Robert S. Lynd was born in New Albany, Indiana, in 1892. He graduated from Princeton University in 1914, received a B.D. from Union Theological Seminary in 1923 and a Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1931. From 1914 to 1918 he was managing editor of Publishers' Weekly. He was director of the Small City Study under the auspices of the Institute of Social and Religious Research from 1923 to 1926, assistant director of the educational research division of the Commonwealth Fund from 1926 to 1927, and permanent secretary of the Social Science Research Council from 1927 to 1931. Since 1931 he has been Professor of Sociology at Columbia University Graduate School. He is author of Knowledge for What (1939), and has contributed many articles to social-science journals. He and his wife, Helen Merrell Lynd, collaborated on Middletown (1929) and Middletown in Transition (1937).

Helen Merrell Lynd was born in the Middle West and now lives in New York. After graduating from Wellesley, she took her doctorate at Columbia University, where she worked in history and psychology as well as in philosophy. Since 1928 she has taught Social Philosophy at Sarah Lawrence College. Her books include England in the Eighteen-Eighties: Toward a Social Basis for Freedom (1945) and On Shame and the Search for Identity (1958). She has also published articles in the Journal of Philosophy, The American Scholar, and other periodicals.

FOREWORD BY CLARK WISSLER

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FOREWORD

On every hand we hear the admonition, "The study of society must be made objective." When one asks what is meant by this, he is referred to the natural and the biological sciences. But while the average man has little difficulty in comprehending what is meant by objective in the study of electricity, bees, etc., he finds himself at a loss to visualize the objects of study in a social inquiry. There is nothing strange in this, because the professionals in social science are still far from confident that they have their hands upon the social reality. True, many attempts have been made to find the basic factors in society, but these factors have been sought, for the most part, in the laboratories of biology and psychology, which is not unlike groping behind the scenes and digging under the stage, disregarding the comedies, tragedies, and dramas in plain sight. On the other hand, experience with social phenomena is bringing us nearer and nearer to a realization that we must deal directly with life itself, that the realities of social science are what people do. Seemingly in full realization of this, the authors of this book have patiently observed an American community and sketched out for us, in the large, the whole round of its activities. No one had ever subjected an American community to such a scrutiny; probably few would regard it as worth while. Rather have we been taught to set store by studies of the individual on one hand, and on the other, on the gathering of intimate statistics as to wages, living conditions, etc., for groups in our national population at large, as coal miners, teamsters, working girls, etc. The first of these seems to have been ordered upon the theory that maladjustments of individuals might be dealt with effectively if one knew a true sample of personal histories, and, in the main, studies of this kind have justified their making. The second seems to rest on the assumption that occupational groups present collective problems which can be dealt with on a national level, the maladjustments in this case arising in the failure of these groups to articulate properly with other groups. Here
Using Leisure

Department of the Women's Club, a collection of paintings in the high school, loan exhibitions from museums in other cities, 1,150 volumes on the fine arts in the public library, art periodicals such as did not exist in 1890 in the library and in a few homes, a high grade of art work in popular magazines, a wide contact with art in certain travel and other motion picture films, and finally the group training in art in the schools, particularly in the high school.

The most spontaneous artistic life of the city, aside from that exhibited in some of the clothing of the younger women, is to be found in the high school with its Daubers' Club made up of boys and girls from all sections of the city. Nine girls out of 341 in the three upper years of the high school listed "art" as the thing they were doing at home in which they were most interested. It is significant that although art was cultivated in 1890 only by a narrow group of business class women, only four of these nine girls came from the business class. More interesting still in view of the fact that art has always been an exclusively female accomplishment in Middletown is the fact that twelve boys listed "art" as the thing they are doing at home in which they are most interested, only six of them coming from the business class. But, like music, art seems somehow to drop out of the picture between the time boys and girls sketch in their high school classes and the time they become immersed in the usual activities of Middletown adults.

Chapter XVIII

Inventions Re-Making Leisure

Although lectures, reading, music, and art are strongly entrenched in Middletown's traditions, it is none of these that would first attract the attention of a newcomer watching Middletown at play.

"Why on earth do you need to study what's changing this country?" said a lifelong resident and shrewd observer of the Middle West. "I can tell you what's happening in just four letters: A-U-T-O!"

In 1890 the possession of a pony was the wildest flight of a Middletown boy's dreams. In 1924 a Bible class teacher in a Middletown school concluded her teaching of the Creation: "And now, children, is there any of these animals that God created that man could have got along without?" One after another of the animals from goat to mosquito was mentioned and for some reason rejected; finally, "The horse!" said one boy triumphantly, and the rest of the class agreed. Ten or twelve years ago a new horse fountain was installed at the corner of the Courthouse square; now it remains dry during most of the blazing heat of a Mid-Western summer, and no one cares. The "horse culture" of Middletown has almost disappeared.

Nor was the horse culture in all the years of its undisputed sway ever as pervasive a part of the life of Middletown as is the cluster of habits that have grown up overnight around the automobile. A local carriage manufacturer of the early days estimates that about 125 families owned a horse and buggy in 1890, practically all of them business class folk. "A regular sight summer mornings was Mrs. Jim B—— [the wife of one of the city's leading men] with a friend out in her rig, shelling

1 Two million horse-drawn carriages were manufactured in the United States in 1909 and 10,000 in 1923; 80,000 automobiles were manufactured in 1909 and 4,000,000 in 1923.
peas for dinner while her horse ambled along the road." As spring came on each year entries like these began to appear in the diaries:

“April 1, ’88. Easter. A beautiful day, cloudy at times but very warm, and much walking and riding about town.”

“May 19, ’89. Considerable carriage riding today.”

“July 16, ’89. Considerable riding this evening. People out ‘cooling off.”’

“Sept. 18, ’87. Wife and myself went to the Cemetery this afternoon in the buggy. Quite a number of others were placing flowers upon the graves of their dear ones . . .”

But if the few rode in carriages in 1890, the great mass walked. The Sunday afternoon stroll was the rule.

Meanwhile, in a Middletown machine shop a man was tinkering at a “steam wagon” which in September, 1890, was placed on the street for the first trial . . .

“The vehicle has the appearance of an ordinary road wagon, when put in motion,” said the newspaper, “though there is no tongue attached. It is run on the principle of a railroad locomotive, a lever in front which guides the vehicle being operated by the person driving. The power is a small engine placed under the running gears and the steam is made by a small gasoline flame beneath a fuel tank. Twenty-five miles an hour can be attained with this wonderful device. The wagon will carry any load that can be placed on it, climbing hills and passing over bad roads with the same ease as over a level road. The wagon complete cost nearly $1,000.”

In other cities other men were also working at these “horseless wagons.” As late as 1895 Elwood Haynes of Kokomo, Indiana, one of the early tinkers, was stopped by a policeman as he drove his horseless car into Chicago and ordered to take the thing off the streets. In 1896 the resplendent posters of the alert P. T. Barnum featured in the foreground a “horseless carriage to be seen every day in the new street parade”—with elephants, camels and all the rest of the circus lost in the background while the crowd cheers “the famous Duryea Motorwagon or Motorcycle.”

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2 See the Silver Anniversary Number of the Automobile Trade Journal Vol. XXIX, No. 6. Dec. 1, 1924, for the story of these adventurous days.

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INVENTIONS RE-MAKING LEISURE

The first real automobile appeared in Middletown in 1900. About 1906 it was estimated that “there are probably 200 in the city and county.” At the close of 1923 there were 6,221 passenger cars in the city, one for every 6.1 persons, or roughly two for every three families.2 Of these 6,221 cars, 41 per cent. were Fords; 54 per cent. of the total were cars of models of 1920 or later, and 17 per cent. models earlier than 1917. These cars average a bit over 5,000 miles a year. For some of the workers and some of the business class, use of the automobile is a seasonal matter, but the increase in surfaced roads and in closed cars is rapidly making the car a year-round tool for leisure-time as well as getting-a-living activities. As, at the turn of the century, business class people began to feel apologetic if they did not have a telephone, so ownership of an automobile has now reached the point of being an accepted essential of normal living.

Into the equilibrium of habits which constitutes for each individual some integration in living has come this new habit, upsetting old adjustments, and blasting its way through such

2 These numbers have undoubtedly increased greatly since the count was made.

As a matter of fact, by far the greater part of the wide diffusion of the automobile culture one observes today in Middletown has taken place within the last ten or fifteen years. There were less than 50,000 passenger automobiles registered in the entire United States in 1910 and only 5,500,000 in 1918, as over against 15,500,000 in 1924. (Cf. Facts and Figures of the Automobile Industry, 1925 Edition, published by the National Automobile Chamber of Commerce.)

Some further idea of the spread of automobiles, involving different degrees of inroad into the family budgets of the city, is afforded by the following list in order of frequency: Ford, 2,778; Chevrolet, 590; Overland, 459; Dodge, 343; Maxwell, 309; Buick, 265; Studebaker, 264; Oakland, 88; Willys-Knight, 74; Nash, 72; Interstate, 73; Durant, 65; Star, 62; Oldsmobile, 59; Saxon, 53; Rem, 52; Chalmers, 47; Franklin, 45; Essex, 45; Hudson, 44; Cadillac, 36; Chandler, 32; Monroe, 31; Paige, 31; Haynes, 20; International, 26; Sheridan, 26; Hupmobile, 25. Sixty-nine other makes are represented by less than twenty-five cars each, including fifteen Marmons, fourteen Packards, one Pierce-Arrow, one Lincoln, but for the most part cheap, early models, many of them of discontinued makes.

The 6,221 cars owned in the city at the end of 1923 included models of the following years: 1924—13; 1923—901; 1922—1,053; 1921—1,063; 1920—785; 1919—585; 1918—1,477; 1917—732; 1916—517; 1915—224; 1914—83; 1913—85; earlier than 1913—57.

This is a rough figure based upon the total of 11,660 passenger cars and 1,768 trucks registered in the county at the close of 1924, the gasoline tax paid during the year, an arbitrary assumption that a truck used three times the gas used by a passenger car, and upon an estimate of 27.5 miles per gallon. The number of motorcycles is negligible.
acquainted and unquestioned dicta as “Rain or shine, I never miss a Sunday morning at church”; “A high school boy does not need much spending money”; “I don’t need exercise, walking to the office keeps me fit”; “I wouldn’t think of moving out of town and being so far from my friends”; “Parents ought always to know where their children are.” The newcomer is most quickly and amicably incorporated into those regions of behavior in which men are engaged in doing impersonal, matter-of-fact things; much more contested is its advent where emotionally charged sanctions and taboos are concerned. No one questions the use of the auto for transporting groceries, getting to one’s place of work or to the golf course, or in place of the porch for “cooling off after supper” on a hot summer evening; however much the activities concerned with getting a living may be altered by the fact that a factory can draw from workmen within a radius of forty-five miles, or however much old labor union men resent the intrusion of this new alternate way of spending an evening, these things are hardly major issues. But when auto riding tends to replace the traditional call in the family parlor as a way of approach between the unmarried, “the home is endangered,” and all-day Sunday motor trips are a “threat against the church”; it is in the activities concerned with the home and religion that the automobile occasions the greatest emotional conflicts.

Group-sanctioned values are disturbed by the inroads of the automobile upon the family budget. A case in point is the not uncommon practice of mortgaging a home to buy an automobile. Data on automobile ownership were secured from 123 working class families. Of these, sixty have cars. Forty-one of

6 “The Ford car has done an awful lot of harm to the unions here and everywhere else,” growled one man prominent in Middletown labor circles.

As long as men have enough money to buy a second-hand Ford and tires and gasoline, they’ll be out on the road and paying no attention to union meetings.

7 What a motor car means as an investment by Middletown families can be gathered from the following accepted rates of depreciation: 30 per cent, the first year, 20 per cent; more second, 10 per cent; more each of the next three years. The operating cost of the lightest car of the Ford, Chevrolet, Overland type, including garage rent and depreciation, has been conservatively figured by a national automotive corporation for the country as a whole at $5.00 a week or $200 a year for family use for 5,000 miles a year and replacement at the end of seven years. The cost of tires, gas, oil, and repairs of the forty-seven of the workers’ families interviewed who gave expenditures on cars for the past year ranged from $3.00 to $192.00.

the sixty own their homes. Twenty-six of these forty-one families have mortgages on their homes. Forty of the sixty-three families who do not own a car own their homes. Twenty-nine of these have mortgages on their homes. Obviously other factors are involved in many of Middletown’s mortgages. That the automobile does represent a real choice in the minds of some at least is suggested by the acid retort of one citizen to the question about car ownership: “No, sir, we’ve not got a car. That’s why we’ve got a home.” According to an officer of a Middletown automobile financing company, 75 to 90 per cent of the cars purchased locally are bought on time payment, and a working man earning $35.00 a week frequently plans to use one week’s pay each month as payment for his car.

The automobile has apparently unsettled the habit of careful saving for some families. “Part of the money we spend on the car would go to the bank, I suppose,” said more than one working class wife. A business man explained his recent inviting of social oblivion by selling his car by saying: “My car, counting depreciation and everything, was costing mighty nearly $100.00 a month, and my wife and I sat down together the other night and just figured that we’re getting along, and if we’re to have anything later on, we’ve just got to begin to save.” The “moral” aspect of the competition between the automobile and certain accepted expenditures appears in the remark of another business man, “An automobile is a luxury, and no one has a right to one if he can’t afford it. I haven’t the slightest sympathy for any one who is 3rd of work if he owns a car.”

Men in the clothing industry are convinced that automobiles are bought at the expense of clothing, and the statements of a number of the working class wives bear this out:

“We’d rather do without clothes than give up the car,” said one mother of nine children. “We used to go to his sister’s to visit, but by the time we’d get the children shoed and dressed

8 “The National Retail Clothier has been devising space to trying to find out what is the matter with the clothing industry and has been inclined to blame it on the automobile. “In one city, to quote an example cited in the articles, a store put on a campaign that usually resulted in a business of 150 suits and overcoats on a Saturday afternoon. This season the campaign netted seventeen sales, while an automobile agency across the street sold twenty-five cars on the weekly payment plan. In another, ‘retail clothiers are unanimous in blaming the automobile for the admitted slump in the retail clothing trade.’” (Chicago Evening Post, December 28, 1923.)
there wasn't any money left for carfare. Now no matter how they look, we just poke 'em in the car and take 'em along."

"We don't have any fancy clothes when we have the car to pay for," said another. "The car is the only pleasure we have."

Even food may suffer:

"I'll go without food before I'll see us give up the car," said one woman emphatically, and several who were out of work were apparently making precisely this adjustment.

Twenty-one of the twenty-six families owning a car for whom data on bathroom facilities happened to be secured live in homes without bathtubs. Here we obviously have a new habit cutting in ahead of an older one and slowing down the diffusion of the latter.

Meanwhile, advertisements pound away at Middletown people with the tempting advice to spend money for automobiles for the sake of their homes and families:

"Hit the trail to better times!" says one such advertisement.

Another depicts a gray-haired banker lending a young couple the money to buy a car and proffering the friendly advice: "Before you can save money, you first must make money. And to make it you must have health, contentment, and full command of all your resources. . . . I have often advised customers of mine to buy cars, as I felt that the increased stimulation and opportunity of observation would enable them to earn amounts equal to the cost of their cars."

*6 This low percentage of bathtubs would not hold for the entire car-owning group. The interviewers asked about bathtubs in these twenty-six cases out of curiosity, prompted by the run-down appearance of the homes. While inroads upon savings and the re-allocation of items of home expenditure were the readjustments most often mentioned in connection with the financing of the family automobile, others also occur: "It's prohibition that's done it," according to an officer in the Middletown Trades Council; "drink money is going into cars." The same officer, in answering the question as to what he thought most of the men he comes in contact with are working for, guessed: "Twenty-five per cent. are fighting to keep their heads above water; 10 per cent. want to own their own homes; 35 per cent. are working to pay for cars." "All business is suffering," says a Middletown candy manufacturer and dealer. "The candy business is poor now to what it was before the war. There is no money in it any more. People just aren't buying candy so much now. How can they? Even bakersmen put all their money into cars, and every other branch of business feels it."

Many families feel that an automobile is justified as an agency holding the family group together. "I never feel as close to my family as when we are all together in the car," said one business class mother, and one or two spoke of giving up Country Club membership or other recreations to get a car for this reason. "We don't spend anything on recreation except for the car. We save every place we can and put the money into the car. It keeps the family together," was an opinion voiced more than once. Thirty-one per cent. of 337 boys and 60 per cent. of 423 girls in the three upper years of the high school say that they motor more often with their parents than without them.13

But this centralizing tendency of the automobile may be only a passing phase; sets in the other direction are almost equally prominent. "Our daughters [eighteen and fifteen] don't use our car much because they are always with somebody else in their car when we go out motoring," lamented one business class mother. And another said, "The two older children [eighteen and sixteen] never go out when the family motors. They always have something else on. "In the nineties we were all much more together," said another wife. "People brought chairs and cushions out of the house and sat on the lawn evenings. We rolled out a strip of carpet and put cushions on the porch step to take care of the unlimited overflow of neighbors that dropped by. We'd sit out all evening. The younger couples perhaps would wander off for half an hour to get a soda but come back to join in the informal singing or listen while somebody strummed a mandolin or guitar." "What on earth do you want me to do? Just sit around home all evening!" retorted a popular high school girl of today when her father discouraged her going out motoring for the evening with a young blade in a rakish car waiting at the curb. The fact that 348 boys and 382 girls in the three upper years of the high school placed "use of the automobile" fifth and fourth respectively in a list of twelve possible sources of disagreement between them and their parents

13 As over against these answers regarding the automobile, 21 per cent. of the boys and 33 per cent. of the girls said that they go to the movies more often with their parents than without them, 25 per cent. and 22 per cent. respectively answered similarly as regards "listening to the radio," and 31 per cent. and 34 per cent. as regards "singing or playing a musical instrument." On the basis of these answers it would appear that the automobile is at present operating as a more active agency drawing Middletown families together than any of these other agencies.
suggests that this may be an increasing decentralizing agent.\footnote{See Table XIII.}

An earnest teacher in a Sunday School class of working class boys and girls in their late teens was winding up the lesson on the temptations of Jesus: “These three temptations summarize all the temptations we encounter today: physical comfort, fame, and wealth. Can you think of any temptation we have today that Jesus didn’t have?” “Speed!” rejoined one boy. The unwanted interruption was quickly passed over. But the boy had mentioned a tendency underlying one of the four chief infringements of group laws in Middletown today, and the manifestations of Speed are not confined to “speeding.” “Auto Polo next Sunday!” shouts the display advertisement of an amusement park near the city. “It’s motor insanity—too fast for the movies!” The boys who have cars “step on the gas,” and those who haven’t cars sometimes steal them: “The desire of youth to step on the gas when it has no machine of its own,” said the local press, “is considered responsible for the theft of the greater part of the 154 automobiles stolen from Middletown during the past year.”\footnote{For ten others charged with sex offenses during this same period the scene of the offense was not given.}

The threat which the automobile presents to some anxious parents is suggested by the fact that of thirty girls brought before the juvenile court in the twelve months preceding September 1, 1924, charged with “sex crimes,” for whom the place where the offense occurred was given in the records, nineteen were listed as having committed the offense in an automobile. Here again the automobile appears to some as an “enemy” of the home and society.

Sharp, also, is the resentment aroused by this elbowing new device when it interferes with old-established religious habits.

\footnote{In any consideration of the devotion to “speed” that accompanies the coming of the automobile, it should be borne in mind that the increased monotony for the bulk of the workers involved in the shift from the large-muscled hand- trades, including farming, to the small-muscled high-speed machine-tending jobs and the disappearance of the saloon as an easy means of “tellin’ the world to go to hell” have combined with the habit-cracking, eye-opening effect of service in the late war to set the stage for the automobile as a release. The fact that serviceable second-hand cars can be bought for $50.00 and up, the simplicity of installment payment, “the fact that everybody has one”—all unite to make ownership of a car relatively easy, even for boys. Cf. the incident cited above of the boy who wanted to “swap in his Ford for a Studebaker that will go seventy-five miles an hour.”
eight we had breakfast at ——, eighty miles from home. From there we went on to Lake ——, the longest in the state. I had never seen it before, and I’ve lived here all my life, but I sure do want to go again. Then we went to —— [the Y.M.C.A. camp] and had our chicken dinner. It’s a fine thing for people to get out that way on Sundays. No question about it. They see different things and get a larger outlook.”

"Did you miss church?" he was asked.

"Yes, I did, but you can’t do both. I never missed church or Sunday School for thirteen years and I kind of feel as if I’d done my share. The ministers ought not to rail against people’s driving on Sunday. They ought just to realize that they won’t be there every Sunday during the summer, and make church interesting enough so they’ll want to come."

But if the automobile touches the rest of Middletown’s living at many points, it has revolutionized its leisure; more, perhaps, than the movies or any other intrusion new to Middletown since the nineties, it is making leisure-time enjoyment a regularly expected part of every day and week rather than an occasional event. The readily available leisure-time options of even the working class have been multiplied many-fold. As one working class housewife remarked, "We just go to lots of things we couldn’t go to if we didn’t have a car." Beefsteak and watermelon picnics in a park or a near-by wood can be a matter of a moment’s decision on a hot afternoon.

Not only has walking for pleasure become practically extinct, but the occasional event such as a parade on a holiday attracts far less attention now.

"Lots of noise on the street preparing for the 4th," reports the diary of a Middletown merchant on July 3, 1891. And on the 4th: "The town full of people—grand parade with representatives of different trades, an ox roasted whole, four bands, fire-

works, races, greased pig, dancing all day, etc." An account in ’93 reports: "Quite a stir in town. Firecrackers going off all night and all this day—big horse racing at the Fair Ground. Stores all closed this afternoon. Fireworks at the Fair Ground this evening."

Today the week before the Fourth brings a pale edition of the earlier din, continuing until the night before. But the Fourth dawns quietly on an empty city; Middletown has taken to the road. Memorial Day and Labor Day are likewise shorn of their earlier glory.

Use of the automobile has apparently been influential in spreading the “vacation” habit. The custom of having each summer a respite, usually of two weeks, from getting-a-living activities, with pay unabated, is increasingly common among the business class, but it is as yet very uncommon among the workers. “Vacations in 1890?” echoed one substantial citizen. "Why, the word wasn’t in the dictionary!” “Executives of the 1890 period never took a vacation,” said another man of a type common in Middletown thirty-five years ago, who used to announce proudly that they had “not missed a day’s work in twenty years.” Vacations there were in the nineties, nevertheless, particularly for the wives and children of those business folk who had most financial leeway. Put-In Bay, Chautauqua, country boarding-houses where the rates were $5.00 a week for adults and $3.00 for children, the annual conference of the State Baptist Association, the Annual National Christian Endeavor Convention, the annual G.A.R. encampment, all drew people from Middletown. But these affected almost entirely business class people. A check of the habits of the parents of the 1,24 working class wives shows that summer vacations were almost unknown among this large section of the population in the nineties. In lieu of vacations both for workers and many of the business class there were excursions: those crowded, grimy, exuberant, banana-smelling affairs on which one sat up nights in a day coach, or, if a “dude,” took a sleeper, from Sat-

Not all of the business class are paid while on vacation, e.g., many retail clerks are not paid, but the custom is usual.

The growth of the vacation habit is reflected in the fact that the Woman’s Club met with unabated vigor all through the summer in 1890. In 1900 it took the first vacation in its history for July and August. Commencing with 1914 it has been earlier and earlier, and since 1921-22 has ceded for the three months from June 1.
the reach of some for whom such vacations are still "not in the dictionary."

"The only vacation we've had in twenty years was three days we took off last year to go to Benton Harbor with my brother-in-law," said one woman, proudly recounting her trip. "We had two Fords. The women slept in the cars, the men on boards between the two running boards. Here's a picture of the two cars, taken just as the sun was coming up. See the shadows? And there's a hill back of them."

Like the automobile, the motion picture is more to Middletown than simply a new way of doing an old thing; it has added new dimensions to the city's leisure. To be sure, the spectacle-watching habit was strong upon Middletown in the nineties. Whenever they had a chance people turned out to a "show," but chances were relatively fewer. Fourteen times during January, 1890, for instance, the Opera House was opened for performances ranging from Uncle Tom's Cabin to The Black Crook, before the paper announced that "there will not be any more attractions at the Opera House for nearly two weeks." In July there were no "attractions"; a half dozen were scattered through August and September; there were twelve in October.\(^{17}\)

Today nine motion picture theaters operate from 1 to 11 P.M. seven days a week summer and winter; four of the nine give three different programs a week, the other five having two a week; thus twenty-two different programs with a total of over 300 performances are available to Middletown every week in the year. In addition, during January, 1923, there were three plays in Middletown and four motion pictures in other places than the regular theaters, in July three plays and one additional movie, in October two plays and one movie.

About two and three-fourths times the city's entire population attended the nine motion picture theaters during the month of July, 1923, the "valley" month of the year, and four and one-half times the total population in the "peak" month of December.\(^{18}\) Of 395 boys and 457 girls in the three upper years

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\(^{17}\) Exact counts were made for only January, July, and October. There were less than 125 performances, including matinées, for the entire year.

\(^{18}\) These figures are rough estimates based upon the following data: The total Federal amusement tax paid by Middletown theaters in July was $3,002.04 and in December $4,794.47. The average tax paid per admission
of the high school who stated how many times they had attended the movies in "the last seven days," a characteristic week in mid-November, 30 per cent. of the boys and 39 per cent. of the girls had not attended, 31 and 29 per cent. respectively had been only once, 22 and 21 per cent. respectively two times, 10 and 7 per cent. three times, and 7 and 4 per cent. four or more times. According to the housewives interviewed regarding the custom in their own families, in three of the forty business class families interviewed and in thirty-eight of the 122 working class families no member "goes at all" to the movies. One family in ten in each group goes as an entire family once a week or oftener; the two parents go together without their children once a week or oftener in four business class families (one in ten), and in two working class families (one in sixty); in fifteen business class families and in thirty-eight working class families the children were said by their mothers to go without their parents one or more times weekly.

In short, the frequency of movie attendance of high school boys and girls is about equal, business class families tend to go more often than do working class families, and children of both groups attend more often without their parents than do all is about 30,022, and the population in 1923 about 38,000. Attendance estimates secured in this way were raised by one-sixth to account for children under twelve who are tax-free. The proprietor of three representative houses said that he had seven admissions over twelve years to one aged twelve or less, and the proprietor of another house drawing many children had four over twelve to one aged twelve or less.

These attendance figures include, however, farmers and others from outlying districts.

"The question was asked in terms of frequency of attendance "in an average month" and was checked in each case by attendance during the month just past. Lack of money and young children needing care in the home are probably two factors influencing these families that do not attend at all; of the forty-one working class families in which all the children are twelve years or under, eighteen never go to the movies, while of the eighty-one working class families in which one or more of the children is twelve or older, only twenty reported that no member of the family ever attends.

"I haven't been anywhere in two years," said a working class wife of thirty-three, the mother of six children, the youngest twenty months. "I went to the movies once two years ago. I was over to see Mrs. —— and she says, 'Come on, let's go to the movies.' I didn't believe her. She is always ragging the men and I thought she was joking. 'Come on,' she says, 'put your things on and we'll see a show.' I thought, well, if she wanted to rag the men, I'd help her, so I got up and put my things on. And, you know, she really meant it. She paid my fare uptown and paid my way into the movies. I was never so surprised in my life. I haven't been anywhere since."

the individuals or other combinations of family members put together. The decentralizing tendency of the movies upon the family, suggested by this last, is further indicated by the fact that only 21 per cent. of 337 boys and 33 per cent. of 423 girls in the three upper years of the high school go to the movies more often with their parents than without them. On the other hand, the comment is frequently heard in Middletown that movies have cut into lodge attendance, and it is probable that time formerly spent in lodges, saloons, and unions is now being spent in part at the movies, at least occasionally with other members of the family. Like the automobile and radio, the movies, by breaking up leisure time into an individual, family, or small group affair, represent a counter movement to the trend toward organization so marked in clubs and other leisure-time pursuits.

How is life being quickened by the movies for youngsters who bulk so large in the audiences, for the punch press operator at the end of his working day, for the wife who goes to a "picture" every week or so "while he stays home with the children," for those business class families who habitually attend?

"Go to a motion picture . . . and let yourself go," Middletown reads in a Saturday Evening Post advertisement. "Before you know it you are living the story—laughing, looking, struggling, winning! All the adventure, all the romance, all the excitement you lack in your daily life are in —— Pictures. They take you completely out of yourself into a wonderful new world. . . . Out of the cage of everyday existence! If only for an afternoon or an evening—escape!"

The program of the five cheaper houses is usually a "Wild West" feature, and a comedy; of the four better houses, one feature film, usually a "society" film but frequently Wild West or comedy, one short comedy, or if the feature is a comedy, an educational film (e.g., Laying an Ocean Cable or Making a Telephone), and a news film. In general, people do not go to the movies to be instructed; the Yale Press series of historical films, as noted earlier, were a flat failure and the local exhibitor discontinued them after the second picture.

20Cf. N. 10 above.

The ex-proprietor of one of the largest saloons in the city said, "The movies killed the saloon. They cut our business in half overnight."
As in the case of the books it reads, comedy, heart interest, and adventure compose the great bulk of what Middletown enjoys in the movies. Its heroes, according to the manager of the leading theater, are, in the order named, Harold Lloyd, comedian; Gloria Swanson, heroine in modern society films; Thomas Meighan, hero in modern society films; Colleen Moore, ingénue; Douglas Fairbanks, comedian and adventurer; Mary Pickford, ingenue; and Norma Talmadge, heroine in modern society films. Harold Lloyd comedies draw the largest crowds. "Middletown is amusement hungry," says the opening sentence in a local editorial; at the comedies Middletown lives for an hour in a happy sophisticated make-believe world that leaves it, according to the advertisement of one film, "happily convinced that Life is very well worth living."

Next largest are the crowds which come to see the sensational society films. The kind of vicarious living brought to Middletown by these films may be inferred from such titles as: "Alimony—brilliant men, beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific smashing climax that makes you gasp"; "Married Flirts—Husbands: Do you flirt? Does your wife always know where you are? Are you faithful to your vows? Wives: What's your hubby doing? Do you know? Do you worry? Watch out for Married Flirts." So fast do these flow across the silver screen that, e.g., at one time The Daring Years, Sinners in Silk, Women Who Give, and The Price She Paid were all running synchronously, and at another "Name the Man—a story of betrayed womanhood," Rouged Lips, and The Queen of Sin. While Western "action" films and a million-dollar spectacle like The Covered Wagon or The Hunchback of Notre Dame draw heavy houses, and while managers lament that there are too few of the popular comedy films, it is the film with burning "heart interest," that packs Middletown's motion picture houses week after week. Young Middletown enters eagerly into the vivid experience of Flaming Youth: "neckers, petters, white kisses, red kisses, pleasure-mad daughters, sensation-craving mothers, by an author who didn't dare sign his name; the truth bold, naked, sensational"—so ran the press advertisement—under the spell of the powerful conditioning medium of pictures presented with music and all possible heightening of the emotional content, and the added factor of sharing this experience with a "date" in a darkened room. Meanwhile, Down to the Sea in Ships, a costly spectacle of whaling adventure, failed at the leading theater "because," the exhibitor explained, "the whale is really the hero in the film and there wasn't enough 'heart interest' for the women."

Over against these spectacles which Middletown watches today stand the pale "sensations" of the nineties, when Sappho was the apogee of daring at the Opera House: "The Telephone Girl—Hurricane hits, breezy dialogue, gorgeous stage setting, dazzling dancing, spirited repartee, superb music, opulent costumes," Over the Garden Wall, Edith's Burglar, East Lynne, La Belle Maria, or Women's Revenge, The Convict's Daughter, Joe, a Mountain Fairy, The Vagabond Heroine, Guilty Without Crime, The World Against Her (which the baker pronounced in his diary, "good, but too solemn"), Love Will Find a Way, Si. Plankard. These, it must be recalled, were the great days when Uncle Tom's Cabin, with "fifty men, women, and children, a pack of genuine bloodhounds, grandest street parade ever given, and two bands," packed the Opera House to capacity.

Actual changes of habits resulting from the week-after-week witnessing of these films can only be inferred. Young Middletown is finding discussion of problems of mating in this new agency that boasts in large illustrated advertisements, "Girls! You will learn how to handle 'em!" and "Is it true that marriage kills love? If you want to know what love really means, its exquisite torture, its overwhelming raptures, see ——."

"Sheiks and their 'shebas,'" according to the press account of the Sunday opening of one film, "... sat without a movement or a whisper through the presentation. ... It was a real exhibition of love-making and the youths and maidens of [Middletown] who thought that they knew something about the art found that they still had a great deal to learn."

Some high school teachers are convinced that the movies are a powerful factor in bringing about the "early sophistication" of the young and the relaxing of social taboos. One working class mother frankly welcomes the movies as an aid in child-
rearing, saying, "I send my daughter because a girl has to learn
the ways of the world somehow and the movies are a good safe
way." The judge of the juvenile court lists the movies as one of
the "big four" causes of local juvenile delinquency, believing
that the disregard of group mores by the young is definitely
related to the witnessing week after week of fictitious
behavior sequences that habitually link the taking of long
chances and the happy ending. While the community attempts
to safeguard its schools from commercially intent private hands,
this powerful new educational instrument, which has taken
Middletown unawares, remains in the hands of a group of
men—an ex-peanut-stand proprietor, an ex-bicycle racer and
race promoter, and so on—whose primary concern is making
money. 28

Middletown in 1890 was not hesitant in criticizing poor
shows at the Opera House. The "morning after" reviews of
1890 bristle with frank adjectives: "Their version of the play
is incomplete. Their scenery is limited to one drop. The women
are ancient, the costumes dingy and old. Outside of a few
specialties, the show was very 'bum.' " When Sappho struck
town in 1910, the press roasted it roundly, concluding, "[Middletown] has had enough of naughtiness of the stage. . .
Manager W—— will do well to fumigate his pretty playhouse
before one of the clean, instructive, entertaining plays he has
hired comes before the footlights." The newspapers of today
keep their hands off the movies, save for running free publicity
stories and cuts furnished by the exhibitors who advertise
them. 29

28 Cf. Ch. XI.
Miriam Van Waters, referee of the juvenile court of Los Angeles and
author of Youth in Conflict, says in a review of Cyril Burt's The Young
Delinquent: "The cinema is recognized for what it is, the main source of
excitement and of moral education for city children. Burt finds that only
mental defectives take the movies seriously enough to imitate the criminal
exploits portrayed therein, and only a small proportion of the boys can be
traced to stealing to gain money for admittance. In no such direct way
does the moving picture commonly demoralize youth. It is in the subtle
way of picturing the standards of adult life, action and emotion, cheapening,
debasing, distorting adults until they appear in the eyes of the young
people perpetually bathed in a moral atmosphere of intrigue, jealousy, wild
emotionalism, and cheap sentimentality. Burt realizes that these exhibitions
stimulate children prematurely." (The Survey, April 15, 1926.)

29 One exhibitor in Middletown is a college-trained man interested in
"bring[ing] 'good films' to the city. He, like the others, however, is caught in
the competitive game and matches his competitors' sensational advertise-
ments.

INVENTIONS RE-MAKING LEISURE

tise. Save for some efforts among certain of the women's clubs
to "clean up the movies" and the opposition of the Ministerial
Association to "Sunday movies," Middletown appears content
in the main to take the movies at their face value—"a darned
good show"—and largely disregard their educational or habit-
forming aspects.

Though less widely diffused as yet than automobile owning
or movie attendance, the radio nevertheless is rapidly crowding
its way in among the necessities in the family standard of liv-
ing. Not the least remarkable feature of this new invention is
its accessibility. Here skill and ingenuity can in part offset
money as an open sesame to swift sharing of the enjoyments
of the wealthy. With but little equipment one can call the life of
the rest of the world from the air, and this equipment can be
purchased piecemeal at the ten-cent store. Far from being
simply one more means of passive enjoyment, the radio has
given rise to much ingenious manipulative activity. In a count
of representative sections of Middletown, it was found that,
of 303 homes in twenty-eight blocks in the "best section" of
town, inhabited almost entirely by the business class, 12 per
cent. had radios; of 518 workers' homes in sixty-four blocks,
6 per cent. had radios. 24

As this new tool is rolling back the horizons of Middletown
for the bank clerk or the mechanic sitting at home and listen-
ing to a Philharmonic concert or a sermon by Dr. Fosdick, or
to President Coolidge bidding his father good night on the
eve of election, and as it is wedging its way with the movie,
the automobile, and other new tools into the twisted mass of
habits that are living for the 38,000 people of Middletown,

24 Both percentages have undoubtedly increased notably since 1924, when
the counts were made.

25 In 1920 the local press spoke of an occasional citizen's visiting "Paris,
France," and "London, England," and even in 1924 a note in one of the
papers recording the accident of some Middletown people finding themselves
in a box at a New York theater with a group of Englishmen was captioned
"Lucky they weren't Chinese!" The rest of the world is still a long way
from Middletown, but movies and radio are doing much to break down
this isolation: "I've got 120 stations on my radio," gloatfully announced
a local working man. Meanwhile, the president of the Radio Corporation
of America proclaims an era at hand when "the oldest and newest civilizations
will thrill together at the same intellectual appeal, and to the same artistic
emotions."
адjustments necessarily occur. Such comments as the following suggest their nature:

"I use time evenings listening in that I used to spend in reading."

"The radio is hurting movie going, especially Sunday evening."  
(From a leading movie exhibitor.)

"I don't use my car so much any more. The heavy traffic makes it less fun. But I spend seven nights a week on my radio. We hear fine music from Boston.‖ (From a shabby man of fifty.)

"Sundays I take the boy to Sunday School and come straight home and tune in. I get first an eastern service, then a Cincinnati one. Then there's nothing doing till about two-thirty, when I pick up an eastern service again and follow 'em across the country till I wind up with California about ten-thirty. Last night I heard a ripping sermon from Westminster Church somewhere in California. We've no preachers here that can compare with any of them."

"One of the bad features of radio," according to a teacher, "is that children stay up late at night and are not fit for school next day."

"We've spent close on to $100 on our radio, and we built it ourselves at that," commented one of the worker's wives. "Where'd we get the money? Oh, out of our savings, like everybody else."

In the flux of competing habits that are oscillating the members of the family now towards and now away from the home, radio occupies an intermediate position. Twenty-five per cent. of 337 high school boys and 22 per cent. of 423 high school girls said that they listen more often to the radio with their parents than without them, and, as pointed out above, 20 per cent. of 274 boys in the three upper years of the high school answered "radio" to the question, "In what thing that you are doing at home this fall are you most interested?"—more than gave any other answer. More than one mother said that her family used to scatter in the evening—but now we all sit around and listen to the radio."

Likewise the place of the radio in relation to Middletown's

other leisure habits is not wholly clear. As it becomes more perfected, cheaper, and a more accepted part of life, it may cease to call forth so much active, constructive ingenuity and become one more form of passive enjoyment. Doubtless it will continue to play a mighty rôle in lifting Middletown out of the humdrum of every day; it is beginning to take over that function of the great political rallies or the trips by the trainload to the state capital to hear a noted speaker or to see a monument dedicated that a generation ago helped to set the average man in a wide place. But it seems not unlikely that, while furnishing a new means of diversified enjoyment, it will at the same time operate, with national advertising, syndicated newspapers, and other means of large-scale diffusion, as yet another means of standardizing many of Middletown's habits. Indeed, at no point is one brought up more sharply against the impossibility of studying Middletown as a self-contained, self-starting community than when one watches these space-binding leisure-time inventions imported from without—automobile, motion picture, and radio—reshaping the city.

23 Cf. N. 10 above.
27 Less than 1 per cent. of the 341 girls answered "radio."