The Celebration of Christmas
And the Fourth of July
In Middletown, Connecticut

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Christmas and Independence Day are two of the most elaborately celebrated holidays in the United States, holidays which are associated with many traditionally "American" customs. These holidays involve people of all ages, economic groups and interests, and thus, when studied over a period of several years, can be useful in tracing the changing patterns and concerns of the populace of a city, town, or Community" (an admittedly nebulous term used when referring to a coherent social structure that is part of a larger and often less personal societal structure). Holidays reflect the values and desires of people, for people achieve a satisfaction and fulfillment from the simple act of celebration--through Christmas, originally, a religious fulfillment through the memory of the birth of Christ, a fundamental part of Protestant religiosity in what was originally an overwhelmingly Protestant America. The celebration of the Fourth of July is an outlet for American patriotism, the celebration of what is "good" about America, and a harking back to the American forefathers that helps citizens believe that the American "mission" is being accomplished, the mission set forth in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. People celebrate both holidays in traditional, practically ritualistic ways--Christmas trees and presents, and fireworks on the Fourth of July, as well as in more individualistic ways which vary from community to community, ethnic group to ethnic group and so on. By tracing the changes in traditional and local celebrations in the Middletown, Connecticut area, one may learn about changes in that society and can even speculate, based on local observations, on national and regional trends.
Christmastime in Middletown and vicinity went through many changes during the forty year period from 1868 to 1908. The holiday celebration reflects the growing complexity of life in the town. Before doing research, one may predict trends that correspond to generally accepted trends in American culture as propounded by social historians such as Page Smith, Wrob, Dahl and others. These general trends would include the growing complexity of life due to the growth of technology and mechanization and resulting depersonalization of social relationships, and the confusion of the social hierarchy often caused by heavy influxes of immigrants. The related problem of rapid urbanization that does not successfully integrate old-country immigrants or long-time community residents and leadership can also be expected to produce changes in the community's attitude towards holiday events and amusements. The trend which seems to show up most clearly in Middletown, however, is one that though predictable, is much more blatant than might be expected; that trend is the breakdown of a church-centered existence and an increase in secular events and entertainment.

The first place one may note a growing complexity in the everyday life of Middletown residents is the newspaper, and more specifically the advertising pages and columns. It is often difficult to distinguish the advertisements from the "news" in all of Middletown's local papers, for the ads were often written in the body of the paper as news flashes or as recommendations from the editor. "For the best in ladies finery and yardgoods our readers are advised not to miss the fine selections at Bunce's store.¹ "Dressaur's has a unique selection of German holiday goods just come in Boxes, Mirrors, Watchstands, Meerschaums... this is indeed a great and tasteful
Christmas display, our readers may never again see such a one.  These small advertisements occurred after every story and often in the middle of a news item, set off by thin lines above and below the ad. The larger advertisements were less wordy, with clearcut messages: "Bunce's Books, Pictures, Fancy Articles, Serving Middletown faithfully for many years," or simply "Bundy's Pictures." The store names were generally in large, bold print and any sale items listed in elite print. Bundy's, of course, had such a short message that it was simply bold type with filigree decorations in each corner of the ad. The merchandise advertised in the papers was usually not labeled as holiday gift items until the mid 1880s. The advertisements ran on a monthly basis, the same layout for an entire month, and thus, since the Christmas season did not begin then until about December tenth or later, the ads were generally for regular merchandise. A few stores advertised "Christmas fruits... nuts, cranberries, citron, currants, havana oranges, figs..." all fruits which, presumably, were too expensive or were simply unavailable during the rest of the year. As time went on, though, the advertising became more elaborate and more pointedly "Christmasy."

The improvements in advertisement layouts began in 1869, as newspapers suddenly began creating eye-catching ads simply by varying the placement and typesetting. In the December 10, 1869 Sentinel Witness for instance, Bundy's Pictures had an advertisement running the length of the page, sideways, with two simple lines of printing their name and address, and the rest of the column blank white. This ad is very striking in the midst of a page of average, somewhat cluttery advertisements with the usual type, layout, etc. On the facing
page is another unusual ad for Dressaur's, this one written in zig-zag type that lists the fine merchandise available at their store. By 1875 there are many more such elaborate ads, many with sketches or some kind of graphics, and these mostly with the caption or including somewhere the words "Holiday Goods." Holiday Goods were the key words that continued to be popular and showed up with increasing frequency in advertisements as the years passed. By 1884 few ads appeared announcing things that were not thought to be possible gift items for "the children," a man," or "your best girl." In 1887 there seems to be a sudden upswing in the town's economy, or perhaps just a peak in materialistic emphasis, for there are ads for the first time for very expensive gifts: chairs, chiffervolés, carpets, stoves and jewelry. These items were quite expensive compared to the usual books, handkerchiefs and toys advertised in the past, which could indicate economic well-being or the merchants appeal to a wealthier sector of the community.

In 1908 advertising had become quite elaborate, with many personal testimonial ads, replete with sketches of satisfied customers and their comments on certain stores or products. Plays and other entertainment were advertised for the first time. Whole columns were devoted to what particular items were good at which stores. New holiday foods were in vogue— one store advertised in different flavors of ice cream. For the first time stores advertised phone shopping: "Order your gifts by telephone." An increasing concern with health and a recognition of potential health hazards shows up also in the advertising of 1908. "Give glasses— a lasting present," and ads for pure "safe" candy that will not make children sick.
hint at the growing concern about health. The Middletown Sun even
devoted a column to the warning that candies and fruits that are unwrapp-
ed or sold exposed on the street are unhealthy gifts, and the town
merchants obligingly offered packaged sweets on the same page in a
holiday advertisement. In 1908 the post-Christmas sales are adver-
tised on December 26 offering great values on holiday decorations,
clothing and linens. Generally the newer gift items were not discount-
ted; the velocipeds, phonographs and ice cream remained at pre-
Christmas prices. Another new "ad," the public ordinance on the re-
quired removal of snow and ice from private property, appears in the
new want-ad column, too, an obvious sign of urban progress and safety.

Entertainment at Christmastime was, until the late 1890s, cen-
tered in the churches in Middletown. The custom common to almost all
churches was the practice of "having" a Christmas tree, which involved
some of the men of the church choosing, cutting down and hauling an
appropriately large evergreen for the women and youngsters of the
congregation to decorate. The tree "ceremony" at the church varied
according to individual churches and religions. The event was pub-
licized in the town papers and it was assumed the only church members,
and preferably active members would attend the party. Some churches
simply erected and decorated the tree, while in others the men and
women decorated the tree with presents for the Sunday School children.
Occasionally churches combined the tree ceremony with a supper and
even, at the 1887 celebration in the Methodist church, for instance,
with a supper and concert. The Deep River Congregational Church cel-
ibrated in 1868 with their tree, "fruits, music and speeches." Often
the music was furnished by a "talented pianist" or "able songstress"
from the congregation and recitations of dramatic works or didactic
Christmas tales were popular, too. The simple tree decoration progressed over a period of about fifteen years from just decoration to these full-scale "entertainments" as they were commonly called. By the early 1880s the churches had become social centers, for not only did they hold Christmas tree parties, but they began to hold holiday bazaars, and Christmas pageants. The holiday bazaar often incorporated the Christmas tree decoration and gradually the bazaar overshadowed that simple ceremony. Bazaars did not mean just sales or games or good food, but all of this and more. The ladies of the congregation prepared craft items for months in advance and cooked and baked feverishly for days to get ready for the event. The papers often ran stories about the bazaars for days in advance, and reminded the readers of how good Mrs. Brown's biscuits always were and what nice penwipers Miss Carleton made. The men of the congregation always joined the ladies at the bazaar in the late afternoon and the ladies of the church then prepared a feast to which a small admission was charged. The dinner was followed by songs, games, speeches and dancing.

Children's parties, too, were popular. These grew from simple, religious parties with presents of Bibles and prayer cards in 1868, to the great entertainments like the one at South Farms Christ Church in 1888 at which there was "a dialogue recited, an exhibition of pictures by magic lantern and a series of pictures on the Saviour's life. Merry games were played... each child received a Christmas booklet, candy and an orange." In the late 1890s, however, the trend towards private, secular entertainment and a return of the religious celebration in churches became evident. Community groups with social or ethnic bases began to sponsor parties, dances and general "entertainments." In 1886 as this secular trend was just beginning, for instance, the seven most
widely reported amusements were non-church sponsored, with only one church sponsored entertainment. The others, sponsored by the Band of Hope, the Earnest Workers and the Rocky Hill Library Association, among others organizations, were held for the benefit of the groups and were very well attended. The Rocky Hill Library Association had, according to the Penny Press, the "best entertainment of the season," with a show featuring magic and mesmerizing at a local opera house running a close second place. The magic show was attended by many of the town's "best people and clergy," the paper stressed, revealing a certain lingering concern about the church, or perhaps merely a concern for appearances.

By 1908 the church-sponsored activities were limited to only one church supper and several Cantatas, a few religious pageants and an organ recital. The ethnically based churches like the Swedish Lutheran and St. Paul's, a German church, held small services and carried out some of the European religious customs, but in general the churches were centers of religious rather than secular activities which became so popular in the eighties.

As entertainment broke away from the churches and became the province of temperance groups, social clubs such as the Elks, the Knights of Pythias, the Library and Workers associations and others, the interest in social welfare seemed to grow in these organizations and there was less said publicly about churches' concern with social problems. The changing society in Middletown was responsible, of course, for immigrants were still coming into the city with little money, taking jobs in the mills and factories, and, with small knowledge of their adopted culture, were easily exploited by employers. There were poor people in quantities the Middletown had never known before industrialization, and thus churches,
many of whom had a largely impoverished congregation, were unable to cope with all the needy and hungry. It is easy to see the growth of the poor population or at least the growing recognition of this segment of the population, for the numbers of churches and organizations helping the needy grows rapidly over the course of forty years. In 1868 there were two publicly announced groups that collected food and clothing for the needy: a post of the Grand Army of the Republic, which began a board of relief for indigent soldiers, and the local Baptist Church which collected food for the poor. Over a period of the next twenty years the only groups collecting for the needy were the churches, the Baptist Church doing this every year and most other churches collecting and giving every two or three years. In 1887 the Veterans of Middletown gave a fair at which they collected items for the poor, and the Temperance League did the same at their annual fair. Other organizations such as the Good Templars of Chester and the Knights of Pythias gave fruits, meat and clothing to the town poor. In 1908 the Middletown Elks gave a turkey dinner for the almshouse inhabitants and also gave away dinners to a few poor families. It was in 1908, too, that the Salvation Army became active, on a large scale. On December seventeenth the Penny Press ran endorsements of the Salvation Army by President Taft and William Jennings Bryan, telling the people to accept the charity of the group if they needed it, and for those who could afford to, to donate money and gifts. The "Army" announced ahead of time in newspapers and handbills that they would give out dinners to worthy recipients, and news of their preparation was given during the week before Christmas. According to the report of the operation, the Army gave away two hundred and fifty baskets of Christmas dinners. Thus, social welfare at holiday time became organized and less church-oriented, for though the Salvation Army was a Christian organization,
it, like most charitable organizations on the rise at that time, had no
clearcut church affiliation. The food and clothing collections for
the poor had certainly changed since the 1868 Sentinel Witness gave
the people of Middletown a pointed reminder:

With the coming of the holidays the poor should be
especially remembered. We celebrate Christmas in
commemoration of the Great Gift which God gave to
fallen humanity eighteen hundred years ago; and
to show our gratitude to Him for the inestimable
blessing let us do unto others as we have been
done by so far as our power permits and generously
give of our means to those brethren who are in
want. "God loveth the cheerful giver." 10

Also reflected at the Christmas season was the growing mobility
at the turn of the century. With the railroad and shipping traffic
in and out of the town increasing and becoming easy means of trans-
portation, it was much simpler for people to move from place to place.
Christmas is very much a family holiday, and thus, with easy travel
people began to visit relatives at Christmas, or, more easily observ-
able, to have relatives visit them. By 1908 the papers were filled
with columns and columns of names: who is back from school for the
holidays, who has come to visit whom, for how long, and so on. Each
listing told the name of the Middletown host or hostess, the relation-
ship of the visitor, where the visitor lived, and how long the visit
was expected to last. Though in earlier years the visitors came
from different towns and cities in Connecticut, the people gradually
began coming from farther and farther away, and by 1908 the lists in-
cluded New Jerseyans, Pennsylvanians and even a few Ohions or Ver-
monters. Visits lasted at least a fortnight, and often people simply
spent the winter with their Middletown hosts.
Another interesting feature of the 1908 Christmastime Penny Press were the cartoons. Some appeared to be like today's editorial cartoons, a comment on the foibles of society, and had little to do with politics, unlike contemporary editorial page art. At Christmastime these cartoons poked fun at the typical holiday problems, and from the cartoons one can learn a great deal about "modernization" of the holiday and its growing commercialism. These cartoons seem to sum up what can be seen happening in the years before: the increasing emphasis on materialism, buying, the problems of the community poor and the lack of church-sponsored community activities. The cartoons in the December 17 issue show "Befor Christmas Jollity:" a person in spikes and padding, "Ready to do Christmas Shopping." Another shows in one corner children running to Sunday School just before the Christmas tree goes up, and in the other corner, a man writing a friendly letter to a rich relation. The December 19 cartoon is a packet of "holiday money" dollar bills being stretched like a rubber band. The cartoon on the twenty-third continues this buying motif with a picture of holiday times in the old days that shows the simple gifts given then: an album for a lady, a top for a boy and a bygone view of "old-fashioned" foods, eggnog and plum pudding. The post-Christmas cartoon is of the "Next Day:" broken toys, a hangover, exchanging gifts, post-Christmas sales, bills, and all the "modern" holidays woes. Other pre-Christmas cartoons included Mr. Grouch ignoring needy hands and men chained by selfishness, blind and deaf to the suffering of others. This is the new, modern Middletown?
The celebration of Independence Day in Middletown reflects the same breakdown of church-oriented celebration and the increasing importance of private organizations that the Christmas celebration reveals. During the seventy-two year period between 1840 and 1912 the means of celebrating the Fourth varied, always including fireworks and usually involving salutes by town bells and guns of town military groups. Advertising became less a reflection of the celebrating of the Fourth and more a reflection of the exploitation of the holiday. Increasing mobility was evident on Independence Day, too, as "the excursion" became more popular. In short, the celebrations of the Fourth of July and of Christmas exhibited many of the same trends toward complexity in the growing urban area, and the breakdown of the simpler church-centered community.

In 1840 the celebration of the Fourth appeared to be totally religiously oriented. The Durham celebration which was described in detail was reportedly "designed particularly to interest the children of the Sabbath Schools."11 This celebration involved a parade and picnic with the singing of hymns and a few speeches by local ministers and town dignitaries. "Every object was fitted to impress forcibly upon the mind the presence and the glory of Him whose handywork was visible on every side."12 The city of Middletown did not hold any celebration, or at least nothing appeared in the press. In 1850 the reported celebrations were somewhat church-directed, with one of the chief local events being the fair to benefit the new church in Portland. The main celebration in Middletown was said to be "quiet," just the firing of "torpedoes, cannons and crackers".13 in the downtown area. One downtown merchant used that holiday to attract some public attention,
giving away rockets and fireworks and sponsoring a balloon ascen-
dition, a very spectacular event, judging by the newspaper accounts.

By 1857 the city was trying to develop its own official celebration by selling subscriptions to a picnic at Pamachea Pond, the money to go towards funds for a "national salute." Unfortunately, with the growing popularity of the boat excursions to New London, begun in the late 1840s, the city was unable to attract enough people to create an exciting celebration, and the picnic was panned by the newspapers. The private excursions on the ferry Granite State to New London, however, were given much publicity and according to the Constitution over half the people in Middletown made the trip. Among the groups on these excursions were church groups, baseball teams, and something known as the Ingersoll Guards.

The celebrations in the 1860s were quiet ones, there was little mention of any events ahead of time, and though the usual excursions were advertised and encouraged, few people really seemed to do anything. Ther was a war on, and presumably it was hard to celebrate the birth of a nation that was no longer one nation, in which citizens were fighting each other. Two downtown merchants gave the fireworks displays in 1864, and there was one church picnic, but the other years little seemed to be happening. In 1866 the editor of the Constitution apparently felt it was time to start protesting the lack of patriotism and reverence reflected in the lack of celebration:

It has been many a year since a celebration has been carried out here, and we fear that many a year may pass before we see another....Now it is obvious that the thing don't pay, or Middletown would have been in on hand in the matter. 'A penny saved is a penny earned' and it is well to prepare for a rainy day. Therefore bells will ring, cannons will announce the
the coming and going of the day-- that's all? 14

The paper was right, for nothing happened at all.

In the early 1870s the social groups and athletic groups began to take over the celebration. The Peanut Yacht Club sponsored sailboat and washtub races in the Connecticut River, the Palmers Band annual picnic was begun and the annual East Coast College Regatta and accompanying festivities were held in Middletown in 1873. The Regatta, involving all the Ivy League schools, the "little ivies" and including Dartmouth, Bowdoin, Trinity and Massachusetts Agriculture, was a big event for Middletown, and though the town favorite, Wesleyan, did not win, there was excitement in the preparation and post race parties. The St. Johns Temperance and Benevolent Society began its annual picnic in the early 1870s, too.

In 1876, the nation's centennial, the country, or at least Middletown, reverted to a religiously-oriented celebration, particularly in the speeches, songs and verses in the newspapers and in the Grand Celebration. The Grand Celebration was the name of the official city celebration, which was written and talked about for weeks in advance. All the neighboring towns were invited to attend and participate in the Middletown celebration, and they certainly did. The main event planned was the parade by a brigade of minute men involving two companies of cavalry, artillery, and ten companies of infantry. The brigade was to fire five salutes at dawn, sunset and noon, and the city bells would ring at sunup and sundown. The parade would end at Wesleyan University and then, on the Wesleyan Green, speeches and music were planned. The parade went off without a hitch, and there were thousands in attendance according to one wide-eyed reporter. The addresses included a welcome by Wesleyan President Foss, and
more religious ones by Reverend Benjamin Douglas, Reverend A.W. Bacon and Robert Pike. A choir sang hymns and an orchestra played patriotic music. Fireworks and a band concert followed this extravaganza. Special fares were offered by the Railroad and Shipping companies for transportation to the New York City, Hartford and New Haven centennial celebrations, but the paper was only able to report on the awesome Middletown celebration, and gave no estimate of the number of people who went away for the holiday.

The New Haven celebration had been written up in the July 1 Daily Constitution, though, and it was expected to be the most "brilliant and imposing of all" Connecticut celebrations. They planned to have beacon fires and balloon ascensions the night of the third, and a grand parade, noon salute, addresses, school children's parade, music and fireworks on the Fourth. This could not compete with the citizen participation in the Middletown celebration, however, for Middletown went all-out to create her own city company of minutemen.

A circular was distributed on the first of July that invited all the Middletown citizens to join the military companies on parade. The uniform choice was left up to the individual, but it was requested that each man make his clothing as authentic as possible.

The minutemen of 1776 when called out came together as they left the workshop, or the farm, bringing rifle or gun, bullet pouch or powder horn. If you cannot obtain a gun, whittle one, or bring for a weapon anything your fancy may dictate.

An alarm will be sounded on the firebell at 6 a.m. July 4, when every patriot will seize his weapon and rush to his company's rendezvous, ready for duty like a minuteman. We hope to meet at that time a large number of volunteers to swell the ranks. 15
The next few Fourth of Julys are difficult to document, though it appears there was about the same interest in excursions, picnics, fairs and dances. By 1888, however, the town seemed to have lost interest in the celebration of Independence Day just as it had during the sixties, but this time there was no war to account for the city's apathy. The town bells were not even rung nor gun salutes made at sunrise and sunset, for people complained they were too loud and disturbing. An interesting thing happened as a result of this breakdown of public celebration, however. Many more private picnics and parties were held and most importantly, there was a parade given in the downtown streets, sponsored by the Ancient Order of Hibernians. The ethnically based group, a large one due to the influx of Irish immigrants twenty years before, had taken up where the disparate, disjointed community (perhaps a contradiction in terms?) had left off. The Hibernians and other such groups became the community servants, for the increasing urbanization had caused a breakdown in community solidarity. People had become apathetic to the needs and desires of each other and thus nothing at all was happening. Weibe speaks of the force of outside pressures creating a metropolis and the metropolis forcing the change from interdependency to specialization in the society. This specialization is reflected in this change from general community activities and church activities to specific group activities, groups that are a part of a community or a portion of a congregation. This specialization in the Independence Day celebration is like that in the Christmas celebration, for the ethnic, temperance and social groups, specialized organizations, take over the celebrations once run by the entire community.

In 1893 the Hibernians gave an enormous picnic with jig contests,
sports and music. The Foresters Association sponsored the community fireworks display and a balloon ascension, and the Salvation Army gave a party. The church activities had a brief upswing, it appears, for there is a Promenade and festival given by one church society, and there are four church-sponsored picnics, including one by the Puritan Council. One possible explanation for this one-year spate of church activity is the Panic of 1893. People might want to turn to some kind of religious support when everything else seems to be collapsing around them, and with the monetary problems of that year people may have turned more to churches. Not only did the churches offer stable religious support, but the entertainment they offered was inexpensive, or cost nothing at all. The decline in religiosity continued after this one year interruption, however, and there is little or no mention of any church-sponsored celebrations of the Fourth from then until 1912.

In 1896 the surrounding small communities sponsored delightful celebrations, while the city of Middletown only managed a picnic at Pamachea Park with sparse attendance. This kind of year seems to substantiate the theory that community disintegration was occurring with increasing urbanization and that communities who were smaller and more intimate could continue their old style celebrations. In the town of Clinton, for example, the people decorated houses and stores, had a parade with bands and floats, and held a group patriotic sing. There was a reading of the Declaration of Independence, several speeches and finally, a display of fireworks. This kind of celebration was reported to have occurred in other nearby towns such as Essex and Ivoryton, as well.

Middletown did attempt a kind of celebration in 1906, but again the lack of consideration of selfish townspeople—who had no par-
ticular ties for place in the growing city, and who were, many of them, beset by financial problems--killed the celebration. The city appropriated fifty dollars, a grand sum, for a city bonfire in the middle of Main Street, which the papers claimed was going to contribute to the greatest celebration in years. A military band was brought in for the occasion, too. Unfortunately, before the bonfire was constructed the wood was unloaded onto the street and was stolen as fast as it was piled up. The police had to be called to guard it and often had to beat off the women and children who tried to drag it away. The bonfire was held, but, as the *Penny Press* said, "There was a sad lack of brotherly feeling all around."16

The celebration in 1912 was a better one, for Mayor John L. Fisk decided to allow the people to plan their own amusements, and the city was to make no arrests for bonfires or firecrackers, and would allow bonfires in the middle of Main Street. Though many people, including the editor of the *Penny Press* thought this "lawlessness" was dangerous, the celebration went off without a hitch. Many commercial celebrations were held--Sherman's Casino and Grove Beach being the two most popular ones.

As the celebration of the Fourth became more commercial, the advertisements, too, became more plentiful and less meaningful. In the 1850s the only holiday related advertisements were those for the railroad companies advertising half price fares for excursions, in an apparent attempt to lure customers away from the popular ship excursions. By the eighties ads contained references to the holiday and pictures of "Old Glory," but offered no Fourth of July Sales or specials on Independence Day-related merchandise. In 1893 there were ads wishing customers a happy Fourth and had accompanying senti-
mental messages about "Old Glory" with notices offering sale prices on American Flags. By 1896 the advertisements were more all-inclusive, with sales on "outing needs" such as parasols, duck suits, silk mitts and veilings. Bunce's advertisement offers the most progressive advice, though, a sales pitch with a strangely familiar sound that reveals the trend of "modernization" once again, an ad that positively screams the advice: "CELEBRATE WITH A SALE!"
"Culture is... a symbolic, continuous, cumulative, and progressive process." This definition of culture, by Leslie A. White, is applicable to holidays and the celebration of holidays, for they are just a part of the overall cultural framework of America. Holidays reveal the needs and concerns of a society: the changing focus of community celebrations, the different kinds of people who organize and take part in celebrations, the changes in traditions and the development of new customs. Francis Grund, an Austrian intellectual, traveled through the United States in 1837, and his observations on American nationalism are applicable to the celebrations of July Fourth and Christmas:

American nationalism is based on three things. First on equality of expectation; each American can legitimately hope for personal and material security; Second on religious sentiment, for the churches are perhaps the most cohesive factors in American civilization; Thirdly, on the American conviction that the nation has a moral commitment to lead the world to a better future.

This nationalistic sentiment is reflected in holiday celebrations, and the changes in holiday customs and amusements reveal the changes in this basic nationalism. From the growing complexity of society due to growing urbanization and mechanization, both related to problems of increasing immigration, technological advances, and so forth, one sees a change in the national outlook and traditions. Middletown reveals this increasing complexity, and with this complexity,
changes in the equality of expectation, a gradual shift from a religiously focused lifestyle to a more secular one, fused with the concept of the American mission, a mission that necessitates progress and modernity to maintain the American position of leadership in the world. By observing the celebrations of Christmas and Independence Day, then, one can uncover a few facets of this growing complexity, the breakdown of an inter-dependent community and the ongoing process of the American Dream.
Footnotes

1. The Evening Journal, December 24, 1887.

2. The Sentinel Witness, December 18, 1868.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.


5. The Penny Press, December 23, 1908.

6. Ibid.


8. The Penny Press, December 29, 1888.


10. The Sentinel Witness, December 18, 1868.

11. The Sentinel Witness, July 8, 1840.

12. Ibid.


15. The Daily Constitution, July 1, 1876.


17. The Penny Press, July 1, 1896.


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