

## Sport in a Middle-Class Utopia: Asbury Park, New Jersey, 1871-1895

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In 1869 a group of Methodist ministers established Ocean Grove, a camp-meeting resort located on the New Jersey shore in Monmouth County about 50 miles south of New York City. James A. Bradley, a wealthy brush manufacturer from New York, arrived to purchase a cottage lot at the camp-meeting site a year later. Impressed with the area's potential for resort development, Bradley eventually purchased a 500 acre tract directly adjacent to Ocean Grove. Here he built Asbury Park, a resort named after the founder of Methodism in America,

The founding of Asbury Park occurred during a period of resort expansion nationwide. The years 1865 to 1915 were the first "golden age" of the American resort. The railroad and the steamship opened new areas to the American tourist. Improved transportation, for example, made possible resort development along the entire Jersey coast. In Monmouth County, an almost continuous line of resort communities had been established along its 30 miles of oceanfront by the mid-1880s. The summer population was estimated at 200,000. Monmouth developers established vacation communities for widely differing clienteles. Long Branch competed with Saratoga for the patronage of what Thorstein Veblen labeled the "leisure class"; there were cottage communities for both the middle class and the wealthy, some of whose names appeared on the social register; and, finally, there were several camp-meeting sites and a small resort which conducted a summer institute modeled after that at Chautauqua, New York. Resort development in Monmouth county reflected the beginnings of a mass tourism industry. A democratization of travel had occurred as the middle class in addition to the wealthy adopted the vacation habit.<sup>1</sup>

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On the history of the American resort see Jeffrey Limerick, Nancy Ferguson, and Richard Oliver, *America's Grand Resort Hotels* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1979). For developments on the Jersey shore see Harold F. Wilson, *The Jersey Show: A Social and Economic History of the Countries of Atlantic, Cape May, Monmouth and Ocean* (NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., 1953). There have been several excellent studies of specific resort areas in recent years. See Charles E. Funnell, *By the Beautiful Sea: The Rise and High Times of that Great American Resort, Atlantic City* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975) and Betsy Blackmar, "Going to the Mountains: A Social History" in *Resorts of the Catskills* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1979). The history of the vacation is discussed by Hugh DeSantis. "The Democratization of Travel: The Travel Agent in American

The golden age of the American resort was an aspect of the "leisure revolution"—an expansion of leisure opportunities which reached its climax in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.\* This growth of leisure was intimately connected to the growth of the modern city. In fact, new forms of leisure were both a reaction and a means of adapting to life in the metropolis.<sup>3</sup> Resorts, for example, were obvious places of escape from the, heat, crowding, and unsanitary conditions found in the 19th-century city. But they were also promoted as places in which the urban business and professional classes could seek both mental and physical rejuvenation. They were, to quote a present-day resort advertisement, an "antidote for civilization," specifically for the new urban civilization emerging at the end of the last century.<sup>4</sup>

Asbury Park was founded on the twin desires for escape and rejuvenation. It was based on an emerging idea among members of the middle class concerning the value of play in the urban world. Recreation, as they understood the term, was needed to provide a respite from the hectic pace and unhealthful aspects of city life. A temporary immersion in the world of play was necessary to avoid the physical and mental breakdown which could result from overwork. The idea of rejuvenation through recreation served as a rationale for a temporary escape from the city.<sup>5</sup>

Contemporaneous with the development of the idea of recreation, a variety of reformers worked within the city to correct those aspects of urban life which contributed to the desire for escape. Sanitarians hoped to raise health standards through improved methods of waste disposal, water systems, and the regulation of the food supply.<sup>6</sup> Other reformers attempted to impose some sort of moral order on the city. Temperance advocates, Sunday-school workers, and YMCA organizers made a concerted effort at social control among the lower orders which would both raise the moral tone of the city and provide the urban community with a shared set of values.<sup>7</sup>

There was often a mutuality of interest between those wishing to improve the city's built environment and those committed to raising moral standards. In 1887, for example, sanitarian Frances White presented her vision for the city of the future. Believing that "hygienic living is the real basis of moral living," White called her city Ethica. It was a place where both sanitary and

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History," *Journal of American Culture*, 1 (Spring 1978), 1-17; and by Neil Harris, "On Vacation" in *Resorts of the Catskills*, 101-108.

2. Dale A. Somers, "The Leisure Revolution: Recreation in the American City, 1820-1920," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 5 (1971), 125-147.

3. Stephen Hardy, *How Boston Played Sport, Recreation, and Community, 1865-1915* (Northeastern University Press, 1982), pp. 195-202.

4. The "antidote for civilization" slogan is borrowed from Club Med Vacation Villages.

5. Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850-1920* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 108-154.

6. Judith Walzer Leavitt and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *Sickness and Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); Stanley K. Schultz and Clay McShane, "To Engineer the Metropolis: Sewers, Sanitation, and City Planning in Late-Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of American History*, 65 (1978), 389-411.

7. Paul Bayer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978).

moral standards were high.<sup>8</sup> Asbury Park was, in effect, an attempt to actually build Ethica as a leisure community and sport played an increasingly important role in furthering the dual goals of health and morality. The resort was not only a place of escape from the city; it was an attempt at responding positively to the defects of the metropolis.

Asbury Park was also an example of what has been called the “quest for subcommunity” among urban Americans. Benjamin G. Rader has argued that, as earlier forms of community based on small geographic units declined, city dwellers turned to new forms of community. One of these was the voluntary organization. Sports clubs, for example, represented an attempt by specific ethnic or status groups to establish subcommunities within the larger society. Such clubs offered their members a sense of group identity, acted as a refuge from urban life, and were vehicles of socialization.<sup>9</sup> At Asbury Park, the town itself functioned as a special kind of subcommunity for its summer residents. The resort performed many of the same functions as a sport club but on a community-wide basis. This quest for subcommunity was, however, at odds with the attempt to present Asbury Park as an ideal urban environment. A fragment of the urban world could not easily be translated into a vision of the urban future.

## II

James Adam Bradley (1830-1921), who became affectionately known as “the Founder” at Asbury Park, was born at Rossville, Staten Island on February 4, 1830. His father died when he was only four. His mother remarried and the family moved to New York where James’ stepfather was a storekeeper. “The Founder” grew up in the Bowery, the city’s infamous lower East Side. An incorrigible youth, James did not do well in school and was tempted from the straight and narrow through association with “bad companions.” His mother attempted to remove the boy from the city’s baleful influence by sending him to a friend’s farm in New Jersey. But James found farm work as disagreeable as school work, running away from the farm twice before his mother was forced to take him back to the city.<sup>10</sup>

Eventually, however, something happened to alter the boy’s character. The turning away from worldly temptation corresponded with Bradley’s conversion to Methodism. He had been baptised a Roman Catholic, the religion of his father, but his mother was a Methodist and James regularly attended a Methodist Sunday school while in New York. In later life Bradley remembered, however, that he was not much of a church-goer in his youth. Then in

8. Frances Emily White, “Hygiene as a Basis for Morals,” *The Popular Science Monthly*, 31 (1887), 67-79.

9. Benjamin G. Rader, “The Quest for Subcommunities and the Rise of American Sport,” *American Quarterly*, 24 (1977), 355-369.

10. Biographical information on Bradley can be found in the *History of Monmouth County, 1664-1920*, III (NY: Lewis Publishing Co., 1922), pp. 206-207. Also useful are *James A. Bradley and Asbury Park: A Biography and History* (Asbury Park: The Bradley Memorial Committee, 1921) and the Bradley memorial edition of the *Asbury Park Evening Press*, June 7, 1921.

1848 an older sister died. Bradley attended the funeral service conducted in a temporary tabernacle probably being used for a Methodist camp meeting outside of Brooklyn. The impact of the sermon was reinforced by literature provided Bradley by an elderly minister. "The Founder's" commitment to Methodism was secured.<sup>11</sup>

By the time his conversion became complete, Bradley was working as an apprentice to a New York brush manufacturer. In 1851 he became plant foreman and remained in that position for seven years. During this period he married Helen Packard of Lowell, Massachusetts. In 1857, at age 27, Bradley established his own brush-making firm. By 1866, annual sales amounted to \$400,000 and the Bradleys had moved to a respectable Brooklyn neighborhood. As their fortunes rose, the Bradleys began their lifelong commitment to moral reform. "The Founder" became a supporter and personal friend of Anthony Comstock, president of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. He also taught Sunday school and was increasingly drawn to the temperance issue and Sabbatarianism. Helen devoted herself to Bowery missions and the Salvation Army, along with cultivating an interest in Sunday-school work and temperance activity.

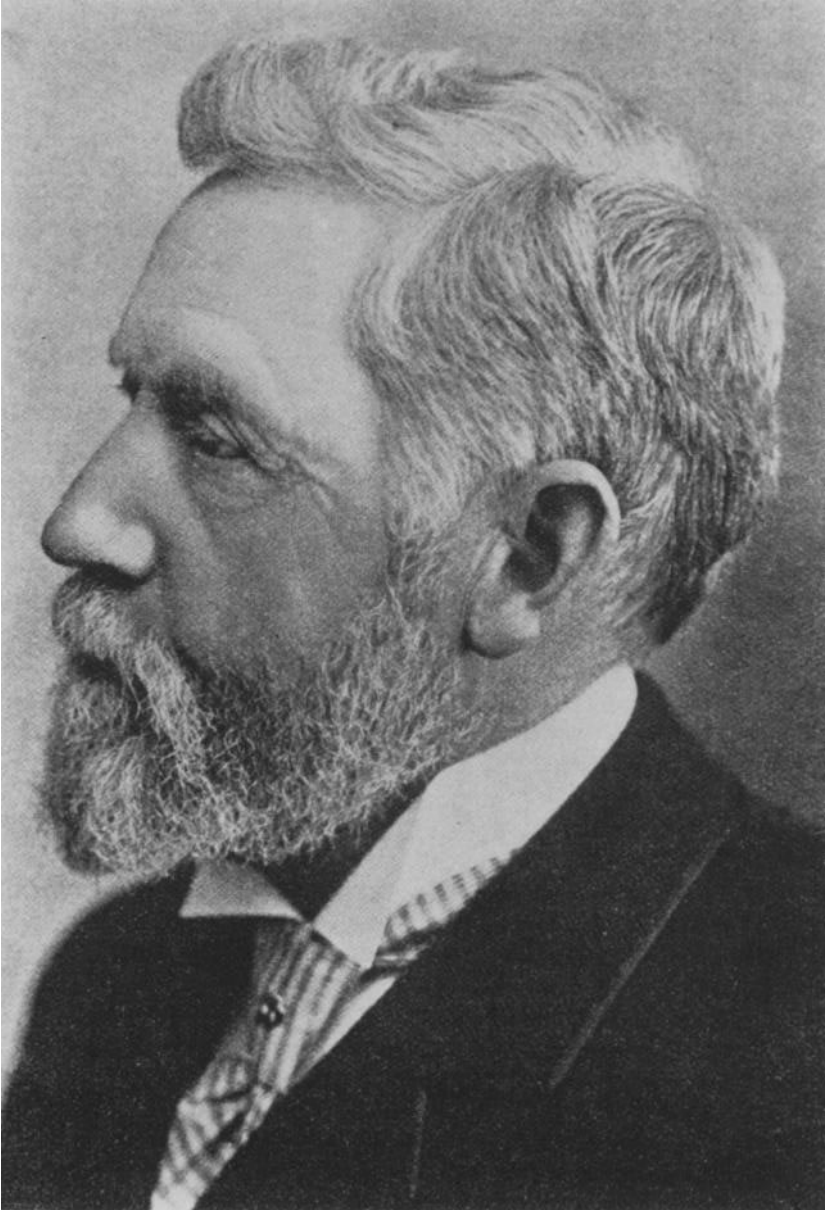
Bradley's life conformed to the tenets of the Horatio Alger myth. Through diligence, hard work, strength of character, and the avoidance of dissipation, "the Founder" overcame the disadvantages of his Bowery boyhood. His own life experience reinforced the commitment to the values encompassed by the Protestant Work Ethic. Through their moral reform activities, the Bradleys attempted to transmit the lessons of industriousness and moral probity to others

"The Founder's" worldly success did, however, exact its toll. In his history of Asbury Park, Bradley recalled that "too close application to business" had seriously affected his nervous system. He decided to take his doctor's advice and seek a restful communion with nature on the seaside. Thus Bradley found himself in the summer of 1870 at Ocean Grove, seeking the healthful recreation the camp-meeting resort offered. "The Founder" noticed that others had been similarly affected by the pressures of business within the hectic environment of the city. At Asbury Park, he determined to develop a resort where both physical and mental rejuvenation could take place.<sup>12</sup>

From Asbury's founding in 1871 until after the turn of the century, Bradley was the key figure in the resort's development. As the original owner of all property in the town, he effectively determined land use patterns in the community. He decided how the streets were laid out and even chose the street names (many were named after famous figures from the history of Methodism). He was the town's first postmaster, published the first newspaper, built the first sewer system, and was the first president of the local board of com-

11. The published biographies do not deal with the events surrounding Bradley's conversion to Methodism. Bradley himself provided the information in a letter written from England and published in the *Asbury Park Journal*, Oct. 13, 1883, p. 2.

12. James A. Bradley, *Three Ways of Telling the History of Asbury Park* [Asbury Park: M., W., & C. Pennypacker, 1897], n. p.



James A. Bradley (c1897). Courtesy of the Monmouth County Historical Association.

missioners. "The Founder" so dominated local politics before the turn of the century that it was often asserted that James A. Bradley was the government of Asbury Park. Critics satirized the control "King James I" exercised over his fiefdom, but Asbury Park voters returned "the Founder" to public office year in and year out.

By the early 1890s, under Bradley's tutelage, Asbury had become a successful watering place. It had the requisite complement of luxury hotels and cheaper boarding houses, a cottage community, and a developed beachfront complete with boardwalk. The permanent resident population of just under 3,000 ballooned to between 30,000 and 50,000 during the summer months.<sup>13</sup> Asbury's growth compared favorably with that of any other resort on the Jersey shore, including Atlantic City (see Table I).

Table 1

*Estimated Aggregate Hotel and Boardinghouse Capacities of Leading New Jersey Seaside Resorts, 1885-1908*

	1885	1895	1908
Asbury Park	11,000	23,625	33,215
Ocean Grove	7,875	17,500	17,385
Long Branch	5,350	7,550	6,225
Atlantic City	8,150	25,825	97,210
Cane May	4,050	5,910	5,780

Source: Pennsylvania Railroad Co., *Summer Excursion Routes* (1885, 1895, 1908)

Estimated hotel and boardinghouse capacity is one means of establishing a comparison between resorts. It should be noted, however, that many resorts relied for their prosperity on their cottage community or on the one-day excursion trade. Nevertheless, the above figures illustrate that Asbury Park's growth compared favorably with that of other New Jersey shore resorts prior to the turn of the century. After 1900, Atlantic City's growth was unmatched on the Jersey shore or for that matter in the entire Northeast. In 1902 its summer population was estimated at 150,000 by William Nelson, *The New Jersey Coast in Three Centuries* (NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1902). By comparison, Nelson estimated Asbury's summer population at between 60,000 and 75,000.

Asbury drew its clientele principally from New Jersey and surrounding states, with the New York and Philadelphia metropolitan areas heavily represented. Visitors were predominately middle class, with business and professional men and their families forming the core of the hotel trade and cottage community. Writing as a correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, Stephen Crane described the average summer guest at Asbury Park as "a rather portly man, with a good watch-chain and a business suit of clothes, a wife, and about three children. He stands in his two shoes with American self-reliance and, playing with his watch-chain, looks at the world with a clear eye."<sup>14</sup>

Bradley viewed the wholesome recreation he offered his guests as an alter-

13. The resident population of Asbury Park was not reported in the United States census until 1900 at which time the population was slightly above 4,100.

14. Stephen Crane, "On the Boardwalk: Aug. 14, 1892" in *The Words of Stephen Crane*, ed., by Fredson Bowers, VIII (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1973), pp. 516-517.

native to the dissipations present at other resorts. Asbury was a “moral community” based on generally accepted norms of middle-class behavior.<sup>15</sup> The resort was a temperance town. “The Founder” had special clauses written into deeds prohibiting the sale of liquor on the premises. Along the beach and boardwalk, both of which Bradley owned, notices were posted advising visitors on appropriate public behavior. “Modesty of apparel” was urged on female bathers and visitors were requested to “discontinue the practice of the sexes in assuming attitudes on the sand that would be considered immoral in their city homes or elsewhere.” Bathers who persisted in maintaining their provocative poses risked removal from the beach.<sup>16</sup>

The restrictions which attracted the greatest comment, however, were the resort’s blue laws. On the Sabbath, access to the beach was restricted, sports were banned, and all businesses required to close down. Trains were not even allowed to stop at the Asbury station. Observing the effect of the Sunday restrictions, a correspondent for the *New York Times* remarked that “Puritanism broods over the place, and blue laws of the bluest kind make a modern human being afraid to smile.”<sup>17</sup>

In addition to adopting measures designed to defend the high moral tone of the community, Bradley initiated reforms to solidify the Park’s reputation as a health resort. This emerging interest in sanitation was revealed in letters “the Founder” wrote back to Asbury during his frequent trips to Europe. In the tradition of 19th-century travel literature, these letters were published in the pages of the *Asbury Park Journal*.

Bradley was plagued by hay fever. Even the curative sea air at the Park failed to counteract the effects of his affliction. At the end of each summer, therefore, “the Founder” beat a strategic retreat to the White Mountains or took himself and his wife abroad. The Bradleys, of course, visited the museums, historic sites, and major attractions which made up any grand tour of the British Isles and the Continent. But “the Founder” also made a special point of investigating the sanitary condition of every city he visited, noting down examples of successful or unsuccessful techniques. At Baden-Baden, the well-known German watering place, for example, Bradley admired the sewage system. In London he found the water of doubtful character and of irregular supply. In Paris “the Founder” admired the system of electric lighting and the wide boulevards. He also singled out the Parisians on the grounds of personal hygiene. There was a noticeable lack of spittoons in the French capital. Parisians were not spitters and this spoke volumes about their character. In addition, the boulevards escaped the stain of tobacco juice.<sup>18</sup>

“The Founder” was well read in the literature produced by sanitarians both in this country and abroad. Through his correspondence back to Asbury Park, Bradley articulated an approach to sanitary reforms which stressed both order

15. *Asbury Park Journal*, June 3, 1876, p. 2.

16. *Daily Spray*, Aug. 13, 1889, p. 2.

17. *Asbury Park Journal*, July 24, 1886, p. 2.

18. *Asbury Park Journal*, Oct. 26, 1878, p. 2; Oct. 6, 1883, p. 2; Sept. 18, 1886, p. 2; Aug. 29, 1887, p. 2.

and cleanliness in the built environment. He praised cities with clean streets, public parkspace, substantial stone architecture, and adequate sanitary services. In "the Founder's" mind, concern over sanitary improvement enlarged and informed his notion of how a city could be made to work.

Jon A. Peterson has identified three major ways in which an interest in sanitary reform yielded urban planning alternatives to the dominant pattern of uncoordinated and piecemeal growth characteristic of the period. These were water-carriage sewerage, sanitary survey planning, and "townsite consciousness."<sup>19</sup> In his European correspondence and in the development of Asbury Park, Bradley displayed a commitment to all three components of the sanitarian's approach to remodeling the city. In 1881, for example, he began construction of a citywide sewer system.<sup>20</sup> One year earlier, "the Founder" was instrumental in establishing a local Board of Health which investigated the sanitary condition of every structure within the town on a regular basis. These reports yielded a "sanitary history" of every rental property and hotel at the resort which was then made available to prospective visitors. The reports also identified nuisances and served as a means of determining priorities for the local Board of Health.<sup>21</sup>

Bradley's efforts at maintaining health standards were widely recognized. The sanitary condition of the resort was praised in annual reports of the New Jersey State Board of Health and discussed by sanitarians in national publications.<sup>22</sup> In 1893 officials of Chicago's Columbian Exposition requested information regarding Board of Health activities for display at the fair.<sup>23</sup>

Providing basic municipal services was just one part of Bradley's comprehensive approach to site development. In short, "the Founder" displayed "townsite consciousness"—a heightened awareness of city site and structure. Among attitudes characteristic of such a consciousness was the belief that a city should be located in an airy setting and be free from the congestion and crowding common in major urban centers. There should be enough parks and trees to refresh the air and provide ample opportunity for outdoor recreation. Finally, there should be an ample supply of pure water and a water-carriage-sewerage system.<sup>24</sup>

Bradley embraced the above set of attitudes and the design of Asbury Park reflected his townsite consciousness. Confronting the sea and surrounded by the rural countryside, Asbury was in an ideal location to allow nature to penetrate the city. In laying out his community, "the Founder" strove to avoid undercutting his city's "natural advantages." The resort would not be al-

19. Jon A. Peterson, "The Impact of Sanitary Reform upon American Urban Planning, 1840-1890," *Journal of Social History*, 13 (1979), 83-104.

20. Asbury Park sewers operated on the so-called separate system with sewage carried separately from rain water. The waste was discharged into the wean where it was assumed that "night currents" would carry it harmlessly away. The Asbury Park system was the first comprehensive sewage system built along the Jersey coast.

21. The history and function of Asbury's Board of Health were discussed in the board's annual report published in the *Shore Press*, Nov. 17, 1893, p. 2.

22. *Asbury Park Journal*, May 22, 1886, p. 2; Aug. 12, 1893, p. 3.

23. *Asbury Park Journal*, Aug. 26, 1893, p. 2.

24. Peterson, "Impact of Sanitary Reform," 91-97.

lowed to become overdeveloped at the expense of either health or aesthetic considerations. Asbury was laid out on a grid with well-defined edges. It was bordered by several lakes on the north and south, by the ocean on the east, and by the tracks of the New York and Long Branch Railroad on the west. House lots were made large enough to avoid overcrowding and the resort was interspersed by a number of public parks. A belt of open space, for example, surrounded Sunset Lake which cut through the town from the railroad tracks to the sea. The feeling of spaciousness was further enhanced by the width of Asbury's streets which exceeded that of any resort on the Jersey coast.<sup>25</sup>

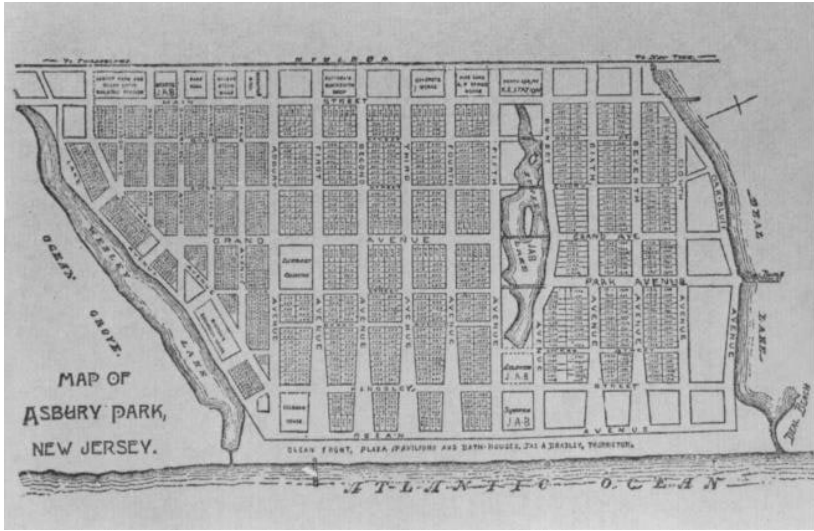
The street grid was of vital importance to Bradley's plan for his city. Asbury was designed in linear terms. "The Founder" organized his resort along two main thoroughfares-Grand Avenue and Ocean Avenue. Grand Avenue was Bradley's show street, the finest residential and institutional thoroughfare in the city. It ran parallel to the ocean through the center of the city four blocks up from the beach. Several church edifices, one of the first of the large hotels, and the Asbury Park and Ocean Grove Library were all constructed along its length. In 1877 Bradley installed the first of Asbury's public auditoriums in a park along Grand Avenue. This was Educational Hall, which had stood on the grounds of Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition. The building served as one of the town's principal landmarks; its historical associations heightening the perception of its importance. The hall's function as a landmark was reinforced by its location. The building was sited in the direct center of the city along one of its principal paths.

The other major path around which Asbury was organized was Ocean Avenue. Running the length of the resort, the avenue bordered its principal public play space-the boardwalk and beachfront. The central importance of the avenue was accentuated by having the main thoroughfares leading into it widen to 200 feet as they terminated. The sense of direction imparted to visitors as they moved down the principal streets toward the ocean was heightened by this change in dimension. A sightline was created which extended at least three blocks inland. The ocean was a gigantic edge which pulled visitors visually down Asbury's wide streets toward Ocean Avenue and the beachfront beyond.

The visitor's sense of direction was further enhanced by the perception that he was moving into an identifiable district as he approached the beachfront. Asbury's hotel district extended three blocks back from the beach. Many of the leading hotels were constructed either along Ocean Avenue or within several blocks of the path along the widening portion of the intersecting streets. This meant that the ocean was visible from a large number of hotels, not just those built close to the beach.

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25. Interpretation of the built environment at Asbury Park is based on an analysis of maps produced by the Sanborn Map Company and contained in the *New Jersey Coast Series* (Sanborn Map and Publishing Co., 1890 and 1905). Also useful is Chester Wolverton, *Atlas of Monmouth County, New Jersey* (NY: the Author, 1889). I have been influenced in my analysis by Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, Mass.: the MIT Press, 1960).



Asbury Park (c1897). Courtesy of the Monmouth County Historical Association

This visual accessibility was possible because Bradley insisted that the beachfront be maintained as a public open space. There was a boardwalk, several beach pavilions, and a fishing pier, but the “catch-penny booths” and technological amusements which marked Atlantic City’s famous boardwalk were forbidden. At Asbury Park, visitors were to have unobstructed access to the healthful surf and seabreezes. Landscape architects in the period argued that public parks were the “lungs of a city,” providing needed open space which would help “ventilate” the urban atmosphere.<sup>26</sup> Bradley used the Atlantic Ocean as a gigantic set of lungs for Asbury Park. His physically spacious community allowed for the penetration of sea air thought to dispel “miasmatic vapors” assumed to be injurious to health.

The hotel district was only one of several specialized districts within the Park. Because the beachfront was to remain an open space, technological amusements and other resort-related businesses were forced inland. An elongated amusement district eventually developed along Wesley Lake, which served as the resort’s southern boundary. In the southwest corner of the resort, a substantial and prosperous business district developed. Serving the needs of the surrounding rural population as well as vacationers, its small business and retail establishments helped even out Asbury’s seasonal economy. Outside of the various specialized districts, and taking up the remainder of the grid, was Asbury’s cottage community. The larger and costlier cottages were located closer to the beach or in several other prime locations such as along Grand Avenue.

26. Hardly, *How Boston Played*, pp. 65-84; Geoffrey Blodgett, “Frederick Law Olmstead; Landscape Architecture as Conservative Reform,” *Journal of American History*, 62 (1976), 869-889.



Looking down Asbury Avenue from the Beachfront, Asbury Park, New Jersey. (*Harper's Weekly*, August 31, 1878).

Within the confines of Asbury Park, Bradley showed himself to be a master of urban design. Within the grid, “the Founder” demonstrated an understanding of the use of paths as the most important means of ordering the whole environment.<sup>27</sup> Cutting through the middle of the resort, Grand Avenue was distinguished from surrounding streets by its institutional architecture. Its churches, the library, and Educational Hall symbolized Asbury’s claim to being a respectable community based on Christian principles and committed to intellectual and moral uplift. While Grand Avenue symbolized Asbury as a moral community, Ocean Avenue represented the city’s primary function as a leisure community. It defined a large elongated public play space spanning the entire length of the resort. This space was allowed to penetrate up the intersecting streets as they widened approaching the beach.

Bradley viewed landscape as ideology. His ideals and values were translated into tangible features built on what was once a barren sand waste. He created a landscape which reflected the reform impulses of the age: it was clean, well-planned, and allowed for the tempering of the urban environment through the penetration of nature. “The Founder” hoped that his resort would serve as an example for urban reformers. In 1916 he recalled that he had designed Asbury as an example for other cities. The Park was not merely a sea-side resort: it was an experiment in urban planning. Bradley intended to create nothing less than a physically and morally sanitized urban environment: he wanted to build Ethica.

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27. For a discussion of paths in urban design see Lynch, *The Image of the City*, pp. 95-99.

Reformers who were attempting to mold America's cities into just such an environment responded enthusiastically to Bradley's experiment. They voted with their feet. Asbury Park, along with its sister resort Ocean Grove, became the summer gathering place for a wide variety of middle-class reform groups. Health reformers, YMCA groups, Sunday-school associations, temperance organizers, and others made the resorts their summer convention site.

Asbury Park also had its critics. A writer for the *New York Herald* accused Bradley of adopting regulations which were "intentionally obnoxious to the ungodly."<sup>28</sup> This was in part true. Bradley had no intention of creating a truly popular resort open to all without regard to social background. What he succeeded in building was a kind of subcommunity for the urban middle class; a place where they knew that their standards of comfort and conduct would be met. It was also a place where they could be sure of meeting mostly their own kind.

Promoters were aware of this last preference on the part of visitors. The city government, for example, concerned itself with the ethnic background of musicians in the beach band which serenaded visitors on the boardwalk. Asbury always had a good American band. It was assumed that an Italian maestro or Germanic tuba players would offend the sensibilities of the resort's guests. In 1898 mayor Frank L. TenBroeck attempted to alter this policy. Vetoing a music contract already approved by city council, the mayor argued that ethnicity should be dropped as a criteria for choosing a band; the music contract should be awarded solely on the basis of competitive bids. The council overturned the mayor's veto by a vote of 6 to 1. Speaking for the majority, Bradley observed that "it makes a difference how a man appears. The mayor talks about foreigners. I don't want a band on my beach that has musicians who in appearance are distinguished from others." In short, "the Founder" wanted an "Americanized band."<sup>29</sup>

Concerns over the ethnic makeup of the beach band might appear comical. They are understandable, however, since complaints were made about the social background of some individuals on the boardwalk. In 1890, for example, the local Board of Trade actually debated whether or not one-day excursionists were a benefit to the town. The excursionists provided virtually the only working-class presence at the resort. Regular hotel guests and cottage owners had raised objections to sharing the beach and boardwalk with those they perceived to be less respectable than themselves.<sup>30</sup> Related to the excursion question was the so-called "colored invasion" of the beach and boardwalk. Black hotel workers congregated in these areas during their off hours. In addition, some of the excursionists were urban blacks. For the first decade of the resort's existence, there apparently was no concerted effort to exclude blacks

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28. *Asbury Park Journal*, Aug. 17, 1892, p. 4.

29. *Asbury Park Journal*, April 22, 1898, p. 1.

30. *Shore Press*, Jan. 17, 1890, p. 1.

from the the beachfront. This may be explained by the relatively low number of blacks at the resort as it was initially being developed.<sup>31</sup>

By the mid-1880s, however, hotel and boardinghouse operators were expressing concern over both the number of blacks visiting the resort and the conduct of local blacks employed in the service industries. Responding to hotelmen's complaints, Bradley began restricting access to the beach and boardwalk to blacks. A local newspaper sounded a common theme in support of this policy in 1885 when it editorialized that Asbury was "a white people's resort and it derives its entire support from white people." It was simply bad business to allow the presence of blacks to antagonize white vacationers. The only solution was to impose restrictions.<sup>32</sup>

The boardwalk restrictions generated a wave of indignation meetings within the local black community. Black leaders argued that hardworking, respectable blacks were being unfairly treated because of the actions of a few "crapshooters and blackguards."<sup>33</sup> At least one white visitor was sympathetic to this line of argument. A letter writer to a local paper supported the right of blacks to limited access to the beach and boardwalk. The visitor stated that he would rather see blacks at the resort because "they look and go respectable" than to see "the working class of white people."<sup>34</sup>

The above remark illustrated that the response to the colored invasion did not focus exclusively on the issue of race. Bradley admitted that he opposed too great a number of blacks at the resort because of the negative response of white vacationers. "The Founder," however, attempted to deny any racial bias on his part. He insisted that his real desire was to exclude Asbury's entire working class from the resort's principal public play space. In 1893, for example, in front of a meeting of local blacks, Bradley asked: "In your city homes you do not allow your servants to mingle with your guests. do you'?" The same is true here. If there was a distinguishing mark in white servants I would restrain them from occupying pavilions, but there is none."<sup>35</sup>

On one level, Bradley's arguments were a facile attempt to deny the existence of racial prejudice at his resort. But the claim that he would prefer to ban all of Asbury's working class from the boardwalk had a ring of truth given the questions raised over the beach band and the excursionists. Bradley was attempting to play on the fact that middle-class objections to social mixing at the resort were based on considerations of class and ethnicity as well as race. Faced with these objections, "the Founder" was forced to consider controlling the social mix in his resort's public spaces.

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31. In 1885 the Galveston, Texas *Daily New* published an article on the growing racial troubles at Asbury Park. The article bore the title the "Collapse of a Social Experiment." The paper noted that Asbury and Ocean Grove were filled with the kind of good moral people who upgraded the South regarding race relations. The paper granted that blacks had enjoyed greater access to amusements at Asbury than was typical at the seaside. But because of the increasing numbers of blacks at the resort, Asbury Parkers now wanted the color line drawn taut (Asbury Park *Journal*, Aug 7, 1885, p 2.)

32. Asbury Park *Daily Journal*, July 17, 1885, p 2

33. Asbury Park *Journal*, July 22, 1893, p. 4; *Shore Press*, July 8, 1887, p. 3.

34. Asbury Park *Journal*, July 27, 1893, p. 1.

35. Asbury Park *Journal*, July 29, 1893, p 3.

A developing pattern of segregation at Asbury was most clearly revealed by developments in West Park. Located across the railroad tracks, legally outside the limits of Asbury Park, West Park was the resort's working-class district. Hotel employees or individuals employed in the construction trades lived here. The bulk of the population was black. According to the *Shore Press*, the district was also populated by "Italians, Turks, Germans, and several varieties of the genus tramp."<sup>36</sup>

West Park revealed a blind spot in Bradley's grand design for his resort. He was in fact building a middle-class city. Since adequate provision was not made for Asbury's working population, the development of West Park was inevitable. This appendage to the resort never enjoyed the full benefit of "the Founder's" interest in urban planning. Despite the fact that Bradley was to become a major property owner in the district, he chose not to extend basic services into the working-class ward. The sewer lines, for example, stopped at the railroad tracks.

By the 1890s a shadow resort had emerged in West Park. An array of public amusements developed, some of which were patterned after those at the parent resort. West Park hotels, for example, sponsored the usual round of parlor amusements, including card parties and dances. There were even fancy dress balls where gentlemen arrived in evening dress with their ladies "gorgeously arrayed in gowns of bewitching sweetness."<sup>37</sup>

Some hotels also sponsored "gambling dens." In addition, pool halls and drinking establishments prospered in the district. Representing recreational patterns at odds with those at Asbury Park, grog shops and gambling dens contributed to West Park's local reputation as a disorderly and lawless neighborhood. Newspaper reports on Asbury's "delectable suburb" stressed gambling and drunkenness as well as marital disputes and infidelity. It was also reported that the mixed population of the district resulted inevitably in disputes which kept local magistrates busy.<sup>38</sup>

West Park served as a counterpoint to Asbury's moral tone and social order. Its residents seemed to reject wholesome recreation which inevitably led to a disruption of family structure in their community. Because the district was home to the resort's working population, descriptions of drunkenness and disorder could only serve to heighten middle-class fears of social mixing at the parent resort.

Exclusionist practices and the commitment to morality and wholesome recreation helped define Asbury Park's function as a "status community" for its middle-class visitors. Such a community was the creation of status equals who sought to distinguish themselves from those they considered their social inferiors.<sup>39</sup> Asbury Park was a place of escape both from the city and from those

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36. *Shore Press*, July 27, 1894, p 8.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Asbury Park Daily Journal*, July 7, 1887, p 2; *Asbury Park Journal*, Oct. 28, 1893, p 1; Nov. 30, 1894, p. 4.

39. Rader, "Quest for Subcommunities," 357.

elements of the urban population about which the middle class harbored a deep mistrust.

### III

What was the role of sport in Bradley's middle-class utopia? Beginning in the mid- 1880s and into the 1890s, there was an explosion of interest in sport at the resort. Or, as a local newspaperman put it, "the popular craze for athletic games has struck Asbury Parkers square in the forehead."<sup>40</sup> In the 1880s, for example, there was a craze for roller skating; an athletic club was formed; there was an increased interest among visitors in tennis, swimming, and other athletic activities; amateur baseball and football teams were organized; and a professional baseball team competed in a league against teams from nearby shore towns.

The rise of sport continued into the next decade. In 1890 the Asbury Park Wheelmen were formed. Two years later a YMCA summer camp was constructed which served groups from New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. In connection with the summer camp, a new athletic grounds was built featuring a bicycle track, tennis courts, baseball field, and facilities for athletic competitions. In 1892 boxer James J. Corbett set up a training camp near the athletic grounds to prepare for his championship fight versus John L. Sullivan. And in 1895 the resort hosted the national meet of the League of American Wheelman.

The growth of sport at Asbury Park was contingent on its acceptance as wholesome amusement. The resort's promoters continually faced the problem of defining what exactly constituted "rational recreation." By contrast, the officials of the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association had fairly specific guidelines on which to judge an entertainment. The Methodist church was quite explicit in defining unacceptable amusements. Dancing, card playing, and going to the theater, for example, were specifically banned. Asbury Parkers developed a more liberal definition of proper recreation than that of the Grovers. The problems inherent in such relative liberality were revealed in a letter Bradley received from a "ministerial friend" from Philadelphia. The minister upbraided "the Founder" for allowing advertisements for a race track, a comic theater, and a ball at a local hotel to appear in his newspaper. Did not Bradley realize that he was giving the impression to local youths that these were fit places to visit?<sup>41</sup>

"The Founder" was suitably chastened over the theater and race-track notices, but he leaped to the defense of dancing. Bradley admitted that the practice could be corrupting. "We have seen the lascivious waltz," he wrote, "indulged in by intoxicated men under the influence of wine, in a manner that should have caused the spectators to depart in shame." But dancing could also be an excellent form of healthful exercise. This dancing question, "the

40. Asbury Park *Daily Journal*, July 7, 1887, p. 2.

41. Asbury Park *Journal*, July 22, 1876, p. 2.

Founder” mused, raised one of the greatest unsolved problems of the day: How to provide amusements for the young and keep them from becoming “demoralizing”? Bradley then went on to establish criteria upon which to judge any amusement:

Any rational game or amusement which enables one who is overtaxed and mentally weary to forget for a brief time the thousand cares that harass the brain, we believe to be not only beneficial, but right and proper. Croquet, boating, swimming, bathing, riding . . . horses in the pic-nic grounds, billiards . . . can, we believe be divested of everything which would demoralize. We set our face like flint against every form of betting, gambling and rum drinking, as well as everything on a higher grade of recreation which would keep our youth from becoming noble and influential men and women in society and the church.<sup>42</sup>

“The Founder,” in short, advocated evaluating any amusement on its own merits. He asked: Does it demonstrate the compensatory function of true recreation? Does it compromise individual morality? And, finally, does it interfere with the proper socialization of youth?

As Asbury Park developed, these questions were asked, either implicitly or explicitly, about any number of sports or amusements. Was roller skating for example, truly rational recreation? One local newspaper answered the question by reprinting a sermon by well-known Brooklyn divine DeWitt Talmadge. Dr. Talmadge favored skating with restrictions. It gave strength to worn out bodies, straightened stooped shoulders, and met the need for some reasonable exercise for women. But restrictions should surround the skating rink; no unescorted young ladies and no young men who operated, in effect, as mashers on wheels. “Flirtation means damnation,” Talmadge sternly warned.<sup>43</sup> Roller skating thus met the criteria for a proper amusement. It was healthful exercise which could be stripped of everything which tended toward immorality.

Occasionally, a sport or amusement received a ringing endorsement as a rational recreation. At the end of the summer of 1892, for example Rev. John Handley mounted the pulpit of Asbury’s First Methodist Church to deliver the first of his “vacation sermons.” He took as his text Ezekial’s “wonderful vision” in which he saw “a high wheel with a creature standing by it.” That wheel, Rev. Handley observed, “standing alone is as nearly represented by the ordinary high bicycle as anything could be.” The creature standing next to this celestial high wheeler was, of course, “the Great Divine Bicyclist.” Here was about as high a recommendation as any recreation could receive.<sup>44</sup>

For Asbury Parkers, sport was easily justified as rational recreation. It was both healthy exercise which revived those who were “overtaxed and mentally weary” and it was also an activity which contributed to the proper socialization of youth. Boosters of athletics in the period stressed the connection be-

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42. *Ibid.*

43. Shore Press, April 23, 1885, p. 4.

44. Asbury Park, *Journal*, Sept. 24, 1892, p. 2.

tween sport and character building.<sup>45</sup> This theme was sounded by an opening day speaker at the new athletic grounds, who delivered an address entitled “How to Grow Strong Morally.” The speaker warned against the evils of drink and gambling and urged his listeners to lead a moral life. Boxer Corbett was used as an example of what could be accomplished through diligent practice.<sup>46</sup>

The status of Corbett as one of Asbury Park’s first local sport heroes is surprising. Boxing, because of its association with the sporting fraternity and gambling, would not be expected to find a place at the resort. In fact, there had been a history of antipathy to the sport at Asbury prior to Corbett’s arrival. In 1876 Bradley’s newspaper urged New Jersey officials to restrict boxing in the state and in 1887 local officials barred a sparring match at an Asbury skating rink.<sup>47</sup> In his autobiography, Corbett remembered that Bradley raised serious objections to his training at the resort. He also recalled that his initial reception from Asbury Parkers was decidedly cool.<sup>48</sup>

Corbett, however, made a concerted effort to fit into the community. The fighter’s manager, William A. Brady, wanted to improve boxing’s public image and extend the sport’s appeal to a better element in society. Corbett was a well-conditioned athlete who represented a scientific style of boxing. His fight against Sullivan would be the first championship bout fought according to the Queensberry rules and with gloves. Corbett was instrumental in improving boxing’s image. At Asbury Park, the fighter and his entourage carefully avoided violating community standards. A number of local newspapers provided the “gentleman fighter” with a sympathetic press. The *Shore Press*, for example, observed that “Corbett quickly made friends with everyone he met. During all the weeks of his stay his conduct and deportment was that of a gentleman, and on the part of his trainers and helpers not a discourteous or unmanly act occurred.” Another local paper published a story headlined “Teetotaler Jim” in which Brady claimed that the strongest drink the fighter enjoyed was lemonade.<sup>49</sup>

Stephen Crane observed that Corbett’s “gentlemanly behavior and quiet manners” won over Asbury Parkers. Even “the Founder” “came down momentarily from his pinnacle and conversed pleasantly with the boxer.”<sup>50</sup> Corbett also endeared himself to Asbury Parkers because of his participation in promotional activities at the resort. When a British swimmer was tossed off the fishing pier wrapped in 18 feet of rope, for example. Gentleman Jim was there to help tie the knots. Combined with his demeanor, the obvious publicity value of having Corbett at the resort facilitated his acceptance.

45. James C. Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness: The History of American Health Reformers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 270-303.

46. *Daily Spray*, July 4, 1892, p. 2.

47. *Asbury Park Journal*, Sept. 16, 1876, p. 2.

48. James J. Corbett, *The Roar of the Crowd* (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing Co., 1926), 176-185.

49. *Shore Press*, Sept. 9, 1892, p. 1; *Daily Spray*, July 9, 1892, p. 4.

50. Crane, “Joys of Seaside Life, July 17, 1892” in *Works*, p. 510.

Gentleman Jim's rise as a local sport hero revealed how liberal a definition of rational recreation Asbury promoters were capable of accepting. The boxer's acceptance implied that, when properly conducted, prize fighting could be a legitimate amusement. It was related to other forms of athletics. In fact, Corbett himself became identified with a wide range of athletic activities while training at the resort. He even challenged "the Founder," who prided himself on being a good short-distance swimmer, to a race for the championship of Asbury Park (the challenge was never accepted). Corbett's status as a legitimate sportsman was implicitly recognized at an "athletic carnival" held in his honor before the Sullivan fight. A number of events were scheduled at the Athletic grounds in which Corbett took part.<sup>51</sup>

The acceptance of prize fighting as legitimate sport at Asbury was not, however, universal. Other fighters, including Jim Jeffries, followed Corbett in establishing training camps at the resort. Local Protestant clergy were vociferous in their criticism of the boxers. In 1894 a local minister advocated the creation of an anti-prize fight league. Asserting that "these brutal fist cuffs are a shame to our Christian nation," the clergymen argued that the coterie of followers who accompanied a fighter were a menace to "the good character of our young men."<sup>52</sup> In 1899 the anti-prize fight forces won a victory when the Board of Trade passed a resolution discouraging fighters from training at the resort. While it was recognized that the boxers had always behaved themselves while at Asbury, it was feared that the notoriety they gave the resort might discourage the patronage of respectable people. Asbury's reputation as a "moral community" was a major selling point which could not be compromised.<sup>53</sup>

The debate over boxing revealed that it was becoming increasingly difficult to reach a community consensus on what was rational recreation. After the turn of the century, there was a "liberal revolt" against "the Founder's" leadership at Asbury Park. Hotelmen were prominent in the effort to institute Sunday train service, allow liquor to be sold in the hotels, obtain public ownership of the beach and boardwalk, and modify the blue laws. Local editors, politicians, and businessmen who were most enthusiastic about Corbett's presence at the resort tended to be those who eventually joined the "progressive" element after 1900. The boxing debate was a prelude to a larger debate over the future of the community in the early 20th century.<sup>54</sup>

With the exception of the dispute over boxing, however, sport was generally accepted as being consistent with the local commitment to morality and rational recreation. It also complemented the resort's emphasis on sanitation and health. There was a natural affinity between those interested in environmental and personal hygiene. That shared interest was recognized in a series of articles on the "science of sanitation" which appeared in the Asbury Park

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51. *Daily Spray*, July 18, 1892, p. 1.

52. *Shore Press*, Feb. 2, 1894, p. 8.

53. *Asbury Park Journal*, Jan. 13, 1899, p. 1.

54. *Asbury Park Press*, June 17, 1934, p. 5. The impact of the liberal of the revolt against "The Founder" is discussed more fully in my dissertation.

*Journal* in 1885. In addition to discussing the importance of proper waste disposal and the maintenance of a pure water supply, the author stressed the connection of diet, dress, and exercise to “hygienic matters.” He pointed out that moderate exercise, which did not overdevelop one set of muscles at the expense of the rest, improved digestion and increased the body’s capacity to fight disease.<sup>55</sup>

The local sporting organization with the most direct connection to improving the built environment was the Asbury Park Wheelmen (APW). Reflecting the interests of Wheelmen nationally, the APW supported the improvement of roads both in the resort and throughout Monmouth County. The club distributed the League of American Wheelmen’s magazine *Good Roads* to farmers in an effort to educate them on road questions. The APW also supported the creation of a County Road League dedicated to fostering road improvement.<sup>56</sup>

In 1894 Asbury Parkers’ interest in road improvement intensified. The resort hosted a Good Roads Convention sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture. Wheelmen, road associations, government officials, and manufacturers of road construction equipment from around the nation met to discuss road questions.<sup>57</sup> During the period of the convention, local wheelmen sponsored a series of competitions at the athletic grounds. Asbury Park presented itself as both a sports and convention center which was also an enlightened community interested in improving the built environment. Not incidentally, the National Editorial Association was also meeting at the resort. The presence of 500 newspapermen from around the country and Canada guaranteed that both the Roads Convention and activities associated with it would receive wide publicity.<sup>58</sup>

Favorable publicity was crucial to Asbury Park’s resort economy. The town was in competition with other resorts throughout the Northeast and in direct competition with other Monmouth communities. Sport became an increasingly important means of promotion.<sup>59</sup> The APW, for example, was praised for its ability to attract thousands of visitors to the resort.<sup>60</sup>

Long Branch was Asbury Park’s leading competitor for dominance on the Monmouth shore. This fashionable resort promoted some decidedly different sporting activities from those at Asbury Park. It was famous for its exclusive gambling clubs and for the Monmouth Park race track. The rise of sport in Asbury occurred during a period when reformers throughout Monmouth County mounted a crusade against these activities at Long Branch. Bradley himself became a leading figure in the effort to rid Monmouth of the gam-

55. Asbury Park *Journal*, Feb. 21, 1885, p. 2.

56. Asbury Park *Journal*, Aug. 11, 1892; *Daily Spray*, Sept. 1, 1893, p. 1.

57. Asbury Park *Journal*, July 13, 1894, p. 3.

58. Local promoters had hoped to attract the national meeting of the League of American Wheelmen for the summer of 1894. They wanted to coordinate the Wheelmen’s meeting with the Good Roads Convention and the meeting of the National Editorial Association. The combination of the three events would have been a masterpiece of promotion combining a sporting event and convention both of national interest with a guarantee of nationwide publicity. They had to settle for something less, but the intent was still the same.

59. For a discussion of the use of sport as a form of boosterism see Stephen Hardy, “The City and the Rose of American Sport: 1820-1920,” *Exercise and Sport Science Reviews*, 9 (1981), 200-201.

60. *Daily Spray*, June 26, 1893, p. 1.



Bicycle Race at the Asbury Park Athletic Grounds (c1897). Courtesy of the Monmouth County Historical Association.

blers. In 1893 he mounted a successful campaign for the state senate on a ticket supported by anti-gambling reformers, prohibitionists, and like-minded Republicans and Democrats. In 1894 “the Founder” cast the deciding vote in favor of the repeal of legislation which had legalized race-track betting. Monmouth Park ceased operation after the repeal.<sup>61</sup>

During the anti-race track campaign, reformers argued that gambling corrupted the “sport of kings.” Spokesmen for the county’s leading anti-race track organization insisted that they did not oppose any “honest sport.” But they argued that gambling degraded any sport to which it adhered, whether that sport be horse racing, baseball, or cycling.<sup>62</sup> Reform newspapers throughout the county increasingly published descriptions of Monmouth Park as a place not for for decent people. It was a place where empty champagne bottles gave silent evidence of the sporting crowd’s drinking habits and where women “who never see the light of day” except at Monmouth Park formed questionable liaisons with male spectators.<sup>63</sup>

By contrast, Asbury Park offered facilities where muscular Christians engaged in healthful activity improving their bodies, minds, and morals. Increasingly, accounts of the activities of local wheelmen and amateur athletes appeared in Asbury Park newspapers juxtaposed against articles on the evils of the race track. By the 1890s sport had become an important element in the array of counterattractions the resort offered to respectable vacationers.

61. Glenn Uminowicz, “The ‘Gambling Evil’ at Long Branch, 1870-1893” (paper presented at the conference on “Atlantic City, Tourism, and Social Change” at Stockton State College, Pomona, New Jersey, May 4, 1982).

62. *Monmouth Democrat*, June 6, 1893, p. 3.

63. *Monmouth Democrat*, July 20, 1893, p. 2.

## IV

Sport at Asbury Park dovetailed neatly with the resort's dual emphasis on health and morality. Interest in sport, as in the case of bicycling, could also complement the interest in improving the built environment. Sporting activity was also an excellent source of publicity and an agent for generating civic pride.

Asbury Park was a preeminent example of reformer efforts in the period to promote wholesome recreation as a means of combating vice and immorality. In this context, athletics at Asbury provided a counterpoint to the perceived corruption of sport at Long Branch. As Stephen Hardy has pointed out in his study of Boston, the control of space and behavior was crucial to both the problem of unacceptable amusements and its proposed solution.<sup>64</sup> Asbury Park was a comprehensive effort at exercising such control.

Perhaps no sporting activity better symbolized Asbury Park than bicycling. Richard Harmond has interpreted the bicycle as both "a mechanism of progress and a vehicle of flight." It facilitated a middle-class flight from the city to the countryside and was also an example of the effects of improved transportation technology on leisure pursuits.<sup>65</sup> Asbury Park was built on the desires for both flight and progress. It was a place of escape for the middle class from unsavory aspects of city life and also from those elements of the urban population they regarded as disreputable. As an experiment in urban planning, it was also a community undoubtedly committed to progress. At the resort, Bradley was able to address problems of the built environment and exercise a degree of social control among individuals with a shared set of values. He did not, however, deal effectively with one major problem faced by Gilded Age reformers, including advocates of rational recreation. Moral reformers were aware of a growing division among the classes in the city. They worked to restore the "natural relations" among urban residents which city life had disrupted.<sup>66</sup>

Their efforts were frustrated in part by the preference of the middle classes to increase the social distance between themselves and the lower orders. Attempts at reuniting the classes through, for example, community leisure or vocational programs foundered on the growing divisions within the urban population. Asbury exemplified both the hopes of the reformers and this major obstacle they faced. Many of those attracted to the resort were committed to re forging links between the classes. Yet they chose as their summer convention site a resort which sharply restricted access to the very groups they were trying to reach. It was also a place which displayed a marked inability to integrate its own lower orders into the recreational life of the community.

Borrowing a phrase from a local newspaperman, at Asbury Park the middle-class quest for subcommunity struck the reformers "square in the fore-

64. Hardy, *How Boston Played*, p. 62.

65. Richard Harmond, "Progress and Flight: An Interpretation of the American Cycle Craze of the 1890s," *Journal of Social History*, 5 (1971-1972), 235-257.

66. Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order*, pp. 121-187.

head.” And the reformers themselves were participants in that quest. Yet they seemed unaware of what appear to be obvious contradictions. Perhaps this was because, in the mind of the reformer, there was not a contradiction between the creation of a middle-class subcommunity and the transformation of the city. The thrust of moral reform by the late 19th century involved the attempt to impose middle-class and patrician values upon the urban masses. If all the world were middle class, the argument essentially ran, what a wonderful place it would be. This was the message presented at Asbury Park.

Bradley succeeded in creating a subcommunity for his middle-class patrons and then offered it as a vision for an urban future. It was a vision “the Founder” shared with others who thought that the solution to the physical and moral problems of the city was to transform the entire urban population into mirror images of themselves. In the mind of the reformer, subcommunity was, in fact, seen as a model for a revitalized metropolis. It was a seriously flawed dream.

“The Founder’s” tragedy was that he was never able to successfully reconcile his role as a reformer with his role as a leisure entrepreneur. He expressed concern over the growing split among the classes in the city and both he and his wife worked to reestablish links between them. As an astute resort developer, however, Bradley crafted a leisure environment which appealed to only one segment of the urban population. It proved to be a remarkably successful formula. With the acceptance of the idea of recreation, the urban middle class became a leisure market ripe for the taking. But amusements had to be marketed in a manner which made them both attractive and acceptable to the new pleasure-seekers. DeWitt Talmadge revealed how that could be accomplished in his discussion of roller skating. He favored skating with restrictions. The amusement was acceptable only if the play space in which it occurred were somehow morally policed. Bradley took that formula and applied it to the resort experience. “The Founder” and local boosters were fond of pointing out that Asbury’s prosperity was based on its restrictions. Because of those restrictions, a “desirable class” of people had been attracted to the resort. Asbury was an enclosure in which the middle class at play could feel at ease. That was the key to its success.

Even after the “\*liberal revolt” at the turn of the century, the model of resort development Bradley pioneered continued to determine the pattern of growth and brand of amusement offered at Asbury. Despite the fact that the resort was controlled by businessmen who did not share “the Founder’s” commitment to moral reform, Asbury’s reputation as a moral community was carefully guarded. Promoters remained sensitive to the preferences of the resort’s core clientele—the urban middle class. Prior to the introduction of the automobile, Bradley’s plan for the physical layout of his city remained largely intact. Even after the city acquired the rights to the beach and boardwalk, for example, it remained an open public space. Asbury Parkers resisted the temptation to develop their boardwalk in imitation of Atlantic City. Even in old age, Bradley remained a vocal critic of any development which he felt com-

promised the integrity of his community. Critics accused him of being out of touch with the progressive spirit of the age. Before a meeting of the city commissioners in 1916, Bradley replied. He said he wanted Asbury Park to grow but to grow right. He then made it clear just how long he intended to keep an eye on his city. "I want to look down from heaven at Asbury Park." the 85-year-old Founder asserted "and I want to be pleased with the view."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>. *Asbury Park Evening Press*, June 7, 1921.