery Store* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: T/D Publications, 1975), 19. It was actually common to find tarantulas and other pests in shipments of fruits from tropical regions.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>423</sup> Erwin W. Kieckhefer, “Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir,” *Milwaukee History* 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 35.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

could only buy what they could carry as they walked home, so it made sense to visit an establishment that was as close as possible to one's place of residence. Small grocery stores generally expected their clientele to consist almost exclusively of neighborhood residents, and therefore their businesses were unlikely to rise beyond the saturation point of the food budgets of the families who lived within easy walking distance of the shop.

Food budgeting and shopping was largely seen as a woman's responsibility, and many females were taught these skills at a young age. In 1920, the Milwaukee Public Schools published a small book titled *Food Preparation, Meal Serving and Housewifery*. The book contained a list of tips for being the model consumer at a food store. Notably, the food shopper was always referred to as a female, highlighting the fact that the grocery store was largely viewed as a woman's domain, an assertion made often in Tracey Deutsch's research. As the monograph encouraged women to improve their skills in the "household arts," it advised women to only patronize stores that were scrupulously clean, protected its stocks from contamination, and were completely free of bugs and all other animals. Depending on where they lived, many consumers might not have had a choice in their main grocery store, even if the cleanliness left something to be desired. Women were also encouraged to test the honesty of the shopkeepers, and to avoid merchants who placed their thumbs on the scale or other tricks like that.<sup>425</sup> The book suggested that food shoppers should obey the following rules:

"1. Pay bills promptly.

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<sup>425</sup> Household Arts Department, Milwaukee Public Schools, Food Preparation, Meal Serving and Housewifery (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1920), 129-130.

2. Wait her turn to be served.
3. Be courteous.
4. If possible, shop when the store keeper will not be rushed.
5. Do not ask for special delivery of goods unless urgent circumstances demand it. A good manager ought to have no more than one delivery a day to her home. Many women do not purchase supplies oftener than two or three times a week.”<sup>426</sup>

These rules do not take several realities into consideration. The “do not purchase supplies oftener than two or three times a week” regulation would not apply to people with no ability to keep their food cold, and therefore had to buy perishable food daily and eat it the same day.\* Furthermore, not everybody could afford to pay their bills in a timely manner. Food prices were a major concern for consumers, and the need for bargains led the city government to offer lower prices in their own shopping venues.

During the First World War, when food prices were high, the Hoan mayoral administration purchased government-surplus food and sold it to Milwaukeeans at bargain prices. John Gurda writes that in 1917 Milwaukeeans bought from the city-sponsored markets “3 carloads of apples, 2,500 pounds of cheese, 30 carloads of potatoes, 140,000 pounds of rough fish (mostly carp and suckers), and 4,000 pounds of split peas, just to name a few of the items that were sold. “I believe I have done more to lower the high cost of living,” Hoan boasted, “than all the congressmen put together.”<sup>427</sup> Over time, the city expanded the number of items it sold. In general, the city’s prices were twenty-five percent to

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid., 131.

\* Further information on food storage and preservation can be found in the appendix to this chapter.

<sup>427</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 229.

fifty percent less than those offered by privately owned stores.<sup>428</sup> Small, independent grocery stores could not match the city's prices and stay in business. Nevertheless, Hoan frequently accused private grocery store owners of profiteering, a charge that sparked resentment amongst the city's food merchants, who felt that the mayor not only undercut their prices but also vilified them. The neighborhood markets did have some advantages over the city-run stores, often being more conveniently located for the average consumer. Additionally, the city shops' selections were generally limited to the surplus items that could be bought in bulk cheaply. Therefore, the city-run markets did not have a long-term business plan, since the government-surplus food was a finite resource, and there was no comparatively priced alternative. As government-surplus food ran out, the city markets went out of business.

Although the Hoan-sponsored markets ceased operations in 1921, after just a few years in existence, Hoan advocated for city-run food markets for the remainder of his tenure in office. At a Socialist rally in 1932, Hoan called for a revival of the city food markets, saying, "Give me support and I'll bring down prices."<sup>429</sup> Friction between Hoan and the Common Council over the city markets' profits, along with tax problems and other controversies, prevented the city from re-entering the food business.

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<sup>428</sup> Edward S. Kerstein, Milwaukee's All-American Mayor; Portrait of Daniel Webster Hoan (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 98.

<sup>429</sup> "City Food Sale Still Debated," The Milwaukee Journal, 3 March 1932, in A Collection of Newspaper and Magazine Articles (photocopied) on Daniel Webster Hoan, 1881-1961, Chronologically Arranged and Covering the Period from April 17, 1912 Through May 17, 1962, compiled by the Milwaukee Public Library, (Milwaukee, Wis: Milwaukee Public Library, 1969), 99.

Hoan's concerns over Milwaukee's food supply went further than attempts to lower prices. He distrusted chain stores and their effect on the local economy. Paul Hampel, who had been involved in the city's meat business, commented in an interview that, "Dan Hoan... had always felt that the chain stores would be the end of the democratic or social process... But as far as the general public was concerned, I would think that they accepted the chain stores because of the fact that the merchandise was somewhat cheaper than it was in the independent, small poppa-momma stores."<sup>430</sup> Additionally, in 1933 Hoan launched the creation of a body tentatively titled the "Women's committee to investigate the rise in food prices." Hoan invited a few dozen Milwaukee women to serve on the committee, including leaders of women's groups and clubs, active church members, and women in prominent careers such as newspaper journalists.<sup>431</sup> The Mayor's Committee on Food Prices (Consumer's Council) issued a statement saying that:

"Our conclusions are, in brief, that there have been large and steady increases in retail food prices, that the farmer's share in this space is small, that wages in retail trades have not increased materially enough to affect the cost of food or the purchasing power of those workers, that wages in general have not increased enough to meet the higher prices, and that the conditions of those who are employed but earn very little weekly, and of those unemployed on work relief in Milwaukee county [sic], are worse than they were during the worst of the depression."<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 111-112.

<sup>431</sup> Miss Lutie E. Stearns to Daniel W. Hoan, 21 July 1933, "Hoan, Daniel Webster, 1889-1966," Mss-0546, Box 16, Folder "Food, 1916-1918, 1933-1938, 1941," Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>432</sup> "Preliminary Report of the Mayor's Committee on Food Prices (Consumer's Council)- July 15-Sep 15," 22 September 1933, "Hoan, Daniel Webster, 1889-1966," Mss-0546, Box 16, Folder "Food, 1916-1918, 1933-1938, 1941," Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Indeed, as the following section will illustrate, it became increasingly difficult for many Milwaukeeans to obtain the food they needed during the Depression.

### ***THE 1930's—CHANGES, THE DEPRESSION AND EXPANDING CHAINS***

The Depression left thousands of Milwaukeeans with much less money to spend on edibles, but when citizens did buy their daily bread, the places where they made their purchases were beginning to change. By the 1930's, chain food stores had made substantial inroads on the city's food sales. The first chain stores looked very much like the small independent stores, though while the small stores were run and managed by their owners, individual chain stores were controlled by company employees, many of whom did not work at a single store for very long.<sup>433</sup> Consumers no longer automatically shopped primarily at the closest market by default—the corner grocery store was still often patronized for the sake of convenience, or possibly loyalty, but consumers were willing to travel a little farther to a larger chain store for the sake of lower prices and a wider selection. The leading drawback to chain stores, in the eyes of many consumers, is the absence of the personal touch that came from the small stores' familiarity with their clientele. As Paul Gilmore observed, "Chain stores brought efficiency to the operation of grocery stores. They were no longer a [sic] family or community

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<sup>433</sup> Erwin W. Kieckhefer, "Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir," *Milwaukee History* 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 38.

establishments but simply businesses.”<sup>434</sup> The chain stores largely refused to offer credit to individuals, although it was theoretically possible that a sympathetic chain store manager or clerk might quietly offer a known and valued customer credit in certain circumstances. This illustrates the divide between the small stores, which had strong ties to their communities and were run by individuals who could set their own rules of business, and the chain stores, most of which were run by corporations headquartered hundreds of miles away and which saw credit as an unnecessary financial risk.

Owners of small, independent stores were aware that their customer base was shrinking, and naturally wondered what they needed to do in order to stay in business. Thomas F. Branham, the president of the National Wholesale Grocers’ Association and Eau Claire resident, declared in 1930 that small, independent grocery stores could survive the competition if they took certain steps. Branham argued,

“The home owned store has the good will and the genuine interest of the public... However, the home owned store that is so shortsighted as to depend upon community loyalty entirely and to neglect fair prices, clean and properly lighted stores, fresh and well-displayed stocks and prompt and courteous services makes a vital mistake. It is estimated that 50,000 home owned grocery stores have been remodeled, and more modern methods of merchandising have been adopted within the last few years. This change should be encouraged in view of the fact that there is a definite swing of public opinion toward the community merchant.”<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> Paul Gilmore, “Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee’s Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984” (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 42.

<sup>435</sup> “Branham Sees Better Business For Independent Grocers,” Wisconsin Retail Grocer 21 no. 6 (June, 1930): 4, Dexter-Roundy Family Papers, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 108 and Milwaukee Micro Collection 57, Folder 14-

As these remarks illustrate, store appearances were a significant factor in how consumers chose their shopping venues. Cleanliness and good lighting were crucial components to creating an inviting appearance, and the new, bigger stores were generally clean and well lighted. Small stores could stay clean, though high-quality electrical lighting was often too expensive for the average storeowner to install. Branham argued that people preferred to shop where they knew the proprietors, though this certainly did not apply to all consumers. Otten's memoirs support Branham's view, showing how a store could serve as a social center. Larger stores served a more widespread audience with an extensive variety of products, but a more sizable clientele also brought more anonymity for the consumer. Small stores could give the personal touch, but often at the cost of price and selection.

Chain stores first appeared in Milwaukee in the late 1910's. The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (A&P) started as an importer and exporter of foodstuffs, and eventually set up large shops\* with a more extensive selection than the average independent store, as well as lower prices. A&P stores did not grant their customers credit. The other major chains in early twentieth century Milwaukee were National Tea and Kroeger. In 1910, there were two A&P stores in Milwaukee, but the total rose to thirty-one in 1919, and reached one hundred thirty-four in 1933, and an additional one hundred eighty-eight stores in the

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Miscellaneous, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society.

\* At least, large when compared to the average independent grocery store at that time.



broader area.<sup>436</sup> As stated earlier, Piggly Wiggly's opened in Milwaukee in 1919.<sup>437</sup> In 1933, the National Tea Co. had ninety-eight stores in Milwaukee and forty-nine additional district stores. This number was up from a mere five shops in 1916.<sup>438</sup> The IGA Supply Depot— E.R. Godfrey & Sons Co. had one hundred twenty-seven Milwaukee stores and two hundred thirty-three district stores in 1933.<sup>439</sup> Milwaukee was also home to seven much smaller chains at this time, plus thirteen wholesale grocers.<sup>440</sup> Notably, many of the chain stores were clustered in roughly the same areas. Paul Gilmore notes that, “In 1919, A&P had four stores along twenty blocks of Vliet street [sic], three of which were within three blocks of each other. By 1933, A&P and National owned *fifteen* stores on West North Avenue alone.”<sup>441</sup>

Though the modern supermarket would not reach Milwaukee until the postwar era, the predecessors of the supermarket came to Milwaukee earlier in the century. Kohl's Food Stores once claimed to have opened the first modern supermarket in Milwaukee, but it must be noted that the word “modern” is used to

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<sup>436</sup> Paul Gilmore, “Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984” (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 37-39. The Merchandising Service Bureau of the Milwaukee Journal, List of Milwaukee Grocers by Routes (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Journal Company, 1933), 4.

<sup>437</sup> “Milwaukee's First Piggly Wiggly Stores,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 4 May 1919, part 2, 12.

<sup>438</sup> Paul Gilmore, “Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984” (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 39.

<sup>439</sup> The Merchandising Service Bureau of the Milwaukee Journal, List of Milwaukee Grocers by Routes (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Journal Company, 1933), 4.

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-7.

<sup>441</sup> Paul Gilmore, “Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984” (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 39. The referenced areas of Vliet Street and West North Avenue are located on the city's West Side.

differentiate the Kohl's supermarket from the older stores that might well be defined as early supermarkets, such as Piggly Wiggly.<sup>442</sup> While the vast majority of the grocery stores in Milwaukee in the early twentieth century were independently and locally owned, chain stores were present in the city before 1920. The first Piggly Wiggly in Milwaukee opened on June 14, 1919, two years after the chain opened for business across the country. Two Piggly Wiggly stores opened simultaneously, one on North Avenue near 35<sup>th</sup> Street, and one on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street near North Avenue. This was part of a plan to fill Milwaukee with Piggly Wiggly stores, with plans to have a total of five stores in the area by the end of the next two months, increasing to fifteen area stores within that year, and to have a total of twenty-five stores in Milwaukee County within the next couple of years, thereby making Piggly Wiggly stores accessible all over Milwaukee.<sup>443</sup> Another was located on Hopkins Street, between 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Streets, some miles north of the downtown area. The chain stores were branching out into residential neighborhoods.

During Piggly Wiggly's expansion period, the chain opened one store on Hopkins Street, between 24<sup>th</sup> Place and 25<sup>th</sup> Street, located a few miles north of downtown, in a residential area near Moody Park. This experimental store initiated some new innovations, such as allowing consumers to carry store-provided cloth bags in order to carry products inside the store without the assistance of a clerk. One-way turnstiles and deliberately cramped exits were

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<sup>442</sup> Tom Daykin, "1<sup>st</sup> Kohl's supermarket to be next Lena's," The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 14 June 2002, sec. D, 2.

<sup>443</sup> "Milwaukee's First Piggly Wiggly Stores," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 4 May 1919, part 2, 12.

meant to thwart shoplifters. The Piggly Wiggly did not gain much of a regular clientele in Milwaukee, and around the time the economic fortunes of the chain's founder, Clarence Saunders, faltered in the 1920's, most of Milwaukee's Piggly Wiggly's closed their doors.<sup>444</sup> Piggly Wiggly went out of business in Milwaukee in 1931, but it returned between 1964 and 1965.<sup>445</sup> In any case, Piggly Wigglys were not the primary locations where most citizens bought their groceries. In 1920, most consumers relied on their neighborhood grocery stores, which were usually independently owned.

There were various chains that were exclusive to Milwaukee. For example, the D. & F. Market Co. billed itself as "A Local Organization Owned by Milwaukeeans," with seven stores in Milwaukee by 1930. Two were on Third Street, one was on Center Street, one was on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, one was on Vilet St., one was on Howell Avenue, and one was on Teutonia Avenue. Most of these were located in and around the downtown area, though the Teutonia Avenue store was further north, near Glendale, and the Howell Avenue store was on the South Side. There were also D. & F. stores in Cudahy and West Allis. The D. & F. Market Co. sold assorted meats, oleo, sweets, and homemade peanut butter and mincemeat, with special sales on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>444</sup> Erwin W. Kieckhefer, "Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir," Milwaukee History 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 39-40.

<sup>445</sup> Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1931, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1931), 1995. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1964-1965, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1964-1965), 1153.

<sup>446</sup> "D. & F. Market Co.," The Milwaukee Journal, 13 January 1930, sec. I, 6.

Chain stores had a different way of doing business from small stores, partially because they intended to serve a wider clientele. The average small, independent grocery store sold its foodstuffs with the goal of making the most possible profit from each item. Therefore, each store set its prices at rates that were low enough to keep customers coming, but high enough to derive a substantial income from each sale. In contrast, the larger chains attracted customers by offering low prices. The chains made comparatively small profits from sales, but they compensated through a large volume of sales.<sup>447</sup>

Understandably, many independent grocery stores were not pleased with the coming of the chains, since new competitors cut into their business. There was talk amongst independent grocery owners of making chain stores illegal or of leveling substantial taxes against them, though these attempts to use the government to crush the chains failed.<sup>448</sup> In 1929 and 1930, twenty-nine state legislatures proposed legislation to impose financial penalties upon chain grocery stores, thereby giving the independent stores a better chance to thrive in the face of competition. Throughout Wisconsin, independent shopkeepers staged protests against chains, and the supporters of the small stores publicly shunned chain store employees.<sup>449</sup> From 1931-1933, the judiciary systems of Wisconsin and Vermont ruled that their states' special taxes on chain stores were unconstitutional,

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<sup>447</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 40.

<sup>448</sup> Erwin W. Kieckhefer, "Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir," Milwaukee History 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 38-39.

<sup>449</sup> Marc Levinson, The Great A&P and the Struggle for Small Business in America (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 121.

although the courts ruled in favor of similar laws elsewhere.<sup>450</sup> Without taxation to cut into the chains' profits, both Milwaukee's independent stores and local wholesalers were forced to confront a danger to their survival.

Since the chains did not use Roundy's as their wholesaler, Roundy's not only lost out on sales to the chains, but also independent stores bought less from Roundy's as they lost business to chain stores. In the hopes of provoking the small stores into launching some sort of consumer movement that would create a backlash against the chains, Roundy's sent out a "Salesman's Memo" in 1933, including a poem meant to inflame independent grocers against chains by painting them as interlopers that selfishly siphoned money away from Milwaukee and sent it out of state. The closing stanzas of the poem read:

“But everything is different now. It isn't like it  
Was when we were kids. Do you know why? I'll  
Tell you, it's because the chain stores all have  
Come to town, it seems they have control, and it  
Seems as if a man don't own his body or his soul.

Now listen folks, can we afford to sacrifice our  
Rights? Shall we neglect our townsmen to feed  
These parasites? Shall we forget the pioneers,  
Those who built up this town? Shall we allow  
Those outside Stores to tear the whole thing down?

I think I know your answer, folks, I think you'll  
All say NO! Let's own our little city as we used  
To years ago. Let's patronize our local stores  
And keep the cash at home,

AND LET THE DOGGONE CHAIN STORES  
START A CITY OF THEIR OWN!”<sup>451</sup>

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 122-123.

<sup>451</sup> Paul Gilmore, “Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984” (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 113.

Of course, the chain stores did not start their own city. Neither did a successful en masse consumer movement drive out the chains. Instead, the chains stayed in Milwaukee, thrived and multiplied, and the independent shops dwindled. Many survived, but large numbers of small stores closed down over the coming decades. The Great Depression killed off some shops, and others closed later in the century due to dwindling sales thanks to larger markets siphoning off profits. Numerous family-owned businesses closed as younger generations made their livings elsewhere.

The Depression hurt food sales nationwide, as cash-strapped consumers had much less disposable income to spend on edibles. In 1929, food store sales totaled \$3,500,000,000 annually, but four years later sales collapsed to nearly half that, dropping to just \$1,800,000,000. (These numbers equate to \$44,631,350,000 and \$30,192,370,000 in 2010 dollars, respectively.)<sup>452</sup> Wisconsin's food sales fell by more than one hundred million dollars from 1929 to 1933, a reduction of forty-two percent. Milwaukee's declining food sales were proportionate to the rest of Wisconsin, with the city's annual food sales falling to under fifty million dollars by the early 1930's, when the Depression hit Milwaukee.<sup>453</sup> People were buying less due to lower incomes, or buying cheaper foodstuffs, or both. Increasing numbers of people were obtaining their sustenance from charities.

While food sales may have declined, Milwaukeeans were still consuming enormous amounts of groceries. During the first eleven months of 1932,

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<sup>452</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>453</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 48.

Milwaukee's residents purchased 8,326 carloads of fruits and vegetables, coming from twenty-six states, including Wisconsin. A little under a quarter of this food came from California, which at this point exported more produce to Milwaukee than any other state. Potatoes and apples were the most popular fruits and vegetables sold, with 1,870 carloads of the former and 1,279 carloads of the latter arriving in Milwaukee during the aforementioned time period.<sup>454</sup>

The decline in food sales corresponded with a collapse in income. Before the stock market crash, the average Milwaukeean earned \$29.03 per week, but by January of 1932 that amount had plummeted to \$14.21.<sup>455</sup> (These amounts equate to \$370.19 and \$226.17 in 2010 money, respectively.)<sup>456</sup> Since many workers did not have constant employment during the Depression, the latter number cannot be multiplied in order to extrapolate a reliable estimate of an average yearly income.

Many unemployed people were compelled to rely on public assistance for food. Gayle Koprowski-Kraut's account of the Depression-era tribulations of a woman identified only as Rose, who was born in Milwaukee in 1900, depicts the nature of food consumption in dire economic circumstances. Rose recalled that, "People went to the county; they got nothing but food and coal; they didn't pay any rents. People got cereal, oatmeal, flour, potatoes, meat, figs, and herring. They did not get these all at once. If you got herring, you didn't get meat. Or, if

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<sup>454</sup> "8,328 Carloads of Fruits, Vegetables Consumed Here," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 2 January 1933, sec. A, 23.

<sup>455</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 48.

<sup>456</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

you got meat, then you didn't get herring. They went every two weeks for supplies. They got cocoa for drinking. No coffee or milk either."<sup>457</sup>

Rose's family was able to earn a small income later in the Depression, though it was a challenge to keep a large family warm and fed. They budgeted a quarter a day to spend on meat, which only allowed them to obtain the cheapest cuts, such as spareribs and neck bones. Potato pancakes were the family's preferred means of "stretching" out meals with comparatively inexpensive tubers, and these were the family's primary meal on Fridays, since the Catholic family did not eat meat then. Catholic authorities did, however, assure the faithful that it was acceptable to use animal fats for frying because of the difficult economic circumstances, which made alternative oils or butter unaffordable. Rose recounts that lard was one of the few substances the family could afford, saying, "We had rendered lard, homemade, but we never used oil. We even ate bread with lard. Butter? You couldn't afford to buy it."<sup>458</sup>

The federal government provided the local government with food for distribution to the needy. In 1933, as part of the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), the federal government decreed that millions of pigs needed to be slaughtered in order to protect pork prices and to prevent the hog population from consuming corn that could have fed people. The AAA was unpopular in many circles because of its wastefulness, and was famously criticized in John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, where copious amounts of surplus food

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<sup>457</sup> Gayle Koprowski-Kraut, "The Depression's Effects On a Milwaukee Family," *Milwaukee History* 3 no. 3 (Autumn, 1980): 86-87.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.



are allowed to spoil, and hungry people are prevented from eating it. The government was unprepared for dealing with all of the resulting pork, and therefore attempts to preserve and distribute the meat to hungry citizens were often clumsy and inefficient. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of cured pork arrived in the Milwaukee area. Between October 18<sup>th</sup> and November 23<sup>rd</sup> of 1933, 315,000 pounds of pork, or nine carloads worth, arrived in Milwaukee. From December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1933 to January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1934, the city accepted 420,000 pounds of government-issued pork, which filled eleven carloads. Receiving so much meat so fast caused some logistical problems for Milwaukee's food distribution services. A local relief commissary was so filled with pork that there was hardly any room for anything else. Prepared in three to six-pound parcels, between 90,000 and 100,000 pounds of pork was housed in an area storage facility, which was a little bit more than the structure could comfortably hold. Milwaukee placed over 223,000 pounds of pork in private cold storage facilities and ice cream factories. At a minimum, this cost Milwaukee County fifteen cents for every hundred pounds stored for one month, and eight cents for every hundred pounds stored each succeeding month. (Eight cents and fifteen cents in 1934 equate to \$1.30 and \$2.44 in 2010.)<sup>459</sup> This meant that the federal meat cost the county hundreds of dollars each month (the county received special low rates on storage due to the situation), thereby giving Milwaukee's government incentive to distribute the meat.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>460</sup> "Endless Supply of Pork Coming; Disposing of It Puzzles County," The Milwaukee Journal, 5 January 1934, sec. A, 1.

By January of 1934, the demand for charitable food donations had decreased sharply, since many hungry people were hired for federal work programs, and therefore did not need additional support. There was still a high need for assistance, since the city gave out approximately ten thousand pounds of pork each day. Still, at that rate much of the pork would have spoiled before it was eaten, so Milwaukee had give more pork to more people in order to make sure that hundreds of thousands of pounds of meat were not wasted. When one Milwaukee relief worker was asked whether or not the government would be sending them more pork, the city employee replied, “Gosh, I hope not.”<sup>461</sup>

The Depression spurred different ways of grappling with hard times beyond government relief. In 1934, two African-Americans, Doctor C.F. Turney and a meat inspector named Ulysses S. Johnson, led approximately three hundred members of Milwaukee’s black community in forming a co-op food store. The project was spurred by the discovery that the grocery stores in the predominantly black Sixth Ward in the middle of the city had higher-priced food than in other areas of the city. The initial participants in the plan saved three cents of every working day’s pay until the start-up capital sum of \$2,200 was amassed. (This equals \$35,800.24 in 2010.)<sup>462</sup> By 1937, the co-op had sufficient funds to commence operations in a tiny 7<sup>th</sup> Street shop, where food was bought from wholesalers and sold to co-op members at a two to three-percent discount.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>462</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>463</sup> Keith Robert Schmitz, “Milwaukee and its Black Community: 1930-1942,” (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, 1979), 40.

Despite harder economic times, numerous Milwaukeeans still had enough room in their budgets for non-essential foodstuffs. Milwaukeeans also had a large appetite for candy. Over fifty shops specialized in selling sweets, and the leading department stores also had often-visited candy counters. The city was home to about a dozen candy factories, many of which used large quantities of locally made dairy products and gelatin in their products. In 1937, approximately eight million dollars worth of candy was sold in Milwaukee, and the city was also the home of *The Northwestern Confectioner*, a publication about the candy business.<sup>464</sup>

While sweets were popular, people in Milwaukee still primarily bought staple foods. At this time, many independent grocery stores were adding meat departments in order to attract more customers. This often meant that numerous family-run grocery stores had to hire a butcher for at least part-time work. Other groceries just bought pre-cut pieces of meat from local butchers. This made for more convenient shopping, since consumers no longer had to make trips to both the corner grocery and the butcher shop for their provisions. Consumers clearly preferred the convenience of one-stop shopping, since in 1933 the nine hundred thirty-eight combination stores in Milwaukee (selling both meat and produce, as well as other items), brought in about four million dollars more in revenue than

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<sup>464</sup> Louise W. Mears, "Milwaukee: A City of Good Foods," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 24, no. 4 (June, 1941): 434.

the approximately one thousand groceries in the city that did not offer fresh meat, according to labor historian Paul Gilmore.<sup>465</sup>

Gilmore's numbers vary from other sources. In 1933, the Merchandising Service Bureau of the *Milwaukee Journal* published a study saying that Milwaukee was home to 1,572 stores that sold groceries but did not have a meat department, five hundred eleven stores that sold both groceries and meat, sixty-four fruit and vegetable markets, and three hundred twenty-three butcher shops.<sup>466</sup> The reason for this discrepancy is unclear, but it may be based in differences on one statistic citing the city proper and the other covering the standard metropolitan standard area or the county.

Conventional grocery stores were not the only places where people could buy their groceries. By 1933, four of Milwaukee's department store chains had added a food department to their businesses: Boston Store, Schuster's (all three stores), Gimbel Bros., and Hills Dry Goods Co., Inc.<sup>467</sup> Schuster's had a delicatessen, which in 1940 exclusively sold S&W Foods brand canned goods.<sup>468</sup> Gimbels dubbed its food department "Tasty Town," selling a diverse array of items, ranging from fresh meats and cheeses, to tinned juices and jams, to candies

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<sup>465</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 49.

<sup>466</sup> The Merchandising Service Bureau of the *Milwaukee Journal*, List of Milwaukee Grocers by Routes (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Journal Company, 1933), 8.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>468</sup> "Schuster's for Dress Values," The Milwaukee Journal, 23 April 1940, sec. M, 5.

and cakes.<sup>469</sup> Further information on department stores and their food departments will be provided in the chapter on dry goods venues.

### ***THE EARLY 1940's– THE SECOND WORLD WAR BRINGS RATIONING***

The United States did not officially enter the Second World War until after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, but American food consumers felt the economic pinch of war in Europe long before the United States entered the conflict. Concerns by commodities speculators over the war, coupled with the lingering effects of the Depression, caused a spike in food prices in September of 1939, which was referred to as a “war boom” effect.<sup>470</sup> Many foods containing imported products became much more expensive, due to multiple factors such as fuel costs and decreased production.

By the start of March in 1940, most food costs reverted back to their pre-war levels. The president of Roundy, Peckham, & Dexter Co.; Roy A. Johnson, noted the price of their sugar was about seven and a half cents per pound in September 1939, compared to a nickel in March 1940, a one-third decrease in price. (In 2010 money, these prices equate to about \$1.22 and \$0.78, respectively.)<sup>471</sup> A continued ten to fifteen percent increase in the company’s canned foods prices was, according to Johnson, not war-related but instead due to economic difficulties in the canning business. Pork loins cost seventeen cents a

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<sup>469</sup> “Fine Foods, Meats and Candies from Tasty Town,” The Milwaukee Journal, 12 April 1940, 9.

<sup>470</sup> “Boom in Food Prices Trailing Off to Whisper,” The Milwaukee Journal, 4 March 1940, sec. L, 1.

<sup>471</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

pound in August 1939, skyrocketed in price to twenty-eight cents per pound in September 1939, and then tumbled down to thirteen cents a pound in March 1940. (At 2010 levels of inflation, these prices equate to \$2.67, \$4.39, and \$2.02, respectively.) In general, the average cost of wholesale foods rose twelve percent in the fall of 1939, and retail prices generally shot up more than five percent at that time.<sup>472</sup>

In order to be prepared to fight the Second World War, the United States government instituted rationing and certain common foodstuffs became scarce, thereby radically changing Milwaukee's consumer habits. During the Depression, most food items were commonly found in stores, although many consumers could not afford to buy them. With rationing and scarcity, many popular items like meat, butter, coffee, cheese, preserved fruit products, and canned goods were harder to find on the legitimate market, though the black market was a different matter. Food stores were required to conform to the dictates of the Office of Price Administration (OPA). Dealers who took in more than their rationed amounts of food were prevented from making further purchases until they proved that they conformed to OPA standards.<sup>473</sup> Many consumers were frustrated by the new age of scarcity, but they were compelled to count their ration points and use rationed items sparingly. Consumers followed the rules out of necessity and duty, but their patriotism was often tinged with bitterness over inefficient government policies and annoying scarcity.

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<sup>472</sup> "Boom in Food Prices Trailing Off to Whisper," The Milwaukee Journal, 4 March 1940, sec. L, 1.

<sup>473</sup> "Three Suspended on Ration Charges," The Milwaukee Journal, 3 January 1945, sec. M, 3.

Before wartime rationing set in, some consumers sought to make sure that they never went without certain types of food by hoarding staple items. The government and newspapers sent out messages warning people to avoid hoarding. Excessive purchases would deplete supplies of staple items, leading to scarcity, and precipitating the need for rationing before it was absolutely necessary. Not only that, but hoarding was often a waste of money, since people who bought hundreds of pounds of flour, sugar, rice, or coffee might lose their entire investment if their supplies spoiled. Even if people securely preserved their hoarded supplies, they might still be unable to enjoy all of their bounty. In one infamous case, one Milwaukee woman collected 1,200 pounds of sugar during World War I, at the rate of twenty-one cents per pound. She was still cooking with her hoarded supply at the start of America's entrance into the Second World War, when ten pounds of sugar cost only sixty-nine cents.<sup>474</sup> (Twenty-one cents in 1918 equals \$3.03 in 2010, and \$0.69 in 1941 comes to \$10.24 in 2010.) Sugar, therefore, cost three times as much in 1918 than in 1941.

Meat rationing started on October 1, 1942. On the same day, limits on tires, automobile speed, and home heating also began to be enforced. These restrictions were not enforced over the entire United States at this time, but the state governments of thirty states, one of which was Wisconsin, plus Washington D.C, agreed to institute rationing then. Starting in October 1942, meat packers provided Milwaukee's meat sellers with less of their product, so that more could be sent to the nation's armed forces. The packers sent out twenty percent less

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<sup>474</sup> "Stop Hoarding, Tip to Buyers," The Milwaukee Journal, 11 January 1942, sec. M, 1.

beef and veal than they distributed one year earlier, five percent less lamb and mutton, and twenty-five percent less pork. Claude R. Wickard, Secretary of Agriculture, developed the plan. At this time, the nation's meat consumption was nearly at an all-time high.<sup>475</sup>

Initially, meat rationing was not strictly enforced. Ration books, coupons, and legal limitations on purchases were not imposed until later. The force of the law did not back the limitations on meat, since at this point the government had not yet invoked the authority to compel citizens to buy no more than a certain amount, and there was no one making sure that consumers were obeying the suggested restrictions. Under the requested guidelines, families were only supposed to buy a maximum of two and a half pounds of meat for each omnivore in the family per week. Vegetarians were not counted in the family total. For example, a family of four where one person was a vegetarian was expected to buy no more than seven and a half pounds of meat a week. The vegetarian family member could not be used to raise the family's weekly purchase to ten pounds, with the extra two and a half pounds presumably being split amongst the three people who did enjoy meat. The federal government figured that this would mean a noticeable reduction in meat consumption, but consumers would hopefully not feel deprived. Government calculations determined that if consumers ate two and a half pounds of meat weekly, that would result in the average person eating only a single pound of meat less than normal, since citizens were estimated to eat half a pound of meat each day. Using those numbers, the average American consumer

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<sup>475</sup> "Wartime Cuts Meat and Heat," The Milwaukee Journal, 1 October 1942, sec. M, 10.



could eat a maximum of one hundred thirty pounds of meat per year under this rationing system, which was only slightly less than the pre-war meat consumption average of one hundred thirty-one pounds per year, but that meant a savings of millions of pounds of meat each year when the entire nation was under rationing. Of course, one hundred thirty-one pounds was an average, many consumers ate much less than this prior to the war, and people who normally consumed lots of meat were forced to make do with less. These numbers reflect purchases and may not include meat obtained through hunting. In any case, butchers had no power to prevent shoppers from exceeding the imposed limits, with butcher G.M. Becker declaring that, “We can’t stand policeman over our customers.”<sup>476</sup>

Shoppers who could not convince a butcher to provide them which additional meat could simply visit another store and buy extra meat there. Additionally, butchers had no way of knowing how many people lived in a household, and how many of them were regular meat-eaters. After ten days of the rationing honor system, some of Milwaukee’s butchers claimed that there was no noticeable decrease in meat sales. There was, however, a marked change in the meat that was available for sale. Eighty percent of the lower-grade meat used for hamburger and cube steak was taken by the government, canned, and sent overseas to the troops. Therefore, consumers who wished to buy hamburger had

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<sup>476</sup> “Meat Buyers on Their Honor,” The Milwaukee Journal, 4 October 1942, sec. A, 4.

to get have higher quality cuts of beef ground, and the cost of the hamburger increased correspondingly.<sup>477</sup>

Stricter rationing followed, and consumers had to carefully count their ration points when buying meat. By May of 1944, the OPA changed their policy and removed all rationing restrictions on meat, with the exception of beefsteaks and beef roasts, although flank steaks were no longer rationed. On the first day of the new rules, women stormed the stores and bought large quantities of meat. One meat store manager calculated that his morning sales were five times their normal rate that day. Once the limitations were repealed, the *Journal* wrote that “It was hard to tell who was happiest– the butchers or the customers... “What a relief!” one butcher commented. “All of those points were rapidly driving me crazy.”<sup>478</sup> Soon, however, some female consumers voiced their dissatisfaction with the new system, since the better cuts of beef were harder to obtain with the revised “red points” program. The result of some customers buying up ration-free beef and leaving little for their peers was an exacerbation of the beef shortage. Other kinds of meat were plentiful. The federal government’s goal in instituting this new policy was to turn consumers towards the more widely available meat alternatives to beef, and they did so by making the other meats more economical. The ultimate result of relaxing meat rationing was to drain the existing beef

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<sup>477</sup> “Little Change in Meat Eating,” The Milwaukee Journal, 11 October 1942, sec. II, 1.

<sup>478</sup> “Happy Housewives Rushing to Buy Ration Free Meats,” The Milwaukee Journal, 4 May 1944, sec. M, 4.

supply and compel women (once again, most meat shoppers were female) to turn to alternatives, like lamb and pork.<sup>479</sup>

Milwaukee had a reputation for adherence to government rationing regulations. During the First World War, pledge cards were distributed. The pledge in question required women to be economical in their food purchases, producing as little waste as possible and adhering to the government's guidelines and regulations. An estimated eighty percent of Milwaukee County's housewives signed these pledge cards, and displayed them in windows in order to encourage other women to behave similarly.<sup>480</sup>

On January 3, 1943, the Wisconsin Branch of the Office of War Information released a memo on the "ABC's" of rationing. This memo consisted of a series of twenty-six paragraphs, each discussing items connected to the letter in question that had been affected by rationing. For example, under "A," it was stated that alcohol was now being used for military purposes, and therefore shoppers had to cope with restricted supplies of many popular alcoholic beverages. The "B" paragraph explained that bananas were now nearly impossible to find, since shipping boats that once traveled to Latin America were now requisitioned for the war effort, thereby wiping out banana imports. As for

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<sup>479</sup> "Housewives Complain Ration Plan Blocks Beef Purchases," The Milwaukee Journal, 5 May 1944, sec. M, 5.

<sup>480</sup> Erika Janik, "Food Will Win the War: Food Conservation in World War I Wisconsin," Wisconsin Magazine of History 93, no. 3 (Spring, 2010): 24.

“C,” coffee, cream, and chocolate were all now in short supply, and cellophane was now too valuable to be used as a disposable food wrapper.<sup>481</sup>

R.E. Patzig’s research provides some very useful statistics regarding how a limited food supply affected Milwaukee’s food consumption options. Patzig’s article illustrates how the total number of food store licenses in Milwaukee declined from 1940 to 1943. In 1940, before America’s entrance into the war, 4,796 retail food store licenses were issued in Milwaukee. By 1943, the third year of American involvement in the war, the number of licenses had dwindled to 3,683. This was a decrease of 1,113 licenses, or a 23.2% total decrease. Patzig’s study covered five additional Midwestern cities (Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, and Minneapolis), and all five cities witnessed a substantial decrease in food store licenses being issued over the time period, at an average 21.3% reduction, placing Milwaukee’s rate of decrease as slightly larger than that of the regional average. Notably, in each of the six cities studied, the number of food stores that closed increased dramatically with each successive year of war.<sup>482</sup> Even the city’s most respected and prominent establishments were not immune to the ravages of the Depression and wartime, as the aforementioned story of the fall of Steinmeyer’s illustrates.

War and rationing radically altered the ways that Milwaukeeans bought their food. With many people still in uncomfortable financial straits due to the

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<sup>481</sup> United States Office of War Information War Production Board, News Releases– War Production Board, Wisconsin Branch (August–December 1942), January 3, 1943.

<sup>482</sup> R. E. Patzig, “The Effect of the War on Retail Food Outlets,” The Journal of Marketing 9, no. 2 (October, 1944): 110.

Depression, numerous citizens relied on charity and government relief in order to make ends meet. By 1942, 38,300 residents of Milwaukee relied on the food stamp system. There were different kinds of stamps— some people on public assistance could use some of their relief money in order to buy orange stamps for food, and Milwaukeeans who received certain kinds of financial relief could be given as much as half of their estimated family food budget in blue stamps. An estimated \$70,000 in blue stamps was distributed monthly in Milwaukee County (\$969,358.28 in 2010 money).<sup>483</sup> The stamps could be used for buying whatever food items one wanted at all area food stores. Grocery store owners would receive the full cash value of the stamps when they turned them in to the federal government.<sup>484</sup>

Not all groceries were bought indoors. Local farmers brought their fruits, vegetables, and other foodstuffs to the “green markets,” so called because they were located on grassy areas in the middle of the city. These public markets had been existence since the city’s founding, and in the 1940’s Milwaukeeans could still buy food there. There were five municipal green markets in Milwaukee in 1943.<sup>485</sup> At this time, the green markets had to conform to the wartime regulations and restrictions that had been set by the Office of Price Administration (OPA). In August 1943, Milwaukee’s Acting Mayor ordered reports in order to ascertain that that the markets did not violate the OPA’s price ceilings. Upon

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<sup>483</sup> “Food Stamps Win Approval,” The Milwaukee Journal, 2 January 1942, sec. A, 1; [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>485</sup> Harry H. Anderson, “Milwaukee’s Green Markets in 1943,” Milwaukee History 17 no. 1 (Spring, 1994): 26-27.

review, all five of the city's green markets, (the Center Street Market, the Central Market, the East North Avenue Market, the Fond du Lac Market, and the National Avenue Market) were found to be completely free of "price-gouging" and were in full compliance with government regulations.<sup>486</sup> Consumers may have gone to the markets looking for a bargain, but they were also wary of food that was too inexpensive. Sweet corn met the OPA's guidelines when it was sold at the National Avenue Market for between thirty and thirty-five cents for a dozen ears. (Converting from 1943 to 2010 values, these prices equate to \$3.78 and \$4.41.) Buyers and sellers alike agreed that, "if it sold for less, there must be something wrong with it."<sup>487</sup>

The green markets often served as locations where farmers could act as independent wholesalers. The Central Market on N. 5<sup>th</sup> and W. Vliet Streets catered overwhelmingly to grocery store owners, selling ninety percent of their produce to businesses. The remaining ten percent were sold to ordinary consumers, who were able to buy produce at prices that were a little cheaper than most nearby stores. Eggs and poultry were also sold at the Central Market, where private individuals purchased them exclusively for home use.<sup>488</sup>

Even though many people were living under straitened circumstances, there were still concerns over the quality of the food being sold. In 1940, the sale of stale bread shipped to a location different from where it was originally baked,

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 26-29. In August 1943, Milwaukee's Acting Mayor was Matt P. Mueller, an alderman who served a two-week stint in the position when Acting Mayor John Bohn took a short summer vacation.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid., 27.

or “bobtailing,” was a growing concern. “Bobtailing” got its name because purveyors of old bread tended to carry the bread in vehicles with small trailers attached, and the trailers were thought to look like the tail of a bobcat. Bakers who participated in bobtailing could recoup some potential losses from unsold merchandise. The bread, which might be as little as one day to as much as several days old, was sold wherever there were buyers, possibly in a shop, possibly on the street. This practice was perfectly legal as long as the bread was clearly identified as “not fresh,” but local bakers loathed bobtailing because it siphoned away sales from their own freshly baked bread. Tensions were so high amongst the members of the Wisconsin Baker’s Association that for a while there were threats of a “bread war” between Milwaukee and the Fox Valley, with the latter threatening to flood the former with cheap stale bread due to their own lost business. The matter went into arbitration to cool down the hostility.<sup>489</sup> Despite bobtailed bread being less fresh, its cheapness led to a high consumer demand for it— the average loaf of bobtailed bread only cost two or three cents in 1940, (comparable to thirty-one to forty-seven cents in 2010).<sup>490</sup>

The war affected home delivery as well. Some wholesale bakeries delivered freshly baked bread to homes during the early twentieth century, but wartime scarcity meant that gasoline, rubber tires, oil, and vehicle parts were increasingly hard to obtain, so in 1942 Milwaukee’s bakeries cut back dramatically on deliveries. Milk deliveries were similarly affected, with some

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<sup>489</sup> “‘Bread War’ Threatened, Parley is Held for Peace,” The Milwaukee Journal, 6 January 1940, sec. A, 1.

<sup>490</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

delivery routes being combined or cut, and many gasoline-powered delivery vehicles were replaced with horse-drawn carts.<sup>491</sup>

While Milwaukee did have a reputation for following the rationing rules, there were exceptions. Like most major metropolitan areas, Milwaukee had a thriving black market, although the exact extent of the illegal activity is impossible to gauge due to the absence of records. Sugar rationing made candy prices rise sharply. Some candy stores were driven out of business. Consumers were forced to pay more for sweets, and the price of penny candy doubled. Candy was one of the few black market items that children bought frequently, for purchasing meat, alcohol, and other rationed delicacies illegally was almost exclusively an adult vice. The bulk of the candy black market did not take place in dark alleys or out of the backs of vans, as the popular imagination might suppose. Black market candy was often sold in ordinary sweet shops, generally on the normal shelves. The owners broke the regulations in multiple ways, such as buying the candy below the regulated price, selling it above the regulated price, or by falsifying their records by misreporting the amount of candy they kept in stock or sold to customers. In retaliation, the OPA brought lawsuits against selected distributors and sellers who violated the rules. The OPA stated that ninety percent of the candy stores in Milwaukee that they investigated broke the rules of rationing.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> “Wholesale Bakeries Cut Deliveries to Save on Tires,” The Milwaukee Journal, 8 January 1942, sec. A, 1.

<sup>492</sup> “Candy Black Market Probed; Five Named,” The Milwaukee Journal, 8 May 1944, sec. A, 1, 8.



While Milwaukee's consumers largely understood the need for rationing, the OPA and its rules were not popular. Indeed, the OPA's ever-changing rules and the seemingly arbitrary nature of their decisions led to friction between the OPA and Milwaukee's consumers. By the end of the war, the OPA had changed its standards multiple times. Initially, ration points were as imperishable as cash, but in 1944 the OPA cancelled many ration points out of fear that the consumers that had accumulated a large supply of extra points might use them all at once, thereby making already limited food items even more rare for the average consumer. Elmer Byers, editorializing in the *Marion Advertiser* (Marion is a small town in central Wisconsin), wrote that:

“The patriotic woman who was trying to be thrifty with her ration points and bought only what she needed... was the loser when the OPA clamped down on ration points. She found herself with her pocketbook full of worthless points and her pantry shelf empty. Whereas, her “piggy” neighbor who went out and used up all her points as fast as they became due, now has her larder stocked up, and this is just what the OPA had been trying to discourage. But the women were told these ration points were food “indefinitely.”<sup>493</sup>

Not everybody was upset with the OPA's changing policies. Myer Eglash, a grocer with a shop on Milwaukee's 14<sup>th</sup> Street, defended the OPA and vented frustration at his ever-demanding customers, writing in a January 1945 letter to the *Journal* that “At present there is an abnormal shortage of canned goods, sugar, butter and of course cigarets [sic]. Yet the people blame the OPA

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<sup>493</sup> Elmer Byers, “A Fair Criticism of OPA,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 4 January 1945, sec. M, 18.

for canceling unused ration stamps! One thing is certain and that is this: The OPA will take care so that nobody will go hungry.”<sup>494</sup>

In contrast, some groups of consumers banded together in an attempt to persuade the OPA to reevaluate its policies in ways that would be more helpful to the average consumer’s budget. On January 7, 1946, the Milwaukee Woman’s Club board sent a letter to the OPA’s director, Chester Bowles. The note asked that, “something be done to relieve the butter shortage,” citing Governor Goodland’s belief that the “OPA was responsible for the situation.”<sup>495</sup> The Milwaukee Woman’s Club asked the OPA to choose one of the Governor’s three suggested solutions to the expensive butter problem:

“That the OPA establish such prices on butter that it might compete on the open market with other dairy products.  
That the OPA re-establish cream ceiling prices.  
That the OPA lift ceiling prices on all dairy products.”<sup>496</sup>

Ross A. Lewis, the *Journal*’s Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist, drew a cartoon on the subject, criticizing the OPA for its inaction on keeping butter prices down. In the cartoon, a butter churn has a note next to its handle, reading “Action to Spur Butter Making.” Next to the churn is a woman wearing an apron with the letters “OPA” on it. The woman sits in her chair, doing nothing, staring at her hands in her lap. The caption reads: “You Have to Work

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<sup>494</sup> Myer Eglash, “Grocer and His Troubles,” The Milwaukee Journal, 6 January 1945, sec. M, 8.

<sup>495</sup> “Butter Complaint to OPA Voted,” The Milwaukee Journal, 8 January 1946, sec. L, 4.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

the Handle to Get Results.”<sup>497</sup> The cartoon attacks the OPA for having the ability to make butter more economical for the average consumer, but not exercising this power. The debate over the OPA’s efficiency and effectiveness continued throughout the war, and the arguments about the OPA often split the populace into two groups, one of which generally consisted of people who supported OPA and believed that the government knew what it was doing for the good of the country, the other claiming that the OPA failed to craft its policies in a way that looked out for the best interests of the ordinary consumer on a budget. This controversy extended throughout the United States, not just in Milwaukee. In celebrated mystery writer Rex Stout’s 1946 novel *The Silent Speaker*, the OPA was fictionalized and satirized as the Bureau of Price Regulation (BPR), an obtrusive government organization, filled with incompetence and corruption. Despite the controversies, the OPA survived the war and continued for a couple of years after peace came.

When WWII ended, peace did not immediately bring about the days of plenty. Rationing officially ended in 1946, although OPA’s attempts to control the food supply and prices left many staple foods scarce and expensive. The OPA was finally dissolved in June of 1947, though the price controls it instituted lingered for a while, thereby straining many people’s food budgets.<sup>498</sup> Concerned consumers used various tactics to draw attention to the price problems. In 1948, Milwaukee housewife Mrs. Laverne Edwards, a twenty-five year-old mother of

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<sup>497</sup> Ross A. Lewis, “You Have to Work the Handle to Get Results,” The Milwaukee Journal, 9 January 1946, sec. M, 1.

<sup>498</sup> “OPA Death Sentence in June, 1947, Drafted,” The Milwaukee Journal, 3 April 1946, sec. M, 3.

two (with a third expected soon), was inspired to protest what she saw as unfairly high meat prices after learning of demonstrations for that purpose in the nearby city of Kenosha, and further away in Texas. Ray Edwards, Laverne Edwards' husband, worked as a laborer and earned ninety dollars for a sixty-hour workweek.<sup>499</sup> (This equates to \$814.32 in 2010 after inflation.)<sup>500</sup> At that time, a week's worth of meat for meals for a family that size came to about twelve dollars, or \$108.58 after inflation.<sup>501</sup> In an attempt to generate publicity and bring down the cost of meat, Mrs. Edwards telephoned about four dozen women over the course of three days, asking each of them to join her in refusing to buy meat for two weeks in the hopes of drawing attention to the problem and convincing sellers to lower costs. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and Mrs. Edwards decided to find a more efficient means of publicizing her boycott. She telephoned three women's club presidents, but they had no intention of spreading the word to their fellow club members. One found the idea too controversial, another denied that the cost of meat was too high, and the last was unimpressed by the plan. Mrs. Edwards was undaunted and was determined to continue the project, saying that, "I'm just a housewife. It took a lot of mustering of my nerve to start something like this because I'm not ordinarily aggressive but I'm going to continue to keep calling others even if the clubwomen don't want to help me."<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> "Clubwomen Shun Mother's Crusade on Price of Meat," The Milwaukee Journal, 6 August 1948, sec. L, 1.

<sup>500</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>501</sup> "Clubwomen Shun Mother's Crusade on Price of Meat," The Milwaukee Journal, 6 August 1948, sec. L, 1 and

[http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

The *Journal* interviewed some local butchers (who requested anonymity) while investigating the rising cost of meat. In one article, one reporter wrote, “In the war between the housewife and the high cost of living the butchers claim they’re playing the role of the innocent bystander who inevitably gets it in the neck.”<sup>503</sup> The butchers, after all, had to purchase their meat from wholesalers. The price of wholesale meat was going through the roof due to factors such as rising labor fees and supply limitations, and the butchers had to tack on their own additional costs in order to make enough of a profit to survive themselves. One butcher from Stein’s Market on 7<sup>th</sup> Street noted that the wholesale price of pork loins was up to seventy cents per pound. In order to make enough money to stay in business, a butcher would have to sell those same pork loins for ninety-four or ninety-five cents per pound, a mark-up of approximately thirty-four to thirty-six percent. (Seventy cents in 1948 equals \$6.33 in 2010, and ninety-four and ninety-five cents are \$8.51 and \$8.60 after inflation between the same time periods.)<sup>504</sup> The vast majority of consumers could not afford to eat pork regularly at those rates.<sup>505</sup>

One butcher explained that his clientele was ninety percent black, and that “They’re making good wages in industry, but they have big families. They can’t afford these prices. Some of my regular customers haven’t bought meat in two weeks. They’re eating spaghetti and potatoes and things like that... My sales

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<sup>503</sup> “Butchers Say Profits Sliced by High Prices,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 8 August 1948, sec. L, 1.

<sup>504</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>505</sup> “Butchers Say Profits Sliced by High Prices,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 8 August 1948, sec. L, 1.

volume is down two-thirds. There's a buyer's strike, all right."<sup>506</sup> Another butcher acknowledged that his customers either could not or would not buy as much meat as they used to before prices rose. Hamburger, which had risen to sixty-five cents per pound (a staggeringly high price for the time), was still popular. (After inflation, hamburger would have been \$5.88 in 2010.)<sup>507</sup> Nonetheless, one anonymous butcher observed that when people did purchase meat, they spent it on the better quality cuts, eschewing the cheaper and inferior portions. Even low-grade meat had tripled in price.<sup>508</sup> The butchers acknowledged that meat was getting much too expensive, but the individual meat seller had no power to lower prices, and any attempt to address the problem themselves would only lead to their own bankruptcy with no impact on the wider problem. Meat prices would eventually fall with increased availability of product, but the cost of meat would be an ongoing problem for consumers on a budget for years to come.

Wartime regulations and restrictions faded away in peacetime, and the Korean War was the last time the government exercised a widespread program of price control and scarcity over food. Consumers were always looking for a good deal, but they were not the only ones with an eye on food prices. Although the OPA had ceased to exist a couple of years after the end of WWII, the start of the Korean War led to the Office of Price Stabilization (OPS). Though the Korean War effort was not as wide-ranging as that of WWII, the OPS made its present

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>507</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>508</sup> "Butchers Say Profits Sliced by High Prices," The Milwaukee Journal, 8 August 1948, sec. L, 1.

felt not through ration books but through its efforts to control prices on foodstuffs. Other than regulating the cost of food, the OPS had to assure that food dealers were complying with regulations. In 1952, the OPS warned Milwaukee's meat markets to be wary of a multi-million-dollar "meat 'racket.'" The OPS ordered meat packers to keep the fat surrounding pork loins to be no more than a half-inch in thickness, a regulation that the American Meat Institute argued was an unnecessary waste of time and effort. Retailers argued that an improperly trimmed pork loin would mean that the wholesale price of the meat would be inflated due to the additional fat, which the butcher would have to trim and throw away if customers did not buy the surplus fat for cooking purposes. An extra pound of fat on an eleven-pound pork loin, for example, which could accrue from a full inch of fat lining the pork loin instead of merely a half-inch, could wipe out a butcher's profit on the rest of the loin. The Milwaukee Retail Meat Dealers' Association and the Milwaukee Meat Council had petitioned the OPS to look into the matter. After a sting covering over one hundred meat stores, the OPS found just four improperly trimmed pork loins, which were then bought by the OPS to be used as evidence in any potential trial against the meat packers.<sup>509</sup> Issues like these mattered to the average consumer, because if butchers were forced to raise their prices on account of lost profits due to improperly trimmed meat, the deficit might be passed on to the customer. The end of the Korean War brought an end to these government regulations.

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<sup>509</sup> "OPS Uncovers Meat 'Racket,'" The Milwaukee Journal, 14 January 1952, Final Edition Cover Section, 1.

Despite the lengthy duration of the Vietnam War and later conflicts, there were no more ration books or government-imposed limitations. With the advent of new and highly effective agricultural developments and farming methods (such as the Green Revolution directed by Norman Borlaug which revolutionized wheat production), food abundance soared. Faster transport for foods has also made fruits and vegetables that are out-of-season in Milwaukee available year-round.

Once Korean War food scarcity vanished, a new day dawned for consumers. This marked the end of a long era. From the time when the Depression first hit Milwaukee, the city had wrestled with the pressures of scarcity, poverty, and rationing for over a decade and a half. Now that was gone, and the government no longer exercised the power to tell citizens how much of anything they could buy, and though poverty was still very much present in the city, the widespread hand-to-mouth existence endured by a significant minority of the populace had been alleviated by better economic times. Even the comfortably-off could not buy food without thinking of the thousands and thousands of fellow Milwaukeeans going hungry, and worrying that a few misfortunes could leave them amongst the ranks of the indigent. For consumers who were adults throughout that lengthy period, shaking off the shackles of the bust times and the war years meant a dramatic change of mindset.

Consumers no longer had to shop with the plight of the nation in mind, or thoughts about shared sacrifice for the sake of the nation and the free world. Some politically or socially active shoppers might have bought food thinking of boycotts and broader concerns, but such thoughts were a consumer's choice, not a



mandatory mentality forced upon them by social upheaval or governmental influence.

### ***THE POSTWAR ERA– THE AGE OF THE SUPERMARKET DAWNS***

During the postwar years, the number of supermarkets in Milwaukee increased, though small grocery stores slowly closed. Chains, often based outside of Wisconsin, began to drive small, locally owned stores out of business. Donald George Leeseberg compiled extensive statistics on food stores in the postwar era. There were sixty-nine chain grocery stores made up of eight different chains in Milwaukee in 1954, if the Kohls Bake Shops, Kohls Fruit Stores, and Kohls Supermarkets are considered separate chains. The largest chains were A&P, which had twenty-seven supermarkets and nine food markets, and National Food Stores, which had fourteen shops in Milwaukee. Five years later, in 1959, there were two new chains in the city and the only Kohls Fruit Store had closed. Out of one hundred nine chain stores in Milwaukee in 1959, the A&P corporation had thirty-six supermarkets and ten food markets, Kohls had seventeen supermarkets and one bakeshop, National Food Stores had fifteen markets, and Krambo had fourteen stores.<sup>510</sup>

Leeseberg's definition of "supermarket" is taken from Charles F. Phillips and Delbert J. Duncan's book *Marketing: Principles and Methods*, which describes a supermarket as "a departmentalized retail store having annual sales of

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<sup>510</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 269. For more statistical information, see Appendix B.

\$500,000 or more in a variety of merchandise and in which the sale of food, much of which is on a self-service basis, plays the major role.”<sup>511</sup> During this time, dozens of stores made more than enough money to meet the earnings aspect of a supermarket. As small stores around the city closed, newer and bigger stores enjoyed rising profits.

Kohl’s was a particularly successful chain. Max Kohl built his first supermarket on West Burleigh Street, and the 13,000 square foot facility dwarfed the city’s other grocery stores when it first opened in 1946 on the West Side, though early twenty-first century supermarkets can be at least three times larger than the Burleigh Street store. The size was not the only factor that made it a “modern” supermarket. The supermarket was equipped with meat, deli, and bakery sections, long before such departments were common in supermarkets. Kohl’s first supermarket stayed in business until 2002, when A&P, which had acquired the Kohl’s food stores in 1983, closed down and sold the Kohl’s stores in Milwaukee. The building was purchased by the Martin family, the proprietors of the locally based Lena’s Food Market supermarket chain, which had several stores throughout the middle of Milwaukee, many of which were located in buildings that used to be Kohl’s food stores. Lena’s was named after the wife of Bezelee Martin, the owner of the first Lena’s supermarket. Lena’s customer base tends to be predominately African-American.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>512</sup> Tom Daykin, “1<sup>st</sup> Kohl’s supermarket to be next Lena’s,” The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 14 June 2002, sec. D, 2.

While the aforementioned Kohl's professed to be Milwaukee's first modern supermarket, this may be a matter of definition. The 1939 Census defined a supermarket as a business selling over \$100,000 of food annually through self-service.<sup>513</sup> Using the Census's definition, there were seven supermarkets in Milwaukee by 1939.<sup>514</sup> (\$100,000 in 1939 equals \$1,568,748.20 in 2010.)<sup>515</sup> These supermarkets were comparably small, and most lacked their own delis, meat, fish, and bakery departments. The 1946 Kohl's was Milwaukee's first supermarket to resemble a contemporary supermarket in layout and design (although it was considerably smaller than twenty-first century supermarkets), whereas the other businesses that fit the Census's definition in the late 1939's more closely resembled the small stores.

As the age of the supermarket dawned, food continued to be serious business in Milwaukee. In 1948, approximately \$196,480,000 worth of food was purchased in the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area. Six years later, in 1954, the amount was up to about \$266,246,000, a 35.5% increase.<sup>516</sup> (Adjusted for inflation, in 2010 money Milwaukee spent \$1,777,744,520 in 1948 and \$2,158,235,610 in 1954.)<sup>517</sup> While the amount of money Milwaukeeans spent on food increased during this time, the number of places where residents could buy their groceries decreased. From 1948 to 1954, the number of food stores in

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<sup>513</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 114.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>515</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>516</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 371.

<sup>517</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

Milwaukee saw a 13.2% reduction from 2,352 to 2,041.<sup>518</sup> Despite the rise of the supermarkets, there were still many smaller stores in business, though their size naturally meant that their revenue could not compare with that of the supermarkets. In 1948 the average food store in the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area annually sold \$83,537 worth of goods. By 1954 that number had risen 56.2% to \$130,449.<sup>519</sup> (\$83,537 in 1948 equates to \$755,840.00 in 2010, and \$130,449 in 1954 becomes \$1,057,441.90 in 2010 after inflation.)<sup>520</sup> Milwaukeeans were both buying more food and more expensive food. One reason for this was increased income allowed people to indulge their desire to eat better. Another is the fact that citizens were beginning to stockpile items for various purposes.

During the 1950's, Milwaukee's food shoppers were advised to shop for more than their daily meals. The threat of nuclear war weighed heavily on many minds, though harsh weather and serious natural disasters were much more likely potential threats. Since an atomic bomb attack, or a severe blizzard, flood, or tornado could potentially leave people stranded or incapable of buying provisions; citizens were advised to keep a supply of emergency rations on hand in case the worst happened. In 1959, the Milwaukee Health Department published a booklet titled *Your Survival Kit– Food and Equipment for Emergency Living*. *Your Survival Kit* advised Milwaukeeans to keep several days worth of long-lasting,

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<sup>518</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 373.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>520</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). For more information, see Appendix B.

high-nutrition food in a clean, dry, secure place.<sup>521</sup> Therefore, people were encouraged to create an emergency pantry stocked with items such as baby cereals, raisins, dehydrated soups, instant pudding, canned meat, dry milk, cocoa, instant coffee, biscuit mix, sugar, shortening, nuts and hard candy.<sup>522</sup> A supply of potable water was also crucial, though in the days before the ubiquity of bottled water, this was generally obtained by using a faucet to fill sealable containers.

By following the menus provided in the booklet, citizens could receive adequate nourishment (at least for several days) for an average cost of thirty-two cents a day.<sup>523</sup> (This equates to \$2.40 in 2010 money.)<sup>524</sup> The caloric amount of the prescribed meals was supposedly sufficient for people who were basically just sitting around a the house waiting for the weather to clear, (or in the event of a nuclear war, a basement room or bomb shelter waiting for the danger to pass), but it was almost certainly far less than the 1949 national average of 3,186 calories consumed daily.<sup>525</sup> It is unknown how many Milwaukeeans actually stocked their own emergency food pantry, or how many people followed the city's guidelines. In any case, the worst fears of nuclear war thankfully never materialized, but every few winters, some Milwaukeeans might have been unable to leave the

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<sup>521</sup> Milwaukee (Wis.) Health Department, Your Survival Kit: Food and Equipment for Emergency Living— Prepared by the Milwaukee Health Dept. for the Milwaukee Civil Defense Administration (Milwaukee, Wis.: The Dept., 1959), 3.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>524</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>525</sup> David M. Potter, People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), 83.

house during a heavy snowstorm. Therefore, citizens needed to have sufficient provisions on hand to wait out a blizzard.

Stockpiling food was possible thanks to food storage and preparation techniques, such as cans, which had been a consumer option since the nineteenth century. Packaging changed substantially over the years, and in the postwar era new options changed the way consumers bought certain items. Milk, which had long been stored primarily in glass bottles, began to be sold in paper cartons. The glass bottles traditionally were returned to the store after use in exchange for a small deposit. Food store employees welcomed the change because it meant fewer chances of broken glass, and less hassle from washing out bottles smelling of spoiled milk.<sup>526</sup> Consumers were not necessarily as fond of paper packaging. A November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1948 letter to the editor in the *Milwaukee Journal* expressed discontent at the shift to waxed paper containers:

#### **“Paper Milk Bottles**

To The Journal: I am against the paper cartons we are getting our milk in, and I wonder if other housewives share my views.

First of all, are they clean? They surely are supposed to be. I can't see through paper, so I don't know. I know glass bottles are sterilized, so they are clean.

Second, I never get all the milk out of the carton, so I feel I don't get the full quart. If I cut off the top of the carton, the milk that's left is full of wax, then we can't use the rest of the milk anyway.

Third, I notice that if I buy a carton of milk on Saturday, by Sunday the milk is sour, unless I pour it into glass. Then it remains sweet.

I always have to fish out specks of wax only from opening the cap of a waxed carton.

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<sup>526</sup> Paul Gilmore, “Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee’s Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984” (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 132.

I like milk in glass bottles. They are sterilized, so I know they are clean and safe.

The health department is so fussy about milk from the time it leaves the cow, then allows dairies to put the good clean milk in wax paper. I know cartons are easier to handle but I think our health should come first. How about this?

Mrs. A.C.B.  
Milwaukee<sup>527</sup>

Mrs. A.C.B.'s letter illustrates the concerns that the average consumer might have had regarding packaging. Her reasons for concern about waxed paper cartons were fourfold: safety, value, product purity, and preservation. From this letter, it is clear that Mrs. A.C.B. was not convinced that waxed paper packaging was sterile, even though she does not complain of any experiences with food poisoning from the new containers. The paper containers also required extra work, in Mrs. A.C.B.'s opinion, since the milk had to be transferred into a glass pitcher or bottle in order to last longer, and then the wax particles that had dislodged had to be skimmed from the surface of the milk before it was consumed. The disadvantages of waxed paper cartons were less apparent to the food stores, as they made for less work. Bottles broken inside the store meant a loss for grocers, so the stores had an added incentive to switch to more durable packaging. Unfortunately, some consumers were left disgruntled because they believed they were being sold an inferior– or at least less convenient– product.

Other issues with milk involved container size. In 1940, there were some restrictions limiting the amount of milk a household could receive for home delivery to a quart per day. Large families and other consumers who used lots of

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<sup>527</sup> Mrs. A.C.B., "Paper Milk Bottles," The Milwaukee Journal, 2 November 1948, sec. A, 18.

milk would be compelled to pick up additional supplies from grocery stores. Many consumers requested increased amounts of milk for home delivery, some requesting as much as a gallon daily. Milwaukee's council judiciary committee was open to this change, but after some consultation with dealers and consumers, a policy of only delivering larger milk orders in half-gallon containers was proposed, on the grounds that the average refrigerator was too small to hold a full gallon container, that full gallons might get stuck in some milk delivery chutes, that bigger containers would be harder for processors to clean and package, and that most housewives would have trouble lifting a full gallon of milk. Many consumers saw a monetary advantage in buying a full gallon of milk, since in 1940 buying milk by the gallon meant a slightly better deal than when buying by the quart.<sup>528</sup>

While consumers openly worried about the quality of the food they bought and the prices of their purchases, they often did not notice the care that went into crafting and designing supermarkets. At this time, new supermarkets were experimenting with stylistic and functional innovations in order to improve consumers' shopping experiences and to encourage patronage.

A great deal of thought and effort went into supermarket design. The civil engineers and architects who devised the new buildings had to take the interests of both the stores and the consumers into account. The designs were crafted to be both shopper-friendly while still addressing the interests of the supermarkets. One of the leading civil engineers who worked on supermarkets throughout

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<sup>528</sup> "Gallon Milk Plan Opposed," The Milwaukee Journal, 16 May 1940, sec. M, 22.



Wisconsin, Northern Illinois, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan was Edward Stanley Geniusz (pronounced “Genius”). During the early 1960’s, Geniusz traveled throughout the state for the purposes of remodeling and modernizing existing supermarkets, and for assisting in the creation of new stores. On an average year, Geniusz might add 100,000 miles to his automobile as he traveled from site to site. For decades, Geniusz worked at designing and improving supermarkets, first for A&P stores starting in the early 1940’s through 1958, and afterwards for Roundy’s.<sup>529</sup>

Geniusz ceased working for A&P for several reasons. One was A&P’s refusal to invest in its stores to make them up-to-date. When most of the other major supermarkets in the region installed conveyor belts in their check-out lines, A&P continued to use the old “box movers,” a clunky contraption where food items were placed in a horseshoe-shaped wooden box that was moved by the clerk pulling a lever. Often the clerk wore a uniform-issued protective work glove, and shoppers (especially those with young children) had to exercise caution to avoid getting fingers and clothing caught.<sup>530</sup>

In order to save money, A&P did not hire night crews for after-hours cleaning. As a result, many of their stores were only cleaned a little at a time during the day, so the stores were rarely cleaned thoroughly. This led to a dingy appearance that repelled many shoppers, resulting in a decline in sales and the chain’s subsequent demise in the area. Geniusz stressed that cleanliness would

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<sup>529</sup> Robert Geniusz, interview by Chris Chan, phone interview, June 29, 2011.

<sup>530</sup> Robert Geniusz, <RGeniusz@usmk12.org> “Hi!,” 22 June 2011, personal e-mail (22 June 2011).

boost sales, but the A&P executives refused to act on his advice.<sup>531</sup> A&P also had no interest in remodeling their traditional colonial motifs, which appeared increasingly antiquated when compared to the more spacious and more attractively designed new stores such as Kohl's and Krambo's.<sup>532</sup> Furthermore, A&P neglected to invest in newer, brighter lighting, further making their stores less palatable to consumers. A&P continued to lose customers throughout the postwar era, and by 1979 all of their Milwaukee stores operating under the A&P name had closed.<sup>533</sup>

Geniusz was often asked to make the same adjustments to existing supermarkets. Once refrigeration replaced the icebox, Geniusz was consistently called upon to assist in converting coolers (which had to be continually refilled with pieces of chopped-up ice throughout the day) into refrigerated cases. Often the original cooler was retained, and the proper refrigeration mechanism was installed. Working coolers were critical, especially for the fish and seafood department. The scent of fish is particularly distinctive, and it repulses many shoppers. As a result, most supermarkets position the fish and seafood department far away from the front door, often with ventilation close to it. One of A&P's favorite tactics for covering unpleasant scents was to place the coffee section adjacent to the front door. The aroma produced by constantly ground coffee camouflaged less attractive smells from other areas.

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<sup>531</sup> Robert Geniusz, telephone interview by Chris Chan, 29 June 2011.

<sup>532</sup> Robert Geniusz, <RGeniusz@usmk12.org> "Hi!," 20 June 2011, personal e-mail (20 June 2011).

<sup>533</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 235.

Layout was critical to the design of a successful store. Geniusz studied traffic patterns in stores in order to determine the most efficient and practical ways to arrange certain departments. One major way that new supermarkets were different from the older small stores is that many of the supermarkets were constructed with the knowledge that the future might bring a substantially different layout for the store. The old stores frequently had wooden shelves, many of which were fairly shallow and firmly fixed to the floor. Supermarkets generally used metal shelves, which were significantly broader than the old wooden shelves. This reflected both the supermarkets' ability to store more merchandise and the growing size of many packaged food items. These metal shelves were constructed so that they could be moved if needed, because supermarket owners knew that certain food departments, such as the refrigerated and frozen foods sections, would almost certainly be expanded at a future date.<sup>534</sup>

The freezers and refrigerators needed to be located in the same general place in the store, due in part to logistics regarding the wiring and compressor lines.<sup>535</sup> Frozen food as a consumer item was launched through the experiments of Clarence Birdseye in 1925, though it took years for frozen food to become a palatable consumer option, and food stores did not widely install freezers until after World War II.<sup>536</sup> Originally, freezers had solid, opaque doors until the invention of glass doors that would not fog up from the cold were invented. Zero Zone, a company based in southeastern Wisconsin, solved the problem by placing

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<sup>534</sup> Robert Geniusz, <RGeniusz@usmk12.org> "Hi!," 22 June 2011, personal e-mail (22 June 2011).

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> Frank J. Charvat, *Supermarketing* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 40.

thermopanes (two panes of glass with a thin gap between them that served as insulation) and defrosting coils in the door. The storage units used to keep food cool ironically produced a considerable amount of heat as a byproduct, which needed to be diverted elsewhere, otherwise the added temperature (and noise from the mechanisms) would have made customers uncomfortable. Geniusz solved the issue of excess heat by using the newly invented “heat pump” to place the coolers’ exterior compressors up on the roof, where the added heat could be used to warm the building in the winter, and would not overheat the store in warmer weather.<sup>537</sup>

When considering the placement of foodstuffs in the supermarket, Geniusz preferred to place the dairy department, refrigerated cases, and freezers towards the end of the customer’s circuit of the store (assuming the consumer started shopping near the front door), since perishable goods would not remain at full freshness for long without refrigeration, especially in hot weather. Dairy departments, incidentally, received much more attention and store space with the disappearance of home delivery for milk. Similarly, the end of small neighborhood bakeries delivering bread to people’s houses coincided with a rise in the development of supermarket bakeries, though supermarket bakeries almost never attained the reputation for quality that the best independent bakeries enjoyed.<sup>538</sup> In contrast to the refrigerated goods, bakeries could be located closer to the front door, because spoilage was not an issue and the scent of baked goods

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<sup>537</sup> Robert Geniusz, <RGeniusz@usmk12.org> “Hi!,” 22 June 2011, personal e-mail (22 June 2011).

<sup>538</sup> Robert Geniusz, <RGeniusz@usmk12.org> “Hi!,” 20 June 2011, personal e-mail (20 June 2011).

was pleasant. The location of the bakery was often discretionary, depending on the store.

The placement of certain items was important. One of Geniusz's leading innovations was his idea to have supermarkets store large, heavy bags of items, such as charcoal briquettes and salt, by the front door. This made it easier to carry out cumbersome items, yet the sheer size and weight of these bags prevented theft.<sup>539</sup> Designing the ideal supermarket also depended on the proper arrangements of merchandise on shelves. Geniusz advocated for placing the products with the best "eye appeal at eye level."<sup>540</sup> This policy meant that the most attractive items, such as cans and boxes with colorful pictures of food, would be located higher up where they were easier to see, whereas plain packaging with only words might be located closer to the ground. Testing and sales experience indicated that customers responded well to pictures.

While reactions to pictorial stimuli were an issue that affected supermarket shopping all over the nation, Wisconsin weather continued to be a factor that separated Milwaukee from other regions of America. Later in his career, when Geniusz was called upon to oversee the development of new supermarkets, he often had to make one important alteration: the location of the motorized sliding doors. All too often, automatic doors were located on the west side of the building, where the strong prevailing winds of southeastern Wisconsin often activated the mechanism and forced open the doors, and also prevented the doors

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<sup>539</sup> Robert Geniusz, telephone interview by Chris Chan, 29 June 2011.

<sup>540</sup> Robert Geniusz, <RGeniusz@usmk12.org> "Hi!," 22 June 2011, personal e-mail (22 June 2011).

from closing. Therefore, the position of the automated entry doors, which often affected the entire layout of the store, meant that the store often had to be rotated ninety or one hundred eighty degrees from the original plan.<sup>541</sup>

Geniusz's work also extended into the areas of a supermarket that most consumers never saw. Many grocery stores and supermarkets at the time lacked large storage rooms on the ground floor, so additional supplies were kept in the basement. The basement, being the coolest part of the building, was an ideal place to store certain foods before the advent of walk-in refrigerated rooms. The inherent problem of using the basement was the difficulty of transporting heavy or bulky items up and down the stairs. In order to solve this problem, Geniusz designed arrangements of conveyor belts and wheeled ramps to facilitate movement. These mechanisms grew less common as more supermarkets expanded to include back storage rooms on the ground level, or installed elevators.<sup>542</sup>

Geniusz was only one of many people who planned local supermarkets. Some of Milwaukee's new supermarkets gained national acclaim for design and layout. A Sentry Market on West Perkins Place was featured in a 1961 collection of profiles of notable new supermarkets throughout the United States. Designed as a prototype store by the Godfrey Company and featuring color design by Raymond Loewy, this Sentry Market was a self-described piece of modern

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<sup>541</sup> Robert Geniusz, telephone interview by Chris Chan, 29 June 2011.

<sup>542</sup> Robert Geniusz, <RGeniusz@usmk12.org> "Hi!," 22 June 2011, personal e-mail (22 June 2011).

architecture, patterned mainly in shades of aqua and turquoise, with white bands running throughout the store.<sup>543</sup>

The Sentry in question was built in a middle-class area, where the local homes were estimated at \$15,000 to \$25,000 each.<sup>544</sup> (Converting these sums to 2010 levels, the homes were worth between \$109,392.94 and \$182,321.07.)<sup>545</sup> Considerable effort was spent in trying to make this Sentry appear inviting and different from other supermarkets. As Calek observes, “Unusual lighting and extensive use of glass create an open, airy atmosphere in the checkout area. Recessed fluorescent lamps, shielded with acrylic plastic for greater diffusion, are used throughout the dropped perimeter ceiling.”<sup>546</sup> This illustrates how supermarket designers were aware of how properly used light could make the customers feel more comfortable, and therefore more inclined to shop there.

James Godfrey, the president of the designing firm for this Sentry, declared that,

“In designing our prototype market, we kept one point in mind— that we wanted to build a modern, attractive market for our shoppers... We want to up-grade our stores so that they reflect current shopping attitudes of Milwaukee citizens in the middle-income bracket. Too many of the markets in our area, particularly the large chains, lack personality; and, although many are located in middle and upper middle class neighborhoods, they appear to be designed for a lower-income group. Our new markets will overcome the store personality lag.”<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Thomas Calak, written and ed., Outstanding New Super Markets (New York: Progressive Grocer Magazine, 1961), 164. The store in question was located on the West Side of the city.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>545</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>546</sup> Thomas Calak, written and ed., Outstanding New Super Markets (New York: Progressive Grocer Magazine, 1961), 165.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

The idea expressed here, that a store ought to have personality, illustrates how the human factor affected the shopping experience. It was not enough for stores to be clean and convenient, they also had to be comfortable and inviting for shoppers to patronize them regularly. In the past, small grocery stores got their “personalities” from the people who ran them, who greeted familiar customers by name and worked with the consumer throughout the purchasing process. Comparatively, shoppers in supermarkets were generally left to their own devices unless they asked for help, and employee turnover meant that consumers rarely saw familiar faces during the shopping process. Store “personalities” in the postwar supermarket world came from interior decoration.

The following list explains some tactics that Godfrey used to make the supermarket palatable and convenient to the consumer, and to promote impulse purchases and expose the consumer to a wider variety of products.

- The store layout... has store traffic divided, with one entrance starting the customer on the service bakery and delicatessen side of the market and the other major entrance directing customers along the florist and produce side of the market.
- A grocery stock location plan in which impulse and demand items are scientifically mixed. For example, the candy section is located opposite cereals.
- An alternating pattern of 60 ft. long gondolas with 64 ft. long gondolas. Main advantage of this arrangement is that it permits customers, while turning down an aisle, to see two end gondola displays at one time.<sup>548</sup>

Calak cites some enthusiastic feedback from customers that was submitted to Ray Bailey, the Sentry’s manager. Some sample comments included the quips, ““I feel happy when I shop here. The store is so cheerful;” “This market always

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<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 166.



looks fresh and clean to me. Maybe it's the bright colors that do it;" and "Even if it's raining or snowing out, it seems to be light and gay inside the store."<sup>549</sup>

Logically, a business profits from having happy customers. Color and light can attract customers throughout the year, but they can be particularly important during Milwaukee's long, cold winter months. Gray skies and long stretches without sunlight often have a depressive effect upon the citizenry, so the supermarket's interior design might conceivably have had a cheering effect upon shoppers. By making the Sentry a place where customers could potentially get an emotional boost simply by being in the store, consumers would have added incentive to visit that particular supermarket. The weekly sales volume of this Sentry was \$30,000 in 1961, (or \$218,785.28 in 2010 after inflation).<sup>550</sup> The total store area was 22,440 square feet, including a 1,440 square-foot mezzanine. 13,420 square feet of the store was devoted to selling space. The average customer purchase was \$5.19. (In 2010, that would inflate to \$37.85.)<sup>551</sup> A nice store and good quality, affordable merchandise were reliable means of building a customer base. Often, however, stores introduced additional measures to make their business stand out from the alternatives.

One way that supermarkets attempted to attract more customers was through trading stamps. Different chains had different policies and types of stamps, but as a general rule the stamps all worked similarly. Consumers would

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<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 166. Of course, negative feedback would be unlikely to be reported in a book like this, so these comments are indicative only of those who liked the new store, and are not necessarily representative of all consumers.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid., 170. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>551</sup> Ibid., 170. [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). More information can be found in Appendix C.

receive a certain number of stamps depending on how much they bought, with extra stamps occasionally being given for shopping on certain days at particular times, or for purchasing special items. Shoppers could then save the stamps, often by pasting them into little booklets. Once sufficient stamps were collected, they could be exchanged for cash or premiums, such as cookware, flatware, or other household items. Some prizes were calculated to keep customers coming on a regular basis, such as encyclopedia sets consisting of multiple volumes, each one of which could be obtained for spending a certain amount at the store. A different volume would be offered each week, so customers would be encouraged to shop every week in order to obtain a complete set. A twenty-six-volume encyclopedia (one volume for each letter) could ensure that a supermarket could count on regular weekly customers for months, maybe even a year.<sup>552</sup> In any case, the vast majority of consumers who received trading stamps used them. The IRS calculated that an average of ninety-five percent of all trading stamps circulated to the general public found their way back to stores to be exchanged for assorted items.<sup>553</sup>

Studies of consumer buying patterns were not just conducted by the IRS. During the 1960's, several members of Milwaukee's academic community studied various aspects of the city's food consumption habits. These studies often relied upon original statistical research. Gordon E. Bivens's 1967 study provides

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<sup>552</sup> Robert Geniusz, <RGeniusz@usmk12.org> "Hi!," 24 June 2011, Personal e-mail (24 June 2011). Not all encyclopedia sets were twenty-six volumes, and some stores distributed the books biweekly, or offered shoppers a chance to purchase books from previous weeks.

<sup>553</sup> Daniel I. Padberg, *Economics of Food Retailing* (Ithaca, New York: Food Distribution Program—Cornell University, 1968), 147.

some useful information on the various benefits that the city's stores offered at that time, especially regarding the different amenities between large chain stores, small chains, and independent stores. For example, Bivens notes that in 1965 and 1966, all large chain stores cashed personal checks, compared to just 83% of small chain stores and independents. 40% of large chains accepted utility payments, versus 26% of small chains and independents. 54% of large chains issued trading stamps, whereas only 6% of small chains and independents used this practice. No large chains offered free delivery or extended credit, but 28% of small chains and independent stores did.<sup>554</sup>

In 1967, Ronald Walter Stampfl studied how newcomers to Milwaukee selected their food shopping venues. In "Supermarket Patronage Motives Among New Residents," Stampfl analyzed two hundred forty-nine questionnaires about food shopping habits from families who had recently moved to Milwaukee.<sup>555</sup>

In 1967, there were forty A&P supermarkets in Milwaukee, twenty-three National Food supermarkets, twenty-nine Kohl's, twenty-two Kroger's, ten Red Owls, twenty-one Sentry's supermarkets, and numerous others. Many of these chains first opened in southeastern Wisconsin during the postwar era. A&P and Kroger's, both longtime presences in Milwaukee, started as large grocery stores and expanded into full-fledged supermarkets during the post-war prosperity years.

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<sup>554</sup> Gordon E. Bivens, Food Price Competition in a Local Market: Milwaukee, A Case Study (University of Wisconsin: Milwaukee, 1967), no page numbers. For more statistical information, see Appendix D.

<sup>555</sup> Ronald W. Stampfl, Supermarket Patronage Motives Among New Residents (Seminar paper submitted in lieu of a M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1967), 3. Additional statistical information can be found in the appendices to this chapter.

Red Owl, a chain with Minnesota origins, first announced its plans to open a store at the Silver Spring Shopping Village in April of 1958, with more to follow soon afterwards.<sup>556</sup> Sentry's (also known as Sentry Foods), began as a product of the southeastern Wisconsin-based Godfrey Co. food wholesalers, who began converting existing supermarkets and building new stores in the mid-1950's and expanded rapidly in the early 1960's.<sup>557</sup>

Of the many chain supermarkets in Milwaukee, Kohl's was the most popular amongst Stampfl's respondents. When newcomers to Milwaukee selected the first supermarket they patronized, 32.1% of them selected a Kohl's. Despite the fact that A&P's were the most common supermarket in Milwaukee, only 10.8% of new Milwaukeeans selected an A&P for their first food shopping experience.<sup>558</sup> Nearly a third (33.2%) of respondents selected Kohl's as their favorite supermarket. 21.2% of those polled answered "other or combination of stores." National Food earned 9.6% of permanent patronage, Sentry 9.2%, A&P 7.2%, Kroger 6.4%, and Red Owl 2.8%.<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>556</sup> "Murphy Co. Chain to Open Store Here," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 24 April 1958, part 1, 6.

<sup>557</sup> Mildred Freese, "Sentry Told to Cut Prices," The Milwaukee Journal, 28 April 1972, part 1, 1. "Wholesaler Asks 138 Stores to Stop Cranberry Sales," The Milwaukee Journal, 10 November 1959, final edition, part 1, 1. The "Sentry" food business first appears in the 1953-1954 edition of Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory. (Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1953-1954, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1953-1954), 1101.)

<sup>558</sup> Ronald W. Stampfl, Supermarket Patronage Motives Among New Residents (Seminar paper submitted in lieu of a M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1967), 30. For more information, see Appendix D.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, 45. For more information, see Appendix D.

Stampfl's statistical research indicates that "convenience" was by far the primary reason why consumers selected their first shopping venue (51.0%), followed by "past experience with the chain" (24.8%).<sup>560</sup> Most new Milwaukeeans lived very close to their first food shopping location. 30.9% lived less than half a mile away from the first supermarket they visited, 28.9% lived half a mile to one mile away, and 19.6% lived one to two miles from their first supermarket experience.<sup>561</sup>

Consumers often visited multiple establishments before deciding upon their "regular" supermarket. 23.2% picked their primary supermarket after visiting just one store, 26.1% chose a supermarket after shopping at two stores, 26.1% after three, and 14.8% after visiting four supermarkets.<sup>562</sup>

Consumers had to travel to buy food once corner stores largely vanished. 18.6% of respondents lived less than a half-mile from their favorite supermarket, 31.7% lived between half a mile and one mile away, and 24.1% lived one to two miles away from their preferred store.<sup>563</sup> It should be noted that some respondents picked a supermarket based on proximity to their places of work, rather than their residences.

Although Stampfl uses terminology that implies that shoppers routinely used only one store, many consumers regularly patronized multiple supermarkets. About two-thirds of the respondents visited two or more stores on a regular basis. 34.9% routinely shopped at just one supermarket, 51.0% divided their loyalties

<sup>560</sup> Ibid., 31. For more information, see Appendix D.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid., 33. For more information, see Appendix D.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 42. For more information, see Appendix D.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid., 48. For more information, see Appendix D.

between two, 12.9% visited three, and the remaining 1.2% shopped at four or more.<sup>564</sup> Additionally, 60.6% of respondents bought food more than once a week.<sup>565</sup>

Stampfl's research indicates that the survey's respondents shopped throughout of the day, depending on their personal schedules. Large percentages of respondents shopped in the morning, afternoon, and evening hours.<sup>566</sup> Further polling illustrates that more than half of major shopping trips occurred on Fridays and Saturdays.<sup>567</sup> One reason for heavy shopping traffic on Fridays and Saturdays is that Friday was often payday, so many people may have put off buying food until they had the grocery money.<sup>568</sup>

Not mentioned in Stampfl's work is the fact that there is at least one important reason why so few respondents bought their food on Sunday. In many cases, it may have been impossible, since many stores were closed on Sunday. Certainly some stores were open then. A small grocery store mentioned in *Shopping in Grandma's Day* was open on Sundays, though Beverly Crawford, the daughter of the store's owners, notes that those hours were anomalous.<sup>569</sup> Additionally, in many circles there was considerable social pressure to not shop at all on the Sabbath. In 1957, approximately nine hundred delegates of the Milwaukee Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women unanimously agreed to

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<sup>564</sup> Ibid., 49. For more information, see Appendix D.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid., 50. For more information, see Appendix D.

<sup>566</sup> Ibid., 51. For more information, see Appendix D.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 51. For more information, see Appendix D.

<sup>568</sup> Robert Geniusz, <RGeniusz@usmk12.org> "Hi!," 24 June 2011, Personal e-mail (24 June 2011).

<sup>569</sup> Valerie Weber and Beverly Crawford, *Shopping in Grandma's Day* (Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1999) 13.

boycott stores that were open on Sundays. Their resolution stated that “Sunday must become again the day of the Lord...” and that women could influence business practices since women were “the chief buyers in the nation.” The resolution further stated that, “The merchant would quickly stop his commercialization of Sunday if he found his customers staying away not only on Sunday but every day of the week... [Sunday] should be a day of adoration... and reflection, a day of happy reunion in the intimate circle of the family.”<sup>570</sup> With sentiments such as these in the city, and “blue laws” preventing sales of liquor and similar products on Sunday, it is not surprising that a mere two percent of new Milwaukeeans purchased the bulk of their groceries on Sundays.

Although by the late 1960’s most corner stores had faded away from residential neighborhoods, most residential areas had at least one, and often more supermarkets within easy reach for most residents. As automobile ownership became more commonplace, large purchases could be transported over a mile without any strain to the consumer. It seems that location was crucial to selecting a primary supplier, since more than half of all respondents eventually picked a store within a mile of their home, and nearly three-quarters selected a supermarket within two miles. Respondents who selected a store further away from their home did not supply in-depth reasons for their choice, although it is possible that factors such as closeness to one’s workplace or children’s school might have influenced such a decision. Another possibility is that some people were willing to travel extended distances in order to obtain better bargains.

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<sup>570</sup> “Women Approve Boycott of Stores Open on Sunday,” The Milwaukee Journal, 11 September 1957, sec. A, 1.

Interestingly, though Geniusz's work indicated that dirty conditions and dim lighting were often reasons why consumers would *stop* shopping at a store, very few people listed "appearance/neatness" as a reason for patronizing a store in the first place. As Calak hinted in his work, lighting and cleanliness are often intangible factors in affecting shoppers' actions. Consumers are favorably disposed towards well-lit, clean spaces, but they often do not realize how these conditions affect them, leading them to not list these details on the questionnaire. Many consumers might not be aware how the condition of the store affects their feelings towards the establishment. Many factors may be important in helping a consumer approve of a store, but the consumer may not always realize– or admit– the relevance of certain attributes to how one feels towards an establishment. Stampfl concludes that new residents to Milwaukee selected their first grocery shopping experience out of convenience, but that as people settled into life in Milwaukee they began to explore, eventually choosing a store (or multiple stores) that best met their needs and desires.<sup>571</sup> The consumer experience in food shopping was as diverse as the population of Milwaukee, but consumers were generally united in their desire to find a quality establishment that met their needs.

Supermarkets used different methods to attract shoppers. Halan's Foods, a chain of four food stores in the Milwaukee area, used a variety of special events and premiums to build up its clientele in the early 1960's. Halan's encouraged evening shopping at its two "Woogietime" stores, which were open until midnight

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<sup>571</sup> Ronald W. Stampfl, Supermarket Patronage Motives Among New Residents (Seminar paper submitted in lieu of a M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1967), 109-110.



and served complementary coffee to late-night patrons. Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays were “Dollar Day Spectaculars,” where many food items were on sale for a dollar apiece. Thursdays were also “Family Nights,” where young children received prizes, and treats were served after five in the afternoon. Additionally, customers who spent over twenty dollars would receive an additional mystery present.<sup>572</sup>

Other studies performed around this time sought to determine whether or not location and the economic status of the clientele affected the prices that Milwaukee’s stores offered. In 1967, Professor Ralph E. Brownlee of Marquette University conducted a study intended to see if supermarket chain prices were substantially different between those in the inner city of Milwaukee and those outside of that region of the city. In order to answer this question, several supermarket chains that had stores both inside and outside the inner city were visited, and the prices of numerous items of the same brand and size were compared. The selected items included a five-pound bag of Gold Medal All-Purpose Flour, a twelve-ounce package of Kellogg’s Corn Flakes, eight ounces of Kraft processed American cheese, and dozens of other items.<sup>573</sup> Purchases were made in the middle of the week to avoid weekend sales distorting prices.

After comparing and contrasting the prices from the stores in different regions in the city, Brownlee concluded that, “The average price of food purchased in the chains either in the inner city or outside of the inner city are [sic]

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<sup>572</sup> “Halan’s Foods Advertisement,” The Milwaukee Journal, 7 January 1960, part 4, 3.

<sup>573</sup> Ralph E. Brownlee, Survey of Retail Food Prices in Milwaukee (Milwaukee: Better Business Bureau of Greater Milwaukee, 1967), 1.

approximately the same. The retail food prices of the independent stores of the inner city are about four percent (4%) higher than those outside of the inner city. The independent retailers in the inner city versus the chain is about nine percent (9%) higher.”<sup>574</sup> As in the past, independent stores generally had to charge a little more to remain economically viable. The average combined cost of the selected items bought at chain supermarkets in the inner city was \$18.42, compared to \$18.33 outside the inner city.<sup>575</sup> (These 1967 prices equate to \$120.26 and \$119.67 in 2010, respectively.)<sup>576</sup> The nine-cent difference is fairly small, and it is important to realize that different establishments’ prices often varied considerably, as one might charge more than average for some items, and less for others.

While supermarkets provided consumers with thousands of items, there was one product that many of Milwaukee’s shoppers desired but could not obtain: oleomargarine. Referred to as both “oleo” and “margarine,” the artificially made substance was widely viewed as a threat to Wisconsin’s butter industry. Wisconsin first passed legislation insisting that oleomargarine be clearly labeled to distinguish it from butter in 1881.<sup>577</sup> Margarine was cheaper than butter, which meant that consumers on tight budgets, especially during the Depression, often

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<sup>574</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>576</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>577</sup> Gerry Strey, “The ‘Oleo Wars:’ Wisconsin’s Fight over the Demon Spread,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 85, no. 1 (Autumn, 2001): 4.

bought it, and World War II rationing led to a scarcity of butter and increased margarine usage.<sup>578</sup>

Dairy farmers felt that their livelihood was being threatened, and they successfully petitioned the state government in 1931 and 1932 for higher taxes on margarine, and the prohibition of colored margarine.<sup>579</sup> Without dye, margarine was a pale-colored substance, which people compared unfavorably to golden butter. The ban on colored margarine was intended to put people off margarine altogether, but many Wisconsinites smuggled in oleo from Illinois and colored it at home using gelatin dyes, carrots, or by mixing it with real butter. The demand for oleo was due to perceived health benefits, and also because it was less expensive than butter. A 1967 state law lifted the ban on colored margarine, and the tax was repealed in 1973, but for over three decades colored margarine could not be found on the shelves of Wisconsin's grocery stores.<sup>580</sup>

By the end of the twentieth century, many supermarkets were compelled to reduce staff in order to cut costs. In the mid-1970's, Pick'n Save introduced a new paradigm in grocery shopping by offering low prices, bargains made possible by cutting overhead costs. One of the most notable ways that Pick'n Save lowered expenses was to dispense with checkout baggers and require shoppers to bag their own groceries. In a *Milwaukee Magazine* article about this new business plan, the impact of the ideas of Roundy's executives Vince Little and Mike McGee were described:

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<sup>578</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid., 14.

“What Little and McGee proposed was to open a giant warehouse, a bargain basement, bag-it-yourself, rock-bottom price discount grocery store with labor costs so low that Roundy’s could undercut every other store in the market...

At the time, it seemed inconceivable that Little and McGee’s wild scheme could ever cause more than a ripple in a city as conservative as Milwaukee. For years shopping in Milwaukee meant one thing: going to the neighborhood Kohl’s store, a busy but friendly place where customers and workers often knew each other by name and chatted like next door neighbors as groceries were bought.

At the heart of each store were the checkers— well-paid, well-treated, primarily female workers who had been on the job for years— women like Norma Nowack, who started as a Kohl’s checker in 1971 at the age of 16. For her, as for most checkers, the job was no mere way station, it was a special place where she had friends, where she had met her husband, where she had what she thought was a lifetime career.

Nowack could never have imagined that some fledgling idea hatched in the remote suburban board room of a local corporation would ultimately disrupt her life and wither the long-standing, seemingly unstoppable prosperity of Kohl’s.”<sup>581</sup>

Pick’n Save saved plenty of money by hiring a minimal staff and compelling consumers to perform many tasks connected to food shopping themselves. Their actions, though, were not restricted to inside the walls of Pick’n Save supermarkets. Pick’n Save’s cost-cutting measures allowed it to offer products at far lower prices, and bargain-seeking customers embraced the new store, causing older, established stores to trim their own budgets. One of the most prevalent means for grocery stores to save money was to lay off staff. Salary cuts, caps on working hours, and decreased benefits made grocery store clerking jobs less popular. As Murphy observed, “the retail clerk job, which was

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<sup>581</sup> Bruce Murphy, “Pink Collar Blues,” Milwaukee Magazine, January 1984, 28.

once a high-prestige, full-time job for women, is now a high-pressure, part-time job in which mental stress and physical injuries are common.”<sup>582</sup>

This illustrates how the gradual phasing out of “nonessential” grocery store personnel was part of a broader shift in supermarket business plans. Pick’n Save initiated a shake-up in supermarket business practices by developing a business model where keeping store staff to a minimum led to reduced overhead, therefore making it possible to offer low prices. Many customers were drawn to Pick’n Save’s bargains, siphoning business from other stores, which, faced with an existence-threatening loss of profits, were forced to cut expenses in order to make up for their declining revenues. Many food stores could not make a profit in this changing business environment, so many groceries of varying sizes were forced to close as consumers shifted their loyalties to the businesses that offered low prices.

Since small stores lacked Pick ‘n Save’s wholesale food price advantage, independent shops often needed to find a niche in order to survive. One way to make a food shop more likely to enjoy longevity was to specialize in a unique or personalized product that could not be sold elsewhere and build up a substantial, loyal clientele. Some stores sold only a certain kind of food, such as special meats, cheeses, or ethnic foods unavailable at most grocery stores. For example, it is not surprising that some Milwaukee specialty shops are dedicated to cheese. The Wisconsin Cheese Mart, to cite just one example, has been in business since 1938, and is currently located inside the former Steinmeyer’s building on Old

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<sup>582</sup> Ibid., 30.

World Third Street.<sup>583</sup> The following case studies will illustrate some of the most prominent and successful specialty stores in Milwaukee.

Fred Usinger, Inc.'s meat store was different from most of the other butcher shops in the city because it specialized in specially made sausages and cured meats rather than direct-from-the-carcass cuts. The business began when Fred Usinger came to Milwaukee from Frankfurt, Germany in the late 1870's, and eventually obtained a job in a butcher shop. Approximately a year later, Usinger purchased the business and married the former owner's niece, and began to specialize in "Old World style" sausages. The shop on Third Street prospered and grew, and Usinger eventually built a large meat processing plant connected to the shop. He further expanded his clientele beyond Milwaukee by setting up a mail order business.<sup>584</sup> The shop was remodeled in the early twentieth century to take on a stylized German appearance, with traditional German architecture and facades, marble counters, and numerous pictures and statues of elves working as butchers. Murals with descriptions written in German, often containing these elves, were painted on the walls.<sup>585</sup> Usinger's worked hard to maintain a high reputation. In one undated pamphlet the company released titled "Mrs. Jones Makes A Discovery— The Story of a Visit to the Factory of Fred Usinger, Inc.,"

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<sup>583</sup> "Founded in 1938, The Wisconsin Cheese Mart,"

<[http://www.wisconsincheesemart.com/about\\_us.php](http://www.wisconsincheesemart.com/about_us.php)> (7 August 2011).

<sup>584</sup> "At Usinger's... Some Things Never Change," pamphlet, no publication or date information, "Business Collection, ca. 1860–ongoing," Mss-0764, Fred Usinger, Inc., Box 2, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>585</sup> Michael J. Dunn III, "Usinger's, The World's Best Wurstmakers," Wisconsin Trails (Winter, 1976): 24, "Business Collection, ca. 1860–ongoing," Mss-0764, Fred Usinger, Inc., Box 2, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

two fictional everywomen toured the Usinger building and commented on the quality and cleanliness of every facet of the operation.<sup>586</sup> If readers of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* learned to distrust the safety and purity of the meat processing industry, Usinger's publication strove to assure consumers that Milwaukee did business very differently from Chicago. Unlike the vast majority of establishments that were opened in late nineteenth-century Milwaukee, Usinger's is still in business in the early twenty-first century, passed down through multiple generations and run by the founder's descendants.

Many food stores catered to specific groups, selling ethnic foods. Some of the most famous and longest-lasting ethnic stores spanned the continent of Europe in inspiration. Vann's Pastry Shop, in existence from 1929 to 1994, specialized in Belgian-style baked goods.<sup>587</sup> In 1946, the Glorioso brothers, Joseph, Ted, and Eddie, founded Glorioso's, a shop selling Italian foods that is still in existence, though in a different location from its original setting.<sup>588</sup> Adamczyk Foods started as a butcher shop in a Polish Catholic area in the early 1920's, and continues to sell specially made Polish sausages in a neighborhood that has largely retained much of its old ethnic composition.<sup>589</sup> Hundreds of other ethnic stores catered to their neighborhoods, but during the postwar era many of the old

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<sup>586</sup> "Mrs. Jones Makes A Discovery— The Story of a Visit to the Factory of Fred Usinger, Inc.," (Milwaukee, Wis: Fred Usinger, Inc., no date), 1-18, "Business Collection, ca. 1860–ongoing," Mss-0764, Fred Usinger, Inc., Box 2, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>587</sup> Cari Taylor-Carlson, *The Food Lover's Guide to Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Serendipity Ink, 1996), 8.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>589</sup> Cari Taylor-Carlson, *The Food Lover's Guide to Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Serendipity Ink, 1996), 117.

ethnic enclaves dispersed, and increased competition caused many shops to close. Only a handful of ethnic stores stayed in business, thanks to quality products, loyal customers, and more often than not younger generations that were willing to continue in the family business. Many of the old European ethnic shops died out by the middle of the postwar era, although later in the century new ethnic markets from around the world opened for business throughout the city. This illustrates the decline of certain communities. Various European ethnicities once lived in their own enclaves, but as time passed ethnic homogeneity decreased. A more integrated city led to the disappearance of many ethnic food stores.

In some cases ethnic markets provided certain citizens with a means of living the precepts of their faith. The city's significant Jewish community needed special stores to cater to their needs. By 1931, there were approximately 18,000 Orthodox Jews in Milwaukee. Since the observant members of the Orthodox Jewish community followed their religion's dietary laws, it was important that kosher butchers were available to serve that segment of the city's population. Meat could only be considered kosher if a properly trained and pious butcher known as a schochat prepared it. In the early 1930's Milwaukee had around ten approved schochtem. Wisconsin law ordered all kosher products to be labeled, thereby helping observant Jews to easily identify acceptable foods. Despite the mandated labeling, devout Jews were wary of improperly slaughtered meats being passed off as kosher. There was good reason for their caution. In Chicago at that time, the local rabbinate forbade the Orthodox Jewish population from eating poultry because many of Chicago's schochtem dealing in fowl had broken rules



and become involved in racketeering scandals. Milwaukee's Jewish population worried that such infractions might come to Wisconsin, so there was added pressure to insure that the city had reliable and upright schochtem. Any taint to the meat would render it terefah, or inedible, so Jewish women often brought suspect meat to their rabbi for examination.<sup>590</sup>

In 1931, several patrons accused one Milwaukee schochat, Isadore Becker, of selling terefah meat, and Becker sued for slander. The case was later transferred to a Jewish ecclesiastical court headed by Milwaukee's Chief Rabbi, Solomon I. Scheinfeld, who happened to be a vegetarian. The hearing was turbulent, and Becker's case was harmed because his most helpful witnesses were all blood relatives and therefore ineligible to testify on his behalf under Talmudic law. Rabbi Scheinfeld found against Becker and ordered him to pay court costs, and angry Becker threatened to bring the matter to a secular court.<sup>591</sup>

The Jewish presence in Milwaukee's food industry was also felt in produce wholesaling. Milwaukee's produce wholesalers community has altered considerably in number and demographics over the course of the twentieth century. In 1900, there were twenty-two produce wholesalers in Milwaukee. The number climbed for three and a half decades, finally reaching a high of thirty-six wholesalers in 1935, though the number dwindled from that point on, until only five wholesalers remained in 1990. Italians gradually became the largest ethnicity involved in the wholesale produce trade, though earlier in the century Germans

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<sup>590</sup> "Age-Old Rules on Jews' Food: Kosher Dispute Shows Laws of Moses Still Observed Here," The Milwaukee Journal, 4 January 1931, sec. II, 3.

<sup>591</sup> "Rabbi Quashes Meat Plaintiff: No Proof of Charge in Kosher Row, Butcher Is Told," The Milwaukee Journal, 5 January 1931, sec. M, 3.

and Jews comprised the major ethnicities involved in Milwaukee's produce wholesale trade. In 1900, 9.1% of produce wholesalers were Italian, by 1925 this number reached 24.2%, 36.7% in 1950, and 1980 88.9% of produce wholesalers had Italian heritage. As the Italian share of the produce industry rose, the number of German and Jewish-owned produce businesses fell proportionately.<sup>592</sup>

Some prominent Italian grocers include the Balistreri family, who transplanted from Sicily to Milwaukee in the 1920's and entered the city's produce trade, using horses and carts until they could afford permanent stores. By 1949, the family operated three grocery shops. These stores were run under the name "Sendik's" due to a misunderstanding. When the family patriarch, who spoke halting, accented English, ordered several items and asked the company to "send it" to him, the clerk heard wrong and assumed that his customer's first name was "Sendik." Others learned of this and the name stuck.<sup>593</sup> Another Milwaukee Italian produce dealer was the Jennaro Fruit Co., which sold fruit from wagons during the early decades of the twentieth century. The family was originally named Gennaro, but the name change was provoked in when the man hired to paint the family name on the truck mistook a cursive letter "G" for a "J."<sup>594</sup> As the years progressed, it became increasingly hard to make a living

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<sup>592</sup> Paul Geib, "From Italian Peddler to Commission Row Wholesaler," *Milwaukee History* 13 no. 4 (Winter, 1990): 112. More information can be found in Appendix E.

<sup>593</sup> "Sendik's History," <[http://www.sendiksmarket.com/home/company\\_information/history/](http://www.sendiksmarket.com/home/company_information/history/)> (6 August 2011).

<sup>594</sup> Caption for "Jennaro Fruit Co.," (July 2011), Milwaukee County Historical Society.

selling produce door-to-door, and fruit wholesalers either directed their attention to selling to stores and supermarkets, or went out of business entirely.

### ***CONCLUSION***

Milwaukee's food consumption landscape has evolved dramatically over time, though many vestiges of the past remain. Eating habits have seen the embrace of new foods and the marginalization of older ones. For example, the Friday night fish fry remains a Milwaukee tradition, but the Saturday night chicken fry has faded into obscurity.<sup>595</sup> The buying landscape in Milwaukee has shifted dramatically over time. Since World War II, the total number of food stores in Milwaukee declined, as increasingly larger stores served the population. In 1940, there were 2,760 grocery stores in Milwaukee, each one serving an average of two hundred twelve of the city's residents. By 1980, that number had fallen to three hundred seventy-seven stores, each providing provisions for an average of 1,687 Milwaukeans.<sup>596</sup> Clerks at small neighborhood stores could remember a limited clientele, but employees of heavier-traffic supermarkets would have a much harder time remembering names and faces.

With the help of the automobile, consumers could travel longer distances to their preferred food stores without a significant loss of time. In the past, these stores might have been a few minutes' walk away, but today it might take a

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<sup>595</sup> Cari Taylor-Carlson, *The Food Lover's Guide to Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Serendipity Ink, 1996), 137.

<sup>596</sup> Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 207. For a chronology of Milwaukee's grocery stores, see Appendix G.

similar amount of time if one travels by car. With the automobile, consumers could carry much more home with them in a single trip. Different forms of consumption, such as those of automobiles and food, intertwined to create new consumption patterns and habits. Supermarket shopping would not have been feasible without the prevalence of the personal automobile.

Before widespread automobile ownership, Milwaukeeans' main means of obtaining groceries were either to walk to a nearby store or to request home delivery. Customers could order home delivery by filling out a form or placing a phone call to a store. Notably, home delivery became less widely available by the rise of the supermarket era. This was due in part to small neighborhood groceries that offered delivery service closing down, as well as the end of Steinmeyer's, a major business specializing in bringing foodstuffs to people's homes. Many of the other major downtown food store that home-delivered goods either closed as a consequence of the Depression or discontinued their delivery services. With the advent of the Internet, new companies like Peapod offered home delivery, and certain grocery store, like one East Side Sendik's, initiated delivery policies within a limited radius. Home delivery fell out of favor in the latter half of the twentieth century, but there is nothing to prevent it from making a comeback.

The consumer experience of the Milwaukee food shopper is very different in the early twenty-first century than it was a hundred years earlier. Erwin W. Kieckhefer noted that Milwaukee's consumers have far more options available in the present than they did in the past, though the personal touch has largely become unobtainable. He writes,

“The stores which replaced the old neighborhood independents are clean and efficient, and they offer a variety of foods from around the world all year around. But they lack the atmosphere and intimacy of the old neighborhood stores. Nobody asks if Johnny is over the measles, or says how sorry they are that Grandma died. The computerized checkout seems to know everything about the items you buy, but they do not know your name. If you want that old kind of store, you have to go to some small rural town. Even there you might find instead a big supermarket selling foods to not only the town people but also to the farmers of the area who are descendants of people who once were practically self-sufficient.”<sup>597</sup>

For Kieckhefer, the ultimate result of the changes in food shopping over the course of the twentieth century is that Milwaukee’s consumers have access to a wider variety of products and more chances to obtain better deals on their purchases, but stores have lost the personal touch, save for the handful of remaining smaller shops, or for some particularly friendly store employees with good memories. Whether these changes are for the better or the worse are largely a subjective choice on the part of the consumer.

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<sup>597</sup> Erwin W. Kieckhefer, “Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir,” *Milwaukee History* 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 44.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

## **“HONESTLY MADE GOODS OF DEPENDABLE QUALITY”: DURABLE GOODS SOLD AT MILWAUKEE’S DEPARTMENT STORES, SHOPPING CENTERS, AND MALLS**

### *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter will address the places where the people of Milwaukee purchased the durable goods that they needed or wanted. Consumers visited specialty shops, department stores, and emporia throughout the century. After the war, shopping centers, malls, and later “big box” stores filled Milwaukee. Since “big box” stores did not become major figures in Milwaukee’s consumption scene until after 1970, they will not be addressed here. The focus of this chapter is on department stores, shopping centers, and malls.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, the city’s “central business district” was located in downtown Milwaukee, where many major public transport routes led, meaning that both automobile owners and those who did not own cars could easily travel downtown. The city’s expansion challenged downtown’s supremacy as a shopping area, leading to the decentralization of Milwaukee’s consumption landscape. Over the course of the postwar era, developers built large collections of stores in close proximity called shopping centers. Initially, these stores were often on the city’s fringes, although soon they would be built throughout the city. These shopping centers (and later, enclosed malls) were, as previously explained, accessible to all of the city’s drivers thanks

to widespread private automobile ownership. As illustrated in chapter one, the automobile not only allowed citizens to travel further, but also to carry more items as they traveled to Milwaukee's major shopping venues.

In the early twentieth century, the most prominent large shopping venues in the city were department stores. Department stores were landmarks of the city's downtown business district for a long time, since some department stores had been in business since the late nineteenth century.

From the late nineteenth century to the immediate post-WWII era, the two most prominent department stores in Milwaukee were Schuster's and Gimbels, whose first stores opened on North Third Street and the intersection of Wisconsin and Grand, respectively.<sup>598</sup> Both were Milwaukee institutions, both had multiple venues during most of their existence, and both served the community for decades before closing. Several other chains and other individual stores were also scattered throughout the city. Chapman's, Espenhain's and Boston Store were some of the other major department stores in Milwaukee during the mid-twentieth century, though by the turn of the century all of the aforementioned establishments except for Boston Store had closed. Other national chains, like Sears, were also in Milwaukee. A few other independent department stores, like Goldmann's, remained in business into the twenty-first century, and the newer Kohl's chain came to be a major figure in the retail market late in the twentieth century, and continues to be a successful retailer as of the early twenty-first century.

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<sup>598</sup> Paul H. Geenen, Schuster's & Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved Department Stores (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 16, 19.

Shopping centers and malls did not arise until well after the end of the Second World War, but they quickly became popular destinations. Shopping centers were collections of multiple stores and often eateries, usually dozens of establishments, all located in the same basic place. Shopping centers were almost always “anchored” by major chain department stores. To move between stores, consumers had to walk outside, since the shops were not connected internally. Malls, where all stores were contained inside one large enclosed structure, were a later innovation. It should be noted, though shopping centers drained business from the downtown area, they often worked in tandem with established department stores, since the shopping centers were mostly composed of independent shops, with one or more department stores as “anchors.” At various times, department store chains such as Schuster’s, Gimbels, JC Penney’s, Sears, and Boston Store all had branches at shopping centers.

This chapter contains profiles of some of the most prominent shopping venues in Milwaukee and the contributions some of these businesses made to the community. Ways that stores built and kept a clientele will be described, as well as how some businesses trained their clerks, and how some department stores and shopping centers became tourist attractions. Innovations regarding consumer credit and profiles of store attractions will also be provided. When applicable, the reasons why stores were built, located where they were, or why mergers or closings occurred will be described. Comparatively, the reasons why shopping venues went out of business will also be explored where applicable, as will the changing role of the human factor in the shopping experience, along with the



declining role of entertainment (including holiday entertainment) as a means of attracting consumers to a particular venue.

Several major factors affected Milwaukee's consumers and their shopping venues. These factors were the same ones that affected automobile and food consumption. In the 1920's, consumers celebrated the boom times and their higher incomes by buying all kinds of goods. During the Great Depression, many small businesses shuttered, since hard times prevented many shoppers from buying more than just the bare essentials. World War II's rationing on textiles and other goods led to certain items, such as shoes and some fabrics, becoming scarce, at least in legitimate venues. Once the war and attendant rationing ended, the selections available to consumers, as well as the venues where they could be purchased, expanded dramatically.

#### *SHOPPING VENUES IN MILWAUKEE PRIOR TO 1920*

Department stores were the result of shops growing larger and diversifying their stock. It is difficult to determine which shopping venue was the first to become sufficiently large and well-stocked to be classified as a department store, but Alexander Turney Stewart is widely credited with opening the first department store, the Marble Palace in New York City in the 1840's.<sup>599</sup> Other department stores, like Wanamaker's of Philadelphia, the Chicago-based Montgomery Ward, and Macy's of New York City soon followed as

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<sup>599</sup> William R. Leach, "Transformations in a Culture of Consumption: Women and Department Stores, 1890-1925," *Journal of American History* 71, no. 2 (1984): 322, 333.

entrepreneurial merchants saw the profits that could be made from larger shopping venues.

In a few decades, the department store came westward to Milwaukee. Prior to the 1920's, the bulk of Milwaukee's dry and household goods stores were located in the downtown business district. The largest stores were mostly downtown, though many other small shops existed throughout the city. Retail sales could be a lucrative business, but the trade was fraught with risks. Fires destroyed many retail businesses, due to accidents involving kerosene lanterns and gas explosions.<sup>600</sup>

The stores of downtown Milwaukee formed a diverse and colorful mixture of establishments along what was then the Grand Avenue, one of the central streets running through Milwaukee's downtown.<sup>601</sup> During the mid-1890's, directly across from Gimbels, were "a messenger service, cigar store, shooting gallery, beer hall and shoe shining stand."<sup>602</sup> Often, only the entrances of the store buildings were visible from the street, since enormous posters and billboards obscured the upper floors of the buildings. These advertisements were often for various entertainments, such as theatrical events and concerts. The downtown area was the center of the city's entertainment and commerce, and all of the city's major department stores were located there.

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<sup>600</sup> Ted Friedlander, The Story of Clothing Retailing and Manufacturing in Milwaukee, from 1843 to 2004 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: T. Friedlander, 2003), 1-2.

<sup>601</sup> Not to be confused with the Grand Avenue mall that was built in the late twentieth century.

<sup>602</sup> Remember When... A Nostalgic Look at Old Milwaukee With a Series of Photos Originally Published in the Milwaukee Journal, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee Journal, 1973), 19.

### *Department Stores*

Department stores were the result of successful dry goods stores expanding and diversifying their stock, until they became large multi-story buildings selling all kinds of household goods. Mass consumption was revolutionized by the plethora of items available for sale in a single structure. The early department stores, such as Macy's, Siegel-Cooper's, Wanamaker's, and Marshall Field's, opened in major cities, like New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago in the mid-to-late twentieth century.<sup>603</sup> Soon, department stores came to Milwaukee.

Department stores came in various sizes, and each one had its own unique reputation. The first establishment in Milwaukee to describe itself specifically as a "department store" was the George M. Barrett Co., which started business in 1889 as a variety store, and later expanded and diversified its stock. Its two locations were on West Water (later Plankinton) and South Fifth.<sup>604</sup> However, even though the George M. Barrett Co. was the first to self-classify as a department store, other large shops with a wide variety of goods existed earlier in Milwaukee. For example, though Chapman's department store began as a small dry goods shop in 1857, T.A. Chapman & Co. expanded into a department store

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<sup>603</sup> William Leach, Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 15.

<sup>604</sup> Ted Friedlander, The Story of Clothing Retailing and Manufacturing in Milwaukee, from 1843 to 2004 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: T. Friedlander, 2003), 16.

later.<sup>605</sup> Another, much larger store was constructed at the intersection of North Milwaukee Street and East Wisconsin Avenue in 1872. The building stood out thanks to the enormous statue of an eagle with outstretched wings on top of it. Already one of the region's biggest stores of its kind, an 1883 remodeling doubled Chapman's volume, but this size increase did not last long. A conflagration completely wiped out Chapman's department store on October 23, 1884. The fire damage destroyed over three-quarters of a million dollars worth of merchandise, and the damage was so severe that "a piece of lace big enough to trim a pair of pantalets couldn't be found in the ruins."<sup>606</sup> The store was rebuilt in the same place less than six months later.<sup>607</sup>

Another similar early business was Espenhain's Department Store, which opened for business in 1878, in the form of the retail and wholesale store Espenhain and Bartel's Westside Dry Goods, located on Third and Highland inside the Lipps Building. The business incorporated under the name Espenhain Dry Goods Company in 1896, changed locations, and changed locations again in 1906 when it moved to Fourth and Grand Avenue and took the form of a department store. Espenhain's strove to gain a reputation as the best store for bargains in Milwaukee during the 1920's, but the business folded in 1932 during

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<sup>605</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>606</sup> "Remember When... Chapman's has an eagle on top?," Milwaukee Public Library Digital Collections, [http://content.mpl.org/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/RememberWhe&CI\\_SOPTR=176](http://content.mpl.org/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/RememberWhe&CI_SOPTR=176) (accessed September 25, 2011).

<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

to the Great Depression.<sup>608</sup> In any case, Chapman's and Espenhain's were much smaller department stores than Schuster's or Gimbels.

Schuster's was a Milwaukee landmark for generations. German-born Edward Schuster and Austrian-born Albert T. Friedmann separately immigrated to Milwaukee in 1883. Schuster entered into a partnership with a merchant named Jacob Poss in 1883, and later that year Friedmann obtained work at their store, Poss & Schuster. The following year Schuster dissolved his business partnership with Poss and initiated a new partnership with Friedmann, opening the store Ed. Schuster & Company in 1884. After five years, the store moved to a bigger location on Third and Harmon Streets, although this establishment and its contents were incinerated in an 1893 fire. By the following year, not only had the Third and Harmon store been rebuilt, but also another Schuster's establishment opened its doors on Twelfth and Walnut Streets. Over the next two years, the stores would expand or move to larger premises, and a third store on Mitchell Street would open on October 26, 1914.<sup>609</sup>

The store expressed its concern for the wellbeing of their customers in the "Schuster Code," which read:

"To maintain a complete merchandising service adapted to the requirements of our patrons; to offer only honestly made goods of dependable quality, fairly priced; to keep a spirit of helpful, courteous and friendly service; to insure the satisfaction of every customer with every purchase; to do business on principles that

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<sup>608</sup> Ted Friedlander, The Story of Clothing Retailing and Manufacturing in Milwaukee, from 1843 to 2004 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: T. Friedlander, 2003), 7, 10-11.

<sup>609</sup> Our Golden Years, 1884-1934: A Personalized Memory Record of the Three Schuster Stores in Their Fiftieth Year (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Edward Schuster & Co., 1934), 16.

make for stability and growth; to deal fairly with those from whom we buy; to have perfect cooperation, practical justice and kindly feeling between members of the organization and the Management; to win and hold for the business the ever-increasing patronage, confidence and good will of our public.’<sup>610</sup>

This dictum was meant to express a cordial relationship between the customer and the establishment. Consumers were thought to be more willing to patronize a business if they felt affection for it, so Schuster’s stated policy was to reward steady clients and make people want to keep visiting their stores.

Over the years, Schuster’s adopted new technologies and policies. The cash register first appeared in Schuster’s in 1919.<sup>611</sup> Schuster’s opened its delivery department in 1912.<sup>612</sup> Some customers placed delivery orders by phone. Many shoppers purchased items such as furniture at the store and had their selections delivered to their homes. Schuster’s also offered trading stamps with every purchase. When sufficient stamps were earned (the rules varied over the years), the consumer could trade in the stamps for a small cash refund.<sup>613</sup> Schuster’s stopped issuing stamps in 1959, during a time of change for the business.<sup>614</sup>

Intriguingly, by the early 1950’s, Schuster’s three stores were located outside of the traditional downtown shopping area: on Third and Garfield (first opened in 1908), Twelfth and Vliet (first opened in 1911), and Eleventh and

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<sup>610</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>613</sup> Paul H. Geenen, Schuster’s & Gimbels: Milwaukee’s Beloved Department Stores (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 35.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid., 71.

Mitchell (first opened in 1914).<sup>615</sup> A fourth Schuster's opened at a new shopping center, Capitol Court, on the city's north side in the mid-1950's, and soon siphoned off over a third of the Third Street branch's business. From 1955 to 1959, the Third Street store lost thirty-seven percent of its business.<sup>616</sup> Another Schuster's opened on Packard Place in 1961.<sup>617</sup> This would prove to be the last new Schuster's to open before the company merged with its greatest rival.

For most of the twentieth century, Schuster's biggest business competitor in Milwaukee was Gimbels, one of the first large chain department stores to open for business in Wisconsin. Gimbels was rooted in New York City, but the chain had a long history of business in Milwaukee as well. Adam Gimbel, the founder of the family's retail empire, was born in Bavaria in 1817, and immigrated to America in his late teens.<sup>618</sup> Adam Gimbel gradually built up a business selling dry goods and various household items in the frontier towns of America, striving to provide customers with a wide selection of items and building a reputation for honest dealing. When Adam was thirty, he married the seventeen year-old Fridolyn Kahnweiler, with whom he had fourteen children, though three died young and a fourth passed away in early adulthood. Seven of the brothers became the "Gimbel Bros." who launched the business that made the family famous. The

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<sup>615</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>616</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 330-331.

<sup>617</sup> Paul H. Geenen, Schuster's & Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved Department Stores (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 85.

<sup>618</sup> Gimbels Midwest, It All Began With Adam (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gimbels Midwest, 1972-1974), 1-2.

brothers opened businesses in cities like New York and Philadelphia, and Milwaukee became home to one of their largest stores.<sup>619</sup>

Gimbels opened an “ultra-modern 30 x 100 foot store building, illuminated entirely by gaslight” on Milwaukee’s Grand Avenue on September 29, 1887.<sup>620</sup> Louis Gimbel, born in 1867, managed the Milwaukee branch of the family business for sixteen years, beginning in 1894. Adam Gimbel’s grandson J. Oscar Greenwald took over the management of the Milwaukee business, serving from 1910 to 1941.<sup>621</sup> Over the ensuing years, bigger stores would follow. In 1902, Gimbels opened an eight-story location covered in white terra cotta on the corner of the Grand Avenue and Water Street.<sup>622</sup> This new building was just one of multiple new department stores being built at that time.

Another large department store was Boston Store. Despite bearing another city’s name, the establishment strove to make itself part of Milwaukee’s business community, dubbing itself “Wisconsin’s Great Store.”<sup>623</sup> Boston Store first opened in Milwaukee early in 1900 on the corner of Grand Avenue and Fourth Street, and the department store is still in business at that location in the early twenty-first century.<sup>624</sup> Since the owners of that property thought that a department store would be a necessary and welcome means of drumming up

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<sup>619</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>623</sup> Boston Store Stamp Book, Business Collection, ca. 1860-ongoing, Boston Store, Mss-0764, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>624</sup> “The Milwaukee Century,” May 28, 1900, Business Collection, ca. 1860-ongoing, Boston Store, Mss-0764, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee. In this case, the “Grand Avenue” refers only to a street and not the enclosed mall that would be built under that name later in the century.



business, entrepreneur Julius Simon was allowed to open the establishment that would come to be known as Boston Store, and all rental fees were waived.<sup>625</sup>

The Grand Avenue's name was later changed to Wisconsin Avenue, but Boston Store has remained in business at its original location for over one hundred and ten years, and additional Boston Stores were opened throughout the city over the years. Though Boston Store stayed in the same downtown location, the building itself changed considerably over time. Additional floors were added to the building, and the Boston Store complex grew horizontally as well as vertically.<sup>626</sup>

Boston Store's initial motto, first enacted in the early 1900's, was "Fair, Square, and Liberal." The last word of this phrase was not a political statement. "Fair" and "Square" were meant to reassure that consumer that they could always expect just dealing and honest treatment by store employees when they purchased items at Boston Store. When Boston Store called itself "Liberal," it meant that customers would be treated generously and receive good value for their money. In an advertisement that further described Boston Store as "the heart of Milwaukee," Boston Store explained its motto and asserted that, "this policy is

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<sup>625</sup> "Store Soon Celebrates 50<sup>th</sup> Year at Location," The Milwaukee Journal, no date, Richard and Ethel Herzfeld papers, 1847-1980, UWM Manuscript Collection 232, Box 2, Folder 9, "Newspaper Clippings, 1914-1951, Undated (Photos), University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid.

not kept just for customers, but controls our relations to our co-workers, and those firms with which we do business.”<sup>627</sup>

There were a few other comparatively short-lived and more obscure department stores, and countless small shops, but the aforementioned businesses were the city’s biggest, longest-lasting, and famous department stores. Together, they formed the heart of Milwaukee’s downtown business district, which had become a bustling center of commerce by 1920.

### *1920-1930: SHOPPING IN GOOD TIMES*

By and large, the 1920’s were a good time to be in the retail business. A substantial portion of Milwaukee’s population was enjoying a comfortable period with varying degrees of disposable income, and they spent this money at various shopping venues— buying clothes, household goods, and other durables. Some of these purchases were luxury items, while others were vital to daily life.

Some of the big department stores provided entertainment as well. Gimbels did more than provide Milwaukeeans with a place to shop. Gimbels was also home to Milwaukee’s first radio station, WAAK, which opened on April 26, 1922.<sup>628</sup> Gimbels’ radio studio, seventeen by twenty-five feet in size, was located on the downtown store’s third floor. A forty-foot broadcasting tower with a one

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<sup>627</sup> “What Does “Fair, Square and Liberal” Mean?,” The Milwaukee Journal, 9 August 1931, sec. A, 12.

<sup>628</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 254.

hundred-watt transmitter was installed on the department store's roof.<sup>629</sup> The new radio station was a popular attraction for shoppers, who often stopped by to view some of the afternoon shows being performed. The initial problem with WAAK, though, was that very few Milwaukeeans had radios. Gimbels was only able to sell a handful of crystal radios, which had to be assembled by the consumer. People willing to put the necessary time and effort into a project could craft a crystal radio out of wire and a cardboard box.<sup>630</sup> More expensive professionally made radios were also sold. Early in WAAK's existence, the listening audience consisted of only a couple hundred Milwaukeeans: the limited number of people with radios and the Gimbels shoppers who listened to the broadcasts at the store. Regular guests on the show included cast members of the local Davidson Theater, as well as the staff of the Wisconsin College of Music.<sup>631</sup> WAAK's broadcasts were not always regular over the course of its three years of existence, and Gimbels closed the station down in 1925.<sup>632</sup>

Gimbels also served food. In the 1920's, Gimbels patrons could stop by a soda fountain in the building's basement and buy a five-cent ham sandwich or a ten-cent roast beef sandwich.<sup>633</sup> Eventually, the downtown Gimbels opened a more elegant sit-down venue, Forum Restaurant, on its top floor for people who

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<sup>629</sup> Gimbels Midwest, It All Began With Adam (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gimbels Midwest, 1972-1974), 41.

<sup>630</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>631</sup> Remember When... A Nostalgic Look at Old Milwaukee With a Series of Photos Originally Published in the Milwaukee Journal, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee Journal, 1973), 36.

<sup>632</sup> Paul H. Geenen, Schuster's & Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved Department Stores (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 34.

<sup>633</sup> Gimbels Midwest, It All Began With Adam (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gimbels Midwest, 1972-1974), 45.

wanted fancier food in a comfortable venue. Several of the other southeastern Wisconsin Gimbels branches opened a Forum Restaurant as well. Take-home items were also available at Tasty Town, Gimbels' own delicatessen and small grocery store.

While restaurants and delicatessens drew customers year-round, some promotional events occurred on a seasonal basis. The annual Christmas parade, sponsored by Schuster's, was an annual tradition starting in 1928.<sup>634</sup> The parade was held around Thanksgiving, give or take a week or so, and was always meant as a way for Schuster's department store to promote itself and provide goodwill in the community, since Schuster's believed that the cost of funding the parade would be offset by the increase in sales from people who had enjoyed the parade and subsequently shopped at Schuster's to show their appreciation.

The Schuster's parade usually started at seven, when it was dark and usually quite chilly. It consisted of four decorated flat cars that traveled upon the downtown streetcar tracks. The floats mostly displayed toys and contained characters from classic children's stories. The final parade car showcased characters that would become part of Schuster's popular radio show. Schuster's version of Santa Claus traditionally sat or stood in an elaborate sleigh led by eight "reindeer." The other fixture of Santa's sleigh was Me-Tik, an Eskimo in a large, hooded fur coat who looked after the reindeer. As the parade traveled, it usually passed two (sometimes three) of the city's Schuster's stores, depending on the

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<sup>634</sup> Ralph Luedtke, "The Schuster Christmas Parade," "Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986," Mss-0430, Billie the Brownie Information, Box 18, Billie Printed Information, Folder 8, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

stores' changing locations over the years. Christmas carols such a "March of the Wooden Soldiers" and "Jingle Bells" were broadcast over speaker horns.<sup>635</sup>

Ralph Luedtke, author of a very brief history of the Schuster's Christmas parade, reminisced about the annual event, writing that, "Standing on a cold, wet, snowy street corner made it seem as if it took forever for the parade to arrive, while possibly less than a minute for it to pass in front of you, however, as a kid growing up in the depression years of the 1930's that one minute translated into pure heaven."<sup>636</sup>

Schuster's knew the importance of appealing to children. Entertaining the city's youths would lead to them visiting Schuster's with their parents, and ideally, form happy memories of Schuster's. When they were older and had disposable income of their own, these happy memories would lead these now-grown people to become Schuster's patrons. In December of 1927, Santa, Me-Tik, and the reindeer made dozens of trips to local schools to make special appearances to entertain children. Usually, Santa's sleigh would be parked right in front of the school and the entire student body would file out to see the display. Schuster's Santa traveled all over the city to places like the Jefferson School and the Franklin School, both in West Allis, the Clarke Street School in the middle of Milwaukee, and the Lloyd Street School and the Saint Elizabeth School on the East Side. These visits were captured in photographs. In nearly all of the photos, Santa is standing with his arms raised in the ten-and-two position. Humorously, in most of the photos, Me-Tik is looking away, making a very tight-lipped

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid.

grimace, or glaring coldly. It is unknown as to whether or not his countenance was warmer when he was dealing with the children. Seeing as how in many of these photographs there is no snow and the children are wearing nothing heavier than sweaters, the heavy fur robes of the Me-Tik costume might have been rather uncomfortable.<sup>637</sup>

The Schuster's Christmas parade lasted for thirty-two years. When Gimbels bought Schuster's in 1960, the parade was cancelled.<sup>638</sup> The destruction of the city's streetcar system in 1958 also played a role, since the traditional parade route and means of conveyance no longer existed.<sup>639</sup>

Gimbels had another means of drawing customers to its store that was not as flashy as a parade, but equally effective: offering limited-time bargains. In 1926, Gimbels set up a permanent Economy Basement Store, often referred to as the Bargain Basement, where shoppers could peruse items that were no longer judged worthy of a place in the building's upper levels, or to clear out inventory to make room for new items. Gimbels' basement store was the home of an eclectic array of merchandise ranging from furniture and stoves to toys and sheet music, which could be purchased at a steep discount. Other sales occurred

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<sup>637</sup> 1927 Photos, "Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986," Mss-0430, Billie the Brownie Information, Box 18, Schuster's Christmas Parade/School Visits- Photos 1927, Folder 1, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>638</sup> Ralph Luedtke, "The Schuster Christmas Parade," "Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986," Mss-0430, Billie the Brownie Information, Box 18, Billie Printed Information, Folder 8, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>639</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 329.

throughout the year, including an annual anniversary sale, where complementary treats such as roses and ice cream cones were distributed to shoppers.<sup>640</sup>

Another popular form of sale was the “gong sale,” where a loud gong was rung every hour on the hour, and each time the gong was struck the items on the special sales tables were rotated with new commodities. Clerks in the Economy Basement Store had to deal with many challenges. Many customers spoke only German, so bilingual clerks were necessary well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also, clerks had to be prepared to deal with difficult customers, such as in one case when two feuding women ripped a dress they both wanted into two pieces.<sup>641</sup>

During the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression, Gimbels became known for its heavily promoted bargain days, often dubbed “Gimbels Daring Sales.” One such sale from the 1920’s informed shoppers that the store was offering “\$250,000 of new quality merchandise at no profit to Gimbels,” with offers such as cutlery for a nickel per item, or hosiery for thirty-six cents.<sup>642</sup>

One Gimbels clerk, Hattie Herz Ginsberger, recalled that prior to a change in the system in 1950, Friday Bargain Days made Friday the basement’s highest-traffic day. Ginsberger recounted her duties in the basement, remembering that, “salespeople wrote up saleschecks, cash or COD (collect on delivery, a novelty

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<sup>640</sup> “Reminiscences of Oldtime Veteran Employees,” “Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986,” Mss-0430, Box 1, “Life at Gimbels”– Reiniscences etc. of Gimbel Employees, Folder 2, “Reminiscences of Oldtime Veteran Employees,” Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1.

<sup>641</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>642</sup> Gimbels Midwest, It All Began With Adam (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gimbels Midwest, 1972-1974), 45.

then).”<sup>643</sup> One of Herz’s favorite memories involved a woman mistaking cash on delivery by requesting that her purchases be sent to her home “ABC.” For purchases where the consumer paid cash, the sales clerk would yell out “cash girl!” In response to this summons, an employee, almost invariably a young woman just starting work at Gimbels, rushed to the counter to make change for the customer. This was how Gimbels handled cash issues in the days before computerized cash registers.<sup>644</sup>

The boom years were profitable times for the city’s department stores (though statistical data on sales is unavailable), and even when the Depression struck, most of the major department stores managed to survive and thrive, thanks to the many Milwaukeeans who still earned comfortable incomes and who needed the durables these stores offered.

#### *1930-1941: SHOPPING DURING HARD TIMES*

Milwaukee’s department stores had to make some dramatic adjustments in the wake of the weakened economy. Schuster’s and Gimbels invested heavily in expanding their stores during the 1920’s, but that policy ceased with the Depression. Moreover, both stores were forced to lay off many of their employees, or to reduce employees’ working hours.<sup>645</sup> Nonetheless, Gimbels and

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<sup>643</sup> “Reminiscences of Oldtime Veteran Employees,” “Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986,” Mss-0430, Box 1, “Life at Gimbels”– Reiniscences etc. of Gimbel Employees, Folder 2, “Reminiscences of Oldtime Veteran Employees,” Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 3.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>645</sup> Paul H. Geenen, Schuster’s & Gimbels: Milwaukee’s Beloved Department Stores (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 41, 45.



Schuster's still strove to sell quality merchandise and tend to their customers, despite the economic hardships.

Even in the depths of the Depression, Milwaukee's consumers had a wide selection of merchandise available for purchase. Scholar Robert S. Lynd has observed that even in the middle of the Depression, consumers' options were plentiful, provided that the consumers had sufficient funds to buy whatever they wanted. Lynd noted that in Milwaukee, "the consumer must choose from among some 250 kinds of toothbrushes, 100 kinds of washing machines, 160 kinds of fountain pens, 50 kinds of motor oil, and so on through the long list of things he must buy."<sup>646</sup>

Although sales were generally in decline throughout the Depression, there was one item that helped to boost business: liquor. This profitability was illustrated on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1933, when Prohibition ended and the Gimbels liquor department reopened. The demand was so great that the liquor department was insufficiently large to hold all of their stock, and a large collection of individual liquor bottles were placed near the front door. Extra staff members were on hand to help customers select their liquor. Gimbels imposed a limit of one case of alcoholic beverages per customer. Families or groups of friends traveled together to each buy a case (generally consisting of twelve bottles), but more ambitious consumers brought along extra clothes, altered their appearance, and rejoined the lengthy throngs to buy another case, repeating the process several times throughout the day.

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<sup>646</sup> Robert S. Lynd, "The Consumer Becomes a "Problem,"" Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 173 (May, 1934): 6.

The first day after Prohibition ended, the Gimbels liquor department set a sales record. A single clerk, Marcella Priebe Haerter, brought in more than \$200,000 in liquor purchases in one day's work shift.<sup>647</sup> Adjusting for inflation, this came to at least \$3,354,707.69.<sup>648</sup> Considering that this was just one of multiple registers in a single department store on a single day, it is clear that alcohol was a major consumer item in Milwaukee, even accounting for the unusually high sales due to the end of Prohibition.

Alcohol was strictly an adult consumer item, but department stores of the Great Depression needed to promote congenial relations with younger Milwaukeeans as well in the hopes of generating additional business. Children, of course, had very little spending money of their own, but stores counted on their ability to influence their parents' shopping habits. One Schuster's most successful child-oriented appeals was a holiday radio program. "Billie the Brownie," broadcast on WTMJ became a much-anticipated annual event for thousands of young Milwaukee children. The show provided kids with daily entertainment early each winter and also promoted Schuster's department store, urging children to have their parents take them to Schuster's to look at the seasonal displays and attractions.

The airing times of the "Billie the Brownie" changed over the years.

When the first show aired in 1930, it was only five minutes long. Eventually, the

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<sup>647</sup> Gimbels Midwest, *It All Began With Adam* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gimbels Midwest, 1972-1974), 40; and "Reminiscences of Oldtime Veteran Employees," "Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986," Mss-0430, Box 1, "Life at Gimbels"—Reiniscences etc. of Gimbel Employees, Folder 2, "Reminiscences of Oldtime Veteran Employees," Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, 2.

<sup>648</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

show tripled in length to fifteen minutes, and aired every night including weekends starting at five P.M., when nearly all children were home from school. Each broadcast season began right after Thanksgiving and continued until Christmas Eve.<sup>649</sup> Larry Teich, a WTMJ radio employee with a strong interest in children's programming, scripted and starred in the show.<sup>650</sup>

The radio show usually consisted of Teich reading a short story and a series of letters from young listeners, as well as updates from Santa and exhortations asking children to behave. During World War II, Teich's charming radio shows were a comfortable haven for children from the constant worries of warfare, ordering that there be no references to the war, and that war news would never interrupt the broadcast unless it was a catastrophic emergency.<sup>651</sup> Children often begged their parents to take them to Schuster's to see Santa and the Billie-related displays, and this helped boost Schuster's sales.

Billie the Brownie became so popular that other Milwaukee department stores developed their own radio personalities to attract children. Gimbels started its own Christmas radio series on WISN in 1937, starring a pair of talking elephants named Gimbie and Ellie. The monikers of the sibling pachyderms came from the two syllables of "Gimbels." Gimbie and Ellie told stories about

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<sup>649</sup> Ralph Luedtke, "The Schuster Christmas Parade," "Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986," Mss-0430, Billie the Brownie Information, Box 18, Billie Printed Information, Folder 8, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> Mildred Freese, "Coping," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 10 December 1979, 1; and "The Great Revival of "Billie the Brownie," *Gimbelite- Gimbels Midwest*, October-November 1973, 5, "Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986," Mss-0430, Billie the Brownie Information, Box 18, Billie Printed Information, Folder 8, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

their adventures with their animal friends and Gimbels used images of Gimbie and Ellie in numerous ads and displays. Gimbels even had two actual elephants from the Will Hill Circus come to a Gimbels store to play Gimbie and Ellie. While the elephant act drew many people to the store, the lingering odors of the animals proved detrimental to customer and employee comfort, and eventually real-life elephants were phased out as a holiday attraction in favor of a small train ride.<sup>652</sup> The Billie the Brownie radio show lasted until the rise of television in the postwar era.

Billie entertained children who then flocked to Schuster's to see their annual toy display. This collection of children's gifts was arranged in a little niche of the store, allowing children to observe the new toys available that year, leaving parents to purchase to buy them once their children were not watching. Schuster's promoted its special Christmas toy display through handbills describing each year's displays, and two large display windows facing the street. The Schuster's Christmas toy display went by many names over the years, such as "Toyland," "Joyland of Toys," "Toy Fairyland," and "Toy Circus."<sup>653</sup> One mid-century advertising poster appealed to young readers, saying:

"Boys! Girls! A Toyland like you've never seen before...  
Opens Saturday at Schuster's.  
Everybody come! Plenty of fun! Listen to this! Santa's speeding  
in haste on his way to Schuster's..."<sup>654</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Gimbels Midwest, *It All Began With Adam* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gimbels Midwest, 1972-1974), 67.

<sup>653</sup> Milwaukee County Historical Society Staff, display case caption, "Billie the Brownie Display," (November 11, 2011), Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.*

Department stores attempted to attract and entertain adult customers as well as children. It was important for retail businesses to cultivate customer loyalty in order to keep their businesses healthy. On February 22, 1934, Schuster's held an "Old Customers' Day Reception." Approximately 3,000 Milwaukeeans who had patronized Schuster's for the fifty years of its existence (or close to it) attended, sharing memories of shopping at the store and what they did with their purchases. One of the most commonly heard refrains was the fact that many longtime customers bought their wedding clothing at Schuster's, and often purchased their children's and grandchildren's wedding attire there also. One devoted customer, Mrs. Mary Wegner, declared that, "I married off my five girls and half a dozen granddaughters with wedding outfits bought at Schuster's. It seems to me that I'm a part of Schuster's, or they're a part of me, for I've grown old with the store."<sup>655</sup>

Besides parties, some stores used event advertising to persuade people to visit. Often, event advertising can be a one-shot event, such as one popular incident in 1940 when some of the costumes worn by the leads in *Gone With the Wind* were placed in the Gimbels and Boston Store display windows for a special one-day-only event, where interested consumers would come to see the costumes and hopefully stay to make purchases.<sup>656</sup> Seasonal event advertising, if it becomes popular, can become an annual holiday tradition for some shoppers.

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<sup>655</sup> Our Golden Years, 1884-1934: A Personalized Memory Record of the Three Schuster Stores in Their Fiftieth Year (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Edward Schuster & Co., 1934), 20.

<sup>656</sup> "'Gone With Wind' Clothes Will Be Displayed Here," The Milwaukee Journal, 23 January 1940, Local News, 1.

Examples of seasonal event advertising include department store Santa Clauses, where parents take their children to a shopping venue and purchase items either before or after they stand in line to have their children briefly sit on Santa's lap, tell him their Christmas present wishes, and be photographed.

Boston Store used various methods to attract customers. One tactic was to celebrate anniversaries and milestones. In 1940, Boston Store estimated that it was nearing its 250,000<sup>th</sup> customer. On September 14<sup>th</sup>, 1940, the consumer who brought Boston Store's visitor list to the quarter-million mark received a radio as a prize.<sup>657</sup> Boston Store temporarily used a tactic similar to Gimbels' old radio station to bring curious consumers to the establishment in 1947, when a television camera was installed in a large display window to demonstrate how the new technology worked.<sup>658</sup>

The department stores promoted fun and games for children even during the roughest years of the Depression and wartime, but the adult matters of wages and management behind the scenes also affected business. Late in 1934, Boston Store's clerks launched a strike. The protesting employees stood outside the store with signs, demanding higher wages.<sup>659</sup> At the time of the strike, the average full-time Boston Store employee (aside from executives and managers) made \$19.55 a

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<sup>657</sup> Untitled photograph, 14 September 1940, Richard and Ethel Herzfeld papers, 1847-1980, UWM Manuscript Collection 232, Box 3, Folder 4, "Photographs, Interior, 1939-1940," University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>658</sup> John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 328.

<sup>659</sup> David Host, "The Treatment of the Boston Store Strike by the Milwaukee Journal and the Milwaukee Leader" (M.A. diss., Marquette University, 1937), i.

week.<sup>660</sup> (This would come to about \$318.13 in 2010 dollars, slightly more than the contemporary minimum wage for a forty-hour week.)<sup>661</sup> While a large percentage of the workforce picketed outside the store, Boston Store still had enough staff to maintain operations during the strike, and remained open.

Consumers used their purchasing power to reflect their opinions regarding the conflict. One customer, Monte Huebsch, wrote a letter to Boston Store's management, saying that, "I wonder if you realize how much the public is for you in this strike. Many people that I know of are calling at your store daily simply to show their sympathy with the store and disapproval of the strikers."<sup>662</sup> In contrast, Mrs. Meta Weimer sent a letter in support of the strikers, telling Boston Store that they could "Find enclosed my charge account card which you can consider closed... I do not belong to any labor organization but do not believe that a policy, in which you have availed yourself to the last iota in the matter of minimum wages... is a fair policy to your employees, the general public, or the government."<sup>663</sup> Another patron, Ruth Carter, informed Boston Store's manager in a postcard that she refused to purchase the "Laskin Lamb Coat" she wanted

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<sup>660</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>661</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>662</sup> Monte Huebsch, letter to The Boston Store, 11 December 1934, Richard and Ethel Herzfeld papers, 1847-1980, UWM Manuscript Collection 232, Box 2, Folder 2, "Clerks' Strike," Correspondence and Employee Newsletters, 1934-1935, undated, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>663</sup> Meta Weimer, letter to The Boston Store, 2 December 1934, Richard and Ethel Herzfeld papers, 1847-1980, UWM Manuscript Collection 232, Box 2, Folder 2, "Clerks' Strike," Correspondence and Employee Newsletters, 1934-1935, undated, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee.

until after the strikers' complaints were resolved.<sup>664</sup> The strike was eventually resolved with a compromise, and business resumed normally, but the split response illustrated the varying opinions of Milwaukee's consumers.

Though great effort was spent attempting to draw people to the shops, the large department stores sometimes had to come to their clients. Like Schuster's, Gimbels also catered to clients who wanted home delivery. The horses and carts originally used for deliveries gave way to Gimbels' trademark yellow and black trucks during the First World War. In 1937, these gleaming trucks vanished as Gimbels transferred its delivery service to UPS, which transported all of Gimbels' products except for flowers.<sup>665</sup> Once again, the expansion of home delivery during the Depression underscores the fact that there were many consumers with disposable income during these challenging times.

Department stores were not just for the wealthy during the Depression. Though a significant minority of the city lost nearly all of its income, many ordinary citizens maintained the same (or at least only slightly lower) standard of living they enjoyed before the war. Even poor people could patronize department store, especially during sales. Since there were so many potential customers that could not afford to pay for everything they needed or wanted, in 1938 Schuster's

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<sup>664</sup> Ruth Carter, postcard to The Boston Store manager, 5 January 1935, Richard and Ethel Herzfeld papers, 1847-1980, UWM Manuscript Collection 232, Box 2, Folder 2, "Clerks' Strike," Correspondence and Employee Newsletters, 1934-1935, undated, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>665</sup> Gimbels Midwest, It All Began With Adam (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gimbels Midwest, 1972-1974), 35.



unveiled the Charga-Plate, a forerunner of the modern store credit card.<sup>666</sup> The Depression helped to create new possibilities for consumption habits.

The Depression's major effect on mass consumption was to impose a culture of frugality, both for the customers, who had to limit their purchases due to their tightened budgets, and for the stores, which had to cut overhead costs in order to stay profitable, though the major department stores did not release their sales statistics. By offering bargains (such as heavily discounted merchandise from the basement, which was soaked in the spring floods) rather than luxuries, and trimming expenses, Milwaukee's major department stores managed to stay in business despite the economic hardships.<sup>667</sup>

#### *1942-1945: SHOPPING IN WARTIME*

World War II affected department stores, just as it changed business for automobile dealerships and grocery stores. Since many metals, plastics, and textiles were needed for the war effort, or could not be imported due to the war, department stores had limited stocks. The federal government's rationing systems covered textiles as well as food, which meant that consumers were issued ration points, which consumers could cash in at their own discretion to buy dry goods made from rationed materials, such as shoes. Gimbels managed to insulate itself from the problems of scarcity to a certain extent. Shortly before the United States entered the war, Gimbels obtained twenty-one million dollars in credit and bought

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<sup>666</sup> Paul H. Geenen, *Schuster's & Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved Department Stores* (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 46.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

up items that would be in short supply later, such as three and a half million dollars of nylon pantyhose.<sup>668</sup> (Converting these sums from 1942 to 2010 values equates to \$280,930,000 and \$46,821,840.49, respectively.)<sup>669</sup> Smaller stores with limited financial resources could not preemptively hoard soon-to-be-rare consumer goods, so they were unable to provide their customers with very many of those items. During the Depression, consumers could buy pretty much anything they liked if they had the money. During World War II, consumers often had to do without items they wanted even if they could afford them. Rubber boots, leather, and many manufactured fabrics were rationed, so consumers had to save their ration points and wait for them to become available, or turn to the black market.

In wartime, rationing meant that certain textile products were increasingly hard to find. The federal War Production Board (WPB) insisted that all stores follow a proscribed code of ethics in advertising in order to prevent profiteering, or consumer runs on certain items that would have exacerbated the problems of scarcity. In a July 27, 1943 memo to its employees, Schuster's reiterated its support for WPB protocols, and informed its departments that it was unacceptable to use "scarcity advertising," or "buy it now" language in an effort to sway customers. Even the word "sale" was to be used sparingly, lest an unexpected rise in purchases lead to shortages in the future. In this memo, Schuster's management wrote,

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<sup>668</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>669</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

“The use of fear of scarcities as an appeal in promotion and selling efforts shall be eliminated. This means elimination of any practices that would indicate any scarcity of goods...

At no time in advertising of any kind, windows, newspapers, direct mail, radio, displays or signs, will any statement be made that could be construed as “scaring a customer” into buying, because of a possible shortage, late delivery, rise in price, etc.”<sup>670</sup>

While the rationale behind the WPB’s rules was understandable, these regulations did require store clerks to be less than completely honest with their customers. After all, it was very likely that the increased need for certain textiles for the war effort might lead to some items becoming difficult or impossible to find (silk, certain synthetic fabrics, and shoes were eventually limited), but the WPB’s logic was that refusing to inform customers of that possibility would work as a preventative against shortages. The prohibition against using the threat of scarcity to boost sales extended to the words that sales clerks were allowed to use when speaking to a customer. The WPB warned clerks to never tell consumers that, “You better buy it now or you won’t be able to get it,” “You better buy now or it will probably be more expensive later,” or “These values, prices, or qualities may never again be equaled.” Instead, sales clerks were advised to talk about the quality and style of the products that they sold.<sup>671</sup> The subtle difference was that

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<sup>670</sup> “Schuster’s Rules Conforming With the WPB “Declaration of Policy” Regarding Textile Publicity and Promotion. Effective Monday August 2, 1945,” July 27, 1943, “Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986,” Mss-0430, Box 1, Folder 1, Historical Booklets Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>671</sup> “WPB Declaration of Policy– What Not to Say,” July 2, 1943, “Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986,” Mss-0430, Box 2, Folder 1, Historical Booklets, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

one tactic allowed sales clerks to sell because they made their customers want to buy certain items. Scarcity threats persuaded people to buy due to fear.

### *Department Stores Go to War*

Both out of patriotism and the need to avoid legal repercussions, department stores made a point of obeying new restrictions and supporting the war effort. Gimbels prided itself on following the law, and celebrated its centennial in 1942. As part of its promotion for being in business for one hundred years, Gimbels launched an advertising campaign for “The Gimbel Centennial.” The slogan for the centennial was “The first hundred years were the hardest... the best hundred years lie ahead.”<sup>672</sup> The most acclaimed portion of this campaign was titled “America... and the Six Great Challenges.” The “Challenges” in question consisted of five major hardships facing America in 1842, the year that Gimbels was founded. These were sickness, ignorance, poverty, distance, and drudgery. Thanks to American innovation and dedication, the nation had significantly lessened the damage caused by these social problems through improved science and technology, as well as effective education and charity. The sixth was the contemporary challenge of aggression, a reference to the threat of the Second World War. Gimbels linked its own development with that of the United States, concluding its advertisement on the “Six Great Challenges” with the words, “As a business organization we have grown up with America. We have lived through four wars and six major panics. We know what a priceless

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<sup>672</sup> Gimbels Midwest, *It All Began With Adam* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gimbels Midwest, 1972-1974), 74.

heritage America has to defend. And we also know it has the strength and courage with which to defend it.”<sup>673</sup>

Gimbels’ patriotic message was printed in the Milwaukee newspapers and broadcast over Gimbels’ radio station. Additionally, on December 31, 1941, Gimbels unveiled six elaborately designed windows, one for each Challenge. Prominent Milwaukeeans responded very positively to the campaign. The president of Milwaukee’s Association of Commerce informed the local Gimbels that, “I consider the advertisements to be among the best I have ever seen, and the window displays of the store are an inspiration. I have no doubt but that the good people of our community have been most favorably impressed by this program and with the spirit of initiative and resourcefulness which has for so long characterized the conduct of the Gimbel institution.”<sup>674</sup> Milwaukee’s mayor, Carl Zeidler, concurred, declaring that, “The progress of your organization is indeed symbolic of the progress of our great and invincible Democracy. Your Centennial is a memorable milestone in the lives of the people of our community.”<sup>675</sup> The overt appeals to patriotism were meant to convince consumers to follow the rationing rules, and to avoid the black market, which not only broke the law but diverted profits from the legitimate stores.

During the Second World War, Gimbels frequently contributed to the war effort. The store sponsored competitions amongst staff members in seven “War Loan Drives.” These competitions took place twice a year, and the store’s

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<sup>673</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>674</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>675</sup> Ibid., 74.

salesclerks and other employees were encouraged to convince customers to buy stamps and bonds to support the war effort.

Fortunately for consumers, fears over insufficiency evaporated once the war ended. The postwar era brought more than just an end to rationing. It also brought new forms of shopping venues.

### *1946-1970: SHOPPING IN A TIME OF ABUNDANCE AND CHANGE*

#### **Department Stores**

The postwar era saw the decline of the freestanding department store, as many of the city's most successful department stores were no longer independent buildings, but instead were the anchor stores of shopping centers and malls.

There were exceptions to this trend, such as Kohl's department stores, but the downtown business district's monopoly on Milwaukee's major shopping venues was gone. The trends of private automobiles and new roads led consumers to explore the city and expand the radii of their zones of consumption.

With the war ended and the economy on the upswing, the postwar era was a good time for retailers. As the years passed, though Milwaukeeans bought more durable goods, they began to shop outside the traditional downtown district as new shopping venues were built elsewhere, and department stores increasingly opened for business far away from the downtown area. Though some of Milwaukee's most famous department stores would disappear over the course of the postwar era due to buyouts, a shifting customer base, changing neighborhoods, and transferring customer loyalties; many department stores

would survive into the twenty-first century, though increasingly they became anchor stores for shopping centers and malls.

Milwaukee's major department stores had nearly all managed to survive the Depression. With the revived economy, most department stores flourished on the new boom times.<sup>676</sup> In the middle of the twentieth century, Schuster's general merchandise manager, Elmer Bartelt, proclaimed that the department store's success was due to the fact that:

“The merchandising policy of Schuster's remains unchanged since its foundation. Any kind of quality of merchandise that cannot help to win and hold the permanent patronage of satisfied customers does not belong in our stores. National brand products are sold at Schuster's with the knowledge that the use of his brand guarantees that the maker is going to stand in back of his product. The thousand and more nationally advertised brand products carried in our three stores completely fulfill Schuster's own rigid requirements for quality products. Steady volume buying and repeat purchases by satisfied customers means that brand name products can be produced in quantity and sold at a price that insures a real value to the purchaser.”<sup>677</sup>

Schuster's was successful during the first decade of the postwar era, but changes were afoot for the venerable store. In 1958, the four stores brought in a combined sales total of approximately \$47,300,000, though the stores located at shopping centers on the fringes of the city were in better shape economically than the downtown-area stores.<sup>678</sup> (This equates to \$356,888,000 in 2010 dollars.)<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>676</sup> For assorted statistics on department store sales, consumer habits, and commentary, see Appendix A.

<sup>677</sup> Kathy Warnes, “Let's Go By Schuster's'— A Milwaukee Tradition,” Milwaukee History 6, no. 2 (Summer, 1983): 63.

<sup>678</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 249.

<sup>679</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

Though Schuster's proclaimed its solid business decisions and maintained a loyal customer base, the department store was not immortal.

In fact, after over three-quarters of a century, Schuster's disappearance from Milwaukee came abruptly. The Twelfth and Vliet Streets store shuttered on January 28, 1960, for even though the establishment had been in business for sixty-six years, the other two Schuster's stores at Capitol Court and Packard Plaza were proving substantially more profitable.<sup>680</sup> This was yet another indicator of the declining role of Milwaukee's downtown area in the city's shopping scene, as the edge-of-the-city shopping centers grew increasingly popular. In December of 1960, Schuster's merged with Gimbels. The impetus for the deal was that Schuster's head, Ralph Friedman, believed that Gimbels could best carry on Schuster's legacy, since Friedman's children did not want to follow in his footsteps. In 1961, Gimbels finally dethroned Schuster's as Milwaukee's highest-grossing department store, earning approximately \$48,000,000 to Schuster's \$47,000,000.<sup>681</sup> (Adjusted to 2010 levels of inflation, these sums equal \$350,060,000 and \$342,760,000, respectively.)<sup>682</sup>

The merger details were finalized in 1962, with the proviso that the two remaining Schuster's establishments would continue business under the name

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<sup>680</sup> Kathy Warnes, "Let's Go By Schuster's – A Milwaukee Tradition," *Milwaukee History* 6, no. 2 (Summer, 1983): 67. Paul H. Geenen, *Schuster's & Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved Department Stores* (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 85.

<sup>681</sup> Paul H. Geenen, *Schuster's & Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved Department Stores* (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 72-73.

<sup>682</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).



Gimbels-Schuster's.<sup>683</sup> This deal lasted for seven years, and then in 1969, when the regional Gimbels became known as Gimbels Wisconsin (it would later be renamed again as Gimbels Midwest), Schuster's name vanished. Gimbels made some changes to the business, such as discontinuing Schuster's annual Christmas parade. Over the years, declining profits led to store closings, and the last of the former Schuster's stores went out of business in 1984, two years before the last Gimbels store shuttered.<sup>684</sup>

When World War II ended, Gimbels had no way of knowing that it would be out of business in Milwaukee in four decades. Gimbels acted as if it planned to be around for as long as the city of Milwaukee existed, and frequently stressed its good relations with the community.

Gimbels placed a strong emphasis on quality customer service, and encouraged its clerks to follow the principles of F.H.I.: friendliness, helpfulness, and interest. By treating customers well and aiding them in their shopping, Gimbels hoped to create new regular patrons and keep current customers visiting the store frequently. Frequently repeated mottos for clerks included "customers buy F.H.I." and "keep an eye on your F.H.I."<sup>685</sup> Other Gimbels mottos included Adam Gimbel's oft-repeated dictum that "a good name is better than riches," and

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<sup>683</sup> Kathy Warnes, "Let's Go By Schuster's' – A Milwaukee Tradition," Milwaukee History 6, no. 2 (Summer, 1983): 67-68.

<sup>684</sup> Ted Friedlander, The Story of Clothing Retailing and Manufacturing in Milwaukee, from 1843 to 2004 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: T. Friedlander, 2003), 10. Paul H. Geenen, Schuster's & Gimbels: Milwaukee's Beloved Department Stores (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 104.

<sup>685</sup> "Gimbels, The Customer, and You," 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1950, "Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986," Mss-0430, Box 2, Folder 1, Historical Booklets, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee, 12-13.

the Gimbels Creed, which stated that, “if anything done or said in this store looks wrong or is wrong, we would have our customers take it for granted that we shall set it right as soon as it comes to our knowledge.”<sup>686</sup> This sales strategy seemed to work. In 1958, Gimbels had three stores in Milwaukee. Their combined sales were estimated to total approximately forty million dollars.<sup>687</sup>

In the wake of the acquisition of Schuster’s and the subsequent phasing out of the Schuster’s name, four new Gimbels stores opened by the early 1970’s. Three were built throughout Milwaukee: one at Southridge (1971), one at East Town (1971), one at Northridge (1972); and the fourth was located in Appleton (1971).<sup>688</sup> The Milwaukee shopping venues were located on the south, east, and north sides of the city, corresponding with their names. Though Gimbels enjoyed a temporary boom in profits, before long, Gimbels stores too were closing rather than opening. Several factors led to stores folding. On August 7, 1970, the *Journal* announced the Third Street Gimbels’ closure.<sup>689</sup> This location suffered a steep decline in business after the Milwaukee riots of July 1967, a racially-based explosion of violence that left the neighborhood, in Gurda’s words, “traumatized

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<sup>686</sup> “Gimbel Creed,” “Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986,” Mss-0430, Box 1, Folder 2, “Life at Gimbels– Reminiscences etc. of Gimbels Employees,” Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>687</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 249.

<sup>688</sup> Gimbels Midwest, It All Began With Adam (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Gimbels Midwest, 1972-1974), 78. Paul H. Geenen, Schuster’s & Gimbels: Milwaukee’s Beloved Department Stores (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 95.

<sup>689</sup> “Milwaukee Journal clipping without a headline,” August 7, 1970, “Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986,” Mss-0430, Box 2, Folder 7, Clippings 1935-1978, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

to its bones.”<sup>690</sup> In the years following the riots, many consumers came to view that area as an unsafe place to shop. Leonard C. Hobart, the president of Gimbels’ Wisconsin stores, observed in 1970 that, “over the past several years our customers have been transferring their business from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to our other stores.”<sup>691</sup> Apparently, customers retained their loyalty to the Gimbels chain, though they felt uncomfortable shopping at the Third Street location.

Conversely, the opening of additional Gimbels stores meant that they were competing with each other for business. The Gimbels Corp. was sold to British-American Tobacco Co. LTD (the American branch was known as BATUS) in 1973 for about two hundred million dollars, and over the ensuing years stores that were considered unprofitable were summarily closed. The downtown Gimbels became a Marshall Field’s in 1986.<sup>692</sup> Marshall Field’s, a department store with many Milwaukee branches in the late twentieth century, shut down by 1997.<sup>693</sup>

In an article titled “Growing Up With Gimbels,” written after a once-popular Gimbels store closed in Milwaukee in 1986, Lois Schmidt attributed Gimbels’ decline in Milwaukee to the fact that it had ignored the fact that their effort to appeal to a modern, upscale clientele drove away the bargain-hunters who were the store’s bread and butter. After a major remodeling, Gimbels’

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<sup>690</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 371.

<sup>691</sup> “Milwaukee Journal clipping without a headline,” August 7, 1970, “Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986,” Mss-0430, Box 2, Folder 7, Clippings 1935-1978, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>692</sup> Ted Friedlander, The Story of Clothing Retailing and Manufacturing in Milwaukee, from 1843 to 2004 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: T. Friedlander, 2003), 10-11.

<sup>693</sup> Paul H. Geenen, Schuster’s & Gimbels: Milwaukee’s Beloved Department Stores (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 106.

bargain basement was eliminated, as were customer favorite perks such as certain food services and personal attention. Schmidt wrote that, “if only Gimbels had talked to me instead of their corporate geniuses, I would have told them their bargain basement was the way to go.”<sup>694</sup> The Gimbels name vanished from Milwaukee on August 16, 1986.<sup>695</sup>

Other prominent department stores joined Schuster’s and Gimbels in oblivion. In 1959, Chapman’s stores, with a downtown branch and another located in Capitol Court, had estimated total sales between \$6,500,000 and \$7,000,000.<sup>696</sup> (In 2010 dollars, this equates to between \$48,710,000 and \$52,450,000.)<sup>697</sup> At its height, Chapman’s had over half a dozen stores located throughout Milwaukee, Madison, and Appleton. Chapman’s downtown Milwaukee store went out of business in 1981, and the families that had run the business for generations sold it to an outside buyer in 1984.<sup>698</sup> The new business filed for bankruptcy a few years later, and Chapman’s became another famous Milwaukee retailer to vanish completely.

Another Milwaukee shopping landmark lasted for about another quarter of a century longer, Goldmann’s Department Store. Goldmann’s was an

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<sup>694</sup> Lois Schmidt, “Growing Up With Gimbels,” The Milwaukee Journal, J3, no date provided on clipped-out article, “Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986,” Mss-0430, Box 1, “Life at Gimbels”- Reminiscences etc. of Gimbel Employees, Folder 2, Reminiscences of Old-time Veteran Employees, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>695</sup> Paul H. Geenen, Schuster’s & Gimbels: Milwaukee’s Beloved Department Stores (Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012), 110.

<sup>696</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 249.

<sup>697</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>698</sup> Ted Friedlander, The Story of Clothing Retailing and Manufacturing in Milwaukee, from 1843 to 2004 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: T. Friedlander, 2003), 7.

independent business with only a single venue. Goldmann's began as a small dry goods store in 1896, and over time expanded into a full-fledged department store. Though it was never as prominent as Gimbels or Schuster's, Goldmann's maintained its own loyal clientele and by the late twentieth century it became a kind of living relic of a bygone era of shopping. Goldmann's was located on Mitchell Street, between Ninth and Tenth Streets, a short distance away from the downtown business district. For much of the postwar period, Goldmann's had a Gimbels and a Schuster's department store for neighbors, as well as the prominent upscale clothing store The Grand, and furniture dealers Kunzelmann-Esser. These stores, along with several others, made Mitchell Street a bustling shopping district for years, but by the end of the twentieth century most of these other businesses were gone.<sup>699</sup> By the early twenty-first century, Goldmann's was 55,000 square feet in size.<sup>700</sup> The store stayed in the Goldmann family until 1988, when employees Milton Pivar and Jerry Lewis bought the establishment, but kept the Goldmann name and made few changes. Goldmann's gained a reputation for selling hard-to-find clothing for larger individuals, such as seventy-inch men's belts. Additional prominent products sold at Goldmann's included fabric, luggage, and various knickknacks, such as artificial flower arrangements for graves.

The store's other attraction, besides its merchandise, was its presentation of itself as a piece of living history, for the store was composed of an amalgam of architectural styles from the early twentieth century. No remodeling was done to

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<sup>699</sup> Doris Hajewski, "Goldmann's On Way Out," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, May 30, 2007, <http://www.jsonline.com/business/29390419.html>, (accessed September 24, 2011).

<sup>700</sup> Ibid.

the store after 1956, although prior to that a few piecemeal renovating attempts had been made over the years. The countertops used throughout the store were very different in appearance due to the staggered remodeling, and the dissimilarities became a Goldmann's trademark. By the early twenty-first century, the store's controlled level of disrepair was seen by many consumers as quirkily charming. The linoleum floors peeled away from the wall, and damaged linoleum was simply covered with duct tape. The cramped top floor could only be reached by a rickety staircase, and tucked away on the high balcony was Goldmann's lampshade department.<sup>701</sup>

In its later years, Goldmann's provided Milwaukee's consumers with a shopping experience that was not replicated anywhere else, but its eccentric reputation could not serve as the foundation of its business plan, especially with the crime rate on Mitchell Street rising, thereby making some customers reluctant to come to that neighborhood. The rise of the "big box" era and Internet shopping provoked a further drain in customers.

Despite the increased competition, Goldmann's department store remained a popular venue, and during the late twentieth century and the first few years of the twenty-first century it served as a time capsule of the old department stores. Goldmann's most popular tourist attraction was its lunch counter. Many people enjoyed a quick lunch there, and Goldmann's signature snack—candied raisins—was wildly popular.

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<sup>701</sup> Ibid.

By that time, most of Milwaukee's department stores had closed down their cafeterias and lunch counters due to profitability issues. By the turn of the century, many of Milwaukee's department stores were attached to a mall or shopping center with an extensive food court and multiple restaurants, thereby siphoning any potential business from the anchor store. Abandoning food service also allowed department stores to save on the added costs of staff and food preparation. Once a dining room was removed from a department store, the establishment could use the space to sell more products. Eliminating eating areas reduced concern over health inspections. Additionally, by removing dining venues, department stores reduced the risk of merchandise being damaged by spilled food or beverages.

Goldmann's was not in serious financial difficulty when it closed. Its owners were almost octogenarians when they decided that they were no longer up to the challenge of keeping the store going, and they feared for the long-term future of the store. Pivar commented that, "It's not like we have to close. We're doing some business. But there's getting to be less and less demand for a store like this. We're going out when the time is right. We can hold our heads up high. We don't have to say we were pushed out of business."<sup>702</sup> Goldmann's closed in October of 2007. It was making about three million dollars a year in sales then, compared to a high of four and a half million dollars in annual sales three decades earlier. After inflation, Goldmann's yearly business in 1967 came to approximately \$27,935,299.40 in 2007 dollars, indicating that in terms of real

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<sup>702</sup> Ibid.

value, the business made about nine and a third times more in sales at its height than it did at its close.<sup>703</sup> At the time Goldmann's shuttered, it had about forty-five employees, many of whom traveled around the store giving customers personal attention in selecting their purchases.<sup>704</sup> This added to the "blast from the past" atmosphere of the store. After Goldmann's closed, the original plans to remodel and reopen the old Goldmann's building as a new retail center were scrapped due to funding issues, though the interior demolitions had already begun. In 2011 Lewis and Pivar, as well as several other community leaders, began talking of reopening Goldmann's in some capacity.<sup>705</sup>

Though Milwaukee has lost a lot of department stores in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, some department stores have managed to survive and thrive. Boston Store, though less prominent than Schuster's or Gimbels, ultimately enjoyed longer longevity. Like other Milwaukee department stores, Boston Store suggested that its profitability was due to quality merchandise, and dealing with customers justly. In 1950, Joseph Deglman, Boston Store's public relations officer, declared that,

"Today more than ever before, brand names form the foundation upon which good merchandise can solidly build reputation.

Behind a brand name, the consumer has learned that there is a constant fact finding research, directed to the building and maintaining of a better product.

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<sup>703</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>704</sup> Doris Hajewski, "Goldmann's On Way Out," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 30, 2007, <http://www.jsonline.com/business/29390419.html>, (accessed September 24, 2011).

<sup>705</sup> Georgia Pabst, "A Goldmann's Revival?," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 3, 2011, <http://www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/119159974.html>, (accessed September 24, 2011).



We at the Boston Store find a direct relationship between the success of a department and the popularity of the brand names it features. Since ‘brand’ is ours to build upon and yours to depend upon, it is only natural that we are ever on the alert to bring you names that we both know will be satisfactory from a quality, price of fashion standpoint.”<sup>706</sup>

Over the years, Boston Store opened additional stores across the southeastern Wisconsin area. By 1958, Boston Store had a branch at its original downtown location, another full-sized store in Glendale, and a much tinier shop in Waukesha. Their combined total sales for 1958 were estimated to be between thirty-five and thirty-six million dollars.<sup>707</sup> (After 2010 levels of inflation, those sums equate to \$264,080,000 and \$271,630,000, respectively.)<sup>708</sup> Boston Store also occasionally installed special exhibits in order to attract customers. In one popular display from March of 1964, a bronze copy of Michelangelo’s famous statue, the Pieta, was placed inside a Boston Store “for the enjoyment of fine art lovers in Milwaukee.”<sup>709</sup>

Another one of Milwaukee’s most successful department stores still in existence is Kohl’s. Initially, Kohl’s Department Store and Kohl’s Food Stores were part of the same company. From its origins as a grocery business, Kohl’s branched out from only food and into clothing and other household goods, as the

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<sup>706</sup> “Store Soon Celebrates 50<sup>th</sup> Year at Location,” The Milwaukee Journal, no date, Richard and Ethel Herzfeld papers, 1847-1980, UWM Manuscript Collection 232, Box 2, Folder 9, “Newspaper Clippings, 1914-1951, Undated (Photos), University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>707</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 249.

<sup>708</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>709</sup> “Michelangelo,” pamphlet, Business Collection, ca. 1860-ongoing, Mss-0764, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

company first experimented with the department store format in 1962. A decade later, in 1972, there were five Kohl's department stores in existence. Although Kohl's is a relative newcomer to Milwaukee's shopping landscape, it has managed to stay in business while many of the city's other department stores have vanished. Kohl's professed its business code of ethics by the acrostic VALUES—Very results-oriented; Acts with integrity; Leverages teams and partnerships; Uses an informed approach; Engaged, prepared and focused; Strives to develop self and others. By 2011, Kohl's established 1,097 branches in every state in the U.S. but one, and gained notoriety for obtaining exclusive rights to celebrity-designed fashion lines, such as those by Daisy Fuentes, Jennifer Lopez, and Marc Anthony.<sup>710</sup>

Though many of Milwaukee's prominent department stores have closed since World War II, many consumers still rely on department stores for buying many of their durables and household items. The decline of the department store as a downtown institution can be attributed to the loss of Schuster's and Gimbels, and an increasingly spread-out city, where by changing demographics and rising concerns about crime crippled once-bustling shopping districts. The heaviest blows to the primacy of the department store may well have come from the advent of shopping centers and malls, as the following sections will illustrate.

### Shopping Centers

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<sup>710</sup> Cristina Daglas, "The Kohl's Mystique," *Milwaukee Magazine*, September 2011, 38-39.

So far, this analysis has focused primarily on department stores, but during the postwar era increasingly large and diverse shopping venues were made available to the city's consumers. The innovations of shopping centers and malls changed consumers' shopping habits, leading to the failure of many (though definitely not all) department stores. The Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, which opened in the early 1920's, is generally credited as the first shopping center in America.<sup>711</sup> Prior to the mid-1950's, Milwaukee's consumers generally shopped close to their homes, or in the downtown business district. Starting in the 1950's, shopping centers changed those consumption patterns. Shopping centers consisted of collections of independent stores, all located in a newly built complex and located in sufficiently close proximity so that shoppers could easily walk between establishments. Stores in a shopping center were generally diverse, selling everything from garments to books, and the complex often contained at least one large department store as an "anchor store." Since shopping centers took up a large amount of space, they were initially built on the fringes of the city, where there was plenty of undeveloped land and growing residential neighborhoods.

The downtown retailers saw the rise of the shopping centers and malls as a threat to the prosperity of the downtown central business district, since without a major raise in either Milwaukee's population or average income, any new shopping venues were likely to drain customers from older businesses. During

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<sup>711</sup> Lizabeth Cohen and Kenneth T. Jackson, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (1996): 1051.

his administration years, when the first shopping centers were constructed, Mayor Frank Zeidler remained optimistic about the role that large shopping centers would play in Milwaukee's economy and development, and predicted that large venues away from the downtown area would reduce crowding and make shopping more accessible to the growing portion of the population that did not live near downtown. Zeidler added that projects like Capitol Court were, "directly in line with the pattern of growth of metropolitan areas... [serving] as a measure of the good life all of us would like to live." Furthermore, the mayor believed that new, large shopping centers would not be "deleterious to the older parts of a city but stimulate the older parts to bring up their facilities to the equal of the shopping centers."<sup>712</sup>

Once the first shopping centers proved popular, more were built around the city. In 1961, the Milwaukee area saw the development of an estimated \$35,000,000 worth of shopping center construction projects.<sup>713</sup> (This equates to \$255,249,500 in 2010 money.)<sup>714</sup> Shopping centers in Milwaukee tend to share the same basic life cycle. At first, Milwaukee's large shopping venues were very popular, due in part to novelty and the fact that a portion of the city found the new venue convenient. Over time, however, the number of customers declined for reasons such as competition, accessibility, and safety concerns. Due to these factors, a venue that was once a high-traffic landmark shut down a couple of

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<sup>712</sup> Schuster's Capitol Court Under Way, (S.I.: s.n., 1953), 2.

<sup>713</sup> "Retailing Fights Discount Battle," The Milwaukee Journal, December 31, 1961, part 4, 16.

<sup>714</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

decades later. This trend has not stopped the development of new shopping venues.

The mid-1950's to the 1970's were a time of busy development and construction for shopping centers in Milwaukee and the surrounding areas. At least nine major shopping centers were opened in Milwaukee from 1951 to 1972: Southgate (1951), Bayshore (1954), Capitol Court (1957), Mayfair (1958), Port Loomis (1959), Brookfield Square (1967), Southridge (1970), Southtown (1971), and Northridge (1972).<sup>715</sup> Some of these locations, like Mayfair, began as shopping centers and were later converted into malls. The directionally named venues were located on the side of town corresponding to their names, Port Loomis was located on the South Side, Mayfair was on the West Side, and Bayshore was in Glendale.

Even before the first shopping centers were built, entrepreneurs saw their potential for profitability. Shortly after the Second World War ended, Kurtis Froedtert, head of the Froedtert Malting Company, decided to expand his business by developing real estate, particularly for commercial enterprises. In 1949, Froedtert announced his intention to build three major shopping centers on the Milwaukee borders, named for their directional locations: Southgate, Northgate, and Westgate. Southgate opened first in 1951. Westgate, the only venue to remain open in the early twenty-first century, would eventually change its name to Mayfair, due in part to the directional theme of the three shopping centers

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<sup>715</sup> 1982 Census of Retail Trade, Major Retail Centers in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (Wisconsin and Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1982), DSCN 1227-1229. For more information, see Appendix B.

being lost when Southgate and Northgate closed in the late twentieth century.\* When Southgate opened at S. 27<sup>th</sup> St. on Highway 41, a location chosen for its proximity to multiple booming residential districts, Froedtert declared that at his new shopping center, “The Milwaukee shopper will be able to make a single, free parking stop at the S. 27<sup>th</sup> St. center and do all of her day’s shopping, comfortably and conveniently, without worrying about her car, the weather outside or carrying her purchases around with her.”<sup>716</sup> Notably, Froedtert used the feminine pronoun, indicating that women were expected to be the primary shoppers, though both genders were welcome patrons. The main attraction of Southgate was supposed to be its comfort and accessibility, as opposed to downtown shopping where consumers would have to rush across busy streets, jump into cramped streetcars, and brave the wind and precipitation in order to travel from store to store.

Southgate cost approximately \$5,000,000 to build and was situated on thirty acres of land. (Converting this sum from 1951 to 2010 money, the cost was \$41,933,846.15.)<sup>717</sup> Only 105,000 square feet (about 2.41 acres) contained stores. Aside from a few walkways, the vast majority of the property was devoted to parking, with around 2,000 spaces available.<sup>718</sup> This illustrates the growing role

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\* For the sake of clarity for contemporary readers, the shopping center formerly known as “Westgate” will be referred to as “Mayfair” in the malls portion of this chapter.

<sup>716</sup> John Gurda, “In 1951, Southgate Changed Shopping,” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, December 5, 1999, Retro-Milwaukee, <http://www.retrocom.com/retromilw/southgate.htm>, (accessed September 17, 2011).

<sup>717</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>718</sup> John Gurda, “In 1951, Southgate Changed Shopping,” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, December 5, 1999, Retro-Milwaukee,

of the automobile in Milwaukee life. Businesses had to provide substantial amounts of parking if they were to have a chance at being financially viable, because if potential customers had nowhere to park, they would be unable to shop in Southgate's twenty establishments. A successful shopping center therefore required sufficient parking to accommodate a large crowd of customers.

On Southgate's opening day, the area was indeed jam-packed. 60,000 individuals came to participate in Southgate's inauguration on September 20, 1951.<sup>719</sup> The large turnout is especially notable because that day was a Thursday. Ethnic music and dance, an acclaimed flagpole stander, Alice in Dairyland (a young woman who was selected yearly to attend events and promote Wisconsin's attractions and food products), and fireworks were all part of the entertainment. The guests largely enjoyed Southgate's stores, a fact that did not go unnoticed by the *Milwaukee Journal*, which quipped that, "Most amazing of all was the way the crowd spent money. Milwaukee enjoys a national reputation as a place where almost everybody will go to anything that is free, but almost everybody will stay away if it costs a lot. Nonetheless, a good three-fourths of the persons on the grounds carried bundles, purchases they had made while exploring."<sup>720</sup>

In 1959, Southgate had twenty-nine stores. Twelve apparel and accessories stores made up over forty-one percent of Southgate's total stores in 1959, with food venues (including four food stores and one restaurant), taking up

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<http://www.retrocom.com/retromilw/southgate.htm>, (accessed September 17, 2011).

<sup>719</sup> Ibid.

<sup>720</sup> Ibid.

over seventeen percent.<sup>721</sup> New, larger stores were added to Southgate in order to attract more customers. A Gimbels department store branch opened in 1954, and Krambo built what was then Milwaukee's biggest grocery store and began doing business at Southgate in 1955.<sup>722</sup> For decades, the customers poured into Southgate, but this success was ephemeral.

Competition proved fatal to Southgate. As increasing numbers of large shopping venues filled Milwaukee, fewer consumers traveled to the South Side for their purchases, since they could find similar venues closer to their houses. Other nearby stores outside the Southgate complex siphoned off business. Once Gimbels closed, Southgate lost a substantial amount of business. John Gurda also credits the rise of the "big box" stores with stripping away clients from the small stores that composed Southgate.<sup>723</sup> Indeed, in 2012, a Walmart stands on the site of what used to be Southgate. Southgate's attempt to survive included a transformation from shopping center to mall, and therefore the continuation of the Southgate saga will follow in the next section on malls.

The rise and fall of Capitol Court runs parallel to that of Southgate. Capitol Court began construction in 1953, and opened three years later.<sup>724</sup> The

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<sup>721</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 233. For more information, see Appendix B.

<sup>722</sup> John Gurda, "In 1951, Southgate Changed Shopping," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, December 5, 1999, Retro-Milwaukee, <http://www.retrocom.com/retromilw/southgate.htm>, (accessed September 17, 2011).

<sup>723</sup> Ibid.

<sup>724</sup> Schuster's Capitol Court Under Way (S.I.: s.n., 1953), 2. "A Look Into the Future of... Capitol Court," pamphlet, 1, "Capitol Court, 1951-2000," Mss-2995,



wide selection of shops there was meant to attract a wide variety of customers, but an “anchor store” was considered essential to maintain a steady flow of business. Capitol Court decided that its anchor store would be a 220,000 square foot Schuster’s. Schuster’s department store made up over a quarter of the complex’s total square foot space.<sup>725</sup>

Capitol Court got its name from a contest. Before the shopping center had its official title, Schuster’s, knowing that it would open an anchor store at Capitol Court, launched a naming competition among its staff members. The winner was Mrs. Lenore Schultz, who worked at the North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Schuster’s. She devised the name “Capitol Court” because the complex’s southern border would be along Capitol Drive, and because she liked the alliterative phrase. For her idea, Mrs. Schultz won a Schuster’s gift certificate for one hundred dollars.<sup>726</sup>

Capitol Court was “partially covered” in order to protect shoppers from inclement weather. In order to travel from one shop to another, the customers had to exit one store and walk outside to the next place they wished to visit. The overhanging roofs above the walkways prevented shoppers from falling rain, but they could do nothing to protect people from the wind and the cold. This was an inconvenience for Milwaukee shoppers, though consumers in more temperate

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Box 1, Folder 3. Promotional Booklets/Brochures, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>725</sup> “Capitol Court– Milwaukee’s First Regional Retail Center,” pamphlet, 3, Milwaukee County Historical Society, “Capitol Court, 1951-2000,” Mss-2995, Box 1, Folder 3, Promotional Booklets/Brochures, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>726</sup> “Name For New Schuster Center Wins \$100 Award,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 21 December 1952, section A, no page number provided, “Capitol Court, 1951-2000,” Mss-2995, Folder 1, Schusters– Clippings re: Capitol Court, 1951-1955, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

climates did not have to worry about being struck by a bone-chilling, snow-filled gust as they exited.

Capitol Court's patrons did have access to a limited amount of climate control. Though Capitol Court consisted of dozens of separate shops, the people behind the shopping center declared that each store provided each customer with a high level of comfort and style. Capitol Court's creators boasted that, "all buildings at the Center will be air conditioned, colorful, and designed in modern contemporary style."<sup>727</sup>

Capitol Court was located on a plot of land nicknamed "the Golden Triangle" due to its shape and the fact that it was extremely well situated as a retail sales center in the wake of the changing layout of the city. The "Golden Triangle" was formed by the intersection of North 60<sup>th</sup> Street and West Capitol Drive at right angles, with Fond du Lac Avenue forming the Triangle's hypotenuse.<sup>728</sup> As mentioned earlier, shopping centers on the fringes of the city would never have been financially viable even a couple of decades earlier, since an out-of-the-way location could never be visited sufficiently regularly to be financially viable until enough of the city's population owned cars. As stated in

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<sup>727</sup> "A Look Into the Future of... Capitol Court," pamphlet, 3, "Capitol Court, 1951-2000," Mss-2995, Box 1, Folder 3. Promotional Booklets/Brochures, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>728</sup> "Convenient Capitol Court," pamphlet, "Capitol Court, 1951-2000," Mss-2995, Box 1, Folder 3, Promotional Booklets/Brochures, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

chapter two, in 1952, the year before Capitol Court began construction, there were 244,359 motor vehicles registered in Milwaukee County.<sup>729</sup>

Capitol Court needed to accommodate the patrons that would have to travel a long way to reach it. The enormous parking lot surrounding Capitol Court had more than 5,000 parking spaces. Additionally, when the complex first opened, there were three Milwaukee County bus routes that could bring consumers directly to Capitol Court, and these routes crossed with thirty additional lines, meaning that residents throughout the city could take public transportation to shop there.<sup>730</sup>

The construction of Capitol Court had strong support from the city government. Mayor Frank Zeidler approved of a shopping center outside of the central business district, saying that the development of Capitol Court was “directly in line with the pattern of growth of metropolitan areas,” acting “as a measure of the good life all of us would like to live,” and the presence of a large shopping center was not “deleterious to the older parts of a city but stimulate the older parts to bring up their facilities to the equal of the shopping centers.”<sup>731</sup>

Capitol Court’s location had been carefully chosen. Logically, a shopping center ought to be accessible to potential consumers. Not only did Capitol Court have to be located on a large tract of land (sixty-five acres, with about 800,000 square feet of enclosed store space), but also it was also ideal that it be located in

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<sup>729</sup> Calendar Year Motor Vehicle Registrations by Counties Jan. 1, 1921 to Date (Madison: State of Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Department, 1952), 32.

<sup>730</sup> “A Look Into the Future of... Capitol Court,” pamphlet, 3-4, “Capitol Court, 1951-2000,” Mss-2995, Box 1, Folder 3, Promotional Booklets/Brochures, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>731</sup> Schuster’s Capitol Court Under Way, (S.I.: s.n., 1953), 2.

a neighborhood where the residents had plenty of disposable income.<sup>732</sup>

Milwaukeeans in Capitol Court's neighborhood had an average annual income of over \$5,000 in 1955.<sup>733</sup> (This is the equivalent of \$40,682.09 in 2010 dollars.)<sup>734</sup>

Although by no means a wealthy neighborhood, it was one where the residents were able to afford significantly more than just the bare necessities. Positioning in a higher-income neighborhood served a dual purpose.<sup>735</sup> First, comfortably-off residents would visit their local shopping center frequently. Second, an affluent neighborhood was likely to be comparatively safe. Customers would be more likely to consistently visit a place where they felt secure, and rising crime rates could mean the death of a once-bustling shopping center.

The composition of Capitol Court's stores shifted over time, as some stores failed or closed, and new businesses, often very different ones, replaced them. In 1959, the composition of Capitol Court consisted of fifty-eight retail stores, including twenty-two clothing stores, seven food stores, and seven restaurants.<sup>736</sup> Notably, approximately thirty-eight percent of Capitol Court's businesses in 1959 were apparel and accessories stores. No other type of merchandise came close to equaling clothing in terms of total number of stores,

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<sup>732</sup> "Capitol Court– Milwaukee's First Regional Retail Center," pamphlet, 3 & 8, "Capitol Court, 1951-2000," Mss-2995, Box 1, Folder 3, Promotional Booklets/Brochures, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid.

<sup>734</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>735</sup> "Capitol Court– Milwaukee's First Regional Retail Center," pamphlet, 8, "Capitol Court, 1951-2000," Mss-2995, Box 1, Folder 3, Promotional Booklets/Brochures, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee. For more information, see Appendix B.

<sup>736</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 210. For more information, see Appendix B.

but food venues, when food stores and restaurants were combined, made up a little over twenty-four percent. Consumers also came to Capitol Court to eat, not just to shop.

When Capitol Court was first built, its creators described it as “a one-stop shopping and service center designed to fit your every buying need.”<sup>737</sup> The complex held space for over sixty businesses, and was intended to hold a mixture of independent Milwaukee retailers and larger chains. Capitol Court’s layout was carefully planned, with all of the establishments “grouped... for convenient shopping... according to the type of merchandise offered... and will be arrayed along partially covered malls for the utmost in customer and protection and convenience,” in the words of a promotional booklet.<sup>738</sup>

Pamphlets were not the only way that Capitol Court advertised itself. In the mid-1960’s, in an effort to attract visitors to Capitol Court, the shopping center prepared rain bonnets, pens, and key chains with Capitol Court’s name upon them, and mailed these gifts to people who moved to the area, along with a note greeting the newcomers and encouraging them to do their shopping at Capitol Court. If the recipients used these trinkets, they would receive constant reminders of the nearby shopping center.<sup>739</sup>

Capitol Court also planned numerous entertainments and promotional events throughout the year in order to attract people. In this form of advertising,

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<sup>737</sup> “A Look Into the Future of... Capitol Court,” pamphlet, 1, “Capitol Court, 1951-2000,” Mss-2995, Box 1, Folder 3. Promotional Booklets/Brochures, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>738</sup> Ibid.

<sup>739</sup> “Promotions Are Center of Capitol Court’s Success,” The Torch, Summer 1966, 16.

people would come for a fun event and then stay to shop. These events were aimed at both adults and children. During the 1960's, Capitol Court held art classes, athletic competitions, animal exhibits, talent shows, concerts, and seasonal events such as Halloween art competitions and an automated display called Santa's Workshop.<sup>740</sup>

Capitol Court primarily used seasonal event advertising during the Christmas season. The Kooky Cooky House was a fixture of Capitol Court for years. It was a small structure filled with robots and moving parts, crafted to look like a magical factory baking gingerbread men. After touring the Kooky Cooky House, children would visit Santa and receive a complimentary gingerbread man.

Capitol Court also used other promotional events to supplement the Kooky Cooky House. For years, Capitol Court displayed what it declared was the state's largest Christmas tree. In 1971, an ad declared that the Capitol Court tree would contain 10,000 lights. The singing and dancing Milwaukee Choristers accompanied that year's Christmas tree lighting.<sup>741</sup> The Capitol Court Christmas tree soon became infamous for the accompanying bell music around it, which was entertaining for visiting shoppers, but loathed by the people who lived close enough to the shopping center to hear the ringing for a full month.

While some seasonal event advertising may have annoyed some shopping centers' neighbors, more and more shopping centers were built to serve the public. Climate issues were a major factor in making enclosed malls more

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<sup>740</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>741</sup> "Capitol Court," < [http://www.kookycookyhouse.com/images/ad\\_800.jpg](http://www.kookycookyhouse.com/images/ad_800.jpg)> (23 December 2011).

popular than open-air shopping centers. As the second half of the twentieth century progressed, the city steadily filled with large shopping venues, but over time, malls became more common than shopping centers.

### **Malls**

Shopping centers allowed consumers to visit a wide variety of stores in close proximity. A downside of shopping centers was the need to go outside to travel between stores. By making it more comfortable to visit multiple stores, malls added an extra level of convenience to the shopping experience. In popular usage, the terms “mall” and “shopping center” are often interchangeable, but there are several distinct qualities that distinguish malls from shopping centers. Malls were a later innovation. In contrast to a shopping center, a mall is totally enclosed, climate-controlled and often contains about the same number of stores as a large shopping center, but all of a mall’s stores are inside a single enormous building, sometimes, but not always, consisting of multiple stories. A consumer can visit every store in a mall without having to leave the building. The first enclosed mall in the United States was Southdale, which opened in 1956 and was located in Minneapolis.<sup>742</sup> Another kind of shopping venue, the strip mall, is really not a mall at all despite its name. Instead, a strip mall is better classified as a small shopping center. Strip malls are usually a collection of separate stores, businesses, and restaurants that are connected by a sidewalk. In contrast to larger

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<sup>742</sup> Thomas W. Hanchett, “U.S. Tax Policy and the Shopping Center Boom of the 1950s and 1960s,” *American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (October, 1996): 1097.

shopping centers, which appeal to consumers throughout a city, strip malls usually cater to the consumption needs of the neighborhood where they are located. An exception to this might be a unique shop that patrons might be willing to travel across the city to visit; as opposed to franchise stores that cater solely to a limited radius, with nearly identical stores providing nearly identical services in different neighborhoods. Actual malls, like shopping centers, have customers from throughout the entire city. Since most of Milwaukee's malls were constructed after 1970, only the few whose origins occurred by the end of the postwar era will be studied here.

The identity of Milwaukee's first "mall" is debatable. The Plankinton Arcade, which much later became part of the Grand Avenue, was an enclosed building containing multiple shops. The Plankinton Arcade opened in 1916, and was built by the Plankinton family, who had made their fortune in the meat business.<sup>743</sup> The Arcade existed long before malls were defined as a mass consumption phenomenon, and in any case the Plankinton Arcade did not have full man-made climate control, which is generally viewed as an essential component to a full-fledged mall.

The title of the first official mall might belong to Brookfield Square, which opened just west of Milwaukee on Thursday, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1967. Brookfield Square was located on a ninety-two acre plot. The building was climate-controlled at a steady seventy-two degrees. Advertisers described it as

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<sup>743</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 408.



“the world’s largest shopping center under one roof” and “a veritable “enclosed city”” that protected customers from the elements.<sup>744</sup>

Going by the standard of an enclosed building with climate control, Brookfield Square was Milwaukee’s first mall. Other malls, such as Southridge (opened in 1970, on the city’s southwest), Northridge (opened in 1973, in the northern part of Milwaukee), the Grand Avenue (1982, downtown), and several more would follow over the coming decades.<sup>745</sup> Southridge was Wisconsin’s largest mall for years, containing “125 stores, 1,400,000 square feet of space, and nearly 7,000 parking spots– not to mention such amenities as a 30-foot waterfall and a two-story aviary.”<sup>746</sup> Northridge was designed by the Kohl family, and was meant to be a carefully planned suburb the size of Shorewood. Though these extensive ambitions were never fully realized, Northridge did become a popular mall.<sup>747</sup> The Grand Avenue was an attempt to revitalize the struggling downtown business district in the 1980’s. Championed by Mayor Maier, the Grand Avenue expanded upon the old Plankinton Arcade. It initially contained one hundred sixty stores, with the downtown Boston Store as an anchor. The Grand Avenue temporarily gave the downtown business district a period of economic revitalization, become the area’s most successful major shopping venue for most

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<sup>744</sup> “Boston Store Leads the Parade to Brookfield Square,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, August 14, 1967, part 1, 4.

<sup>745</sup> Eugene Kane, “Myths About Northridge Cannot Foretell Mayfair’s Doom,” The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, January 5, 2011, <<http://www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/112984389.html>>, (10 October 2011). John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 384-385, 408.

<sup>746</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 385.

<sup>747</sup> *Ibid.*, 390.

of the 1980's, though by the turn of the century the mall would suffer a severe decline as many shops closed and patronage dwindled. The food court, composed of a wide variety of ethnic eateries, remains a reasonably popular lunchtime spot for individuals who work downtown.<sup>748</sup>

Not every shopping venue that used the name “mall” deserved that title. The Prospect Mall on the East Side was not really a full-fledged mall. The 41,900 square-foot Prospect Mall, though it was an enclosed, climate-controlled shopping environment, fit on a single city block, and only contained several stores and a couple of restaurants at its peak. The Prospect Mall Cinema, which opened in 1976, consisted of only three small theaters.<sup>749</sup> The stores at the Prospect Mall were nearly all independent shops rather than chains. The entire edifice could have fit into a real mall's anchor store with plenty of room to spare. The Prospect Mall would be better described as a mini-mall. Run-down, dirty, mostly empty, and much-derided during its final years, the Prospect Mall was closed down in 2006, though in the following years, developers gutted the building as part of a larger plan to renovate it into a taller, more upscale facility with residential apartments. As of early 2013, the project is still in development.<sup>750</sup>

In the last decades of the twentieth century, enclosed malls became more popular than open shopping centers. Milwaukee's often-inclement climate played

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<sup>748</sup> Ibid., 408-409.

<sup>749</sup> Tom Daykin, “Sunday's movies will be the last for Prospect Mall Cinema,” The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 15 June 2006, sec. D, 1.

<sup>750</sup> Tom Daykin, “Prospect Mall site considered for apartments,” The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 21 May 2012, < <http://www.jsonline.com/business/prospect-mall-site-considered-for-apartments-a05ggbc-152360755.html> > (16 February 2013).

a role in this development. As customers came to prefer the convenience of not having to step outside between store visits, some prominent shopping centers converted into malls.

### *Milwaukee's Malls and the People Who Built Them*

The malls of Milwaukee were designed and financed by a combination of Milwaukee's entrepreneurs and politicians, as well as out-of-state designers and financial backers. These individuals observed the growing market for new shopping venues and the potential economic benefits and urban renewal that might come from large, thoughtfully designed malls.

### *Mayfair and Southgate*

Mayfair (formerly Westgate) and Southgate, as previously stated, began as shopping centers and later were renovated and turned into enclosed malls. They were a joint construction project of Froedtert Enterprises and Marshall Field & Co. Kurtis Froedtert (1887-1951), the financial driving force behind the Northgate, Southgate, and Westgate shopping centers (the latter two, as previously stated, were later remodeled into malls), originally wished to become a doctor, but his father's poor health led to Froedtert taking over the family malt business. Froedtert made a fortune, and his continuing interest in medicine would lead to him eventually donating a large portion of his wealth in order to build

what would eventually become Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital.<sup>751</sup>

Froedtert would not live to see the shopping centers he sponsored succeed or to see two of them become malls.

Other major business figures behind the city's construction included Joseph E. Rapkin, the president of Froedtert Enterprises; and Stanley Field, the nephew of department store proprietor Marshall Field, and the director and chairman of the executive committee for the construction of the Mayfair Shopping Center. The Marshall Field's department store was meant to be Mayfair's anchor store, and an experiment in seeing if Marshall Field's would be successful outside of its hometown of Chicago. Hughston M. McBain, the Marshall Field's board chairman, declared in 1957 that, "Milwaukee has shown remarkably sound growth... We are not attempting to become nationwide, but we want to do the best possible job in the immediate area where we are known and have operated for years."<sup>752</sup>

### *Southridge and Northridge*

Southridge and Northridge were two of Milwaukee's first major malls to be originally built as enclosed, climate-controlled major shopping venues, rather than as shopping centers that were later converted into malls. Southridge and Northridge were financed and constructed through a partnership between the Kohl family and A. Alfred Taubman and his Taubman Co. Both parties contributed to

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<sup>751</sup> "Kurtis Froedtert Kept Interest in Medicine," The Milwaukee Journal, 22 February 1955, part 1, 8.

<sup>752</sup> "Field Execs Visit Store Site; Predict Great Future Here," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 6 June 1957, part 1, 4.

funding the projects, while Taubman and his colleagues designed the malls.<sup>753</sup>

Both malls used scores of architects and designers, and the work was divided up amongst the crew. One team might design an entryway, another team might work on one anchor store, and so forth.

As illustrated in the preceding chapter on food stores, the Kohl family had long been major players in Milwaukee's food shopping landscape thanks to the Kohl's chain of supermarkets. The Kohls also promoted the sale of other household goods and durables through the Kohl's department stores. During the early 1970's, the Kohls were the primary driving force behind the construction of Northridge and Southridge.<sup>754</sup>

At this time, the Kohl Corporation was largely a family affair. Max Kohl, the family patriarch who immigrated to Milwaukee from Poland, started a food shop on the city's South Side in the late 1920's, and gradually built his business up into a major economic powerhouse, was the Kohl Corporation's chairman of the executive committee in 1972, though by this point his sons ran most of the family business's daily operations. Herbert Kohl was the Kohl Corporation's president, would later serve as a Democratic Senator for Wisconsin, and owns the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team. Younger brother Allen served as executive vice president. Eldest brother Sidney was chairman of the board, and oversaw the business's expansion and development. Sidney Kohl claimed that one day, when driving past 76<sup>th</sup> Street and Brown Deer Road on Highway 100, he was

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<sup>753</sup> "Northridge Partners See Enough Centers in Area," The Milwaukee Journal, 2 August 1972, part 2, 25.

<sup>754</sup> Gordon L. Randolph, "Kohl Family is Always Looking Ahead," The Milwaukee Journal, 1 August 1972, Northridge special section, 6.

struck by the idea that it would be an excellent venue for a major shopping venue. Upon further review, the family bought the land that would later become Northridge, which was often affectionately referred to as the “twin” of the Kohls’ Southridge Shopping Center, though the latter venue predated Northridge by a few years. Sidney declared that, “Road development– transportation– plays an enormous role in making a decision to locate retail business... And today transportation means autos,” noting that the Kohls kept a close watch on the city’s road expansions in order to scout out potential commercial venues that would become increasingly valuable with new streets.<sup>755</sup> Milwaukee’s road layout in the late 1960’s was a primary reason why Southridge opened before Northridge– the Kohls wanted to wait until new highways made the Northridge site more accessible.

A. Alfred Taubman, the chairman of Taubman Co., Inc., was once described by the *Milwaukee Journal* as “one of the masterminds behind Northridge Shopping Center,” though this designation also applies to Southridge as well. Taubman was born in 1924 and lived in Michigan for most of his life.<sup>756</sup> His parents came to the United States from Germany, and when the family suffered serious financial losses during the Great Depression, Taubman began earning money at the age of nine, and eventually made billions by investing in the construction and development of shopping venues in affluent suburban areas.

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<sup>755</sup> Ibid., 6-8.

<sup>756</sup> C. J. Satterwhite, “Openers: Suits; Not on the Block,” [The New York Times](http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B00EFD9133EF935A15752C1A9609C8B63&ref=aalfredtaubman), 26 November 2006, <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B00EFD9133EF935A15752C1A9609C8B63&ref=aalfredtaubman>> (9 February 2013).

Taubman championed the presence of artistic details in malls, such as elaborate water fountains, and promoted the use of tiled floors in malls rather than carpet because he believed that friction-producing carpet made for a less pleasant walking experience for the customer. By 1983, Taubman expanded his financial empire by purchasing the auction company Sotheby's, though this acquisition would eventually have negative repercussions for him. At the start of the twenty-first century, Taubman was charged with violating federal anti-trust laws connected to fixing prices, and eventually was convicted and served a little under a year in a prison hospital. Taubman always maintained his innocence and insists that the only evidence against him came from perjured testimony. Taubman returned to his business enterprises after his release.<sup>757</sup>

Before Southridge opened in the fall of 1970, Taubman explained his decision to build malls in Milwaukee, declaring that the city was ripe for expansion, for "The highway patterns changed, and that changed the retailers' distance of influence."<sup>758</sup> The earliest shopping malls were mostly single-story structures, but Taubman's company determined, after polling numerous consumers, that shoppers were not averse to traveling between floors. Therefore, Taubman's company designed Southridge as "the state's first bi-level, temperature-controlled mall development."<sup>759</sup> During Southridge's construction,

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<sup>757</sup> Caitlin A. Johnson, "For Billionaire There's Life After Jail," CBS News, 15 April 2007, <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/04/15/sunday/main2684957.shtml>> (9 February 2013).

<sup>758</sup> "Bi-Level Malls Called Step Up," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 26 August 1970, part 2, 7.

<sup>759</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

the Taubman Co., Inc. was in the process of building experimental three-level malls in California and Illinois.<sup>760</sup>

In 1972 Taubman predicted that Northridge “would be the last [shopping center] built in the metropolitan are for 8 to 10 years.”<sup>761</sup> This was due to Taubman’s belief that the city was reaching a saturation point in terms of new shopping venues, and that further construction projects would only serve to siphon away customers from existing shopping venues. Taubman was partially correct— though smaller projects, such as the Mitchell Street Pedestrian Mall would come within a few years, and over the coming decades many existing shopping centers would remodel and become malls, the next major new shopping venue, the Grand Avenue, would not come into being for almost another decade. The post-war prosperity era was a boom time for the construction of shopping centers and malls, but by the early 1970’s the city’s population was no longer growing at a rate that would support or justify increasing numbers of major shopping venues, though the city government still explored the possibility of growth through consumption venues.

Though all of these malls were meant to be economic boosts to their locations, Southridge was viewed as a potential source of tax relief to the city of Greenfield, and the neighboring village of Greendale. Greendale residents had been subject to rising taxes for some time, but the local authorities hoped that increased revenue stemming from the mall would steady or even slightly decrease

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<sup>760</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>761</sup> “Northridge Partners See Enough Centers in Area,” The Milwaukee Journal, 2 August 1972, part 2, 25.



the property tax rate. One estimate placed the reduction at about eighty-eight cents for every thousand dollars of home value during the first couple of years of Southridge's existence, but this was only a rough guess, and the authorities were aware that issues beyond their control, such as the need for further development to the surrounding areas, might eat up any potential relief for the taxpayers.<sup>762</sup>

Southridge was able to serve consumers throughout Milwaukee, thanks to the new freeway system making it possible to travel across the city quickly. However, city planning experts disagree on whether major construction projects in previously undeveloped areas led freeways being built to reach these new areas, or if freeway construction led to increased residential and commercial development so the new freeways would lead somewhere. Milwaukee County Expressway and Transportation Commission employee Donald Leaman remarked on the situation, saying "It's a chicken and egg type of thing. Sometimes you wonder which came first... the proximity of the freeway system must have influenced the developers of Southridge. You can't operate a shopping center without immediate access to rapid transportation."<sup>763</sup> Three freeways, nicknamed The Rock, Airport, and the Zoo Freeways intersect provided an easy path to Southridge.<sup>764</sup>

Southridge initially consisted of 1,420,000 square feet of sales area and 7,000 parking spaces, all on one hundred twenty-five acres of space, making it

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<sup>762</sup> Thomas Hagerty, "Tax Gains Expected, Problems, Too," The Milwaukee Journal, 9 September 1970, special Southridge section, 4.

<sup>763</sup> "Freeways: Aid to Suburbs, Shopping Centers," The Milwaukee Journal, 9 September 1970, special Southridge section, 16.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

Wisconsin's largest shopping venue at the time, costing approximately \$50,000,000 to build.<sup>765</sup> (This equates to \$260,832,440 after 2010 levels of inflation.)<sup>766</sup> When Southridge first opened on Thursday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1970, not one, but five “anchor stores,” including Boston Store, Gimbels, Kohl's, J.C. Penney's, and Sears buttressed it. Boston Store was 184,578 square feet in size, Gimbels was 210,672 square feet, Kohl's was 66,000 square feet, J.C. Penney's was 183,930 square feet, Sears was 232,220 square feet. Not all the stores opened at once— though most of the anchor stores opened with the mall, J.C. Penney's did not open until 1971.<sup>767</sup>

The stores' entrances were each decorated with a unique combination of stone and metal, such as limestone and copper for Gimbels, or grey-brown brick and styled concrete for Sears. These department stores encircled the central area of the mall, known as the arcade, which was designed by Wah Yee Associated Architects from Southfield, Michigan, with the assistance of the Taubman Company. The designers' goal was to make the mall seem bright and spacious, and this effect was promoted through skylights, window niches, and carefully placed artificial light. To make Southridge seem brighter, most of the mall's surfaces were colored white. Benches were carefully placed throughout the mall, as were potted plants and trees. In the central Grand Court, a tall aluminum structure poured water into a pool in the floor, and next to this was a wooden

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<sup>765</sup> Alicia Armstrong, “Southridge,” The Milwaukee Journal, 9 September 1970, special Southridge section, 1.

<sup>766</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>767</sup> Thomas Barber, “Southridge Has a Familiar Air,” The Milwaukee Journal, 9 September 1970, special Southridge section, 2.

stage used for fashion displays and other presentations. Opposite ends of the mall contained massive sculptures that mixed shiny surfaces and reflected light.<sup>768</sup>

Southridge also contained a wide variety of food stores and coffee shops such as the Coney Island Inn café, Le Petit Gourmet sidewalk café, The Harvest House at Woolworth's, the Sun Garden Cafeteria, and the cocktail lounge-featuring Chauncey's.<sup>769</sup> Over the years, these restaurants all closed and were replaced by fast-food chains. Robert Greaves & Associates of Glendale, a professional landscaping company, designed Southridge's outer grounds. Trees were carefully planted to help define driving routes, and high patterned shrubs were placed along the main structures in order because they would require less maintenance than grass, which had to be constantly mowed. Some of the plants were meant to have a functional purpose. Thick spruce and pine trees helped to block street noise. Some shrubs, like Japanese yews and Pfitzer junipers, were purely decorative. Hardwood tree bark was scattered inside the ground in order to avoid erosion.

Southridge was an immediate success, and two years later the Kohls and the Taubman Co. sought to improve upon their work with their new mall, Northridge. When Northridge opened on Wednesday, August 2, 1972, it was thought to be the first time in American mall development that four department stores opened at the same time in the same structure.<sup>770</sup> Other malls (like

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<sup>768</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>769</sup> Charlie House, "Nibbler, Gourmet Can Find Equal Satisfaction," The Milwaukee Journal, 9 September 1970, special Southridge section, 2.

<sup>770</sup> Thomas J. Hagerty, "Festivities to Introduce Shoppers to Northridge," The Milwaukee Journal, 1 August 1972, special Northridge section, 2.

Southridge) had four or more anchor stores, but their grand openings were staggered. Some of Northridge's smaller stores did not open until later in the fall.<sup>771</sup> Northridge's anchor stores were Boston Store, Gimbels, J.C. Penney, and Sears, comprising 665,617 square feet of space altogether out of Northridge's total 1,338,331 square feet of area, all of which opened the same day as all of Northridge. This was 81,669 square feet smaller than Southridge, though these totals do not include the many independently-standing stores constructed near the main building. The mall was nine hundred feet long, a length that was chosen because studies illustrated that women preferred not to walk more than three city blocks at a time when they shopped.<sup>772</sup> The only anchor store Southridge had that Northridge did not was Kohl's, and Kohl's planned to build a department store and supermarket a short distance from Northridge. The anchor stores all owned their own spaces, including parking. This meant that Northridge had five "owners," consisting of Boston Store, Gimbels, J.C. Penney's, Sears, and the Northridge Co., which owned the rest of the building.<sup>773</sup>

Northridge had 6,550 parking spaces, and the Route 67 bus route was redrawn in order to serve the new mall.<sup>774</sup> Route 67 originally covered the city's West Side, but the line was extended northwards to help bus patrons reach the new mall. Additionally, portions of Brown Deer Road (Highway 100) and 76<sup>th</sup> Street were expanded to three lanes on each side in order to accommodate

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<sup>771</sup> "Some Stores Opening Dates Coming in Fall," The Milwaukee Journal, 1 August 1972, special Northridge section, 8.

<sup>772</sup> Thomas J. Hagerty, "Festivities to Introduce Shoppers to Northridge," The Milwaukee Journal, 1 August 1972, special Northridge section, 2.

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

additional traffic. A stretch dubbed 85<sup>th</sup> Street was built along Northridge's northern edge, and new traffic lights were placed at the mall's entryways.<sup>775</sup>

Northridge was sometimes described as a “near twin” of Southridge, but there were several major differences between the two. Northridge's slightly smaller size was due to Kohl's and other businesses being constructed away from the main building. Northridge featured a metal sculpture similar to those previously described at Southridge, consisting of a twenty-four-foot-tall piece of artwork crafted from bronze and stainless steel, made by Harold Paris, an artist teaching at the University of California– Berkeley. Paris's sculpture was located in the middle of a water pool and dubbed the Fountain of Illusion. Customers occasionally complained that the water fountain at Southridge was often too loud and distracting, so Northridge's fountain was designed to be quieter. The first supervisor of the maintenance crew, Wendell Manning, explained that it was imperative that the building be kept pristine, saying that “Mister Taubman told me he wanted the place hospital clean, and hospital clean it will be.”<sup>776</sup>

Though Northridge was distinctly different from Southridge in many physical respects, and many of the same designers and architects worked on both projects (over a hundred people worked on decorating Northridge), so there were deliberate points of resemblance between the two “sibling” malls, such as the use of windows and lighting, the arrangement of the means of conveyance between floors, an elaborate fountain, prominently displayed art, and music. One of

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<sup>775</sup> Jerry Wilkerson, “Access Prepared for Autos, Busses,” The Milwaukee Journal, 1 August 1972, special Northridge section, 3.

<sup>776</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Northridge's distinctive features was the use of octagonal shapes, found throughout the ceiling and in translucent tiles in the floor. Northridge's floor was a combination of terrazzo marble tiles and carpet. Brown was a commonly used color, found in the pots for the many plants and the oak railings for the stairs.<sup>777</sup> Much of the artificial light came from bulbs affixed into shiny chrome tubes in the ceiling, or from other bulbs stuck in tall metal poles in the floor dubbed "light trees." Sound speakers were installed at the tops of the light trees. More lights were installed in recesses along the floor. Approximately 20,000 assorted lighting apparatuses could be found throughout Northridge. When Northridge opened, James Smith, one of Taubman's architectural consultants, said, "Northridge is a bit more sophisticated and refined than Southridge, in my opinion... [this is due to] increased experience, growth and better established awareness of "what Taubman is trying to achieve."<sup>778</sup>

Though the two malls were "siblings," they had to compete for Milwaukee's shoppers. Since Northridge and Southridge had many of the same stores, proximity became a primary factor in how consumers decided which venue to patronize. In one advertisement, Northridge tried to siphon away potential Southridge clients by declaring that "you can now go north for all the good things you had to go south for."<sup>779</sup> In essence, Northridge was positioned to serve the

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<sup>777</sup> Lois Hagen, "Co-ordinators Molded Architectural Talents," The Milwaukee Journal, 1 August 1972, special Northridge section, 4.

<sup>778</sup> Lois Hagen, "Co-ordination Vital" (second part of "Co-ordinators Molded Architectural Talents,") The Milwaukee Journal, 1 August 1972, special Northridge section, 8.

<sup>779</sup> "You can now go north for all the good things you had to go south for," The Milwaukee Journal, 1 August 1972, special Northridge section, 5.

inhabitants of the northern half of the city, and Southridge those who lived in the city's southern half. By providing a wide variety of stores in heretofore-underdeveloped areas, Northridge and Southridge attracted customers in their regions of influence and further siphoned away consumers from the traditional downtown business district. When the Kohls decided to invest in malls, they acted on the principle of "if you build it, they will come," and that was certainly true for a while. People came to Northridge and Southridge to make their purchases in a comfortable building where they did not have to worry about the weather as they moved between stores. Novelty and variety (and in some cases, convenience) made these malls popular, at least for a time. Southridge survived and thrived into the twenty-first century. Northridge, for reasons that will be discussed in the conclusion to this dissertation, dwindled, depopulated, and shuttered soon after the turn of the century.

#### *The Mitchell Center Pedestrian Mall*

The Mitchell Center Pedestrian Mall is not one of the city's most famous malls, but it was the product of a great deal of research and development. The Milwaukee City Council had long been aware of the ways that creating new business districts could positively affect the economic vitality of the neighborhoods in which they were built. In 1961, Milwaukee became the first major city government in America to initiate an urban economic development

unit.<sup>780</sup> Several neighborhoods suffering from issues such as high levels of unemployment were targeted for economic redevelopment and revitalization. Mayor Henry Maier and the Common Council spearheaded these local improvement projects, for the local city government believed that creating economic stimulus through encouraging retail trade would strengthen the city monetarily and socially. During the late 1960's and early 1970's, the South Side Mitchell Street District was identified as an area that might benefit from a newly developed shopping district. Mitchell Street was already a longtime shopping area, but the new project was meant to further develop and remodel the location into a pedestrian mall.

A pedestrian mall is different from an enclosed mall. Pedestrian malls are not enclosed within a single climate-controlled building. They are collections of stores (some of which may be in the same building) in an area where shoppers can walk between buildings without fear of traffic. The streets running throughout the pedestrian malls are often a little smaller and paved differently than the roads normally used for automobiles, as they are meant solely for foot traffic and not for heavy vehicles. Despite the use of the word "mall," pedestrian malls are closer to shopping centers than malls, although pedestrian malls often leave traveling patrons more vulnerable to the elements than shopping centers, which often provide cover from rain and snow.

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<sup>780</sup> David H. Laughrey, The Mitchell Center Pedestrian Mall: A Case Study of Neighborhood Commercial Redevelopment in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Washington: National Council for Urban Economic Development, 1975), 7.



In November of 1975, David H. Laughrey, an urban economic environmental consultant working with the Milwaukee Department of City Development (MDCD), released a study discussing the potential benefits of constructing a pedestrian mall on Mitchell Street. Laughrey and the MDCD predicted that the Mitchell Center would provide much-needed financial resuscitation to the area. When the Mitchell Center opened in 1975, it enjoyed a brief period of prosperity.<sup>781</sup> However, in 1984, the Gimbels that served as an anchor store for the Mitchell Center closed, and subsequently the area, though still home to several stores, never became the long-lasting revitalizing force that Mayor Maier and the Common Council dreamed it would become.<sup>782</sup>

Laughrey warned the city government that building new shopping venues was not a reliable long-term plan for economic growth and revitalization, writing that:

“The difficult and diverse problems of older urban commercial areas are complex issues that defy simplistic or holistic solutions. Urban neighborhoods and their cities vary significantly in their basic economic, social and political makeup. There are no simple and easily transferable solutions, and in some instances economic redevelopment *may not* be possible. Each community, therefore, must analyze its own situation carefully and act accordingly...

It is our hope that while the Mitchell Center approach is not necessarily or simplistically transferable, the experience of Mitchell Center may be instructive to others trying to rejuvenate urban commercial neighborhoods.”<sup>783</sup>

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<sup>781</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>782</sup> Linda Steiner, “Department stores had humble origins,” “Stores have deep roots,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, 14 January 1986, part 3 (Business), 5-6.

<sup>783</sup> David H. Laughrey, *The Mitchell Center Pedestrian Mall: A Case Study of Neighborhood Commercial Redevelopment in Milwaukee, Wisconsin* (Washington: National Council for Urban Economic Development, 1975), 35.

*The Grand Avenue*

No city-encouraged building project was predicated on higher hopes than the Grand Avenue. The Grand Avenue was meant to revitalize the downtown shopping district, and for a while, it succeeded according to the plans of Mayor Maier and the Common Council. Despite Mayor Maier's support for the downtown Grand Avenue project, he declined to attend the August 25, 1982 opening party on the grounds that the money raised by the festivities' twenty-five dollar admittance fee would be donated to the Friends of the Museum,\* the United performing Arts Fund, and the Zoological Society of Milwaukee County. Maier objected to the fact that none of these were official city charities. Alderman Joan Soucie also refused to come, claiming, "I just feel that the thing should be more egalitarian, and the *Sentinel* reported that, "she believed Maier had a case of "stage fright" and was protecting himself in case the retail center failed."<sup>784</sup> The deputy commissioner of the Department of City of Development, Jon Wellhoefer, who had assisted the Rouse Co. in constructing the Grand Avenue, stated that, "I appreciate the mayor's position, but personally I've been involved with the people who have been working on this matter for years and for me the gala is like the final handshake at the completion of a project."<sup>785</sup>

Mayor Maier was happy to support the Grand Avenue a year later on August 26, 1983, at the anniversary of the mall's opening, where he helped to cut an eight foot-high cake for about five hundred guests. During his celebratory

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\* The Milwaukee Public Museum.

<sup>784</sup> Avi Lank, "Some city officials going to gala despite Maier refusal to attend," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, 19 August 1982, part 1, 5.

<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

speech, Maier declared that approximately eight million patrons had visited the Grand Avenue over the past year, and suggested that this was really the complex's tenth anniversary, since he and his colleagues had been designing and developing the Grand Avenue for a full decade. Maier was pleased by the heavy traffic, declaring that; "Downtown Milwaukee is a place for people."<sup>786</sup>

In 1985, Mayor Maier's attempts to promote shopping in the downtown area provoked a reaction from small local shopkeepers on Old World Third Street. During this time, the city government was actively encouraging the construction of the forthcoming Bradley Center sporting arena, and the business district on Third Street was the city government's choice for the location. Storeowners threatened litigation in order to protect their shops, and eventually the Bradley Center was built further away on Fourth Street.<sup>787</sup>

Another major figure who helped spearhead the Grand Avenue was Francis E. Ferguson, the chairman of Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co. The *Milwaukee Journal* once described Ferguson as "a big, blunt-spoken, impatient man whose vision is as broad as his community commitment. Francis E. Ferguson, more than any one person, saw the potential for new life in an ailing city center and coaxed, cajoled, and bullied that vision to reality."<sup>788</sup> A political conservative, Ferguson clashed with some of Milwaukee's Democratic politicians as he pushed for downtown economic development, even when he and his

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<sup>786</sup> Bruce Gill, "Neat, it wasn't, but nice, it was," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, 27 August 1983, part 1, 5.

<sup>787</sup> Henry Maier, *The Mayor Who Made Milwaukee Famous* (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, distributed by National Book Network, 1993), 241.

<sup>788</sup> "Blunt visionary bows out," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 11 February 1985, part 1, 12.

ideological adversaries were striving towards the same goal of building the Grand Avenue. In 1973, Ferguson was a co-founder of the Milwaukee Redevelopment Corp., a collection of businessmen who worked with the public and private sectors to help build the Grand Avenue and launch other projects to strengthen the downtown economy. Fueled largely by self-initiative, Ferguson sought out and obtained financial backers for the Grand Avenue, eventually choosing to invest some of Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.'s funds in the project when other sources of backing failed to emerge. Ferguson was aware that racial tensions might play a role in the Grand Avenue's success, stating that he had to make sure that customers of all races felt comfortable there. Noting the widespread presumption that white shoppers might avoid a mall predominately visited by black consumers, Ferguson once declared that, "we were very concerned about, always... that there would be a disproportionate number of blacks, and a lot of people wouldn't be interested in coming down, and that the first time anything wrong happened that would be the end [for the Grand Avenue]."<sup>789</sup> The problem was addressed by concerted attempts to build up clientele of all ethnic backgrounds. Ferguson stepped down as Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.'s chairman in 1985.<sup>790</sup>

The Grand Avenue was designed and crafted through the efforts of two of the most acclaimed figures involved in late twentieth-century American shopping venues: the architect Benjamin C. Thompson and the developer James W. Rouse.

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<sup>789</sup> Gregory D. Stanford, "Races blend in at Grand Avenue," second part of "Hope for harmony," The Milwaukee Journal, 30 September 1984, part 1, 16.

<sup>790</sup> "Blunt visionary bows out," The Milwaukee Journal, 11 February 1985, part 1, 12.

Thompson (1918-2002) was born in St. Paul, Minnesota. Thompson's architectural career rose after serving in the Navy during World War II, after which he became a co-founder of the Architects Collaborative (TAC), and later taught architecture at Harvard University. Thompson became famous after he began collaborating with Rouse. Thompson firmly believed that shopping venues had to be artistic and not mere functional in design, saying that, "For art to be part of our life we must live with it, not just go to museums... In a way, things like museums and Lincoln Center kill art and music. Art is not for particular people but should be in everything you do— in cooling and, God knows, in the bread on the table, in the way everything is done." Thompson believed that commerce strengthened cities, saying that, "The problems of the cities, how to create a new city center in practically every city in the country, is the greatest issue facing the country today."<sup>791</sup>

James W. Rouse (1914-1996) was born into a family of food dealers, though his relatives suffered serious losses during the Depression. Rouse later studied law, worked in mortgage banking, and then fought in the Navy Air Force during World War II. His self-named Rouse Company was known for constructing housing projects in previously undeveloped areas, as well as gentrification efforts through promoting shopping venues. One of Rouse's most ambitious projects was the town of Columbia, Maryland. Columbia is a carefully designed collection of houses and mass consumption venues that Rouse described

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<sup>791</sup> David W. Dunlap, "Benjamin Thompson, 84, Architect of Festive Urban Marketplaces, Dies," *The New York Times*, 20 August 2002, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/20/obituaries/20THOM.html>> (9 February 2013).

as “not an attempt at a perfect city or a utopia, but rather an effort to simply develop a better city, an alternative to the mindlessness, the irrationality, the unnecessary of sprawl and clutter as a way of accommodating the growth of the American city.”<sup>792</sup> Though Rouse stepped down from full-time management of the Rouse Company in 1979, he still played a role in planning the Grand Avenue. In 1982, Rouse used some of his considerable wealth to create the Enterprise Foundation, which was used to build homes and other structures for those in need. Rouse’s basic business and social philosophy was once summarized as follows: “Helping neighborhoods build was not only the right thing to do morally... it was cheaper for the country in the long run than letting them deteriorate.”<sup>793</sup>

As an effort to attract citizens and tourists and to make the venue distinctive from other shopping venues, the Grand Avenue had several notable decorations, including several displays depicting Milwaukee’s history, a large elaborate fountain, and a seven-foot-tall mechanized bear with a monocle, green bowler hat, striped orange jacket, and red bow tie that rode a unicycle back and forth along a wire stretched out above the food court. The bear, affectionately known as both “the tightrope bear” and “Professor Stein,” due to the two beer steins serving as counterweights on the ends of the bear’s balancing pole, one on each end, was a popular tourist attraction for many years. After Northwestern Mutual Life made some changes to the layout and arrangement of the Grand

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<sup>792</sup> Paul Goldberger, “James W. Rouse, 81, Dies; Socially Conscious Developer Built New Towns and Malls,” *The New York Times*, 10 April 1996, <<http://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/10/us/james-w-rouse-81-dies-socially-conscious-developer-built-new-townsand-malls.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>> (10 February 2013).

<sup>793</sup> Ibid.

Avenue in 2004, the unicycling bear was taken down and placed out of public view, although it was taken out occasionally for stationary Christmas displays. Late in 2012, the immobile bear was installed in the South entrance of the Milwaukee Public Market, a collection of food stores all in one building in the Historic Third Ward, attracting new and nostalgic customers. Soon after the bear was unveiled in its new home, the management of the Milwaukee Public Market stated its willingness to explore other ways of displaying it.<sup>794</sup>

The removal of the unicycling bear coincided with a general trend of malls removing unusual or distinctive attractions. By the early twenty-first century, Northwestern Mutual Life had also drained and paved over the elaborate fountain in the center of the Grand Avenue (not only are water fountains expensive to maintain, but they are also a potential safety hazard, leaving areas susceptible to costly lawsuits). The aviary that was an early tourist attraction at Southridge did not last long. Not all distinctive aspects of Milwaukee's malls were removed over time. The Grand Avenue Mall Speisgarten food court still has much of the architecture and decorations used to make the area look reminiscent of a beer hall from Germany.<sup>795</sup> In the early twenty-first century, live animals and animatronics have largely ceased being tourist attractions at malls, save for the occasional Christmas display. The demise of classic seasonal entertainments at shopping venues, like the Kooky Cookie House, has already been mentioned. One of the

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<sup>794</sup> Molly Snyder, "Milwaukee Public Market Gets a New Market and a New Bear," Molly Snyder's Blogs, 9 November 2012, <<http://onmilwaukee.com/myOMC/authors/mollysnyder/publicmarketbear.html>> (11 February 2013).

<sup>795</sup> Ibid.

few entertainment venues that can still be found at shopping malls is the movie theater, featured at malls like Mayfair and the Bayshore Town Center.

### *Transforming Shopping Centers*

Southgate became a mall in order to stay in business. In 1971, the twenty year-old complex underwent a major makeover and transformed from shopping center to mall. Not only were all of the stores secured inside a single large climate-controlled building, but also the number of establishments increased by nearly one hundred percent.<sup>796</sup> Southgate was not the only shopping center to make such a change. Bayshore originally opened in 1954 as a shopping center where the customers had to walk outside to move from store to store.<sup>797</sup> Soon after Southgate's major renovation, Bayshore made similar adjustments and became an enclosed mall. By the early twenty-first century, Bayshore revamped again and increased its size to become the Bayshore Town Center, which was both an enclosed mall and shopping center, consisting of a large main building and several separate smaller buildings outside as well, including a movie theater, numerous restaurants, and other stores.<sup>798</sup>

The renovations kept Southgate and Bayshore alive, but Southgate was no longer as special as it was in earlier years. Increased competition sapped business

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<sup>796</sup> John Gurda, "In 1951, Southgate Changed Shopping," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, December 5, 1999, Retro-Milwaukee, <http://www.retrocom.com/retromilw/southgate.htm>, (accessed September 17, 2011).

<sup>797</sup> John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 329.

<sup>798</sup> Bayshore Town Center, < <http://www.bayshoretowncenter.com/>> (17 November 2012).



and when Gimbels went out of business Southgate suffered a crippling blow. Over the course of the ensuing quarter-century, Southgate Mall gradually lost customers and businesses, battled growing safety concerns with growing numbers of gangs and muggers, and eventually became a largely empty shell of its former self.

By the summer of 1999, Southgate had been demolished. Other than a handful of stores on the periphery of the property that had been added late in the complex's existence, the entire complex was bulldozed and fenced off, with new construction projects planned for the future. Gurda posited that the destruction of Southgate would be no great loss to the city, since its role as a shopping venue had been supplanted by other businesses, writing that, "Southgate was a relic of the recent past, like black-and-white TVs... it never developed the emotional potency of a Mitchell St or a 3<sup>rd</sup> St... In 1951 Southgate represented a brave new world in American retailing. It displaced historic neighborhood shopping districts and was displaced, in turn, by more novel forms of commerce."<sup>799</sup>

No new brick-and-mortar edifice came to challenge the mall as a "more novel form of commerce." Online shopping, safety issues, and increased competition drew away customers, and malls were no more guaranteed to enjoy longevity than shopping centers or department stores.

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<sup>799</sup> John Gurda, "In 1951, Southgate Changed Shopping," Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, December 5, 1999, Retro-Milwaukee, <http://www.retrocom.com/retromilw/southgate.htm>, (accessed September 17, 2011).

***CONCLUSION– THE FUTURE OF SHOPPING VENUES AND THE  
CONTINUED DECLINE OF THE DOWNTOWN SHOPPING DISTRICT***

The reasons why Milwaukee’s shopping landscape has changed so dramatically over time are open to debate. In his 1967 thesis “Downtown Milwaukee: Progress and Promise,” Kenneth E. Fry criticizes the notion that that the downtown business district was dying, and concludes by writing,

“Milwaukee’s downtown has shown both progress and promise in the years since 1947. It was never as bad off as some people thought in the last decade and it probably isn’t as well off as some people think in this decade.\* What was viewed as death was mostly change in function and some “squeezing” of the useful life of old buildings. What is viewed as new life is probably also a change of function plus sharper competition for old buildings.

So what has been viewed as growth and decay is probably mostly change, and even that has been in the direction of overall improvement.”<sup>800</sup>

Leeseberg argues that there is nothing preventing the Milwaukee downtown area from reclaiming its former position of dominance in the city’s consumption landscape. This analysis, however, came before increasing numbers of shopping centers and malls were built throughout the city, dispersing the buying public across a large number of venues. Additionally, many of Milwaukee’s consumers believed that as the decades passed, more and more of the intangible aspects that had made shopping enjoyable had vanished.

As long as Milwaukee exists, its residents will need to purchase all kinds of items. The advent of Internet retailers has made it possible to obtain many

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\* Fry argues that the Depression did not harm business as much as the public perception might have indicated.

<sup>800</sup> Kenneth E. Fry, “Downtown Milwaukee: Progress and Promise,” (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee, 1967), 132-133.

pieces of merchandise without ever leaving one's home, but the places Milwaukeeans visit come in extremely diverse styles and sizes. Shopping venues have grown bigger with time, and economic, personal, and crime issues all combine to affect the health of such businesses. If the history of Milwaukee's shopping venues is any indication, two main trends become apparent. The first is that no retail business is guaranteed to last forever. The second is that the city's shopping habits will continue to evolve along with global, national, and regional trends. Milwaukee's consumption habits mirror those of the global and national scene.

The existence of traditional shopping venues may be threatened by the emergence of two very different yet powerful forces, both of which have completely reshaped mass consumption practices in the twenty-first century. The first is the "big box" store, which has emerged as a one-stop venue with for many consumers thanks to the wide selection of dry goods (and increasingly, food) and the discounted prices that are offered. The second is Internet shopping, which has eliminated the need for consumers to travel in order to make their purchases. Big box stores and the Internet have forced department stores, shopping centers, and malls to reevaluate their business models and to reconsider their relationships with their customers. It is unlikely that big box stores and the Internet will ever completely supplant traditional shopping venues. Many consumers enjoy the shopping experience too much to make a full switch to computer-based purchasing, and for all their diversity of merchandise, big box stores lack many items that specialty stores may provide. Nonetheless, it seems likely that

traditional shopping venues will continually need to deal with the challenges of an evolving consumption landscape.

**CONCLUSION: “SUFFICIENTLY UNPREDICTABLE TO BE  
INTERESTING”**

*MASS CONSUMPTION IN MILWAUKEE AFTER 1970*

The main constant in the history of mass consumption in Milwaukee is change. Changing times altered the ways that Milwaukeeans shopped. In the decades following 1970, the landscape of consumption in Milwaukee changed dramatically. Numerous landmark stores and shopping centers closed and new businesses and shopping locations opened to replace them. Many but certainly not all of the small grocery stores had closed to make way for larger stores. By 1990 there were only approximately six hundred groceries in Milwaukee, one hundred twenty of which were either supermarkets or convenience stores.<sup>801</sup> Though many of the old groceries had shuttered due to the increased competition from the larger chains, numerous small food stores and specialty shops survived. Formerly thriving shopping centers like Southgate closed, and were replaced by others in different areas. By the end of the century, physical shopping centers, though still commonly frequented, became less crucial to buying and selling, since the Internet provided a completely new venue for consumption, allowing shoppers to purchase all sorts of items from all over the world and have them shipped to their homes, all through the use of a computer.

As the twentieth century reached its close and the twenty-first century began, Milwaukee continued to change. The basic innovations affecting mass

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<sup>801</sup> Erwin W. Kieckhefer, “Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir,” (*Milwaukee History* 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993)), 34.

consumption throughout the twentieth century, such as the invention of the automobile, the birth of the supermarket, and the rise of shopping centers and malls had already come into being by 1970, and few new forces entered in the ensuing decades, save for the rise of the “big box” store. Some of the most prominent changes came from shifts in Milwaukee’s population.

### **MILWAUKEE SINCE 1970: SETBACKS AND STABILITY**

Throughout the bulk of this period, Milwaukee’s population declined, and by this point the city’s strategy of expansion through annexation ended, due primarily to running out of available land to add to the city’s boundaries. The surrounding cities and towns were understandably unwilling to sacrifice their territory to keep Milwaukee growing. The closing of Milwaukee’s frontier, so to speak, coincided with a time of population reduction. As the city’s boundaries stayed static, a trickle of citizens moved elsewhere. The decline was sharpest between 1990 and 2000, but as the twenty-first century began, the rate of depopulation dwindled significantly.

#### *MILWAUKEE’S POPULATION: 1980–2010*<sup>802</sup>

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>POPULATION</b>
1980	636,212
1990	628,088
2000	596,974
2010	594,833

<sup>802</sup> Pabst, Georgia and Ben Poston, “State’s Latino Population Increases 74% in 10 Years,” The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 10 March 2011, <<http://www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/117756803.html>>.

Although the city's population is significantly smaller than it was during the record highs of the 1960's, the decline appears to have stalled. The history of Milwaukee is far from over, and the story of the city's mass consumption continues. Though the city has many social and economic problems, the contention of Anthony Orum in *City-building in America*, where he asserted that from the postwar period onward that Milwaukee was a city in decline, is unjustifiably severe. It might be argued that Milwaukee's post-war prosperity era ended with the start of the city's decline of population. From the 1970's onward, Milwaukee may be considered to have been in a state of both setbacks and stability. Mass consumption continued without economic hindrance or political interference, though periodically some economic turbulence, usually based on national or international troubles, caused some minor disruptions in local buying and selling patterns.

The ways that Milwaukeeans earn and spend their money have changed radically as well since 1970. Technological advances have led to new jobs that few observers could have anticipated during the early twentieth century, in fields such as computers, to cite just one example. Citizens have new ways to spend their hard-earned money, with new credit cards allowing people to potentially buy items with money that they do not yet have. The Internet has also provided many new ways for people to spend their money without leaving the comfort of their computer screens, as well as new ways to manage their money. From the last years of the twentieth century onwards, the Internet has become an increasingly prominent venue for consumption. The ability to place orders online and have

them delivered straight to one's home has radically reworked the ways that people are able to make purchases. The full extent of this phenomenon has yet to be determined, though physical evidence of this can be seen in local shops often being supplanted by more convenient (and often more economical) websites, and this Internet business has taken money that might have been gone into the local economy and sent it out-of-state, or even out of the country. One downside of Internet shopping, like catalog shopping, is that the consumer is often unable to verify the quality of the merchandise prior to its arrival, and the hassle of returning items reinforces the phrase "caveat emptor."

There are limits to the Internet. Automobiles and groceries are still largely bought in person, and consumers still visit department stores, shopping centers, and malls, though perhaps not quite as frequently as they once did.

#### *NEW CARS, NEW CHALLENGES*

Buying and selling automobiles in Milwaukee during the latter decades of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first century was essentially the same as it was at the end of the post-war prosperity period. Many large car lots were on the fringes of town in 1970, but urban development led to increased construction— often of commercial districts— around the lots. The major change in classified advertising came in 1995, when the city's two main newspapers merged to form *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, thereby leaving only one main



newspaper outlet that catered to the entire city.<sup>803</sup> At the start of the setbacks and stability era, however, many commentators believed that a new revolution in transportation habits was about to begin.

Cars remain crucial to life in Milwaukee, but in the 1970's many figures believed that global issues would make automobiles increasingly impractical as a mass consumption item, and that public transportation would become the dominant means of conveyance. In the early 1970's, climbing oil prices and environmental concerns led to some pundits believing that the age of the automobile in Milwaukee was ending. Writing in the mid-1970's, John Ray Ottensmann declared, "The automobile is an exceedingly inefficient means of transport in terms of energy consumption," and predicted that an energy crisis would lead to a massive switch to public transportation.<sup>804</sup> This attempt to see into the city's future proved erroneous, despite the trends that seemed to foretell doom for the automobile. Issues such as higher oil prices caused by the oil embargo, coupled with growing environmental concerns, a demand for energy efficiency, as well as worries about the safety and reliability of the cars being marketed to consumers were all prevalent concerns amongst certain pundits. These issues all combined to create a commonly held belief that Americans were about to significantly change their car consumption habits.

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<sup>803</sup> "Journal Sentinel Will Greet Readers April 2," The Milwaukee Journal: Waukesha Metro Edition, 18 January 1995, sec. W, 1.

<sup>804</sup> John Ray Ottensmann, "The Changing Spatial Structure of an American City: Milwaukee 1920-1970" (Ph.D. diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1974), 332.

Writing in 1974, John Ray Ottensmann predicted in “The Changing Spatial Structure of an American City: Milwaukee 1920-1970” that the automobile age as Milwaukeeans knew it was very likely coming to an end. When discussing the evolution of Milwaukee’s layout and the role that automobiles had played in this development, he wrote that:

“If the city of the twenties should be considered a product of the streetcar, the present Milwaukee is obviously the product of the automobile. The overwhelming majority of all employed persons drive their cars to work each day. The flexibility of this mode of transportation... has facilitated the decentralization of employment and population over the past half century... The ease of automobile transportation has reduced the pressure on households to locate as close as possible to places of employment...

The flexible transportation provided by the automobile has made distance relatively unimportant, and this allowed the “free-form” dispersal of the city. Any attempt to develop mass transit would have to accommodate this new style of urban life.”<sup>805</sup>

Ottensman predicted that skyrocketing gas prices would make personal automobiles economically unsustainable, but he freely admitted that he might be wrong. Indeed, Ottensman’s vision of Milwaukeeans relying mainly on public transportation has proven to be dramatically mistaken. Automobiles continue to be the main means of conveyance for the citizens of southeastern Wisconsin. As Phil Hunt quipped, “The average American would fight to the death to protect his ignition keys and any attempt to restrict the privilege of owning and operating a private vehicle would result in instant rebellion.”<sup>806</sup> Referring to his own experience selling cars during the 1970’s, Hunt recalls that the buying public lost

<sup>805</sup> Ibid., 330-331.

<sup>806</sup> Phil Hunt, “No Thanks, I’m Just Looking”: The True Confessions of a Car Salesman (St. Francis, Wisconsin: Full Court Press, 1981), 13.

all interest in fuel-efficient economy cars once the Arab oil embargo had ceased and gasoline prices dropped.<sup>807</sup>

Concerns over fuel efficiency have led to one new development in purchasing cars. By the twenty-first century, environmental concerns and rising gasoline prices led to the creation of a new kind of vehicle: hybrid cars. Hybrid cars have found a market amongst consumers concerned about pollution and fuel efficiency. Milwaukeeans continue to need cars to maneuver about their city, but it is certainly possible that there will be new innovations in automobiles that will make the cars of the coming decades radically different from those of the late twentieth century.

### ***FOOD SHOPPING IN THE AGE OF THE SUPERMARKET***

By the early 1970's, supermarkets had taken over the bulk of the food business in Milwaukee, and the small independently-owned shops that had filled the city half a century earlier were now relatively uncommon. The little stores where the employees helped the customers select their purchases were now curiosities rather than the job. Once such food shop that was still in business in 1972 was the Meyer Fishman family's "Meyers' Old Fashioned Bulk Food Store." In a series of photographs taken on August 8<sup>th</sup> of that year, the shop is shown to be quite small, with only a few items in the center of the store accessible

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<sup>807</sup> Ibid., 31.

to the customers, and the bulk of the store's wares behind a counter, where only the clerks could access them.<sup>808</sup>

By describing itself as “old fashioned,” the Meyer Fishmans’ store acknowledged that its means of selling groceries had become an anachronism. Despite the increasing ubiquity of chains and supermarkets, the small independent store never died. Numerous small, independently owned shops continued to do business, some in residential areas, others in business districts. Population shifts led to new terminology to describe food stores. New Hispanic residents built small groceries and called them bodegas, a term that was used by all sorts of customers, not just Spanish-speakers.

The 1970's were a time of upheaval in the grocery business as many chains either went out of business or left Milwaukee during this decade. Kroger, Red Owl, and National Food Stores are three prominent examples of chain food stores that left Milwaukee during this time. Kroger stores had been in Wisconsin since 1928, but by 1971 all fifty-five stores in the state were out of business.<sup>809</sup> The ten Red Owl stores in Milwaukee closed in 1974. National Food Stores transplanted its warehousing headquarters from Milwaukee to Hodgkins, Illinois, and all of their Milwaukee businesses shut in 1976.<sup>810</sup>

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<sup>808</sup> “Meyer Fishman Photographs, 1946-1972,” 050 B-[1943], Folder 2: Meyers’ Food Bulk Store, 1972, University of Wisconsin– Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society.

<sup>809</sup> Paul Gilmore, “Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee’s Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984” (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 215.

<sup>810</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

Alternative shopping venues are still available. In 1996, there were six regularly open farmer's markets located throughout Milwaukee County.<sup>811</sup> Many of the downtown areas that were formerly used for "green markets" are now used almost entirely for parks or have been developed for various purposes. Milwaukee's current city hall has been built on the site of one former green market.<sup>812</sup>

Ethnic food stores are a growing presence on the city's landscape at the start of the twenty-first century. Whereas in the past Milwaukee's ethnic shops were almost exclusively European, such as German, Polish, or Italian; Asian and Hispanic/Latino shops make up a growing percentage of twenty-first century Milwaukee's ethnic food store market. El Rey Supermarkets, specializing in Hispanic foods, now has multiple locations located throughout Milwaukee's South Side. El Rey was founded by two Mexican-born brothers, Ernesto and Heriberto Villarreal, who began with a small food store catering to the city's Mexican community, and expanded as a supermarket starting in 1978. More stores and increasing numbers of Central and South American food products were introduced over the following decades.<sup>813</sup>

In the years after 1970, consumption options changed for the poorest residents of Milwaukee. During the 1970's, Milwaukee, as well as much of the

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<sup>811</sup> Olmedo J. Varela, Socio-spatial Relationships and Food Programs in Milwaukee's Food System (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, 1996), 96.

<sup>812</sup> Harry H. Anderson, "Milwaukee's Green Markets in 1943," Milwaukee History 17 no. 1 (Spring, 1994): 26.

<sup>813</sup> "The El Rey Story: Milwaukee's Authentic Hispanic Grocery Store," <<http://elreyfoods.com/aboutus.html>> (14 August 2011).

rest of America, became increasingly concerned with the plight of the impoverished and hungry. As a result, a growing number of food pantries, meal programs, and other charitable endeavors were launched as a means of assuring that the less fortunate in the city had sustenance. By 1996, there were thirty-six meal programs catering to Milwaukeeans in need, and one hundred forty-seven emergency food pantry programs in Milwaukee County.<sup>814</sup> Additionally, in 1996 Milwaukee County was home to one hundred ninety-nine summer food service programs, specializing in feeding children who would otherwise have missed the breakfasts and lunches that schools provided students when classes were in session, and thirty elderly nutrition programs were also in effect.<sup>815</sup>

At the start of the twenty-first century, the supermarket remains the primary source of food for many consumers, but many of the “big box” stores have begun selling groceries for low prices, thereby siphoning business from the traditional supermarkets. The variety of foods in the “big box” stores, however, is often much more limited than in supermarkets, and many “big box” food departments lack fresh meat, fish, and produce.

#### *VENUES FOR DURABLE GOODS GO AND COME*

Only a few of the department stores that dominated Milwaukee’s consumption landscape in the mid-twentieth century are still in business today. Unlike other major Milwaukee department stores such as Gimbels and Schuster’s,

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<sup>814</sup> Olmedo J. Varela, Socio-spatial Relationships and Food Programs in Milwaukee’s Food System (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, 1996), 42, 45-48.

<sup>815</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-65, 71.

Boston Store continues to be in business in multiple locations during the early twenty-first century, including one in the same location where the business first opened in Milwaukee.

What causes the decline and eventual death of a shopping venue? The transfer of business to other venues has been discussed in the third chapter. Crime is another serious problem that has led to the decline of several major shopping venues. Consumers will not patronize a venue if they do not feel safe there. During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, many shopping centers and malls became considerably more dangerous due to the presence of muggers, gangs, and drug addicts. After experiencing verbal or physical harassment at a shopping venue, a patron is considerably less likely to return there for future purchases. Consumers have no incentive to buy items at a shopping venue if they fear that the items they purchase there might be stolen from them before they leave.

This issue continues to be an extremely controversial subject. Some commentators have posited that racism plays a role in the decline of certain shopping venues. In his 2011 op-ed “Myths About Northridge Cannot Foretell Mayfair’s Doom,” *Journal Sentinel* columnist Eugene Kane discusses the fate of Northridge Mall, which opened to brisk business in 1973, only to endure a protracted decline and an eventual close three decades after its opening.<sup>816</sup> Kane writes in the wake of an incident where a large group of African-American youths

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<sup>816</sup> Eugene Kane, “Myths About Northridge Cannot Foretell Mayfair’s Doom,” *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 5, 2011, <<http://www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/112984389.html>>, (10 October 2011).

caused a major disruption (possibly an Internet-inspired flash mob) at Mayfair Mall, causing many consumers to feel unsafe there. Several readers emailed Kane to argue that crime and vandalism, caused mostly by African-Americans, led to the failure of Northridge and could very likely destroy Mayfair. Kane does not provide any statistics on crime at Northridge but he posits that, “what really killed Northridge Mall was a white guy named Jesse Anderson who brutally killed his wife in 1992 and claimed it was two black men who attacked the pair after they dined at a nearby restaurant. Anderson ultimately was convicted of the murder and sentenced to life in prison. (He was killed in prison by the same inmate who killed Jeffrey Dahmer there.) But the damage to Northridge’s reputation was done.”<sup>817</sup>

Out of over four hundred comments on the online version of the article, many readers disagree with Kane’s conclusions, and the racial aspect of these cases is hotly debated. Whatever the true state of the crime problem at a major shopping venue, the mere *perception* that one might be unsafe visiting somewhere can drain a venue’s customer base. Citing personal experience, readers explained why they stopped shopping at Northridge and other local venues, mostly because they felt that visiting these venues was growing increasingly hazardous, and shopping was no longer a pleasant experience. Scores of other acts of theft, intimidation, and crime throughout the late twentieth century are cited, pointing out that it was much more than just one horrendous crime that made people feel unsafe and unwilling to visit Northridge. Additionally, some malls appear to have

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<sup>817</sup> Ibid.



cut back on overhead costs by reducing maintenance and security budgets.<sup>818</sup>

Decreased security makes it harder for shops at a mall to make a profit because shoplifting and vandalism rise. In any case, the debate over Northridge and Mayfair illustrates that safety is a relative issue, and for whatever reason, shoppers have their own reasons for ceasing to visit a shopping mall, ranging from muggings to dirty conditions. All it takes are enough crimes or other unpleasant incidents to dissuade a significant percentage of consumers from frequenting a venue, and a mall or shopping center will die.

There are numerous other factors besides crime that might doom a shopping venue. If a shopping center or mall lost popular stores, a decline in customers might conceivably occur. The sale of inferior merchandise was another factor that cost many stores consumers. Shops selling clothes that quickly wore out would lose business to establishments that sold better quality wares. Milwaukee's consumers were willing to spend the better part of an hour driving to Southgate when it was the city's only major shopping center, but as increasing numbers of large shopping venues were constructed throughout the city, consumers were often inclined to make their purchases at a more convenient location, unless the items they wanted were only sold at a certain place, or if an out-of-the-way shopping venue was offering a special sale.

*MILWAUKEEANS AND MASS CONSUMPTION: HOW BUYING AND SELLING  
REMAIN AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE CITY*

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<sup>818</sup> Ibid.

Milwaukee's experiences with mass consumption should not be carelessly extrapolated to apply to the nation as a whole. Milwaukee's size, state of development, and local culture were widely different from large cities like New York and Los Angeles. Comparatively, Milwaukee's mass consumption experience was as a whole quite different from smaller cities in Wisconsin, such as Oshkosh or Sheboygan, or any of thousands of little towns throughout the country. Milwaukee's mass consumption history does, however, reflect the changing trends and major events that affected the nation.

After studying the histories of automobile consumption, food shopping, and shopping venues in Milwaukee, what can be learned about the influence that mass consumption had upon the city and its residents? As landmark stores have closed and seasonal traditions have faded into distant memory, sentiment and nostalgia have affected Milwaukeeans in ways that have given the city a unique consumer culture. To gain a full understanding of how buying and selling affected life in Milwaukee, consumer culture would have to be incorporated, since a better conception of the human factor and how it affects buying and selling would give a fuller view of what makes for a successful business in Milwaukee. Yet even with a strictly narrow focus on mass consumption, certain clear patterns are illustrated about the minds of the local consumers.

Thrift has often been described as a Milwaukee virtue, and many newspaper articles from the *Journal* and *Sentinel* that discuss the city's buying habits comment on the residents' love for a good bargain. There is definitely a great deal of truth to this, for example, during the Depression and WWII years

many Milwaukee consumers were extremely careful with their finances, as demonstrated in some of the anecdotes in the chapters on income and grocery shopping. Economical habits, in any event, are not limited to Milwaukee, but it is notable that the city's largest vehicles of print communication sought to define Milwaukeeans as being economical.

As stated earlier, it is fruitless to talk of the "typical" Milwaukee consumer, because of the diversity of taste and product availability, even among members of the same ethnic group or income class. It takes all kinds of consumers to make a community. Some consumers may have been driven to overspend out of covetousness; others bought only what they needed. From a seller's perspective, it does not matter what a consumer's motives for purchasing are as long as the store continued to make profits.

Making the city's residents want to shop fueled mass consumption in Milwaukee, and throughout the mid-twentieth century Milwaukee demonstrated a strong talent for experimenting with new and innovative ways to make its residents want to trade their incomes for assorted goods. From the widespread local experimentation with new automobile models, to supermarkets carefully designed to be welcome and inviting to consumers, to numerous forms of entertainment meant to draw people to shopping venues, Milwaukeeans were continually coaxed to see consumption as an exciting, satisfying, and entertaining component of their lives.

Through print media, radio, television, and entertainment events, Milwaukeeans were bombarded with advertising and encouragement to engage in

mass consumption. Yet for all of the local pressure to spend, Milwaukee's consumers were largely affected by national and international forces. The economic chaos of the Depression and the straitened circumstances of the war years had an exponentially greater effect on Milwaukee's consumption practices than anything that local government or entrepreneurs could have done.

Despite the fact that Milwaukee's economy was largely shaped by forces outside of local control, Milwaukee's merchants and businesspeople certainly taught the city's residents that consumption was a means to a more pleasant and pleasurable life. Yet despite constant efforts, no person or organization has yet been able to harness the power of advertising and psychological manipulation in order to benefit the city as a whole. Attempts to revitalize the downtown shopping district have met with many failures and limited success, and concerns over crime have destroyed many shopping venues.

A full-fledged attempt to strengthen Milwaukee's economy and consumption practices has to start with income. Jobs paying healthy wages are critical in turning citizens into consumers. Issues of crime and safety have to be addressed, for no shopping venue is likely to receive regular patronage if its visitors feel endangered. Lessons should be drawn from the city's consumption history in order to teach businesses how to attract and retain customers. At a time when much of one's shopping can be done over a computer, consumers have to be given increased incentives to venture out, such as better deals, an entertainment experience, or a feeling of participating in a community event. The emotional aspect of consumption also has to be remembered. When traditions die, like

many of the holiday entertainments mentioned in chapter four, consumer loyalty may conceivably be weakened. Careful planning should insure that shoppers have plenty of places to park their cars. The “buy local” movement is frequently touted as a means of stimulating the economy of a defined area, but Milwaukee is a city that requires many imports. The trendy “locovore” movement, encouraging consumers to eat foods grown closely to their homes, has some potential in farm-filled Wisconsin, but to hew too strictly to the locovore mentality would have a serious effect in Milwaukee, where citrus fruits would have to be abandoned and fresh produce cannot be grown at all during the long, cold winter months. Ultimately, Milwaukeeans need to be given a sense of pride and interest in their city’s culture and history if they to make any sort of effort to strengthen the area economically.

Milwaukeeans have long accepted the attitude that mass consumption was an integral part of their lives to be enjoyed. The city’s long-term economic health depends on finding ways to shape the consumer mindset into more effectively supporting local businesses.

#### *WHAT MASS CONSUMPTION MEANS FOR MILWAUKEE*

This dissertation has deliberately focused on mass consumption in Milwaukee through three case studies. To more fully understand how consumption shaped the city, other topics of mass consumption research, such as housing, advertising, small specialty stores, and the growing influence of the Internet might be explored.

Additionally, further research into Milwaukee's consumer culture might help to illustrate what made the city's consumption habits unique. One exploration of Milwaukee's consumer culture can be found in the 2004 television documentary "Things That Aren't Here Anymore," which profiles several Milwaukeeans as they reminisce about Milwaukee institutions that have since closed, such as once-famous restaurants and drive-in movie theaters. The opening segment focuses on now-closed shopping venues, such as Southgate, and the downtown Gimbels, Schuster's and other downtown stores. In this segment, individuals who lived through the early and mid-twentieth century in Milwaukee reflect about their experiences visiting shopping venues, explaining the differences between the past and the present, as well as the thoughts and feelings they experienced during their shopping trips. A study of Milwaukee's consumer culture would go beyond the Joe Friday-esque "just the facts" approach taken here to study mass consumption, delving into the psyches of Milwaukee's shoppers, as well as weighing the common perception— or possibly mere stereotype— that in general Milwaukee is a city obsessed with finding bargains.

Was Milwaukee's mass consumption experience substantially different from that of other major American cities? The answer to that is both yes and no. The entire nation went through the same cycles of boom, bust, war, and prosperity as Milwaukee, with the noted exception of the delayed onset of the Depression in Milwaukee. Milwaukee was subject to the same rationing restrictions as the rest of the nation during wartime, and the city shared prosperous times with much of the rest of America.

Milwaukee's experiences with mass consumption were not really different from the rest of America, but rather, Milwaukee's mass consumption experiences were distinctive from those of other cities. As shown earlier, Milwaukee was home to certain forms of innovation, such as the development of new forms of automobiles and the improved design of supermarkets under Edward Stanley Geniesz.

There are not many studies of specific cities and how mass consumption developed within them, so it is difficult to thoroughly compare Milwaukee's mass consumption experience with that of other cities. According to Fr. Steven Avella's *The Good Life: Sacramento's Consumer Culture*, the development of car consumption, food stores, and other shopping venues in Sacramento was very similar to that of Milwaukee. The two cities have numerous points of contrast, such as ethnic composition (Sacramento's Asian population was much larger than Milwaukee's, and Asians played a major role in the city's food sales) and different innovative forces, but the basic patterns of change, such as the evolution of small grocery stores to gigantic supermarkets, are quite comparable.<sup>819</sup>

Some cities do have major differences in mass consumption from Milwaukee. New York City, for example, has a substantially different automobile consumption experience from Milwaukee. Thanks to the city's layout and extensive public transit system, many New Yorkers do not need to own a car in order to move about their city, and indeed, plenty of New Yorkers never even learn how to drive. In general, however, most major American cities have

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<sup>819</sup> Steven M. Avella, *The Good Life: Sacramento's Consumer Culture* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 86.

comparable development patterns to Milwaukee's in terms of food shopping and venues selling durable goods. The timing of the developments may have differed— some franchises and modernizations varied, but in general, however, mass consumption in Milwaukee mirrored that of the broader American experience.

After studying several decades of mass consumption, it is worthwhile to reflect on how Milwaukeeans reflected on mass consumption as an intellectual and cultural phenomenon, if at all. The mentality of Milwaukeeans in regard to consumption can be paralleled with some observations about the celebrated television police drama *Homicide: Life on the Street*. The Baltimore-set series was acclaimed for its realism and accuracy, but the show's creators often commented that there was one major disparity between real life and their dramatized versions of police work. On the television series, the detectives frequently philosophized about the meanings of life and death, debated the morality of certain laws and practices, and openly explored many other existential questions through dialogue. In reality, Baltimore's police officers were largely decent, capable men who were so busy with catching criminals and making Baltimore a better, safer place, and they rarely dwelled upon the intellectual and philosophical aspects of their work. Similarly, while many histories of consumption, such as Tracy Deutsch's *Building a Housewife's Paradise* portray consumers as consistently aware of the thoughts and processes behind their consumption, there is little evidence that the majority of Milwaukee's consumers philosophized about the nature of mass consumption, nor were they consciously



aware of the extent to which their purchases were part of a larger phenomenon of mass consumption.

Milwaukee's consumers were concerned primarily with making their livings, taking care of themselves and their families, and finding a few comforts in life. The average consumer rarely explores the psychological, economic, and metaphysical aspects of their consumption habits in any depth, although consumers frequently ask themselves basic questions such as, "What do I want?" and "Is this purchase a good deal?" With the exception of the war years, local businesses appealed to the consumer to act as an individual and not as a concerned citizen. Though many Milwaukeeans may have been concerned about the state of the union, consumer comments and advertising messages indicated that personal concerns dominated mass consumption decisions. No organized movement or leadership managed to direct the citizenry towards channeling their consumption habits into acting for the good of some long-term goal regarding the betterment of the city or the nation. Though the citizenry may not have been fully aware of the theory and history of mass consumption, they were indeed aware of how buying and selling were an essential part of their daily lives, though only those who deliberately studied the city might fully understand how various social and economic factors affected their region.

Crime, urban renewal, and development will continue to affect the layout of a decentralized city. Though the downtown area might conceivably regain ground as a major shopping destination, the convenience and flexibility created by the construction of shopping venues all over the city means that it is almost

impossible for the downtown area to regain the dominance it possessed when downtown was the center of Milwaukee's consumer economy. The best that the downtown area can hope for is a larger share of the city's shopping business. The recentralization of Milwaukee's consumption landscape is not something to be desired, for it would require the destruction of the shopping venues spread throughout the rest of the city, which would devastate certain neighborhoods and inconvenience hundreds of thousands of residents.

Whatever happens in the future, Milwaukeeans will keep consuming. The future of mass consumption in Milwaukee, the United States, and even the entire world may go in any of multiple directions. E.F. Schumacher declares in *Small is Beautiful*, his critique of contemporary economics, that, "I thus come to the cheerful conclusion that life, including economic life, is still worth living because it is sufficiently unpredictable to be interesting."<sup>820</sup> The story of mass consumption in Milwaukee is not over. It has barely begun.

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<sup>820</sup> E.F. Schumacher, Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 225.

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**INTRODUCTION APPENDIX: INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT**

**APPENDIX A: DETAILS ON MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE IN 1920**

**MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY GENDER & AGE: 1920<sup>821</sup>**

	Age in years							[Unknown]
	[All 10 + over]	10-13	14-19	20-24	25-44	45-64	65+over	
Males	153,419	336	13,094	19,819	79,423	35,770	4,847	130
Females	51,344	19	12,706	12,867	19,455	5,689	558	50

**MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY GENDER: 1920<sup>822</sup>**

	<u>Total number (over age 10)</u>	<u>Number gainfully employed</u>	<u>Percent gainfully employed</u>
Males	183,803	153,419	83.5
Females	184,139	51,344	27.9

**OCCUPATIONS IN MILWAUKEE, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN OVER 10: 1920<sup>823</sup>**

Total working persons:	204,763
Agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry:	731
Extraction of minerals:	116
Manufacturing and mechanical industries:	106,371
Transportation:	14,685
Trade:	25,868
Public service (not elsewhere classified):	3,287
Professional service:	11,509
Domestic and personal service:	15,860
Clerical occupations:	26,336

<sup>821</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Abstract of the Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 544-547.

<sup>822</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population 1920, Vol. III: Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 169.

<sup>823</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

*APPENDIX B: INFLATION IN AMERICA, 1920-1970*<sup>824</sup>

\$1 in 1920 = \$10.94 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.09 in 1920
\$1 in 1922 = \$13.02 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.08 in 1922
\$1 in 1924 = \$12.79 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.08 in 1924
\$1 in 1926 = \$12.36 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.08 in 1926
\$1 in 1928 = \$12.79 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.08 in 1928
\$1 in 1930 = \$13.10 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.08 in 1930
\$1 in 1932 = \$15.96 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.06 in 1932
\$1 in 1934 = \$16.32 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.06 in 1934
\$1 in 1936 = \$15.73 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.06 in 1936
\$1 in 1938 = \$15.51 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.06 in 1938
\$1 in 1940 = \$15.62 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.06 in 1940
\$1 in 1942 = \$13.42 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.07 in 1942
\$1 in 1944 = \$12.43 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.08 in 1944
\$1 in 1946 = \$11.22 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.09 in 1946
\$1 in 1948 = \$9.08 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.11 in 1948
\$1 in 1950 = \$9.08 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.11 in 1950
\$1 in 1952 = \$8.25 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.12 in 1952
\$1 in 1954 = \$8.13 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.12 in 1954
\$1 in 1956 = \$8.04 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.12 in 1956
\$1 in 1958 = \$7.57 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.13 in 1958
\$1 in 1960 = \$7.39 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.14 in 1960
\$1 in 1962 = \$7.24 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.14 in 1962
\$1 in 1964 = \$7.06 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.14 in 1964
\$1 in 1966 = \$6.75 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.15 in 1966
\$1 in 1968 = \$6.28 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.16 in 1968
\$1 in 1970 = \$5.64 in 2010	\$1 in 2010 = \$0.18 in 1970

Not surprisingly, the difference between the past value of a dollar and the contemporary spending power of American currency is the least in the most recent date covered here, in 1970. The slight hiccup in dollar value at the start of the 1920's may be attributed (at least in part) to the slight recession and the lingering economic after-effects of the First World War, and the Great Depression similarly caused a shift in monetary values. The relatively steady, gradual

<sup>824</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

narrowing between past or present values began at the start of the Second World War, and continued for three straight decades.

APPENDIX C: MILWAUKEE INDUSTRIAL STATISTICS: 1919-1929<sup>825</sup>

		<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Wages Paid</u>	<u>Average Wage</u>
Manufacturing	1919	118,919	\$141,944,658	\$1,193.63
Jobbing & Wholesale Business	1919	6,138	\$9,066,783	\$1,477.16
Manufacturing	1920	125,555	\$183,628,013	\$1,462.53
Jobbing & Wholesale Business	1920	5,893	\$11,379,132	\$1,930.96
Manufacturing	1921	97,201	\$123,790,409	\$1,273.55
Jobbing & Wholesale Business	1921	5,919	\$9,927,604	\$1,677.24
Manufacturing	1922	111,617	\$135,700,030	\$1,215.77
Jobbing & Wholesale Business	1922	5,802	\$9,206,509	\$1,586.78
Manufacturing	1923	121,002	\$174,711,264	\$1,443.87
Jobbing & Wholesale Business	1923	6,321	\$10,934,621	\$1,729.89
Manufacturing	1924	109,521	\$160,378,425	\$1,464.36
Jobbing & Wholesale Business	1924	5,944	\$10,415,468	\$1,752.27
Manufacturing	1925	119,480	\$180,815,923	\$1,513.36
Jobbing & Wholesale Business	1925	6,076	\$10,575,291	\$1,740.50
Manufacturing	1926	127,453	\$197,481,946	\$1,549.45
Jobbing & Wholesale Business	1926	5,872	\$10,623,835	\$1,809.24
Manufacturing	1927	128,209	\$198,949,637	\$1,551.76
Jobbing & Wholesale Business	1927	5,597	\$10,228,361	\$1,827.47
Manufacturing	1928	131,027	\$207,918,869	\$1,586.84
Jobbing & Wholesale Business	1928	5,402	\$10,223,079	\$1,892.46
Manufacturing	1929	138,378	\$222,969,287	\$1,611.31

<sup>825</sup> “Industrial Statistics Summary For 1920,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1921, Manufacturing Special Section, 3. All average wage statistics from the Sentinel industrial statistics have been calculated by me. “Industrial Statistics Summary, 1920-1921,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1922, Annual Trade Review and World Commerce Number, 3. Note: there appears to be some sort of error with the numbers, because the listed amounts do not add up to the stated total. Since there is no evidence as to what caused this discrepancy, I have simply used the stated total. “Industrial Statistics Summary, 1921-1922,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1923. The newspaper pages on this microfilm were out of order and badly frayed at the top, making identifying the section and page number impossible. “Industrial Statistics Summary, 1922-1923,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1924, Annual Trade Review, 3. “Industrial Statistics Summary, 1923-1924,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1925, Progressive Milwaukee and Annual Trade Review, 3. “Industrial Statistics Summary, 1924-1925,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1926, Progressive Milwaukee and Annual Trade Review, 3. “Industrial Statistics Summary, 1925-1926,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1927, Progressive Milwaukee and Annual Trade Review, 3. “Industrial Statistics Summary, 1926-1927,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 31 December 1927, Annual Trade Review, 3. “Industrial Statistics Summary, 1927-1928,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 29 December 1928, Progressive Milwaukee and Annual Trade Review, 3. “Industrial Statistics Summary, 1927-1928,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 29 December 1928, Annual Trade Review, 3. The earlier version of the 1928 statistics were used in this one case because the microfilms of the later statistics were so faint as to be unreadable. Industrial Statistics Summary, 1919-1929,” The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1930, Annual Trade Review, 5, 8-14. Note: some individual digits in larger numbers are blurred, but after examining the totals, these are my best approximations as to the precise printed statistics.

APPENDIX D: STATISTICS ON MILWAUKEE'S RETAIL EMPLOYEES: 1930<sup>826</sup>

<u>Number of stores</u>	<u>Number retail workers</u> <sup>827</sup>	<u>Average full-time employee annual salary</u>
8,669	41,725	\$1,450

APPENDIX E: AVERAGE YEARLY INCOME IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY: 1929-1936<sup>828</sup>

	<u>Average Total Income</u>	<u>Percent of 1929 Income</u>
1929	\$2,602	100.0
1934	\$1,418	54.5
1935	\$1,569	60.3
1936	\$1,781	68.4

<sup>826</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Wholesale Distribution: Special Series. Multiple Types of Wholesaling: A Study of Establishments Engaged in Two or More Types of Wholesaling (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 37.

<sup>827</sup> Includes full and part-time employees and proprietors.

<sup>828</sup> W. Elliot Brownlee, Jr., Progressivism and Economic Growth: The Wisconsin Income Tax 1911-1929 (Port Washington, New York: National University Publications, Kennikat Press, 1974), 58.

APPENDIX F: EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN MILWAUKEE IN 1930TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN MILWAUKEE: 1930<sup>829</sup>

<u>Total population</u>	<u>Number of gainful workers over age 10</u>
578,249	254,337

TOTAL UNEMPLOYMENT IN MILWAUKEE: 1930<sup>830</sup>

*Class A: Persons out of a job, able to work, and looking for a job*

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent of population</u>	<u>Percent of gainful workers</u>
16,017	2.8	6.3

*Class B: Persons with jobs but on unpaid lay-off, excluding the sick and voluntarily idle*

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent of population</u>	<u>Percent of gainful workers</u>
4,695	0.8	1.8

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT BY GENDER: 1930<sup>831</sup>

	<u>Total number</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Gainful workers (all industries)	254,378	190,915	63,463
People out of a job, able and looking for work	16,017	14,095	1,922
People with jobs, but on unpaid lay-off (not including the sick and voluntarily idle)	4,695	3,997	698

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY GENDER: 1930<sup>832</sup>

	<u>Total number</u>	<u>Number gainfully employed</u>	<u>Percent gainfully employed</u>
Males	242,261	191,005	78.8
Females	240,028	63,332	26.4

<sup>829</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Abstract of the Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 468.

<sup>830</sup> Ibid., 468.

<sup>831</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930: Unemployment (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931-2), 1096.

<sup>832</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Abstract of the Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 325.

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT BY GENDER: 1930<sup>833</sup>

	<u>Total number</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Gainful workers (all industries)	254,378	190,915	63,463
People out of a job, able and looking for work	16,017	14,095	1,922
People with jobs, but on unpaid lay-off (not including the sick and voluntarily idle)	4,695	3,997	698

The numbers in the two previous tables are slightly different. This can probably be attributed to adjustments in the statistical data, since the former table was printed a year after the latter. The latter is still included because it contains information not present in the former.

TOTAL OCCUPATIONS IN MILWAUKEE BY RACE, TOTAL NUMBERS: 1930<sup>834</sup>

	<u>Total Number</u>	<u>Number White</u>	<u>Number Negro</u>
Total:	254,337	249,660	3,638 <sup>835</sup>
Professional persons:	15,425	15,286	133
Proprietors, managers, and officials:	20,063	19,932	70
Clerks and kindred workers:	59,164	59,093	52
Skilled workers and foremen:	52,730	52,435	259
Semiskilled workers:	64,450	63,633	645
Unskilled workers:	42,505	39,281	2,479

<sup>833</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930: Unemployment (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931-2), 1096.

<sup>834</sup> Department of Commerce: Bureau of the Census, Washington, "A Social-economic Grouping of Gainful Workers in Cities of 500,000 or More: 1930" (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1938), 9.

<sup>835</sup> The fact that the total numbers of Whites and Negroes do not always add up to the Totals is because Asians, Mexicans, and other minority groups are not mentioned specifically in the non-Total categories.



TOTAL OCCUPATIONS IN MILWAUKEE BY RACE, MALES: 1930<sup>836</sup>

	Total Number	Number White	Number Negro
Total:	191,005	187,232	2,797
Professional persons:	9,023	8,917	102
Proprietors, managers, and officials:	18,836	18,724	53
Clerks and kindred workers:	33,577	33,541	23
Skilled workers and foremen:	51,995	51,704	255
Semiskilled workers:	44,933	44,355	437
Unskilled workers:	32,641	29,991	1,927

TOTAL OCCUPATIONS IN MILWAUKEE BY RACE, FEMALES: 1930<sup>837</sup>

	Total Number	Number White	Number Negro
Total:	63,332	62,428	841
Professional persons:	6,402	6,369	31
Proprietors, managers, and officials:	1,227	1,208	17
Clerks and kindred workers:	25,587	25,552	29
Skilled workers and foremen:	735	731	4
Semiskilled workers:	19,517	19,278	208
Unskilled workers:	9,864	9,290	552

<sup>836</sup> Department of Commerce: Bureau of the Census, Washington, "A Social-economic Grouping of Gainful Workers in Cities of 500,000 or More: 1930" (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1938), 9.

<sup>837</sup> Department of Commerce: Bureau of the Census, "A Social-economic Grouping of Gainful Workers in Cities of 500,000 or More: 1930" (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1938), 9.

APPENDIX G: WAGE OR SALARY INCOME RECEIVED IN 1939 BY ALL EXPERIENCED MALES IN THE MILWAUKEE LABOR FORCE (EXCEPT PERSONS ON EMERGENCY WORK): ALL JOBS<sup>838</sup>

Total Persons:	329,602
\$0 to \$99:	28,635
\$100 to \$199:	3,152
\$200 to \$299:	7,052
\$300 to \$399:	8,104
\$400 to \$499:	10,343
\$500 to \$599:	11,117
\$600 to \$699:	13,414
\$700 to \$799:	17,003
\$800 to \$899:	17,157
\$900 to \$999:	25,434
\$1,000 to \$1,199:	16,323
\$1,200 to \$1,399:	4,718
\$1,400 to \$1,599:	4,614
\$1,600 to \$1,999:	1,516
\$2,000 to \$2,499:	1,646
\$2,500 to \$2,999:	
\$3,000 to \$4,999:	
\$5,000 and over:	
Not reported:	

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<sup>838</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. III: The Labor Force: Part 5 Pennsylvania–Wyoming (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 1006. These numbers are contradicted later in this edition of the census, for where these income levels are categorized by job, sometimes the sum totals of the numbers are slightly off, and it is impossible to tell from where the error originates with the provided information (any of the numbers could have been improperly typed), though the differences are so slight as to be statistically insignificant. This categorized income data can be found in Appendices G and H.

APPENDIX H: WAGE OR SALARY INCOME RECEIVED IN 1939 BY ALL EXPERIENCED MALES IN THE MILWAUKEE LABOR FORCE (EXCEPT PERSONS ON EMERGENCY WORK): BY PROFESSION<sup>839</sup>

	Professionals <sup>840</sup>	Managers/Officials/Etc. <sup>841</sup>	Clerical/Sales/Etc.	Craftsmen/Foremen/Etc.
Total Persons:	170,228	15,714	29,115	40,626
\$0 to \$99:	2,952	7,215	3,502	5,389
\$100 to \$199:	120	41	609	506
\$200 to \$399:	217	114	1,264	1,244
\$400 to \$599:	267	142	1,248	1,604
\$600 to \$799:	353	182	1,688	2,156
\$800 to \$999:	397	223	2,010	2,417
\$1,000 to \$1,199:	423	316	2,382	3,014
\$1,200 to \$1,399:	516	478	3,077	4,160
\$1,400 to \$1,599:	701	560	2,819	4,884
\$1,600 to \$1,999:	1,252	1,199	4,170	7,910
\$2,000 to \$2,499:	1,347	1,605	3,529	4,977
\$2,500 to \$2,999:	854	813	1,068	1,412
\$3,000 to \$4,999:	1,032	1,555	1,187	606
\$5,000 and over:	254	904	284	35
Not reported:	165	367	278	312

	Operatives	Domestics	Protectors <sup>842</sup>	Service Work <sup>843</sup>	Farm Laborers	Other Laborers <sup>844</sup>	Not Reported
Total Persons:	43,087	182	3,326	8,854	342	16,809	1,259
\$0 to \$99:	3,774	54	94	2,016	131	2,871	588
\$100 to \$199:	813	14	22	323	38	617	49
\$200 to \$399:	1,926	34	42	747	59	1,345	59
\$400 to \$599:	2,431	23	63	771	35	1,465	53
\$600 to \$799:	3,199	15	94	1,016	20	1,563	54
\$800 to \$999:	3,748	8	143	919	17	1,456	49
\$1,000 to \$1,199:	4,239	6	184	996	9	1,792	52
\$1,200 to \$1,399:	5,362	12	237	920	12	2,169	59
\$1,400 to \$1,599:	5,872	5	208	483	8	1,564	52
\$1,600 to \$1,999:	8,369	4	483	409	9	1,551	78
\$2,000 to \$2,499:	2,882	2	1,575	119	2	247	36
\$2,500 to \$2,999:	351	1	126	30	—	56	7
\$3,000 to \$4,999:	161	—	37	14	—	12	9
\$5,000 and over:	21	—	5	3	—	5	5
Not reported:	209	4	13	88	2	96	109

<sup>839</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. III: The Labor Force: Part 5 Pennsylvania–Wyoming (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 1006-1008.

<sup>840</sup> Includes semi-professionals.

<sup>841</sup> Not including farmers, who are placed under “Professionals.”

<sup>842</sup> Includes firemen, guards, watchmen, policemen, soldiers, and so forth.

<sup>843</sup> Does not include those in domestic or protective service.

<sup>844</sup> Does not include farm or mining work.

APPENDIX I: WAGE OR SALARY INCOME RECEIVED IN 1939 BY ALL EXPERIENCED FEMALES IN THE LABOR FORCE (EXCEPT PERSONS ON EMERGENCY WORK): ALL JOBS<sup>845</sup>

Total Persons:	66,810
\$0 to \$99:	12,863
\$100 to \$199:	3,141
\$200 to \$299:	7,258
\$300 to \$399:	7,433
\$400 to \$599:	9,988
\$600 to \$799:	9,703
\$800 to \$1,199:	5,984
\$1,200 to \$1,399:	3,799
\$1,400 to \$1,599:	2,010
\$1,600 to \$1,999:	1,803
\$2,000 to \$2,499:	1,269
\$2,500 to \$2,999:	616
\$3,000 to \$4,999:	285
\$5,000 and over:	49
Not reported:	609

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<sup>845</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. III: The Labor Force: Part 5 Pennsylvania–Wyoming (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 1010.

APPENDIX J: WAGE OR SALARY INCOME RECEIVED IN 1939 BY ALL EXPERIENCED FEMALES IN THE LABOR FORCE (EXCEPT PERSONS ON EMERGENCY WORK): BY PROFESSION<sup>846</sup>

	Professionals <sup>847</sup>	Managers/Officials/Etc. <sup>848</sup>	Clerical/Sales/Etc.	Craftsmen/Foremen/Etc.
Total Persons:	7,816	2,222	25,537	814
\$0 to \$99:	1,858	1,276	3,329	129
\$100 to \$199:	133	17	1,027	22
\$299 to \$399:	445	38	1,958	51
\$400 to \$599:	660	35	1,865	62
\$600 to \$799:	396	76	3,885	119
\$800 to \$999:	568	112	4,875	151
\$1,000 to \$1,199:	490	127	3,427	102
\$1,200 to \$1,399:	421	108	2,526	75
\$1,400 to \$1,599:	478	84	1,220	35
\$1,600 to \$1,999:	707	103	864	36
\$2,000 to \$2,499:	890	72	260	15
\$2,500 to \$2,999:	512	36	56	4
\$3,000 to \$4,999:	183	44	45	1
\$5,000 and over:	11	25	10	1
Not reported:	64	69	190	11

	Operatives	Domestics	Protectors <sup>849</sup>	Service Work <sup>850</sup>	Farm Laborers	Other Laborers <sup>851</sup>	Not Reported
Total Persons:	14,118	6,297	26	8,905	10	408	646
\$0 to \$99:	1,502	1,694	—	2,610	3	78	373
\$100 to \$199:	577	885	—	440	3	17	20
\$299 to \$399:	1,455	1,976	1	1,229	1	56	48
\$400 to \$599:	2,100	1,073	—	1,553	—	49	36
\$600 to \$799:	3,571	441	1	1,387	—	72	40
\$800 to \$999:	2,914	116	9	858	2	65	33
\$1,000 to \$1,199:	1,256	47	3	456	1	46	19
\$1,200 to \$1,399:	480	15	5	150	—	15	4
\$1,400 to \$1,599:	132	6	—	50	—	3	2
\$1,600 to \$1,999:	52	—	1	34	—	3	3
\$2,000 to \$2,499:	6	3	6	16	—	—	1
\$2,500 to \$2,999:	3	1	—	4	—	—	—
\$3,000 to \$4,999:	1	—	—	10	—	—	1
\$5,000 and over:	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
Not reported:	68	40	—	97	—	4	66

<sup>846</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. III: The Labor Force: Part 5 Pennsylvania–Wyoming (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 1010.

<sup>847</sup> Includes semi-professionals.

<sup>848</sup> Not including farmers, who are placed under “Professionals.”

<sup>849</sup> Includes firemen, guards, watchmen, policemen, soldiers, and so forth.

<sup>850</sup> Does not include those in domestic or protective service.

<sup>851</sup> Does not include farm or mining work.

*APPENDIX K: DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN MILWAUKEE: 1940*<sup>852</sup>

	Wage/Salary Workers		New Workers <sup>853</sup>		On Public Emergency Work	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total	19,561	4,324	3,907	2,583	12,000	2,746
Less than 1 month	386	165	55	39	110	52
1 month	1,319	365	120	110	165	66
2 months	1,176	292	308	231	220	64
3 months	1,498	414	180	115	359	88
4 or 5 months	1,915	389	146	102	509	127
6 to 8 months	2,072	453	188	136	1,019	239
9 to 11 months	1,158	323	397	298	865	228
12 to 23 months	2,874	711	870	580	1,939	472
24 to 59 months	4,172	705	1,011	557	3,251	643
60 months or more	2,427	284	165	106	2,302	306
Duration not reported	564	223	467	309	1,261	461

<sup>852</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. III: The Labor Force: Part 5 Pennsylvania–Wyoming (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 1034.

<sup>853</sup> These “New Workers” are those individuals who have no prior work experience, but wish to enter the labor force.

APPENDIX L: EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN MILWAUKEE, 1940MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY RACE & EMPLOYMENT STATUS (TOTAL NUMBERS): 1940<sup>854</sup>

	All Classes	Native White	Foreign-born White	Negro	Other
Total population	790,336	674,308	106,273	9,186	569
People 14 & up	627,202	513,663	105,897	7,214	428
In labor force	335,960	278,208	53,465	4,024	263
Employed <sup>855</sup>	281,326	233,988	45,136	1,999	203
On public emerg. <sup>856</sup>	17,747	14,389	2,487	851	20
Seeking work	36,887	29,831	5,842	1,174	40
Not in labor force	291,242	235,455	52,432	3,190	165

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY RACE & EMPLOYMENT STATUS (MALES): 1940<sup>857</sup>

	All Classes	Native White	Foreign-born White	Negro	Other
Total population	391,444	328,407	57,981	4,705	351
People 14 & up	308,443	246,654	57,778	3,729	282
In labor force	246,016	197,306	45,615	2,872	223
Employed <sup>858</sup>	202,927	163,458	37,870	1,425	174
On public emerg. <sup>859</sup>	14,575	11,634	2,307	617	17
Seeking work	28,514	22,214	5,438	830	32
Not in labor force	62,427	49,348	12,163	857	59

<sup>854</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. II: Characteristics of the Population: Part 7 Utah–Wyoming, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 690.

<sup>855</sup> Does not include emergency public assistance.

<sup>856</sup> Such as WPA, etc.

<sup>857</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. II: Characteristics of the Population: Part 7 Utah–Wyoming, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 690.

<sup>858</sup> Does not include emergency public assistance.

<sup>859</sup> Such as WPA, etc.

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY RACE & EMPLOYMENT STATUS (FEMALES): 1940<sup>860</sup>

	All Classes	Native White	Foreign-born White	Negro	Other
Total population	398,892	345,901	48,292	4,481	218
People 14 & up	318,759	267,009	48,119	3,485	146
In labor force	89,944	80,902	7,850	1,152	40
Employed <sup>861</sup>	78,399	70,530	7,266	574	29
On public emerg. <sup>862</sup>	3,172	2,755	180	234	3
Seeking work	8,373	7,617	404	344	8
Not in labor force	228,815	186,107	40,269	2,333	106

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY GENDER: 1940<sup>863</sup>

	Total number	Persons over 14	In labor force	Not in labor force	% in labor force <sup>864</sup>
Males	391,444	308,443	246,016	62,427	79.8
Females	398,892	318,759	89,944	228,815	28.2

<sup>860</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. II: Characteristics of the Population: Part 7 Utah–Wyoming, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 690.

<sup>861</sup> Does not include emergency public assistance.

<sup>862</sup> Such as WPA, etc.

<sup>863</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Vol. II: Characteristics of the Population: Part 7 Utah–Wyoming, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943), 690.

<sup>864</sup> For persons over 14. These percentages were calculated by me.



APPENDIX M: INCOME IN MILWAUKEE, 1949

INCOME IN 1949 FOR FAMILIES AND UNRELATED INDIVIDUALS FOR  
THE MILWAUKEE STANDARD METROPOLITAN AREA<sup>865</sup>

*[Statistics are based on a 20% sample.]*

	<u>Families and Unrelated Individuals</u>	<u>Families</u>
All Classes:	224,880	167,630
Less than \$500:	20,500	7,075
\$500 to \$999:	11,400	3,570
\$1,000 to \$1,499:	10,495	5,015
\$1,500 to \$1,999:	11,570	5,795
\$2,000 to \$2,499:	16,245	9,995
\$2,500 to \$2,999:	19,415	14,395
\$3,000 to \$3,499:	28,400	23,905
\$3,500 to \$3,999:	22,365	20,130
\$4,000 to \$4,499:	18,775	17,355
\$4,500 to \$4,999:	13,135	12,455
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	19,770	18,980
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	10,160	9,860
\$7,000 to \$9,999:	10,750	10,445
\$10,000 and over:	4,920	4,675
Income not reported:	6,980	3,980
Median income (\$):	3,340	3,800

<sup>865</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States: Census of Population: 1950, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population: Number of Inhabitants, General and Detailed Characteristics of the Population, Part 49: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 49-70.

APPENDIX N: DISPOSABLE INCOME IN MILWAUKEE: 1949-1961DISPOSABLE INCOME TRENDS IN MILWAUKEE, 1949 to 1961<sup>866</sup>

	Per Capita	City Total
1949	\$1,638	\$1,417,197
1952	\$1,848	\$1,665,011
1955	\$1,981	\$1,913,081
1958	\$2,014	\$2,096,201
1961	\$2,328	\$2,478,815
% Change 1949 to 1961	42.1	74.9

(From the Survey of Buying Power, Sales Management)

TRENDS IN RETAIL SALES IN MILWAUKEE: 1949 TO 1961<sup>867</sup>

1949	\$1,104,853,000
1952	\$1,142,562,000
1955	\$1,241,748,000
1958	\$1,430,367,000
1961	\$1,403,433,000
% Change 1949 to 1961	27.0

(From the Survey of Buying Power, Sales Management)  
(All numbers are rounded to the nearest thousand)

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY GENDER: 1950<sup>868</sup>

	Total number	Persons over 14	In labor force	Not in labor force	% in labor force <sup>869</sup>
Males	311,643	240,255	198,715	41,540	82.7
Females	325,749	259,425	92,445	166,980	35.6

<sup>866</sup> Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, The Economy of Southeastern Wisconsin (Waukesha, Wis.: The Commission, 1963), 8-10.

<sup>867</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>868</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States: Census of Population: 1950, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population: Number of Inhabitants, General and Detailed Characteristics of the Population, Part 49: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 49-158.

<sup>869</sup> For persons over age 14. These percentages were calculated by me.

TOTAL AND PER CAPITA CURRENT CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURES FOR  
FOOD, CLOTHING, TRANSPORTATION, SERVICES, AND DURABLE GOODS  
CONSUMED IN MILWAUKEE, 1954 AND 1958<sup>870</sup>

	1954	1958
Service Expenditures	\$117,740,000	\$128,358,000
Retail Sales	\$907,566,000	\$1,063,400,000
Durable Goods Consumption	\$292,193,000	\$316,503,000
Total	\$1,317,499,000	\$1,508,261,000
Per Capita	\$1,403.00	\$1,500.00

*(Source: Sales Management, Census of Business, Census of Population)*

*(All numbers except per capita are rounded to the nearest thousand)*

“Service expenditures were adjusted by subtracting out all business service expenses. Retail sales expenditures were adjusted by subtracting out all new durable goods expenditures which are considered investment out of savings and not current consumption.

Durable goods consumption during the period was obtained by taking a six year average of durable goods sales.”<sup>871</sup>

When adjusted for 2010 values, the 1954 per capita consumption rate for Milwaukee is \$11,411.92 and the 1958 per capita consumption rate is 11,356.56.<sup>872</sup> It should be noted that these numbers only reflect the sales reports that were reported by local stores, and there may conceivably be some unreported data that might affect the numbers.

<sup>870</sup> Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, The Economy of Southeastern Wisconsin (Waukesha, Wis.: The Commission, 1963), 13.

<sup>871</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>872</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

APPENDIX O: EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN MILWAUKEEEMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN MILWAUKEE: 1950<sup>873</sup>

	Males	Females
Persons 14 years old and over	242,907	259,105
Labor force	200,515	92,486
Civilian labor force	199,472	92,461
Employed	193,388	90,164
Unemployed	6,084	2,297
Not in labor force	42,392	166,619

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY GENDER: 1950<sup>874</sup>

	Total number	Persons over 14	In labor force	Not in labor force	% in labor force
Males	311,643	240,255	198,715	41,540	82.7
Females	325,749	259,425	92,445	166,980	35.6

<sup>873</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1950 United States Census of Population: Census Tract Statistics: Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Adjacent Area (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952), 20.

<sup>874</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States: Census of Population: 1950, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population: Number of Inhabitants, General and Detailed Characteristics of the Population, Part 49: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 49-158.

<sup>875</sup> For persons over age 14. These percentages were calculated by me.

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY JOB AND GENDER: 1950<sup>876</sup>

	Males	Females
Total employed people	193,388	90,164
Professional, technical, and kindred workers	15,278	9,521
Managers, officials, and props., incl. farm	18,184	3,480
Clerical and kindred workers	17,152	29,650
Sales workers	12,876	8,968
Craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers	47,320	2,000
Operatives and kindred workers	52,791	19,326
Private household workers	129	3,195
Service workers, except private household	12,494	12,139
Laborers, except miners	15,498	925
Occupation not reported	1,666	960

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<sup>876</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Census Tract Statistics: Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Adjacent Area: 1950 Population Census Report, Volume III, Chapter 32, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 20.

APPENDIX P: INCOME IN MILWAUKEE IN 1949

*INCOME IN 1949 OF PERSONS BY SEX, FOURTEEN YEARS AND UP, FOR  
THE MILWAUKEE STANDARD METROPOLITAN AREA<sup>877</sup>*

*[Statistics are based on a 20% sample.]*

	Total	Males	Females
Total Milwaukeeans <sup>878</sup> :	673,715	323,965	349,750
Total people with income:	435,955	279,845	156,110
\$1 to \$499 or less:	52,785	15,715	37,070
\$500 to \$999:	41,945	16,355	25,590
\$1,000 to \$1,499:	34,620	13,780	20,840
\$1,500 to \$1,999:	39,080	14,275	24,805
\$2,000 to \$2,499:	48,285	25,600	22,685
\$2,500 to \$2,999:	44,980	33,800	11,180
\$3,000 to \$3,499:	57,065	50,615	6,450
\$3,500 to \$3,999:	38,945	36,325	2,620
\$4,000 to \$4,499:	26,630	25,020	1,610
\$4,500 to \$4,999:	13,960	13,225	735
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	16,790	15,845	945
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	6,500	6,075	425
\$7,000 to \$9,999:	6,980	6,470	510
\$10,000 and over:	7,390	6,745	645
Median income (\$):	2,514	3,201	1,369
Income not reported:	33,040	13,935	19,105

<sup>877</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States: Census of Population: 1950, Volume II: Characteristics of the Population: Number of Inhabitants, General and Detailed Characteristics of the Population, Part 49: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 49-227.

<sup>878</sup> Includes people without income.

APPENDIX Q: INFORMATION ON INCOME AND POPULATION IN  
MILWAUKEE IN 1959

INCOME IN 1959 OF FAMILIES FOR THE MILWAUKEE STANDARD  
METROPOLITAN AREA, BY PERCENT<sup>879</sup>

Total number of families:	303,887
Under \$1,000:	2.1
\$1,000 to \$1,999:	3.3
\$2,000 to \$2,999:	4.2
\$3,000 to \$3,999:	5.1
\$4,000 to \$4,999:	7.7
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	13.2
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	14.5
\$7,000 to \$7,999:	12.4
\$8,000 to \$8,999:	9.6
\$9,000 to \$9,999:	7.1
\$10,000 to \$14,999:	14.9
\$15,000 to \$24,999:	4.2
\$25,000 and over:	1.6
Median income (\$) for families:	6,995
Median income (\$) for families & unrelated individuals:	6,171

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<sup>879</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1960; the Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 1-311. These numbers only add up to 99.9% due to the numbers being rounded.

INCOME IN 1959 OF PERSONS BY SEX, FOURTEEN YEARS AND UP, FOR  
THE MILWAUKEE STANDARD METROPOLITAN AREA, BY PERCENT<sup>880</sup>

	Males	Females
Total # of Milwaukeeans: <sup>881</sup>	378,049	250,806
Total:	100.0	100.0
\$1 to \$499 or loss:	4.8	20.0
\$500 to \$999:	4.5	17.9
\$1,000 to \$1,499:	4.7	10.4
\$1,500 to \$1,999:	3.4	7.8
\$2,000 to \$2,499:	3.5	8.6
\$2,500 to \$2,999:	3.0	6.6
\$3,000 to \$3,999:	7.4	13.1
\$4,000 to \$4,999:	11.9	8.5
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	17.9	3.8
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	14.7	1.5
\$7,000 to \$9,999:	16.7	1.3
\$10,000 and over:	7.5	0.6
Median income (\$):	5,377	1,615

MEDIAN INCOME IN 1959 OF PEOPLE BY RACE AND GENDER IN MILWAUKEE<sup>882</sup>

*(For the standard Milwaukee metropolitan area)*

Total males: \$5,377

Total nonwhite males: \$4,057

Total females: \$1,615

Total nonwhite females: \$1,497

<sup>880</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1960; the Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 1-313.

<sup>881</sup> Only includes people with income.

<sup>882</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1960; the Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 1-314.



MEDIAN INCOME IN 1959 OF PERSONS IN THE EXPERIENCED CIVILIAN  
LABOR FORCE BY RACE AND GENDER IN MILWAUKEE<sup>883</sup>

*(For the standard Milwaukee metropolitan area)*

Total median income for males <sup>884</sup> :	\$5,625
Male professional, managerial, and kindred workers:	\$7,273
Male craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers:	\$6,133
Male operatives and kindred workers:	\$5,347
Male laborers, except farmers and miners:	\$4,289
Total median income for females:	\$2,468
Female clerical and kindred workers:	\$2,983
Female operatives and kindred workers:	\$2,883

MEDIAN INCOME IN 1959 OF MILWAUKEE FAMILIES BY RACE<sup>885</sup>

*(For the standard Milwaukee metropolitan area)*

All Families:	\$6,995
White Families:	\$7,121
Nonwhite Families:	\$4,872

<sup>883</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1960; the Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 1-314.

<sup>884</sup> Gender median income totals (both for males and females) include people in other occupations that are not listed here.

<sup>885</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, Census of Population: 1960; the Eighteenth Decennial Census of the United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 1-796-1-797.

*FAMILY INCOME IN THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE: 1959*<sup>886</sup>

All families:	188,984
Under \$1,000:	4,648
\$1,000 to \$1,999:	7,453
\$2,000 to \$2,999:	9,466
\$3,000 to \$3,999:	11,204
\$4,000 to \$4,999:	16,487
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	26,758
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	27,806
\$7,000 to \$7,999:	23,094
\$8,000 to \$8,999:	17,538
\$9,000 to \$9,999:	12,911
\$10,000 to \$14,999:	25,091
\$15,000 to \$24,999:	5,386
\$25,000 and over:	1,142
Median income for families:	\$6,664
Median income for families and unrelated individuals:	\$5,694

(When adjusted for inflation, the 1959 median income for families was \$50,106.64 by 2010 standards, and the median income in 1959 for families and unrelated individuals was \$42,813.21.)<sup>887</sup>

<sup>886</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, United States Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Milwaukee, Wis. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 15.

<sup>887</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

APPENDIX R: MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE IN 1960

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN MILWAUKEE: 1960<sup>888</sup>

	Males	Females
Persons 14 years old and over	255,913	277,118
Labor force	206,491	111,318
Percent of total	80.7	40.2
Civilian labor force	205,544	N/A
Employed	196,083	106,168
Unemployed	9,461	5,146
% Civilian labor force	4.6	4.6
Not in labor force	49,422	165,800

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY GENDER: 1960<sup>889</sup>

	Total number	Persons over 14	In labor force	Not in labor force <sup>890</sup>	% in labor force <sup>890</sup>
Males	361,268	255,913	206,491	49,422	80.7
Females	380,056	277,118	111,318	165,800	40.2

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY JOB AND GENDER: 1960<sup>891</sup>

	Males	Females
Total Employed Workers:	196,083	106,168
Professional, Technical, & Kindred Workers:	18,457	10,606
Managers, Officials, & Propr's, including Farmers:	14,665	3,016
Clerical and Kindred Workers:	16,718	35,847
Sales Workers:	12,080	9,997
Craftsmen, Foremen, & Kindred Workers:	43,510	1,529
Operatives and Kindred Workers:	54,142	18,347
Private Household Workers:	92	3,723
Service Workers, Except Private Household:	12,139	16,258
Laborers, except Miners:	13,439	748
Occupation not Reported:	10,841	6,097

<sup>888</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, United States Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Milwaukee, Wis. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 87.

<sup>889</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>890</sup> For persons over age 14. These percentages were calculated by me.

<sup>891</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960; Milwaukee, Wis. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 87.

APPENDIX S: INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT IN 1969TOTAL INCOME FOR ALL MILWAUKEE MALES OVER 18: 1969<sup>892</sup>*(Statistics are for the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area)*

Total:	426,374
Without income:	9,675
With income:	416,699
\$1 to \$999 or loss:	18,386
\$1,000 to \$1,999:	30,025
\$2,000 to \$2,999:	24,876
\$3,000 to \$3,999:	22,371
\$4,000 to \$4,999:	18,006
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	20,005
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	25,740
\$7,000 to \$7,999:	35,922
\$8,000 to \$9,999:	81,227
\$10,000 to \$14,999:	100,771
\$15,000 to \$24,999:	28,018
\$25,000 or more:	11,352
Median income in dollars:	8,307
Mean income in dollars:	8,803

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<sup>892</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 51-886.

TOTAL INCOME FOR ALL MILWAUKEE FEMALES OVER 18: 1969<sup>893</sup>

*(Statistics are for the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area)*

Total:	479,994
Without income:	128,516
With income:	351,478
Less than \$1,000:	80,625
\$1,000 to \$1,999:	64,885
\$2,000 to \$2,999:	45,325
\$3,000 to \$3,999:	38,345
\$4,000 to \$4,999:	34,346
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	28,916
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	20,617
\$7,000 to \$7,999:	13,179
\$8,000 to \$9,999:	13,542
\$10,000 to \$14,999:	9,020
\$15,000 to \$24,999:	1,871
\$25,000 or more:	807
Median income in dollars:	\$2,667
Mean income in dollars:	\$3,395

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<sup>893</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 51-886.

TOTAL INCOME FOR MILWAUKEE NEGRO MALES OVER 18: 1969<sup>894</sup>*(Statistics are for the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area)*

Total:	24,990
Without income:	1,610
With income:	23,380
Less than \$1,000:	2,347
\$1,000 to \$1,999:	2,158
\$2,000 to \$2,999:	1,848
\$3,000 to \$3,999:	1,507
\$4,000 to \$4,999:	1,741
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	2,146
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	2,652
\$7,000 to \$7,999:	2,475
\$8,000 to \$9,999:	3,903
\$10,000 to \$14,999:	2,260
\$15,000 to \$24,999:	263
\$25,000 or more:	80
Median income in dollars:	5,973
Mean income in dollars:	5,748

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<sup>894</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 51-887.

TOTAL INCOME FOR MILWAUKEE NEGRO FEMALES OVER 18: 1969<sup>895</sup>*(Statistics are for the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area)*

Total:	29,402
Without income:	6,159
With income:	23,243
Less than \$1,000:	4,459
\$1,000 to \$1,999:	3,983
\$2,000 to \$2,999:	3,878
\$3,000 to \$3,999:	3,715
\$4,000 to \$4,999:	2,562
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	1,859
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	1,320
\$7,000 to \$7,999:	566
\$8,000 to \$9,999:	488
\$10,000 to \$14,999:	358
\$15,000 to \$24,999:	46
\$25,000 or more:	9
Median income in dollars:	2,820
Mean income in dollars:	3,095

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<sup>895</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 51-887.

TOTAL INCOME FOR ALL MILWAUKEE FAMILIES: 1969<sup>896</sup>

*(Statistics are for the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area)*

Total:	346,410	<sup>897</sup>
Less than \$1,000:	4,938	
\$1,000 to \$1,999:	6,641	
\$2,000 to \$2,999:	10,182	
\$3,000 to \$3,999:	11,325	
\$4,000 to \$4,999:	11,952	
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	13,204	
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	14,747	
\$7,000 to \$7,999:	19,376	
\$8,000 to \$9,999:	54,446	
\$10,000 to \$14,999:	127,911	
\$15,000 to \$24,999:	77,561	
\$25,000 or more:	19,896	
Median income in dollars:	11,532	
Mean income in dollars:	12,521	

(When adjusted to 2010 levels of inflation, the 1969 median income for families in the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area was \$68,753.03, and the mean income for the same group and time was \$74,649.38.)<sup>898</sup>

<sup>896</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 51-908–51-909.

<sup>897</sup> The numbers used in this chart and the following chart on African-American family income in 1969 differ from the totals in the actual bound copy of the census. The statistics for family income are divided into subcategories, such as “Head, under 25 years old,” “Head, 25 to 34 years old,” and so forth. Upon checking the statistics to make sure that the figures were correct, I discovered that the totals were actually short, and that for some unknown reason they did not include the “Head, 60 to 64 years old” numbers. Consultations with Marquette University librarians, Milwaukee Public Library researchers, and the U.S. Bureau of the Census confirmed that the number totals in the book are incorrect. I have adjusted all of the numbers to the correct totals, but since I lack the full data behind the “Head, 60 to 64 years old” totals, I cannot be certain if the median and mean census numbers provided by the Bureau of the Census are correct or if they also lack the statistics of the “Head, 60 to 64 years old” section.” The median and mean census numbers must therefore be viewed cautiously.

<sup>898</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).



TOTAL INCOME FOR ALL AFRICAN-AMERICAN MILWAUKEE FAMILIES: 1969<sup>899</sup>*(Statistics are for the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area)*

Total:	23,422
Less than \$1,000:	1,340
\$1,000 to \$1,999:	1,271
\$2,000 to \$2,999:	1,969
\$3,000 to \$3,999:	1,570
\$4,000 to \$4,999:	1,394
\$5,000 to \$5,999:	1,563
\$6,000 to \$6,999:	1,701
\$7,000 to \$7,999:	1,689
\$8,000 to \$9,999:	3,378
\$10,000 to \$14,999:	5,243
\$15,000 to \$24,999:	2,081
\$25,000 or more:	223
Median income in dollars:	7,520
Mean income in dollars:	8,078

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<sup>899</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 51-910–51-911.

APPENDIX T: INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT IN 1970

MILWAUKEE'S LABOR FORCE BY GENDER, AGES 14-15: 1970<sup>900</sup>

	Total number aged 14-15	In labor force	Not in labor force
Males	29,903	4,395	25,508
Females	28,426	1,903	26,523

MILWAUKEE'S SMSA EXPERIENCED CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE BY JOB AND GENDER, TOTAL: 1970<sup>901</sup>

	Males	Females
Total experienced civilian labor force 16 and over:	361,615	231,136
Professional, technical, and kindred workers:	53,884	33,529
Managers and administrators, except farmers:	35,863	6,039
Sales workers:	24,896	20,705
Clerical and kindred workers:	27,624	83,353
Craftsmen and kindred workers:	78,230	4,330
Operatives, except transport:	65,542	32,821
Transport equipment operatives:	20,071	764
Laborers, except farmers:	22,286	3,008
Farmers and farm managers:	2,497	331
Farm laborers and farm foremen:	1,320	516
Service workers, except private household:	29,189	41,323
Private household workers:	129	4,046
Unemployed persons, last worked 1959 or earlier:	84	371

<sup>900</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 51-599-51-600. These statistics are for the standard metropolitan area.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-667-51-670.

MILWAUKEE'S SMSA EXPERIENCED CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE BY JOB  
AND GENDER, WHITE: 1970<sup>902</sup>

	Males	Females
Total experienced civilian labor force 16 and over:	339,058	213,309
Professional, technical, and kindred workers:	52,468	31,787
Managers and administrators, except farmers:	35,259	5,918
Sales workers:	24,472	20,184
Clerical and kindred workers:	26,519	79,589
Craftsmen and kindred workers:	74,391	4,052
Operatives, except transport:	57,722	28,421
Transport equipment operatives:	18,720	701
Laborers, except farmers:	18,838	2,668
Farmers and farm managers:	2,383	272
Farm laborers and farm foremen:	1,261	458
Service workers, except private household:	26,863	35,808
Private household workers:	99	3,104
Unemployed persons, last worked 1959 or earlier:	63	347

MILWAUKEE'S SMSA EXPERIENCED CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE BY JOB  
AND GENDER, NEGRO: 1970<sup>903</sup>

	Males	Females
Total experienced civilian labor force 16 and over:	20,725	16,640
Professional, technical, and kindred workers:	1,086	1,541
Managers and administrators, except farmers:	544	93
Sales workers:	399	470
Clerical and kindred workers:	1,002	3,501
Craftsmen and kindred workers:	3,493	265
Operatives, except transport:	7,346	4,111
Transport equipment operatives:	1,265	63
Laborers, except farmers:	3,293	319
Farmers and farm managers:	114	59
Farm laborers and farm foremen:	59	58
Service workers, except private household:	2,078	5,214
Private household workers:	30	922
Unemployed persons, last worked 1959 or earlier:	16	24

<sup>902</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), 51-667-51-670.

<sup>903</sup> Ibid., 51-667-51-670.

MILWAUKEE'S SMSA EXPERIENCED CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE BY JOB  
AND GENDER, PERSONS OF SPANISH LANGUAGE: 1970<sup>904</sup>

	Males	Females
Total experienced civilian labor force 16 and over:	5,037	2,298
Professional, technical, and kindred workers:	553	221
Managers and administrators, except farmers:	220	41
Sales workers:	161	114
Clerical and kindred workers:	336	724
Craftsmen and kindred workers:	958	57
Operatives, except transport:	1,743	668
Transport equipment operatives:	264	-
Laborers, except farmers:	400	48
Farmers and farm managers:	-	-
Farm laborers and farm foremen:	8	-
Service workers, except private household:	380	391
Private household workers:	-	34
Unemployed persons, last worked 1959 or earlier:	14	-

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN MILWAUKEE: 1970<sup>905</sup>

	Males	Females
Persons 14 & 15 years old	29,903	28,426
Labor force	4,395	1,903
Employed	4,073	1,633
Unemployed	322	270
Not in labor force	25,508	26,523
Persons 16 and over	453,601	506,105
Labor force	363,313	232,120
Employed	350,502	222,988
Unemployed	11,734	9,083
Not in labor force	90,408	273,985

<sup>904</sup> Ibid., 51-667-51-670.

<sup>905</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, 1970 Census of Population, Volume I: Characteristics of the Population, Part 51: Wisconsin (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), 51-621.

PERCENTAGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS IN  
THE LOWEST INCOME CATEGORY OF THE CENTRAL-CITY AND SUBURBS  
OF MILWAUKEE, 1950-1970<sup>906</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Percentage Difference</u>
1950	-35
1960	-36
1970	-53

$$\text{Percentage Difference} = \frac{\text{Share of households in suburban total}}{\text{Share of households in central city total}} - 100$$

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<sup>906</sup> Morton D. Winsberg, "Income Polarization between the Central Cities and Suburbs of U.S. Metropolises, 1950-1980," American Journal of Economics and Sociology 48, no. 1 (January, 1989): 6.

## CHAPTER I APPENDIX: AUTOMOBILES

### APPENDIX A: MADE IN MILWAUKEE: LOCALLY PRODUCED BRANDS OF CARS

The increasingly omnipresent nature of the automobile led to all sorts of ancillary industries that maintained, protected, and produced cars for Milwaukee. In his 1936 essay “The Hollow Horn,” G.K. Chesterton mused that, “I wonder if anybody has yet written a History of the Motor-Car. I am certain thousands must have written books more or less purporting this; I am also certain that most of them consist of advertisements for particular makes and models.”<sup>907</sup>

Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, Milwaukee had numerous small, independent car manufacturers scattered across the city. As Greb notes, in the wake of the economic recovery from Depression of 1907, Milwaukee saw an influx of small car manufacturers attempting to enter the market. Almost invariably, these little companies failed within a few years of opening, and often much sooner than that.<sup>908</sup> The high initial start-up costs, exacerbated by the difficulty in finding customers outside of Milwaukee, plus the limited number of potential consumers in the city, all contributed to the short lifespan of the average car manufacturer in Milwaukee.

In alphabetical order, the Abresch-Cramer Auto Truck Company of Milwaukee built large motor trucks (fourteen-ton trucks with forty-two-inch wheels) from 1910 to 1911. Abresch-Cramer was unable to find a market for

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<sup>907</sup> John Alfred Heitmann, The Automobile and American Life (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2009), 1.

<sup>908</sup> W.C. Greb, Wisconsin on Wheels, A Motor Vehicle History of the Badger State, ca. 1948, WIHV95-A1072, SC 1239, Box 1, Folder 1, Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin, 12.

their trucks, and the company folded quickly.<sup>909</sup> Allis Chalmers produced one of the few vehicles whose market was largely outside of Milwaukee. In 1913 and 1914, they created the Allis Chalmers Tractor-Truck, which was used primarily by the governments of France and Russia as they mobilized for what would eventually become known as the First World War.<sup>910</sup> One obscure, independently produced model of car was 1908's Anger. Few Anger cars were manufactured from 1908 to 1914.<sup>911</sup> The people behind the Anger Engineering Company started making cars in 1908, incorporated in 1914, and produced the A.E.C. automobile for two years.<sup>912</sup> The B&P Company, founded in 1902, produced the Ideal car nearly exclusively for the people of Milwaukee.<sup>913</sup> Briggs & Stratton released a couple of models in the early twentieth century. The Briggs & Stratton Flyer was released from 1918 to 1921, and Briggs & Stratton also released the Superior model in 1908.<sup>914</sup> The F. S. Motors Company, also known as the Filer & Stowell Company, opened its doors in 1912.<sup>915</sup> The Four-Wheel Drive Motor Wagon Company built the Four-Wheel Drive Motor Truck from 1902 to 1907. The Four-Wheel Drive Motor Truck's defining characteristic was its use of wooden wheels.<sup>916</sup> Wooden wheels could not puncture like rubber wheels, but they also could wear down, crack, and splinter with use. In any event, rubber tires triumphed, and wooden wheels became nothing more than a footnote in

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<sup>909</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>910</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>911</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>912</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>914</sup> Ibid., 4, 27.

<sup>915</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>916</sup> Ibid., 11.

automobile history, save for during World War II, when rubber scarcity led to some consumers using wooden wheels.

The J.C. Iverson and Company made the Iverson car for a very brief period in 1908. From 1902 to 1903, the Kunz truck was built by the J.L. Kunz Machine Company, but in 1903 the manufacturer's name changed to the Kunz Automobile and Motor Company, until the company closed in 1906. Kunz's slogan was "rigs that travel."<sup>917</sup> The Johnson Service Company, headed by Warren S. Johnson from 1900 to 1912, built both steam and gasoline-powered cars and trucks, often made to the specifications of the customers.<sup>918</sup> The Johnson line included the Elite, the Elite Steamer, the Empress, the Johnson, the Johnson Steamer, and the Silent and Special. These were distinguished by their use of steam combustion for power, and were used for both pleasure and commercial purposes.<sup>919</sup>

The Krueger Manufacturing Company of Milwaukee tried to break into the auto industry twice. The Krueger Car was released from 1904 to 1906, but it failed to find a market. Krueger Manufacturing tried again with the Eclipse model, but that proved even less successful and was only produced in 1908.<sup>920</sup>

Led by President Charles Nash, the LaFayette Motors Company built the LaFayette car in 1923 and 1924.<sup>921</sup> The L.R. Smith Company developed a large

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<sup>917</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>918</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>919</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>920</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>921</sup> Ibid., 15.



niche in the market for auto frames.<sup>922</sup> The Meiselbach Motor Wagon Company of North Milwaukee created the Meiselbach motor truck from 1904 to 1908. Meiselbach's trademark distinction was its use of friction driven mechanisms rather than the more common gear-driven mechanisms.<sup>923</sup>

The Merkel Motor Company was incorporated in July of 1904, and throughout 1905 produced the Merkel Motor Car, which was sold almost entirely in the Milwaukee area.<sup>924</sup> The Milwaukee Auto Company thought that the most effective propulsion method for personal vehicles was steam power, so they built the Milwaukee Steamer.<sup>925</sup> The Milwaukee Steamer was not the only steam-powered car built in the city. The novelty McGee Steamer was crafted out of a refurbished Stanley Steamer in 1945.<sup>926</sup> The Monarch Motor Car Company of Milwaukee started making the Monarch Automobile in 1908, but the Monarch did not meet consumer expectations, and the company folded in 1909.<sup>927</sup> The Northwestern Automobile Company was founded in 1904, but few details about this organization still exist.

From 1919 to 1922, the Ogren Motor Car Company specialized in high-end luxury cars. The prices were often too high for the average consumer, ranging from \$4,250 for the Ogren four-passenger Standard Roadster, five-passenger Sport Touring model, and the four-passenger Sports Roadster; up to

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<sup>922</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>923</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>924</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>925</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>926</sup> Ibid., unnumbered page located between two pages numbered 12 and 13.

<sup>927</sup> Ibid., 19.

\$5,500 for the seven-passenger sedan.<sup>928</sup> (Adjusted over time, these prices in 1922 would be the equivalent of \$55,162.98 to \$71,387.38 in 2010 dollars.)<sup>929</sup> Considering that in 1922 the average yearly pay of a manufacturing worker in Milwaukee was \$1,273.55, the cost of an Ogren car would be far outside the average Milwaukee working man's budget, coming to 334% to 432% of a year's pay.<sup>930</sup>

The Petrel Motor Car Co., led by S.W. Watkins as its president, released the Petrel car from 1908 to 1909. Petrels were differentiated by the use of friction-drive technology. The car, sold mainly in Milwaukee, utilized the Seaman Organization to craft the automobile bodies.<sup>931</sup> Not all of Milwaukee's automobile manufacturers were aiming to become profitable, long-lasting business. In 1902, Rex Reinertsen started his hobby of producing handcrafted automobiles (known as the Reinertsen) for his friends. Only a handful of Reinertsens were created, as the creator never intended for his cars to be mass-produced.<sup>932</sup> In 1912, the Sioux Auto Manufacturing Co. released a car known as the Silent Milwaukee.<sup>933</sup> The A.O. Smith Co. produced a couple of cars in the early decades of the century. The Smith Motor Wheel was produced from 1904

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<sup>928</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>929</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>930</sup> "Industrial Statistics Summary, 1922-1923," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 1 January 1924, Annual Trade Review, 3.

<sup>931</sup> W.C. Greb, Wisconsin on Wheels, A Motor Vehicle History of the Badger State, ca. 1948, WIHV95-A1072, SC 1239, Box 1, Folder 1, Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin, 22a.

<sup>932</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>933</sup> Ibid., 26.

to 1918.<sup>934</sup> From 1907 to 1915, the Sterberg family built the Sterberg Motor Truck. For unspecified reasons, the company name was later changed to the Sterling Motor Co., which continued to build trucks in Milwaukee for decades.<sup>935</sup> Other short-lived car models included the Titan Truck and Motor Co.'s Titan Motor Truck in the mid-1910's; the independently-produced Vixen in 1914, and also the Winther in 1917 and 1918.<sup>936</sup>

When looking over all of these car companies from the early decades of the twentieth century, it is important to realize that they were making their products during a time when a uniform consensus over the best composition of an automobile had not yet been reached. Indeed, in 1910, one automobile pundit theorized that in fifty years, car tires would be crafted out of iron and the roads would be covered in fake rubber.<sup>937</sup> The Four-Wheel Drive Motor Truck's use of wooden wheels over rubber ones might not seem so anomalous today if the company had managed to convince more people that wood was preferable to rubber. Likewise, the near-universal adoption of gasoline-powered motors was not preordained. The Johnson Service Company and the Milwaukee Auto Company's promotion of steam power, and the Petrel Motor Car Co.'s use of friction-driven engines provide glimpses of alternative means of fuel. Milwaukee was not the only city to deviate from the use of gasoline power. In 1900, George

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<sup>934</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>935</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>936</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>937</sup> "Mark Was Missed in Prediction for '60," The Milwaukee Journal, 7 February 1960, Auto Show Section, 2.

and Peter Harris of Manchester, New Hampshire promoted an automobile that used soft coal as fuel.<sup>938</sup>

New kinds of cars continued to be produced in Milwaukee later in the twentieth century, though far fewer original brands were produced as compared to earlier years. One of the most successful of the more recent cars was the Excalibur, a fancy car designed to promote a sense of nostalgia. The brothers David B. and William C. Stevens founded the Excalibur Company in 1963, with the intention of producing unique luxury cars that were also works of art. The company grew steadily and gradually added employees over time. By 1979, the Excalibur plant had ninety-five employees, producing cars at the rate of three hundred per year, or one every seven hours. Excalibur was a very small company, and the Stevens brothers were aware that they were insufficiently large to have any appreciable impact on the nation's automobile industry, while they were large enough to be crippled or even destroyed by lawsuits or union boycotts.<sup>939</sup>

Milwaukee's contributions to the development of the automobile did not always involve the creation of new types of cars. In some cases, manufacturers focused on producing or improving just one part of a car. Some local inventors directed their energies towards developing car components. One Milwaukeean,

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<sup>938</sup> "A Soft-Coal Automobile," The Milwaukee Journal, 4 January 1900, 4.

<sup>939</sup> Our Own: The Excalibur, produced by Tom Regan, directed by Jim Leser, 30 min. Milwaukee Humanities Program, 1979, videocassette.

Niels A. Christensen, filed a patent for an air brake in 1899.<sup>940</sup> Bornett L. Bobroff was a Russian immigrant who moved to Milwaukee in the early 1900's. Though his principal source of income came from his work as a machinist, Bobroff crafted numerous inventions in his spare time, such as a new form of voting machine that was used in the Wisconsin Assembly. Bobroff also invented a different form of turn signal for cars. During the early decades of the twentieth century, the turn signal was not a particularly popular piece of apparatus. In Bobroff's pamphlet "Turn Signal Tips for Truck and Trailer Operators," he wrote that,

"It is our experience that most truck and trailer operators regard directional signals as a necessary evil...

Evidence at hand clearly indicates that the trend in buying signals is swinging from "give me the lowest priced signal that meets the state law" to "give me a signal that will protect our trucks, and trailers, that is approved, and that won't cost me a great deal to maintain."<sup>941</sup>

Bobroff's version of the turn signal consisted of light bulbs in signal lamps. One signal consisted of four bulbs arranged in a row inside a translucent cover, and another contained a single bulb in a cover shaped like an arrow.<sup>942</sup> Although the original mechanisms were made for use in larger trucks, Bobroff eventually adjusted his invention for use on ordinary cars. Reliable lights and signals could save lives, for as Bobroff noted, strong lights and visible signals

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<sup>940</sup> W.C. Greb, Wisconsin on Wheels, A Motor Vehicle History of the Badger State, ca. 1948, WIHV95-A1072, SC 1239, Box 1, Folder 1, Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin, Appendix 2.

<sup>941</sup> Bornett L. Bobroff Papers, 1904-1946, Bornett L. Bobroff, "Turn Signal Tips for Truck and Trailer Operators," Mss 110, Box 1, Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin, 6.

<sup>942</sup> *Ibid.*, unnumbered pages.

could cut accidents by approximately forty-five percent.<sup>943</sup> Bobroff's specific designs did not achieve widespread use, but they illustrate how innovators might propose alternative designs to make automobiles safer and more effective. In any case, Bobroff's creations were a substantial departure from the first car lights, which consisted of kerosene oil lamps that needed to be lit manually.<sup>944</sup>

Many of Milwaukee's most successful corporations found their niche not by manufacturing entire automobiles, but by making parts of automobiles. The Briggs and Stratton Company, incorporated on April 16, 1909 and still in business as of this writing, is currently the biggest producer of air-cooled gasoline engines, as well as keys and locks for cars.<sup>945</sup> Johnson Controls, a reorganized company stemming from the Johnson Service Company whose steam-powered cars were described previously, shifted its focus to building various car components during the course of the twentieth century. By 1930, Johnson Controls produced car batteries and other automobile parts, and would continue to produce different versions of them over the decades.<sup>946</sup>

Other, larger companies had their headquarters outside of Milwaukee, yet they had plants and branches inside the city. Ford and Nash had plants in the area, and the American Motors plant employed many Milwaukeeans for years. The Kissel Motor Car Company, originally based in Hartford, Wisconsin, first

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<sup>943</sup> Ibid.

<sup>944</sup> W.C. Greb, Wisconsin on Wheels, A Motor Vehicle History of the Badger State, ca. 1948, WIHV95-A1072, SC 1239, Box 1, Folder 1, Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin, 8.

<sup>945</sup> The History of Briggs & Stratton Corporation, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Corporation, 1985), 1.

<sup>946</sup> Johnson Controls: 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary— 1984 Annual Report, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Johnson Controls, Inc., 1984), 23.

opened in 1906, and operated a plant in Milwaukee in 1912.<sup>947</sup> Although the Kissel Motor Car Company went bankrupt in September of 1930 and all operations ceased soon afterwards, their luxury cars retained a large following among collectors, and the Kissel Kar Klub was started in 1957 in order to preserve the company's memory, as well as preserve the remaining working Kissels.<sup>948</sup>

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<sup>947</sup> Val V. Quandt, The Classic Kissel Automobile (Amherst, Wisconsin: Palmer Publications, Inc., 1990), 2, 19.

<sup>948</sup> *Ibid.*, 100, 114.

APPENDIX B: MILWAUKEE COUNTY MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS, 1921-1952<sup>949</sup>

1921	44,255
1922	54,515
1923	68,304
1924	91,649
1925	94,402
1926	109,146
1927	117,856
1928	128,183
1929	142,791
1930	142,586
1931	135,445
1932	125,540
1933	121,550
1934	132,042
1935	139,462
1936	157,640
1937	164,367
1938	159,551
1939	161,147
1940	173,713
1941	189,722
1942	157,218
1943	159,028
1944	150,928
1945	155,146
1946	241,766*
1947	176,379
1948	187,919
1949	————**
1950	228,370
1951	239,454
1952	244,359

<sup>949</sup> Calendar Year Motor Vehicle Registrations by Counties Jan. 1, 1921 to Date (Madison: State of Wisconsin Motor Vehicle Department, 1952), 2-32.

\* This number is far higher than the true total of registrations, because at the end of WWII, a staggered registration system was implemented, and thousands of automobiles were double-registered. Counting twice-registered cars, 1,012,845 automobiles were registered in the entire state of Wisconsin in 1946, although the true number was later calculated to be 744,911 cars, a difference of 267,934 automobiles, or 26.45%. The true number must be between the previous and the latter year's totals of 155,146 and 176,379, meaning that the difference rate in Milwaukee due to twice-registered cars would therefore be far higher than it was for all of Wisconsin.

\*\* The number of registrations for 1949 is not included in this publication.



APPENDIX C: AVAILABLE PARKING SPACES, 1937 TO 1958, FOR THE  
AREA BOUNDED BY STATE, JEFFERSON, CLYBOURN, AND EIGHTH  
STREETS<sup>950</sup>

<u>Type</u>	<u>1937</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1955</u>	<u>1958</u>
Parking Structures or Garages	2,625	2,841	2,252	2,772*
Parking Lots	6,412	6,489	7,135	7,109
Curb	2,674	1,842	1,672	1,542
TOTALS	11,712	11,172	11,059	11,423

<sup>950</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 77.

\* Does not include a parking structure for municipal cars with a capacity of 150 cars.

APPENDIX D: MILWAUKEE'S AUTOMOTIVE GROUP SALES

AUTOMOBILE GROUP SALES AND STORES IN MILWAUKEE, 1948 & 1954<sup>951</sup>

Area	Sales <sup>a</sup>			# Establishments			Average Sales Per Store <sup>b</sup>		
	1948	1954	% Change	1948	1954	% Change	1948	1954	% Change
MSMA <sup>c</sup>	139,989	189,326	+35.2	288	305	+5.9	486.073	620.741	+27.7
MALTCC <sup>d</sup>	24,021	39,731	+65.4	66	61	-7.6	363.955	651.328	+79.0
MCBD <sup>e</sup>	17,779	23,837	+34.1	23	20	-13.0	733.000	1191.850	+54.2

SUMMARY STATISTICS ON MILWAUKEE'S AUTOMOTIVE GROUP SALES<sup>952</sup>

Area	Sales <sup>a</sup>			# Establishments			Average Sales Per Store <sup>b</sup>		
	1954	1948	% Change	1954	1948	% Change	1954	1948	% Change
CBD	24	18	+34.1	20	23	-13.0	1,191.8	773.0	+54.2
City less CBD	126	98	+28.1	224	199	+12.6	561.4	493.4	+13.8
MALTCC	40	24	+65.4	61	66	-7.6	651.3	364.0	+79.0

<sup>951</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 160.

<sup>a</sup> All sales numbers are in thousands of dollars.

<sup>b</sup> All sales numbers are in thousands of dollars.

<sup>c</sup> Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area.

<sup>d</sup> Metro. Area less the Central City.

<sup>e</sup> Milwaukee Central Business District.

<sup>952</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 327.

<sup>a</sup> Sales numbers are in millions of dollars.

<sup>b</sup> Sales numbers are in thousands of dollars.

APPENDIX E: MILWAUKEE'S CAR SALES BY MAKECAR SALES IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY, 1953-1964<sup>953</sup>

	<u>1953</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1955</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1958</u>	<u>1959</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1962</u>
Ford	6,948	10,237	10,776	8,431	10,912	7,192	10,216	6,855	5,630	6,201
Chevrolet	7,903	7,654	9,411	9,901	8,778	7,971	8,226	9,933	9,064	10,491
Buick	3,415	4,358	6,950	4,917	3,570	2,091	2,143	2,306	2,085	2,208
Oldsmobile	2,868	4,041	5,688	3,749	3,683	2,683	3,534	3,399	2,570	2,897
Pontiac	2,818	2,268	3,014	2,102	2,050	1,657	3,267	3,252	2,196	2,738
Plymouth	3,292	1,505	3,428	2,473	3,286	1,952	2,126	1,063	847	759
Mercury	1,386	1,340	2,392	1,724	1,493	582	709	1,102	687	767
Nash	2,048	1,067	1,697	1,636	244	-	-	-	-	-
Dodge	1,860	929	1,963	1,956	2,039	946	1,301	430	1,157	1,028
Cadillac	654	622	900	967	1,031	928	964	1,141	1,086	1,059
Studebaker	1,160	567	317	340	393	167	587	648	376	394
De Soto	886	498	861	891	660	239	87	123	-	-
Chrysler	885	439	860	717	765	341	363	460	550	657
Hudson	474	300	542	532	136	-	-	-	-	-
Packard	501	250	322	242	45	6	3	-	-	-
Lincoln	196	225	222	381	209	148	164	131	180	127
Willys	205	200	117	48	45	59	129	192	78	76
Kaiser	178	82	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous	108	109	166	199	-	32	40	89	111	117
Other foreign	-	-	-	-	396	717	2,094	2,019	1,577	1,680
Rambler****	-	-	-	-	2,970	1,884	5,072	5,293	3,138	3,151
Falcon	-	-	-	-	-	-	279	2,422	2,033	1,393
Dart*****	-	-	-	-	-	-	116	2,332	-	-
Comet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,032	783	380
Valiant	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	777	447	384
Corvair	-	-	-	-	-	-	204	711	1,140	1,982
Imperial	-	-	-	-	-	-	88	90	62	67
F-85	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	84	347	551
Special	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	75	600	1,295
Tempest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	72	637	823
Lancer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	62	230	139
Edsel	-	-	-	-	-	-	147	3	-	-

<sup>953</sup> 1953-1954: "1954 Good Car Year- Sales Third Highest in History; December Set Record," The Milwaukee Journal, 30 January 1955, part 4, 8.

1955-1956: Frank Sinclair, "Chevrolet Sets Sales Mark- Moved 33,024 New Cars in 1956, Highest for Any Make for One Year in State," The Milwaukee Journal, 20 January 1957, part 4, 8.

1957-1958: "1958 Car Sales Totals," The Milwaukee Journal, 18 January 1959, part 4, 10.

1959-1960: "Domestic Car Sales," The Milwaukee Journal, 29 January 1961, part 4, 6.

1961-1962: "Domestic Car Sales," The Milwaukee Journal, 27 January 1963, part 4, 12.

1963-1964: "Domestic Car Sales," The Milwaukee Journal, 31 January 1965, part 4, 12.

\*\*\*\* Rambler superseded Nash and Hudson.

\*\*\*\*\* In 1959-1960, the Dart is totaled separately from the rest of the Dodge figures. In 1961-1962 the Dart is included with the rest of the Dodge figures.

	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>
Ford	7,396	8,288
Chevrolet	10,881	10,645
Buick	2,681	2,708
Oldsmobile	2,853	3,109
Pontiac	3,197	2,951
Plymouth	1,021	1,366
Mercury	634	531
Dodge	1,817	1,825
Cadillac	1,085	958
Studebaker	364	205
Chrysler	554	688
Lincoln	129	155
Miscellaneous	104	116
Volkswagen	1,236	1,443
Other foreign	519	650
Rambler	3,251	3,018
Falcon	1,195	933
Comet	249	425
Valiant	421	692
Corvair	1,684	1,229
Imperial	87	87
F-85	624	1,090
Special	1,096	1,545
Tempest	672	1,120

DOMESTIC CAR SALES IN MILWAUKEE, 1965-1969<sup>954</sup>

*(NOTE: The following numbers are for the first eleven months of the year, January to November. Bold names include the above subdivisions.)*

	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1969</u>
AMERICAN MOTORS	2,607	2,168	2,345	2,257	2,037
Chrysler Division	956	1,062	1,036	1,012	948
Dodge Division	1,799	2,170	1,932	2,833	2,603
Plymouth Division	2,287	2,074	2,219	2,877	2,675
CHRYSLER CORP.	4,086	4,244	5,247	6,777	6,293
Ford Division	10,851	10,875	8,969	9,967	9,820
Lincoln-Mercury Division	1,173	1,284	1,196	1,778	1,740
FORD MOTOR CO.	12,024	12,179	10,294	11,993	11,762
Buick Division	5,586	5,063	5,090	5,448	5,677
Cadillac Division	1,102	1,076	1,250	1,154	1,306
Chevrolet Division	12,934	10,562	10,307	10,051	9,925
Oldsmobile Division	4,666	3,562	3,234	3,474	3,968
Pontiac Division	4,829	4,984	5,447	5,299	4,636
GENERAL MOTORS	29,117	25,247	25,328	25,426	25,512
FOREIGN	2,168	2,021	2,094	2,759	2,985
MISCELLANEOUS	88	89	55	26	18
Imperial	—	—	—	55	67
Lincoln Continental/Mark III	—	—	—	248	202
GRAND TOTALS	51,046	47,010	45,363	49,541	48,876
(Total Station Wagons)	5,963	5,491	5,283	5,949	5,484

<sup>954</sup> 1965-1966: "Domestic Car Sales," The Milwaukee Journal, 15 January 1967, part 4, 5.

1967: "Domestic Car Sales," The Milwaukee Journal, 21 January 1968, part 4, 5.

1968-1969; "Domestic Car Sales," The Milwaukee Journal, 18 January 1970, part 4, 7.

FOREIGN CAR SALES IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY—1963-1964<sup>955</sup>

	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>
Volkswagen (Ger.)	3,660	4,315
Opel (Ger.)	4	239
Triumph (Eng.)	221	232
MG (Eng.)	118	200
Renault (Fr.)	173	151
Volvo (Sweden)	140	144
Mercedes-Benz (Ger.)	136	135
Fiat (Italy)	173	133
Rootes (Eng.)	45	87
Austin-Healey (Eng.)	79	75
Saab (Sweden)	43	65
Porsche (Ger.)	39	64
Simca (Fr.)	2	46
Jaguar (Eng.)	42	36
Peugeot (Fr.)	27	20
Lotus (Eng.)	—	9
Royer (Eng.)	4	9
Citroen (Fr.)	5	8
BMW (Ger.)	—	7
Datsun (Japan)	—	7
Morris (Eng.)	—	4
Alfa Romeo (Italy)	16	2
DKW (Ger.)	2	2
Morgan (Eng.)	3	1
Sabra (Israel)	3	1
Vauxhall (Eng.)	3	1
Aston-Martin (Eng.)	—	1
Rolls-Royce (Eng.)	—	1
Miscellaneous	7	8
TOTAL	4,940	6,003

<sup>955</sup> "Foreign Car Sales," The Milwaukee Journal, 31 January 1965, part 4, 2.

APPENDIX F: AFRICAN-AMERICAN CAR OWNERSHIP

CAR OWNERSHIP AMONG MILWAUKEE AFRICAN-AMERICANS BY ZONES<sup>956</sup>

Price Range	ZONE 1		ZONE 2		ZONE 3		ZONE 4	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Low Priced Cars	10	30	16	37	3	60	3	33
Medium Priced Cars	20	60	20	46	2	40	6	66 <sup>***</sup>
High Priced Cars	3	10	7	17	0	–	0	–

<sup>956</sup> Irwin D. Rinder, "Color and Cadillacs: Some Evidence About a Stereotype," The Midwest Sociologist 19, no. 2 (May, 1957), 99.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> This number really should be rounded up to 67, but the information is copied directly from Rinder's article.

APPENDIX G: GASOLINE SALESSUMMARY STATISTICS ON MILWAUKEE'S GASOLINE SERVICE STATION SALES<sup>957</sup>

Area	Sales <sup>a</sup>			# Establishments			Average Sales Per Store <sup>b</sup>		
	1954	1948	% Change	1954	1948	% Change	1954	1948	% Change
Metro Area less City 38	10		+276.0	247	264	-6.4	155.1	38.6	+301.8

<sup>957</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 329.

<sup>a</sup> Sales numbers are in millions of dollars.

<sup>b</sup> Sales numbers are in thousands of dollars.



## **CHAPTER II APPENDIX: FOOD STORES**

### **APPENDIX A: CHANGING FOOD PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGY**

It should be noted that the frequency of food shopping changed over time with the advent of new technology. The consumption habits of later generations were very different from those of earlier generations. Before the invention of mechanical refrigerators and freezers, Milwaukeeans had to rely on more basic means of keeping perishable foods cool and fresh. Some consumers were able to ensure the freshness of their food by buying their meat, eggs, and similar items at the store and cooking and eating them soon after they arrived home. In hot, muggy weather, perishable meat and fish needed to be cooked and eaten as soon as possible. With certain meat and dairy products spoiling easily, only limited quantities of these items could be bought at one time, which meant near-daily trips to the store (assuming that one was sufficiently well-off to afford to eat meat regularly) and frequent home deliveries of milk and other dairy products. Artificial refrigeration and freezing allowed consumers to buy large quantities of perishable items in a single shopping trip and then store the food for days, weeks, or even months, depending on the product. This sparked the consumer paradigm shift, where small, near-daily food purchases turned to less frequent, larger sales. Before Milwaukeeans had access to this preservation technology, they needed other ways to keep their food and the resulting leftovers fresh.

Depending on the meteorological conditions, for a few months of the year, perhaps even most of the year, Milwaukee's weather provided a cheap and easy way to preserve cold foods. For example, a windowsill might be used to keep a

bottle of milk fresh during a chilly fall, although an overnight dip in temperatures could turn a natural refrigerator into a freezer. A sealed box outside the house could become a simple cooling device, as could a watertight container placed in a small lake, river, stream, or spring, for those who lived near natural water sources. Plenty of houses had a larder or a cool cupboard. Larders were shelving areas that were located as far away from heating sources and the sun as possible. Close-fitting doors maintained a constant temperature lower than elsewhere in the house, and kept out vermin. Cool cupboards varied in design, but they were similar to larders, with the added innovation of a pipe leading outdoors or underground, where colder air could keep the contents of the insulated cupboard at a safer temperature. Many people relied on an icebox, a metal container consisting of a compartment to hold food and another compartment that was filled with ice, in order to keep the food cool and fresh. During the winter, ice or snow could often be gathered for free, but in warmer temperatures the city of Milwaukee had to rely on the iceman if they wanted to store perishable food.

When Milwaukeeans wanted ice, they could place a card in their home's front windows with the desired amount printed on it. Consumers could order as much as one hundred pounds of ice at a time. There was a charge for home delivery, so to save money many people bought their own ice from their local ice repository and carted it home themselves. Consumers also needed to invest in a reliable pair of tongs and ice picks in order to cut their ice.<sup>958</sup> The ice trade was

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<sup>958</sup> Remember When... A Nostalgic Look at Old Milwaukee With a Series of Photos Originally Published in the Milwaukee Journal (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee Journal, 1973), 38.

able to “harvest” enough of their product over the course of the winter to keep Milwaukee’s food cool the rest of the year. Ice harvesters used enormous saws to cut large blocks of ice from the tops of local lakes, ponds, and rivers. When cutting from the Milwaukee River, harvesters had to take care to work upstream of the North Avenue Bridge, otherwise the ice would be tainted by sewage. The ice would then be stored in insulated underground storage facilities, or “ice houses,” in order to last until freezing temperatures returned. Some leading ice houses were Casper’s, Donohue’s, Hoff’s, Kopmeier’s, and Orth’s. Orth’s alone hired between two hundred fifty and three hundred people each winter to work in ice cutting and storage. A single ice storage company could gather over 6,000 cords of ice (768,000 square feet) each year.<sup>959</sup>

Consumers often needed to store up food not necessarily for emergencies, but to make shopping trips more infrequent. With artificial refrigeration and freezing becoming increasingly available to the average consumer thanks to a combination of less expensive products and higher incomes, more and more consumers could buy a refrigerator or freezer, thereby allowing them to store substantial quantities of food for extended periods of time without spoilage. By 1952, refrigerators and freezers were becoming both larger and more user-friendly. One new freezer model, released in 1952, had a holding capacity of eleven cubic feet and could store three hundred eighty-five pounds of food. Larger models could hold fifteen or twenty-three cubic feet of food. Refrigerators and freezers used space more efficiently with the help of strategically placed

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<sup>959</sup> Ibid., 48.

shelves and drawers that moved on small wheels. Easier to move doors were added, as were temperature control gauges. Another added feature was an ultraviolet lamp to kill microbes that might precipitate spoilage. Purely decorative touches, such as appliances that came in designer colors, such as ice blue trimmed with gold, were also made available to those who wanted their refrigerators and freezers to come in hues other than white.<sup>960</sup>

Freezers became increasingly important as customers bought more and more frozen foods. In the 1940's, quick-frozen foods were beginning to gain rapid acceptance by consumers. Clarence Birdseye, the inventor of quick-freezing, developed his process over a decade earlier, and the 1930's saw the test-marketing of the first frozen foods. Frozen foods could only be purchased by consumers who owned freezers (or during winter), unless they were prepared soon after being bought. In contrast, canned foods required no additional appliances for storage, but delicate fruits and vegetables often turned to mush in cans, whereas quick-freezing could produce something closer to the original consistency. Wisconsin's large canning industry felt deeply threatened by the emergent frozen foods industry, fearing that freezing would one day supplant or at least severely crimp canning.<sup>961</sup>

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<sup>960</sup> Dorothy Witte, "Refrigerators Get Dressier; Review Freezer Advances," The Milwaukee Journal, 14 January 1952, sec. M, 12.

<sup>961</sup> Lewis C. French, "Wisconsin's Farmers and Cannerymen Ask What Quick Freezing Means to Them?," The Milwaukee Journal, 18 February 1940, editorial section, 1.

APPENDIX B: STATISTICS ON GROCERY STORE CHAINS

SUMMARY OF CHAIN GROCERY STORES 1954-1959<sup>962</sup>

Chain	1954	Number of Stores		1959
		Closed Since 1954	New Since 1954	
A&P Food Markets	9	0	1	10
A&P Supermarkets	27	2	11	36
National Food Stores	14	7	8	15
Kohls Bake Shops	1	0	0	1
Kohls Fruit Stores	1	1	0	0
Kohls Supermarkets	7	0	10	17
Krambo	7	0	7	14
Trimborn	2	1	4	5
Halan's	0	0	7	7
Red Owl	0	0	7	7
Total	69 <sup>a</sup>	11	51	109 <sup>b</sup>

SUMMARY STATISTICS ON MILWAUKEE'S FOOD STORE SALES<sup>963</sup>

Area	Sales			# Establishments			Average Sales Per Store		
	1954 <sup>c</sup>	1948	% Change	1954	1948	% Change	1954 <sup>d</sup>	1948	% Change
CBD*	\$4	\$3	+27.1	44	49	-10.2	\$79.9	\$56.5	+41.5
City less CBD	200	148	+34.9	1,669	1,782	-6.3	120.0	83.3	+44.1
Metro Area less City	62	45	+37.9	328	521	-37.0	190.3	86.9	+118.9

<sup>962</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 269.

<sup>a</sup> Of which 58 were supermarkets in 1954.

<sup>b</sup> Of which 98 were supermarkets in 1959.

<sup>963</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 314.

<sup>c</sup> These numbers are in millions.

<sup>d</sup> These numbers are in thousands.

\* CBD = Central Business District

APPENDIX C: STATISTICS FOR THE WEST PERKINS PLACE SENTRY<sup>964</sup>

**Name of store:** Sentry Market  
**Address:** 7550 West Perkins Place, Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
**Weekly volume:** \$30,000  
**Date opened:** November 11, 1959  
**Type of location:** Single highway store  
**Parking lot and store area:** 101,200 square feet  
**Store dimensions:** 140 feet by 150 feet  
**Total store area (including 1,440 square foot mezzanine):** 22,440 square feet  
**Selling area:** 13,420 square feet  
**Stock and work area:** 9,020 square feet  
**Parking capacity:** 146 cars  
**Display (linear feet):**  
     **Grocery:** 929 feet  
     **Meat (including frozen poultry):** 101 feet  
     **Produce (refrigerated and dry):** 108 feet  
     **Dairy:** 40 feet  
     **Frozen foods (including ice cream):** 88 feet  
     **Service bakery department:** 19 feet  
     **Service Delicatessen Department:** 33 feet  
     **Florist:** 528 square feet  
     **Self-service baked foods department:** 27 feet  
**Checkouts:** 8 (mechanical type)  
**Full-time employees:** 26  
**Part-time employees:** 18  
**Average customer purchase:** \$5.19 (Taken from 1961 value, in 2010, that would be \$37.85.<sup>965</sup>)

<sup>964</sup> Thomas Calak, written and ed., Outstanding New Super Markets (New York: Progressive Grocer Magazine, 1961), 170.

<sup>965</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

APPENDIX D: STATISTICS FROM GORDON E. BIVENS' RESEARCHSERVICES OFFERED BY TYPE OF STORE, MILWAUKEE, 1965-66<sup>966</sup>

	<u>Large Chains</u>	<u>Small Chains and Independents</u>
Cash personal checks	100%	83%
Accept utility payments	40%	26%
Issue trading stamps	54%	6%
Extend credit	0%	28%
Offer free delivery	0%	28%

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<sup>966</sup> Gordon E. Bivens, Food Price Competition in a Local Market: Milwaukee, A Case Study (University of Wisconsin: Milwaukee, 1967), no page numbers.

APPENDIX E: STATISTICS FROM RONALD W. STAMPFL'S RESEARCHFIRST VISITED SUPERMARKET<sup>967</sup>

(N=249)

	<u>% first visited</u>	<u># stores in Milwaukee area</u>	<u>% total chain supermarkets in area</u>
A&P	10.8	40	27.1
National	10.4	23	15.6
Kohl's	32.1	29	19.7
Kroger	13.6	22	15.0
Red Owl	4.8	10	6.9
Sentry	12.0	21	14.3
Food Fair	3.6	2	1.3
Other <sup>968</sup>	12.4	numerous	N/A
Total	100.0 <sup>969</sup>	147 (plus others)	100.0

REASON FOR CHOOSING FIRST SUPERMARKET<sup>970</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Appearance	5.6
Advertising	3.2
Convenience	51.0
Free offers/Coupons	2.0
Past experience with the chain	24.8
Recommendation of Friend	9.6
Other	3.2
Unknown	0.4
Total	100.0

<sup>967</sup> Ronald W. Stampfl, Supermarket Patronage Motives Among New Residents (Seminar paper submitted in lieu of a M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1967), 30.

<sup>968</sup> “Other” was defined as independent and discount outlets, as well as minor chains.

<sup>969</sup> The numbers do not add up to 100.0 due to rounding. Most of Stampfl's tables will add up to less than 100.0 for that reason.

<sup>970</sup> Ronald W. Stampfl, Supermarket Patronage Motives Among New Residents (Seminar paper submitted in lieu of a M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1967), 31.



DISTANCE TO FIRST SUPERMARKET<sup>971</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Distance</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Under ½ mile	30.9
½ to 1 mile	28.9
1 to 2 miles	19.6
2 to 3 miles	7.2
3 to 4 miles	9.2
Over 4 miles	4.0
Total	100.0

FAMILY COMPOSITION OF THE FIRST VISIT<sup>972</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Members</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Husband only	14.8
Wife only	28.5
Husband & wife	30.5
Wife & children	5.6
Husband, wife & children	20.4
Total	100.0

PRIMARY GROCERY PURCHASER FOR HOUSEHOLD<sup>973</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Persons</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Husband	7.2
Wife	51.8
Husband & wife	26.5
Wife & children	6.0
Husband, wife & children	8.4
Total	100.0

<sup>971</sup> Ronald W. Stampfl, Supermarket Patronage Motives Among New Residents (Seminar paper submitted in lieu of a M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 1967), 33.

<sup>972</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>973</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

NUMBER OF SUPERMARKETS VISITED BEFORE FINAL CHOICE<sup>974</sup>

(N=249)

<u>When final choice was made</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
After visiting the first supermarket	23.2
After visiting the second supermarket	26.1
After visiting the third supermarket	26.1
After visiting the fourth supermarket	14.8
After visiting more than four supermarkets	3.2
Still looking	5.2
Unknown	1.2
Total	100.0

PERMANENT SUPERMARKET CHOICES OF NEW RESIDENTS IN MILWAUKEE<sup>975</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Supermarket</u>	<u>% Permanent Patronage</u>
A&P	7.2
National	9.6
Kohl's	33.2
Kroger	6.4
Red Owl	2.8
Sentry	9.2
Other or Combination	21.2
Food Fair	3.6
Total	100.0

DISTANCE FROM HOME TO PERMANENT SUPERMARKET<sup>976</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Distance</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Under ½ mile	18.6
½ to 1 mile	31.7
1 to 2 miles	24.1
2 to 3 miles	8.8
3 to 4 miles	8.4
Over 4 miles	6.8
Unknown	1.2

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<sup>974</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>975</sup> Ibid., 45. 6.8% of the total is unaccounted for. It is unclear how the discrepancy occurred.

<sup>976</sup> Ibid., 48.

NUMBER OF STORES REGULARLY VISITED<sup>977</sup>

<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
One	34.9
Two	51.0
Three	12.9
Four or more	1.2
Total	100.0

FREQUENCY OF FOOD SHOPPING TRIPS<sup>978</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Unit of Time</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Almost daily	8.8
More than once a week	60.6
Once a week	28.1
Twice a month	2.0
Once a month	0.4
Total	100.0

TIME OF DAY FOR MAJOR FOOD SHOPPING TRIPS<sup>979</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Time of day</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Morning	26.1
Afternoon	39.3
Evening	32.5
Combination	2.0
Total	100.0

<sup>977</sup> Ibid., 49.<sup>978</sup> Ibid., 50.<sup>979</sup> Ibid., 51.

DAY OF WEEK WHEN MAJOR FOOD SHOPPING TRIP OCCURS<sup>980</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Unit of Time</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Monday–Thursday	40.9
Friday	27.3
Saturday	23.2
Sunday	2.0
Combination	6.4

USE OF A PRE-PLANNED BUDGET<sup>981</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Using Pre-planned Budget</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	43.8
No	56.2
Total	100.0

USE OF A PRE-PLANNED BUDGET<sup>982</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Using Pre-planned Budget</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	43.8
No	56.2
Total	100.0

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<sup>980</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>981</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>982</sup> Ibid., 54.

*REASONS FOR CONTINUED PATRONAGE AT A SUPERMARKET*<sup>983</sup>

(N=249)

<u>Continuance motives</u>	<u>1st reason (%)</u>	<u>2<sup>nd</sup> reason (%)</u>	<u>3<sup>rd</sup> reason (%)</u>	<u>Times mentioned (%)</u>
Meat department	25.7	9.2	3.6	38.6
Prices	25.7	13.2	8.8	47.7
Convenience/location	18.8	11.6	11.2	41.7
Quality	11.2	16.0	11.2	38.6
Selection	5.6	17.6	11.2	34.5
Produce department	1.2	3.6	7.6	13.7
Good service	1.6	1.6	10.0	13.3
Personnel	1.6	2.8	3.6	9.2
Familiarity to layout	3.2	2.8	10.4	16.5
Grocery department	1.2	3.6	4.0	8.8
Delicatessen	1.6	6.0	2.0	9.6
Bakery	0.8	2.4	2.0	4.4
Appearance/neatness	0.8	–	0.4	1.2
Other	0.8	0.4	2.0	3.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	300.0

<sup>983</sup> Ibid., 65.

APPENDIX F: MILWAUKEE PRODUCE WHOLESALERS BY ETHNICITY,  
1900–1990<sup>984</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>German/Jewish/Other</u>		<u>Italian</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1900	20	90.9	2	9.1
1905	20	90.9	2	9.1
1910	26	92.8	2	7.2
1915	29	87.8	4	12.2
1920	25	83.3	5	16.7
1925	22	75.8	7	24.2
1930	25	75.7	8	24.3
1935	27	75.0	9	25.0
1940	26	74.2	9	25.8
1945	25	75.7	8	24.3
1950	19	63.3	11	36.7
1955	14	56.0	11	44.0
1960	9	42.8	12	57.2
1965	7	50.0	7	50.0
1970	5	38.4	8	61.6
1975	2	16.6	10	83.4
1980	1	11.1	8	88.9
1985	2	28.5	5	71.5
1990	1	20.0	4	80.0

(Source: Wright's Directory of Milwaukee from 1900 to present)

<sup>984</sup> Paul Geib, "From Italian Peddler to Commission Row Wholesaler," Milwaukee History 13 no. 4 (Winter, 1990): 112.

APPENDIX G: CHRONOLOGY OF SELECTED FOOD STORES IN  
MILWAUKEE

*(All dates refer to events in Milwaukee)*

1865	William Steinmeyer enters grocery business
1872	Smith, Roundy & Co. (later Roundy's) opens
Circa 1900	Balistreri family (later Sendik's) enters grocery business
1910	Great Atlantic & Pacific grocery stores open
1917	City-run markets open
1919	Piggly Wiggly stores open
1921	City-run markets close
Mid-1920's	Max Kohl's first grocery store opens
1924	D. & F. Market Co. stores open
1929	First National Tea Co. grocery stores
1931	Piggly Wiggly stores close
1934-5	D. & F. Market Co. stores close
1937	Great Atlantic & Pacific changes store names to "A&P"
1945	Steinmeyer's closes
1946	First Kohl's supermarket opens
1948-9	Krambo supermarkets open
1953-4	Sentry Foods (run by Godfrey family) opens
1955	National Tea Co. stores close
1956	Halan's Foods opens
1963	Krambo closes
1964	Piggly Wiggly stores re-open
1966-7	Halan's Foods closes
1975	Pick'n Save (part of Roundy's) opens
1979	A&P stores close
1983	A&P acquires Kohl's food stores
2003	Kohl's supermarkets close <sup>985</sup>

<sup>985</sup> Erwin W. Kieckhefer, "Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir," Milwaukee History 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 40. Lydia Engelman, The History of Roundy's Inc. (Roundy's Inc, 1987), Dexter-Roundy Family Papers, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 108 and Milwaukee Micro Collection 57, Folder 14- Miscellaneous, University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, 1. "Sendik's History." <[http://www.sendiksmarket.com/home/company\\_information/history/](http://www.sendiksmarket.com/home/company_information/history/)> (6 August 2011). Paul Gilmore, "Grocery Clerks and Meat Cutters: Milwaukee's Grocery Store Unions, 1920-1984" (M.A. diss., UW-Milwaukee, 1995), 37-39. Note: there are some discrepancies regarding this date. The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company had a business presence in Milwaukee since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but only as a wholesaler, not as a store owner. Multiple Great Atlantic and Pacific grocery stores are not listed in the Wright's Milwaukee City Directory until 1929. Similarly, National Tea Company had a wholesaling office in

Milwaukee by 1915 (possibly 1914), but their stores did not open until 1929. (Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1929, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1929), 680. John Gurda, The Making of Milwaukee (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 229. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1913 (2 vols.), (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1913), all pages. "Milwaukee's First Piggly Wiggly Stores," The Milwaukee Sentinel, 4 May 1919, part 2, 12. ("City Food Sale Still Debated," The Milwaukee Journal, 3 March 1932, in A Collection of Newspaper and Magazine Articles (photocopied) on Daniel Webster Hoan, 1881-1961, Chronologically Arranged and Covering the Period from April 17, 1912 Through May 17, 1962, compiled by the Milwaukee Public Library, (Milwaukee, Wis: Milwaukee Public Library, 1969), 99. Erwin W. Kieckhefer, "Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir," Milwaukee History 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 42. "D. & F. Market Co.," The Milwaukee Journal, 13 January 1930, sec. I, 6. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1929, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1929), 1202. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1931, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1931), 1995. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directories 1937, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1937), 61. Erwin W. Kieckhefer, "Milwaukee Neighborhood Grocery Stores: A Memoir," Milwaukee History 16, no. 2 (Summer, 1993): 42. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1964-1965, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1964-1965), 1153. Tom Daykin, "1<sup>st</sup> Kohl's supermarket to be next Lena's," The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 14 June 2002, sec. D, 2. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1949, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1949), 658. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1953-1954, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1953-1954), 1101. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1955, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1955), 834. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1956, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1956), 447. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1963, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1963), 819. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1964-1965, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1964-1965), 1153. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1966-1967, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1966-1967), 404. Lydia Engelman, The History of Roundy's Inc. (Roundy's Inc, 1987), Dexter-Roundy Family Papers, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection 108 and Milwaukee Micro Collection 57, Folder 14- Miscellaneous, University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee Libraries/Wisconsin Historical Society, 8. Wright's Milwaukee (Milwaukee County, Wis.) City Directory 1979, (Kansas City, Mo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1979), 1. Tom Daykin, "1<sup>st</sup> Kohl's supermarket to be next Lena's," The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 14 June 2002, sec. D, 2. Tom Daykin, "Waukesha grocery facility likely to close," second part of "Grocery warehouse likely to close," The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 4 September 2003, sec. D, 6.



### **CHAPTER III APPENDIX– SHOPPING VENUES**

#### **APPENDIX A: STATISTICS ON DEPARTMENT STORE SALES**

Statistical information illustrates the growing prominence of various forms of shopping venues in the average Milwaukee consumer's consumption habits. As the table below illustrates, most Milwaukeeans bought something at a department store at some point during the Christmas and New Year's seasons in the interval from 1956 to 1959. These shopping venues naturally saw a lot of patronage during the Christmas shopping days.

PERCENTAGE OF METROPOLITAN MILWAUKEE FAMILIES WHO MADE A  
PURCHASE FROM A SELECTED DEPARTMENT STORE DURING THE  
PERIOD DECEMBER 15 TO JANUARY 15, FOR THE YEARS 1956, 1957, 1958,  
AND 1959<sup>986</sup>

<u>Store and Location</u>	<u>Percent of Families</u>			
	<u>1959</u>	<u>1958</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1956</u>
<b>Schuster's</b>				
Third Street	30.1	32.0	35.3	43.5
Capitol Court*	35.0	32.8	29.3	--
12th & Vliet Street	16.9	17.7	20.5	25.9
Mitchell Street	29.9	30.2	31.8	31.1
<b>Gimbels</b>				
Downtown	57.2	60.8	63.4	67.0
Southgate*	24.0	25.7	25.2	24.0
Mayfair*	17.5	--	--	--
<b>Chapmans</b>				
Downtown	13.8	15.4	15.0	18.1
Capitol Court*	16.0	16.9	14.8	--
<b>Boston Store</b>				
Downtown	62.6	67.3	68.3	72.1
Bayshore*	11.8	--	--	--
<b>Sears</b>				
21 <sup>st</sup> & North Avenue	31.0	30.8	33.1	35.3
Mitchell Street	21.4	21.6	22.6	22.8
Bayshore*	8.0	3.4	3.4	4.4
West Allis	4.8	4.3	4.6	4.1

\* = Planned Shopping Centers

As this table illustrates, a sizable majority of Milwaukeeans shopped at the downtown Boston Store and Gimbels during this time period. Although there is no evidence in these statistics as to how many of these people visited more than one store, it is fair to assume that many consumers did not devote their loyalties to a single business, and therefore visited multiple stores to do their shopping. It should also be stressed that this table only registers actual *purchases* made by

<sup>986</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 275.

consumers. The actual number of visitors to these department stores was probably much higher, due to patrons who did not buy anything.

Sales at department stores reflect a six-day business week since shopping on Sundays was prohibited. Milwaukee's grocery stores similarly observed the Lord's Day, up to the late 1960's. In 1968, while Gimbels-Schusters, Chapmans, and the national chains J.C. Penney's and Sears remained closed on Sundays, Boston Store remained open for business from noon to six in the evening.<sup>987</sup>

Although the total amount that the city spent on various items increased over time, sales might decline between years before resuming a steady increase. In the following table, "Retail Sales" refers to merchandise sold at the retail level and includes the following major categories: general merchandise, furniture and appliances, apparel, building materials and hardware, food, eating and drinking, automotive, drug and proprietary, and miscellaneous retail sales."<sup>988</sup>

The following table illustrates the amount of money spent in wholesale trade in Milwaukee from 1929 to 1958:

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<sup>987</sup> Fairchild News Service, "Big Stores Still Shun Sundays Bandwagon," *Women's Wear Daily*, November 18, 1967, 7, "Gimbel Brothers, 1840-1986," Mss-0430, Box 2, Folder 4, "Memos 1956-1976," Milwaukee Historical Society, Milwaukee.

<sup>988</sup> 1982 Census of Retail Trade, Major Retail Centers in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (Wisconsin and Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1982), DSCN 1239.

WHOLESALE TRADE IN THE MILWAUKEE METROPOLITAN AREA<sup>989</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Sales</u>	<i>(in thousands of dollars)</i> <u>Sales adjusted for inflation in 2011 dollars</u> <sup>990</sup>
1929	551,539	7,033,122.12
1939	423,130	6,637,844.26
1948	1,466,177	13,265,920.83
1954	1,853,692	15,026,344.34
1958*	2,368,715	17,872,405.47

As these numbers illustrate, Milwaukee's wholesale trade sales dipped during the Great Depression, but climbed steadily in the postwar years, even after the numbers are adjusted for inflation. This can be credited both to rising incomes and a growing population. There is a major difference between retail and wholesale sales. Wholesale sales, such as those described in the previous table, sell directly to businesses, and retail sales deal with stores that sell directly to private consumers.

<sup>989</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 45.

<sup>990</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

\* The 1958 numbers are preliminary, based on early estimates.

APPENDIX B: DETAILS ON SHOPPING VENUE COMPOSITION AND SALESCOMPOSITION OF SOUTHGATE'S STORES IN DECEMBER, 1959<sup>991</sup>

<u>Kind of Business</u>	<u>Number of Establishments</u>
Retail Stores, Total	29
Food Stores	4
Eating, Drinking Places	1
General Merchandise Group	3
Apparel, Accessories Stores	12
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Appliance Dealers	2
Automotive Group	1
Lumber, Building Materials, Hardware, Farm Equipment Dealers	1
Drugstores, Proprietary Stores	1
Other Retail Stores	4

CONSUMER SPENDING IN THE CAPITOL COURT AREA<sup>992</sup>

*A= Total amount trade area residents spent in retail stores in 1955, not necessarily in the Capitol Court trade area (in thousands of dollars)*

*B= Total amount spent in Capitol Court's trade area in 1955, not necessarily by area residents (in thousands of dollars)*

	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>
Food	67,060	56,077
Department Stores	56,508	24,114
Variety Stores	5,456	2,215
Apparel	29,100	11,850
Furniture	16,761	7,567
Hardware	9,701	4,622
Drug Stores	8,164	4,472
Food and Drink	29,627	12,012
Other	236,821	12,097
Total	249,198	135,026

<sup>991</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 233.

<sup>992</sup> "Capitol Court- Milwaukee's First Regional Retail Center," pamphlet, 8, "Capitol Court, 1951-2000," Mss-2995, Box 1, Folder 3, Promotional Booklets/Brochures, Milwaukee Historical Society, Milwaukee.

COMPOSITION OF CAPITOL COURT'S STORES IN DECEMBER, 1959<sup>993</sup>

Kind of Business	Number of Establishments
Retail Stores, Total	58
Food Stores	7
Eating, Drinking Places	7
General Merchandise Group	4
Apparel, Accessories Stores	22
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Appliance Dealers	2
Automotive Group	1
Lumber, Building Materials, Hardware, Farm Equipment Dealers	4
Drugstores, Proprietary Stores	1
Other Retail Stores	10

FACTUAL INFORMATION ON MILWAUKEE'S RETAIL CENTERS<sup>994</sup>

*(Note: this information refers to the venues' status in 1982)*

Name	Year Opened	Total Acres	Floor space (sq. ft.)	Tenants (# stores)	Parking spaces (# cars)
Bayshore	1954	32	500,000	60	2,000
Brookfield Sq.	1967	92	1,500,000	69	6,000
Capitol Court	1957	60	700,000	100	4,500
Mayfair	1958	100	1,050,000	116	8,000
Northridge	1972	105	1,400,000	130	7,000
Port Loomis	1959	28	300,000	30	1,700
Southgate	1951	32	5,000,000	54	2,100
Southridge	1970	135	1,400,000	130	8,000
Southtown	1971	N/A	N/A	15	N/A

<sup>993</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 210.

<sup>994</sup> 1982 Census of Retail Trade, Major Retail Centers in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (Wisconsin and Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1982), DSCN 1227-1229.

APPENDIX C: POSTWAR SALES IN MILWAUKEERETAIL SALES IN MILWAUKEE: 1950–1970<sup>995</sup>*(in millions of dollars)*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Sales</u>
1950	1,140
1951	1,210
1952	1,260
1953	1,330
1954	1,310
1955	1,350
1956	1,310
1957	1,480
1958	1,500
1959	1,630
1960	1,660
1961	1,620
1962	1,660
1963	1,760
1964	1,850
1965	1,930
1966	2,030
1967	2,180
1968	2,370
1969	2,470
1970	2,500

The following table illustrates the total amount of sales, total number of stores, and average sales per store in various areas of Milwaukee in 1948 and 1954, without taking into account the types or sizes of the stores. All of the following sales numbers are in thousands of dollars. (After inflation, one dollar

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<sup>995</sup> 1982 Census of Retail Trade, Major Retail Centers in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (Wisconsin and Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1982), DSCN 1239.

by 1948 standards and one dollar in 1954 money are the equivalent of \$9.05 and \$8.11 in 2010 dollars, respectively.)<sup>996</sup>

SALES, NUMBER OF STORES, AND AVERAGE STORE SALES IN  
MILWAUKEE<sup>997</sup>

Area	Sales			No. of Stores			Ave. Sales Per Store		
	1948	1954	% Chg.	1948	1954	% Chg.	1948	1954	% Chg.
Milwaukee SMA	903,991	1,155,581	+26.6	9,519	9,787	+2.8	94.967	116.949	+23.2
Metro. Area less Central City	131,513	213,554	+62.4	1,944	1,732	-10.9	67.651	123.299	+82.3
Milwaukee CBD	193,263	191,287	-1.0	814	790	-2.9	237.424	242.135	+2.0
Milwaukee less CBD	579,215	739,740	+27.7	6,761	7,265	+7.5	85.670	101.822	+18.9

These numbers need to be viewed cautiously. These statistics do not account for the fact that a large department store might sell millions of dollars in assorted merchandise over the course of year, whereas a tiny specialty shop that sold nothing but buttons or pens might only expect to take in a few thousand dollars worth of sales annually. Therefore, an “average” sales per store statistic is slightly misleading because the few enormous department stores in Milwaukee’s central business district made much more than \$237,424 a year in 1948, and the many little shops could only dream of being so profitable. This affected the averages. Similar trends, with some notable differences, can be found in the statistics for general merchandise stores during the same period.

<sup>996</sup> [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

<sup>997</sup> Donald George Leeseberg, Retail Trade Trends in Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1948-1959 (D.B.A. dissertation, University of Washington, 1961), 148.



*SALES, NUMBER OF STORES, AND AVERAGE STORE SALES IN  
MILWAUKEE FOR GENERAL MERCHANDISE STORES, 1948 & 1954*<sup>998</sup>

*(All sales numbers are in thousands of dollars)*

Area	Sales			No. of Stores			Ave. Sales Per Store		
	1948	1954	% Chg.	1948	1954	% Chg.	1948	1954	% Chg.
Milwaukee SMA	166,561	170,201	+2.2	148	179	+20.9	1,125.412	950.843	-15.5
Metro. Area less Central City	3,841	5,841	+52.3	28	39	+39.3	137.179	149.974	+9.3
Milwaukee CBD	82,466	81,204	-1.5	13	14	+7.7	6,343.538	5,800.285	-8.6
Milwaukee less CBD	80,254	83,148	+3.6	107	126	+17.8	750.037	659.905	-12.0

For the most part, Milwaukee's stores saw rises in sales throughout the city, save for some slight declines in the central business district. On a broader scale, larger trends illustrate some basic trends in Milwaukee's retail sales. In general, the amount of retail sales in Milwaukee rose substantially and the number of shopping venues rose slightly from 1948 to 1954. Sales inside Milwaukee's metropolitan area and outside the central city rose dramatically over this interval, due mainly to the construction of new shopping centers. With the expansion of shopping in the suburbs, Milwaukee's central business district saw the beginnings of its decline in sales and open stores, but the diminishing returns and closings were fairly slight at this time.

Milwaukee's sales statistics differed from those of the United States as a whole, illustrating how mass consumption in a single city could be demonstrably different from mass consumption in an entire nation. Using 1954 as a sample year, Milwaukeeans' spending habits in retail stores can be analyzed.

<sup>998</sup> Ibid., 155.

PER CAPITA RETAIL SALES IN MILWAUKEE & THE UNITED STATES: 1954<sup>999</sup>

<u>Kind of Business</u>	<u>City of Milwaukee (\$)</u>	<u>United States (\$)</u>
Retail Stores, Total	1,331.62	1,054.45
Food Stores	291.51	246.68
Eating, Drinking Places	132.18	81.28
General Merchandise	235.07	110.88
Apparel, Accessories	95.90	68.73
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Appliances	75.90	53.47
Automotive Group	213.96	185.59
Gasoline Service Stations	64.09	66.65
Lumber, Bldg. Mtls., Hardware, Farm Equip.	63.31	81.42
Drugstores, Proprietary Stores	39.16	32.58
Other Retail Stores	120.53	99.18
Non-Store Retailers	33.08	28.00

These statistics illustrate that in 1954, Milwaukeeans, on average, spent more money at every kind of retail store than the average American, save for gasoline service stations, where the difference was slight, and lumber/building materials/hardware/farm equipment stores. Differences in gas prices and the wide-ranging national disparities in private versus public transportation may have accounted for the former disparity, and the latter difference may be explained in part by the fact that by 1954, Milwaukee was mainly a developed urban area, and denizens of the city, therefore, had far less need for farm equipment and other construction materials than those who lived in agrarian areas. Nevertheless, Milwaukeeans spent more money on retail merchandise than the average American citizen, possibly due in part to a higher average per capita income, as chapter one illustrated.

The following tables list statistics regarding the central business district's sales in 1948 and 1954.

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<sup>999</sup> Ibid., 168.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SALES AS PERCENT OF CITY SALES<sup>1000</sup>

	<u>1948</u>	<u>1954</u>
General Merchandise Group	50.7	49.4
Department Stores	51.8	52.4
Apparel, Accessories Stores	50.8	48.1
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Appliance Dealers	23.3	21.8
Automotive Group	15.3	15.9
Other Retail Stores	28.1	24.3
Liquor Stores	13.8	9.8
Jewelry Stores	57.3	59.6
Book, Stationery Stores	N/A	69.3
Sporting Goods, Bicycle Stores	43.5	33.6
Florists	20.4	16.9
Music Stores	70.4	28.0
Camera, Photographic Supply Stores	52.2	65.3

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SALES AS PERCENT OF STANDARD  
METROPOLITAN AREA SALES<sup>1001</sup>

	<u>1948</u>	<u>1954</u>
General Merchandise Group	49.5	47.7
Department Stores	51.8	52.4
Apparel, Accessories Stores	48.8	42.4
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Appliance Dealers	21.9	20.0
Automotive Group	12.7	12.6
Other Retail Stores	25.0	20.9
Jewelry Stores	10.3	7.4
Book, Stationery Stores	53.5	53.5
Sporting Goods, Bicycle Stores	36.0	24.2
Florists	16.4	13.0
Music Stores	68.1	24.7
Camera, Photographic Supply Stores	46.1	51.6

<sup>1000</sup> Ibid., 102, 104.

<sup>1001</sup> Ibid., 102, 104.

As these numbers illustrate, roughly half of the city's general merchandise and department stores were located in the central business district, although a much smaller percentage of furniture, home furnishings, appliance dealers, and automotive group sales could be found in that area. As discussed in chapter two, by the mid-twentieth century the vast majority of car dealerships had migrated from the downtown area and moved towards the outer regions of the city, where large tracts of land could be bought more economically for use as car lots. Of the other stores tracked in these statistics, most changes in sales percentages are relatively minor, save for music stores, whose sales in the central business district plunged over the six-year interval covered here.

The following table lists the statistics for per capita retail store sales in the United States, Wisconsin, and the Milwaukee Standard Metropolitan Area in 1954, illustrating what the average consumer spent at retail stores.

RETAIL STORE SALES IN THE UNITED STATES, WISCONSIN, AND THE  
MILWAUKEE STANDARD METROPOLITAN AREA, 1954<sup>1002</sup>

Kind of Business	United States		Wisconsin		Milwaukee Metro. Area	
	Per Capita Sales	% Total	Per Capita Sales	% Total	Per Capita Sales	% Total
Retail Stores, Total	\$1,054.45	100.0	\$1,082.09	100.0	\$1,215.90	100.0
Food Stores	246.68	23.4	234.90	21.7	282.84	23.3
Eating, Drinking	81.28	7.7	103.96	9.6	117.03	9.6
General Merchandise	110.88	10.5	115.55	10.7	180.81	14.9
Apparel, Accessories Stores	68.73	6.5	56.41	5.2	80.79	6.6
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Appliance Dealers	53.47	5.1	49.59	4.6	61.33	5.0
Automotive Group	185.59	17.6	182.14	16.8	201.12	16.5
Gasoline Service Stations	66.65	6.3	71.88	6.6	88.30	7.3
Lumber, Building Materials, etc.	81.42	7.7	111.18	10.3	63.20	5.2
Drugstores	32.58	3.1	28.98	2.7	36.38	3.0
Other Retail Stores	99.18	9.4	109.32	10.1	104.09	8.6

By 1959, the downtown shopping district was past its peak, but there were still hundreds of stores specializing in many different kinds of merchandise there. Notably, the automobile dealerships were almost completely gone from the downtown area by 1959.

<sup>1002</sup> Ibid., 121.

COMPOSITION OF DOWNTOWN SHOPPING AREA STORES IN DECEMBER, 1959<sup>1003</sup>

<u>Kind of Business</u>	<u>Number of Establishments</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>East of River</u>	<u>West of River</u>	
Retail Stores, Total	188	272	460
Food Stores	4	19	23
Eating, Drinking Places	32	73	105
General Merchandise Group	4	5	9
Apparel, Accessories Stores	49	77	126
Furniture, Home Furnishings, Appliance Dealers	10	4	14
Automotive Group	1	0	1
Gasoline Service Stations	1	5	6
Lumber, Building Materials, Hardware, Farm Equipment Dealers	1	0	1
Drugstores, Proprietary Stores	7	6	13
Other Retail Stores	79	83	162

As the previous tables show, the downtown shopping district was still a complex and busy area during this time, even though the city's shoppers were increasingly turning to shopping centers located in other areas.

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<sup>1003</sup> Ibid., 248.

APPENDIX D: THE PROBLEMS OF SHOPLIFTING

Not all of the crime that leads to the decline of shopping venues is perpetrated on the consumers. Shoplifting is a serious problem for many stores, because pilfered stock cuts into profits. Losses due to shoplifting are rarely covered by insurance, since filing the paperwork for remuneration and the subsequent processing would be time and cost-prohibitive. Few store proprietors wish to bother the police over the theft of an inexpensive or common item, although expensive jewelry, artwork, electronics with traceable serial numbers, or an armed robbery are different matters. All too often, however, a stolen object is usually never recovered or recompensed.

Most shoplifting is done either for thrills or due to need. Shoplifting due to mental illness is rare. Only one person in 500,000 is diagnosed as a genuine kleptomaniac.<sup>1004</sup> In the late 1970's, experts estimated that a maximum of five percent of all shoplifters are apprehended.<sup>1005</sup> Though most large shopping venues have a security staff, the effectiveness of these anti-crime measures is variable. Confronting alleged shoplifters can lead to negative repercussions, for unverifiable accusations can lead to lawsuits and bad publicity, even if the suspect is guilty. In cases with clear evidence, offenders might be turned over to the police. Certain stores had an automatic policy of contacting law enforcement. Others dealt with offenders on a case-by-case basis, with some captured shoplifters being given a strict warning, or an adult thief's doctor or clergyman

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<sup>1004</sup> William Lancaster, The Department Store: A Social History (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 314.

<sup>1005</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

might be called. Youthful offenders were often turned over to their parents, and the punishment was left to their discretion.<sup>1006</sup>

As a means of preventing shoplifting, department stores and shopping centers launched preventive measures. Some stores launched anti-shoplifting ad campaigns. Most of these ads were directed towards teenagers, and the ads generally meant to scare youths into good behavior by pointing out that a criminal conviction could ruin young people's lives by spoiling their future prospects. In one example of such an ad, the viewer was informed that, "Ken swapped a college education for a \$6.50 pair of jeans."<sup>1007</sup> The message in these advertisements was that a criminal record could destroy one's chances of getting into a reputable university. Similar ads warned that caught shoplifters could lose jobs, relationships, and their freedom. The small profit obtained from pilfering was not worth the potential damage to one's future. Shopping venues often hired store detectives and security guards to be on the alert for consumers who sought to avail themselves of a five-finger discount. Though in the earlier decades of the century most store detectives were male, by the early 1960's the majority of Milwaukee's shopping venue protectors were women. They wore street clothes identical to those worn by the average consumer, and did not wear nametags or badges. The female store detectives simply blended in with the rest of the customers, keeping a sharp eye out for people who pocketed goods or tried to sneak out without paying. The best store detectives were indistinguishable from

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<sup>1006</sup> Patti Last, "That Grandma Type Shopper May Be the Store's Gumshoe," The Milwaukee Journal, December 26, 1961, The Green Sheet, 1.

<sup>1007</sup> William Lancaster, The Department Store: A Social History (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1995), 315.



regular customers. Occasionally store detectives would be asked to investigate employees who were suspected of robbing their employers.<sup>1008</sup>

Store detectives kept on the alert for shoplifting by looking for telltale signs, such as bulging bags or umbrellas, or baggy clothing with extra pockets. Other shoplifting warnings were large gangs of young people, or nervous and perspiring people. The majority of shoplifters were either teenagers or women of middle age. Most stole only for thrills or on dares, rather than out of need. Once a shoplifter was apprehended, the store detective then had the often-tricky job of apprehending the thief and retrieving the merchandise. In her profile of female store detectives, Patti Last wrote that,

“They can confront a suspect best by being kind and gentle, rather than brash and demanding, says one protection department head.

Not all suspects are agreeable, however. These unarmed women detectives have been kicked and even bitten by desperate shoplifters. Take the case of a small woman detective versus a 250 pound female bruiser.

The detective observed the theft and approached the woman and asked her to come with her to come with her to the protection office “to clear up a mistake.” Whereupon the shopper slapped her in the face, turned around and stalked out the door...

The detective followed her and later confronted her with the help of a near-by policeman.

These female detectives don't always enlist the aid of a policeman. Many times they can “talk” a suspect up to the office. Or they may call the office and ask for the help of a male detective, especially if more than one person is involved. One store has equipped its detectives with whistles.

Because of the potential danger of the work, most stores seek only mature women, usually at least 30 years old, who like people but who don't show their emotions. They must be intelligent, and able to think quickly in tight situations.”<sup>1009</sup>

<sup>1008</sup> Patti Last, “That Grandma Type Shopper May Be the Store's Gumshoe,” The Milwaukee Journal, December 26, 1961, The Green Sheet, 1.

<sup>1009</sup> Ibid., 1.

Shoplifting is a major problem for shopping venues. A supermarket, for example, can leave its indoor produce section relatively unattended or leave items such as potted flowers or a freezer full of bags of ice outside, trusting honest customers to bring the items inside to pay for them. If a customer filches a handful of grapes or swipes a bag of ice, for instance, the supermarket takes a tiny loss from the theft, and this is widely accepted (though never liked) as part of the cost of doing business. A department store, however, can lose thousands of dollars in minutes if a customer walks off wearing one or more expensive coats, or if the jewelry counter is left unattended. A small store's entire daily— even weekly— profits can be wiped out in a few minutes by a shopper indulging in larcenous behavior. Often a watchful staff is the only security against such a loss, which underscores the necessity of clerks having contact with customers in many situations.

In some department stores, though not all, the priciest items, such as leather jackets or designer clothes, are fastened to the rack with a special cord that cannot be cut, and a store employee must detach the item with a special device if the customer wishes to try it on, and the store clerk stays with the customer as long as the expensive item is not secured. If the customer wants to purchase the item, the clerk must remove additional protective devices, such as dye packs or alarm-triggering tags. If the customer decides against the purchase, the item is once again locked to the rack. This illustrates a new aspect of the consumer experience: in order to protect themselves against theft, shopping venues need to treat their clientele as potential thieves.