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The role of sports in the Bethlehem community, 1915-1938 : a social barometer

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The Role of Sports in the Bethlehem Community 1915-1938: A Social Barometer

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The Role of Sports in the Bethlehem Community, 1915-1938:
A Social Barometer

by

Daniel J. Kungl

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May 16, 1994

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Thesis Advisor
Chairperson of Department

Second Reader
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Abstract

This thesis examines the role of sports in the Bethlehem community from 1915 to 1938. It has been argued that soccer, a European sport, was rejected in the United States, in the late 19th century, because of the development of sports considered more in accordance with the national culture of the New World. While it is true that soccer dwindled in the United States because of the development of more American sports such as baseball, the time frame projected, the 19th century, is too early for the decline of soccer. The Bethlehem Steel Football [Soccer] Club of Bethlehem Pennsylvania, which played from 1912 to 1930, offers an excellent example with which to test the dates. The Bethlehem Steel soccer club was a world-class soccer team that played in front of thousands of enthusiastic fans all over the world in the teens and twenties. This support and enthusiasm for the Bethlehem Steel soccer team strongly suggests that soccer continued to be a popular sport, at least in some areas, through the 1920s.

Soccer declined in popularity in Bethlehem throughout the twenties and thirties. It was during those two decades that immigrants and their children, who for years were the mainstays in soccer, began to pursue more American interests. Influenced by mass culture, working-class Americans underwent a gradual shift in attitudes and behaviors over the intervening decade and a half [1920-1935] as a result of a wide range of social and cultural experiences. American sports were among the social and cultural experiences that working-class Americans, and this included immigrants and their children, experienced during that time and ultimately led to the decline in soccer. Social and cultural experiences opened up a new world to them, and while maintaining ties to
their past, they eagerly pursued new activities and interests. Over the course of time, these new interests led to a reduction in the amount of time spent on traditional activities, including soccer. A study of the life of the Bethlehem Steel soccer team within the larger framework of sports activity in Bethlehem reveals how this shift towards American sports curtailed the popularity of soccer.
In his article, "The Other American Exceptionalism: Why is There No Soccer in the United States?" Andrei Markovits outlines the reason that soccer has lacked popular acceptance in the United States since the 19th century. He postulates that soccer was rejected in the United States because of the development of sports considered more in accordance with the national culture of the New World. In his argument, Markovits describes soccer as a European sport, and baseball and football as American sports -- New World sports. While it is true that soccer dwindled in the United States because of the development of more American sports such as baseball, Markovits projects a time frame that is too early for the decline of soccer. The Bethlehem Steel Football [Soccer] Club of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, that played from 1912 to 1930, offers an excellent example with which to test the dates in Markovits' theory. The Bethlehem Steel club was a world-class soccer team that played in front of thousands of enthusiastic fans all over the world in the teens and twenties. Within the United States, the Bethlehem club competed regularly against teams from around the country that were supported by fans in their hometowns. This support and enthusiasm for the Bethlehem Steel soccer team


2 Although the team was officially called the Bethlehem Steel Football Club, it will be referred to as the soccer team to avoid confusion with references to American football.

strongly suggests that soccer continued to be a popular sport, at least in some areas, through the 1920s.

Soccer did decline in popularity in Bethlehem, as in other cities in America, throughout the twenties and thirties. It was during those two decades that immigrants and their children, who for years were the mainstays in soccer, began to pursue more American interests. Lizabeth Cohen, in Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939, argues that diverse ethnic groups underwent an "Americanization process" in the twenties and thirties. Influenced by mass culture, Cohen argues that "working-class Americans underwent a gradual shift in attitudes and behaviors over the intervening decade and a half [1920-1935] as a result of a wide range of social and cultural experiences." American sports were among the social and cultural experiences that working-class Americans, and this included immigrants and their children, experienced during that time and ultimately led to the decline in soccer. It was a gradual process of Americanization. Immigrants and their children did not swiftly move into the mainstream of American culture and, as a result, deny their ethnic heritage. Social and cultural experiences opened up a new world to them, and while maintaining ties to their past, they eagerly pursued new activities and interests. Over the course of time, these new interests led to a reduction in the amount of time spent on traditional activities, and one of the things to decline was soccer. A study of the history of the Bethlehem Steel soccer team within the larger framework of sports activity in Bethlehem reveals how this

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shift towards American sports curtailed the popularity of soccer.

On Sunday, November 17, 1918, four thousand spectators watched the Bethlehem Steel soccer team defeat an all-star team from Canada by the score of 4 to 1. The Bethlehem Steel field was a quagmire which lead to mediocre play, and the fans endured a steady downpour that left everyone soaked by the end of the first half. Yet, the reports indicate that all four thousand fans stayed until the end of the game and sang a victory song in honor of Bethlehem’s win. The game was staged to benefit the United War Works Campaign, a soldiers relief organization. Because of their renowned talent and ability to attract thousands of fans, it was one of many games that the soccer team played over the years to benefit war and charity causes.5 Earlier in the year, the Bethlehem club won their fourth American Cup in the last five years, their third consecutive title. The American Cup, established in 1884 by the American Football [Soccer] Association, recognized the holder as the best soccer team in the country.6 Bethlehem Steel had put together the most accomplished soccer unit in the United States where the local constituents supported it for nearly eighteen years.

In 1930, the Bethlehem Steel soccer team played its last game. The management of Bethlehem Steel Corporation announced that because of the depression


taking hold of the country they could not afford to support the team any longer. In actuality, the company considered folding the team several times during the previous three years because it was losing support among local residents. The depression was the final factor in deciding to disband the team. Attendance at home games, by the late twenties, fell to the point where most games averaged fewer than five hundred people. Local businessmen were pleading with Bethlehem residents to support the team for the sake of the national and international recognition Bethlehem city received through the exploits of the team. Just a decade earlier, tickets for games against popular rivals could hardly be found for a stadium holding ten thousand spectators. Why was there a decline in the popularity of Bethlehem Steel’s soccer team in the 1920s?

The soccer team lost its following among the residents of Bethlehem during the twenties because of a decline in the popularity of European sports. The decline in European sports was initiated by the excitement and enthusiasm the immigrant residents and their children felt for American sports such as football, baseball, and basketball. These sports were considered American because they were invented in America, and they were not yet popular in Europe. The rise of American sports was part of the gradual Americanization process that immigrants and their children experienced from the teens through thirties, but especially in the twenties. Lizabeth Cohen argues that the twenties


Bethlehem Globe-Times, December 30, 1926.

Bethlehem Globe-Times and The Bethlehem Booster, a magazine published by Bethlehem Steel Corporation for its workers, published attendance numbers.
were a transitional time for immigrants. While they maintained distinct ties to their respective ethnic and/or neighborhood groups, they were crossing traditional boundaries, such as race or religion, by experiencing common social and cultural experiences. Sports was no exception. Cohen says, "Recreation could provide a glue to bind workers of different races, ethnicities, and ages together."

The popularity of American sports increased during the twenties because of developments in leisure time, professional and amateur sports, and radio. Leisure activities became a more regular part of people's lives with a shorter work week. Notably, with the introduction of the eight hour workday in the steel industry in 1924, the majority of workers in the Bethlehem area had more time to pursue their activities and hobbies. The growth of professional leagues to watch, and local leagues in which to participate, made American sports more familiar and recognizable to all citizens. There was an increase in spectator sports during that time as people flocked to stadiums and ballparks around the country to see their favorite teams. With the advent of network radio in the mid 1920s, people all over the country followed the results of professional

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baseball and football leagues thereby increasing their familiarity and popularity.\textsuperscript{13}

Soccer did not entirely disappear from Bethlehem because of the popularity of American sports. Bethlehem Steel folded its team because of a lack of interest among the residents, but local leagues were active in Bethlehem from the teens through the thirties. These leagues were dominated by ethnically oriented teams. Social clubs, such as the Hungaria Sports Club, sponsored teams that competed locally. The members of these clubs were committed to their teams because they believed the results were a reflection on their heritage. The difference between the ethnic sports clubs in the thirties and the same organizations in the teens and earlier twenties is that the younger generation’s involvement in sports activities had shifted over the years. In the early years, young men competed for their ethnic groups’ soccer teams, and if they were not actual participants, they were involved in the organization of the team.\textsuperscript{14} By the 1930s, the managers of these teams were combing the area to find talented players, regardless of their ethnic heritage, to fill the void left by their own group’s lack of interest.\textsuperscript{15} Young men, often the children of immigrants, found alternative forms of leisure more interesting. They were now concerned with the outcome of the Phillies games or they


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
preferred watching Bethlehem High School’s football team play Easton or Allentown.

The key period in the transition from European sports to a more Americanized sports enthusiasm was between 1915 and 1938. It was in the mid-teens when all five levels of sports, from recreational sports through professional sports, first appeared on a regular basis. The Bethlehem Steel soccer team started in 1912, but it first achieved national success and recognition in the 1913-1914 campaign.\textsuperscript{16} At the same time, the results of Philadelphia and New York professional baseball teams began to receive more consistent updates by local Bethlehem papers. High school sports began to emerge in the mid-teens with Bethlehem High School initiating programs in football, basketball, and wrestling.\textsuperscript{17} From 1927 to 1938, Bethlehem experienced its pinnacle of involvement in local sports before World War II. There was a plethora of leagues in the area in which young men could compete in basketball, baseball, and football, and the local high school and university teams were very popular with the local residents. The last time that Bethlehem attempted to field a professional or semiprofessional soccer team to capture the interest of a cross section of residents was 1938. In the forties, World War II severely curtailed the number of sport activities. Professional baseball and football leagues were either suspended or reduced to inferior levels of play. Bethlehem city and church sports leagues were drained as young men went into the service in large

\textsuperscript{16} The Bethlehem Booster, 1 July 1918 in a review of the soccer team’s history. Charles Altemose interview.

\textsuperscript{17} Bethlehem Globe-Times, various articles throughout 1915.
numbers.\textsuperscript{18}

Bethlehem, located in Eastern Pennsylvania, was a medium-sized industrial city in the first half of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{19} The town's growth mirrored that of Bethlehem Steel Corporation. As the company's main facility, the Bethlehem plant expanded as Bethlehem Steel became one of the leading manufacturers in the country. This growth process was supplemented by a wave of immigrants who poured into the Lehigh Valley, and Bethlehem in particular, to supply the workforce Bethlehem Steel needed during the boom years of World War I. The town grew 65\% between 1910 and 1920.\textsuperscript{20} The new arrivals, like those who lived in Bethlehem for years and like people all over the country, eagerly coveted their free time. Leisure activities were sought out

\textsuperscript{18} Bethlehem Globe-Times, various articles throughout 1941 and 1942.


for enjoyment in those precious days and hours that were not devoted to making a living. In Bethlehem, there was a range of activities for members of the community as participants or spectators. In addition to sports, there were theater productions, Bach Choir recitals, or band concerts. Various groups sponsored trips to cities like Philadelphia or New York to watch professional sports.\(^{21}\) On a more informal level, men gathered in saloons, but prohibition in the twenties may have encouraged alternative forms of recreation.\(^{22}\)

In addition to the Americanization of immigrants and the influence of radio, the area’s enthusiasm for sports rose with the increase in population. A large portion of the increase between 1900 and 1920 took place on the South and West Sides of Bethlehem where immigrant families tended to settle either because of proximity to the steel plant or the availability of affordable housing.\(^{23}\) The foreign-born population doubled between 1900 and 1920. The immigrant population stagnated and even diminished after 1920 due to the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 which restricted further immigration to America. After 1910, though, there was a steady increase in the number of children

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\(^{21}\) The Bethlehem Globe-Times contains daily updates throughout this time period on events and activities in Bethlehem in its section covering sports, theater, and other leisure activities. Excellent examples of the options are found on January 11, 1915 and May 3, 1915.


of immigrants as Bethlehemites with foreign parentage doubled between 1910 and 1930. When the foreign-born population was combined with the number of children with foreign parentage, the immigrant residents and their children totaled between 47% and 50% of the overall population between 1910 and 1930 (see Table). Therefore, while a portion of the increase in population over a thirty year period should be attributed to natural increases in the area, the immigrant population (including their descendants) on the South Side and the West Side between 1900 and 1940 was extensive and a large part of the Bethlehem community.

Population and Nativity of Bethlehem, PA 1900 -1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1920</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native-born White</td>
<td>15,729</td>
<td>23,418</td>
<td>39,049</td>
<td>46,657</td>
<td>50,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native-born of Native-born parents</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>16,498</td>
<td>26,503</td>
<td>29,820</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native-born of Foreign-born parents*</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6,920</td>
<td>12,546</td>
<td>16,837</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign-born White</td>
<td>4,805</td>
<td>9,159</td>
<td>10,943</td>
<td>10,093</td>
<td>8,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Native-born</td>
<td>76.6</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Foreign-born</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Foreign Stock</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>20,534</td>
<td>32,810</td>
<td>50,358</td>
<td>57,892</td>
<td>58,490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A - Not Available.

* For the purposes of this table, "Native-born of Foreign-born Parents" also includes "Native-born of Mixed Parents" which means the person had at least one parent who was foreign-born.

Source: The information in the table comes from the U.S. Census information that was noted earlier (See footnote 19). Slight variations between the numbers in the individual categories and the totals occur because of the separation of the Negro population.
In the inter-war decades, sports played an integral part in the life of Bethlehem’s population at all social levels. It was an immensely popular form of leisure, as both a participatory and spectator event, a form of business advertisement, an outlet for people trapped in dismal working conditions, an arena for the interaction of distinct, separate ethnic groups, and a setting used to promote ethnic heritage. There were five general levels of sports found in Bethlehem between 1915 and 1938. First, there were participatory sports such as ice skating, roller skating, quoits, fishing, and swimming in which individuals of all ages engaged strictly for their pleasure. They were a form of recreation and exercise. Second, there were youth sports. These included school, city, and church sponsored events and leagues initiated for boys and girls from the age of five through their high school years. These sports included marbles, boxcar races, soccer, basketball, baseball, boxing, swimming, and track and field events. The primary purpose for these events was for the enjoyment and health of the participants, but many of these activities were very popular with spectators as exemplified by the thousands of people who paid to watch high school football games. Third, there were a large number of amateur teams and leagues for adults in soccer, baseball, basketball, tennis, bowling, wrestling, darts, and golf. Relying heavily on social and athletic clubs and fraternities for support, young men, and sometimes women, formed teams to enjoy competitive sports. Ethnic clubs often formed teams to compete for the sole purpose of representing their organizations. As with the high school teams, these events were often very popular as spectator sports, especially among those who belonged to organizations sponsoring teams. On the fourth level, there were strictly spectator sports. In this realm,
Bethlehem contained, over the twenty-five year period, a number of teams that could be classified as semiprofessional and professional. In addition to the Bethlehem Steel soccer team, which should be considered as a semiprofessional team, there were the Bethlehem Bulldogs football team, the Hellertown Bears football team, the Hungaria Sports Club soccer team, and the Bethlehem Steel baseball team. On the final level, the people of Bethlehem supported professional teams in nearby larger cities, such as the Brooklyn Rangers soccer club and the Philadelphia Athletics baseball franchise.

By the teens, the people of Bethlehem had a wide and growing range of sports activities in which to participate and watch on all different levels. The local residents understood and appreciated sports accomplishments by national, local, and school level athletes. As early as 1914, Bethlehem had a semiprofessional football team of some renown. The Blue Star football team went undefeated in the 1914-1915 season beating teams representing athletic clubs in Allentown, Easton, Bangor, and Lansford, Pennsylvania. They outscored their opponents by a combined 266 to 0. A variety of Bethlehem’s ethnic groups were represented on the team. In noting the make-up of the team, the *Bethlehem Globe-Times* wrote, "In personnel, the team hardly has an equal. Irish, German, Hungarian, and Italian blood united produced this winning combination." Organizations such as the Temperance Society, a social group

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24 Mr. Frank Gutshall, interview by author, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, February 20, 1994. 
25 Mr. Frank Rauscher, interview by author, Hellertown, Pennsylvania, February 27, 1994. 
26 *Bethlehem Globe-Times*, January 8, 1915. 
27 Ibid.
associated with the Holy Infancy parish, maintained a basketball team from 1915 through the mid-thirties that played other clubs and organizations in the Lehigh Valley such as the Easton ex-high team composed of former Easton High School players.\textsuperscript{27} The Temperance team was charging as much as twenty-five cents a game in 1920 for home games, and they were able to draw crowds of close to 300 for games held at the Liberty High School Gymnasium or the Colosseum in Center City Bethlehem.\textsuperscript{28} Bethlehem residents were interested in all types of athletic events, no matter how trivial they may seem to future generations. The following story was printed in the \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times} in May of 1915:

"Thomas Kinney, Northampton Heights, and George Kohler, Rittersville who are employed in the Saucon plant of the Bethlehem Steel Works recently had an argument on sprinting and the result was that they placed a side bet of $50 and agreed to settle their differences by running 100 yards. The race is scheduled to take place next Monday on a course to be chosen by the seconds of the participants."\textsuperscript{29}

The amount of the bet was certainly tremendous for workers in 1915, but the announcement of the race for the purpose of informing the general public was another example of the public’s quest for new spectator sports.

Additional examples of the increase in the popularity of sports in the early twentieth century are found in the Bethlehem area. First, South Bethlehem, a separate entity until the late teens, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with a series of events from October third through the ninth of 1915. Each day was dedicated to a different cause.

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, January 14, 1915.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, January 28, 1920.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, May 4, 1915.
There was Educational Day, Military Day, Home Comers’ Day, Religious Day, and Athletic Day. Considered important enough to receive its own day, athletics were emerging as an important component of community life. There were a series of track and field events sponsored by the Amateur Athletic Union for world records, a baseball game, and a soccer game played by the Bethlehem Steel soccer team. Three thousand people attended the festivities on Athletic Day. Second, the local universities were attractive venues for those interested in watching sporting events. Lehigh University and Moravian College drew thousands of fans yearly to their athletic events. Football and wrestling were popular events for local residents. Football games at Lehigh in the late teens attracted crowds from one to seven thousand for big games.

The professional baseball teams in New York and Philadelphia were popular in Bethlehem. The residents followed the results in the newspaper, listened to the games on the radio, and went to those cities to watch them play. The most popular teams were the Philadelphia Athletics, Philadelphia Phillies, and New York Giants, and these franchises rewarded their fans with some of the best baseball in the country. In a sixteen year period from 1921 to 1938, a team from either New York or Philadelphia won the World Series twelve times. For the World Series in 1915, the Bethlehem Globe-Times promoted the fact that they would broadcast results from the games immediately

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31 Bethlehem Globe-Times, various articles recounting the games.

their building on the South Side. The front page of the newspaper for October 5, 1915 carried the following story: "World Series Games By Megaphone and Telephone. As has been the custom of the Globe, this newspaper will again handle the World Series games. Every year, the Globe has done this, and the crowds outside of the building run into the hundreds." There were advertisements in the newspaper that the Reading Train would be running express trains from Bethlehem to the Philadelphia ball park for the length of the series.

The emergence of new playgrounds and parks marked the trend in physical activity, and they began to appear more frequently in Bethlehem in the 1910s. Sand Island Playground and Park officially opened on September 18, 1915 with a barbecue and band concert. In an article from October 3, 1915, the editors of the Bethlehem Globe-Times praised the developments of playgrounds and parks in America and especially Bethlehem. The editors said, "it becomes evident that the organization of play is one of the new public functions that are coming and that every city must soon join the movement or be classified among the backward or decadent communities." The editors also pointed out that New York City spent seventeen million dollars over the last fifteen years on playgrounds alone, and it would be appalling if Bethlehem did not contribute according to its size. The popularity of the parks continued for years. In

33 Bethlehem Globe-Times, October 5, 1915.
34 Bethlehem Globe-Times, October 6, 1915.
35 Bethlehem Globe-Times, September 17, 1915.
37 Ibid.
the annual mayor’s message of 1930, the Superintendent of the Parks reported there were not enough open dates, as in years past, to supply the demand "for the numerous requests of the Park for reunions, ball games, football, and other games." In fact, some people in the community were worried that sports and recreation were becoming too popular and time consuming with Bethlehem residents. This concern was shown in an editorial that appeared in the paper berating the increase of athletics in high schools. The editor argued:

"The competitive interscholastic games which require great physical exertion and mental tension should be done away with and a good gymnasium, under the direction of one trained in physical culture, should provide exercise according to each pupil's needs. Over-exertion in competitive sports, especially in school boys, is one factor. From five to ten per cent of freshmen entering the state university have enlarged hearts with dilation attributable to athletic sports. This hampers their scholastic work." 

The errors in these assumptions are evident to those who have the benefit of modern medicine and physiology, but the fact remains that the emergence of new sports, and more importantly the enthusiasm with which they were embraced in the Bethlehem area, was clear to members of the community.

Of all the sports present in Bethlehem in the teens and early twenties, none was more popular with the residents than soccer. The focal point of their enthusiasm for soccer rested on the Bethlehem Steel soccer club. While soccer was found in Bethlehem

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before 1912 in the unorganized play of clubs and associations, the steel team greatly increased the level of excitement for the sport. The Bethlehem soccer team dominated the sports scene in Bethlehem from its beginning in 1912 through roughly 1925. Charles Schwab, who was president of Bethlehem Steel and the catalyst behind its rise to prominence in the years before World War I, initiated a general athletic program at Bethlehem Steel in the early 1910s. The employees of the steel company could participate in tennis, baseball, skeet shooting, boxing, gymnastics, swimming, basketball, or bowling. The company established recreational facilities all over the Lehigh Valley and at other plants located around the country for the use of all their employees. The corporation formed leagues for the employees with full-time athletic managers and recreational facility coordinators. In Bethlehem, for example, the company purchased a playing field, called Steel Field, and they built an extensive gym and swimming pool complex for the workers. While they were closely involved in establishing an exclusive country club for the use of upper management, the steel company did establish a positive recreational program for the blue-collar workers. In addition to the participatory sporting events created for the workers, the company formed semiprofessional teams in baseball and soccer to compete as representatives of the organization in leagues and

40 Bethlehem Globe-Times, October 15, 1909 and September 4, 1911.

41 John Strohmeyer, Crisis in Bethlehem: Big Steel's Struggle To Survive (Bethesda: Adler & Adler, 1986).
tournaments around the country.\textsuperscript{42}

The soccer team was the crown jewel of the sports program. Among Schwab's management team, there were two brothers of Welsh descent, R.A. Lewis and H.E. Lewis, who spearheaded the initiative for the soccer club. R.A. Lewis eventually became the general manager of the local Bethlehem Steel plant, and H.E. Lewis became vice president of the corporation.\textsuperscript{43} The brothers carried with them to America a love for soccer. As Schwab was forming the athletic program at Bethlehem Steel, the brothers approached him about organizing a soccer team that could compete on a national level. With Schwab's permission, the Lewis brothers brought in William Stark, a Welsh manager and masseur, and Billy Sheridan, an accomplished Scottish athlete, to put together a competitive soccer team.\textsuperscript{44} Sheridan would later achieve more recognition in the twenties and thirties as the coach of Lehigh University's powerful wrestling team, but his initial success in America came in the teens and early twenties as the manager of Bethlehem Steel Athletics program and coach of the Bethlehem Steel soccer team.\textsuperscript{45}

\footnote{The magazine, \textit{The Bethlehem Booster}, printed by the steel company for the workers gave updates every issue of the facilities available to the workers and the dates and locations of the spectator events such as soccer. The president of the booster association used the magazine continually to urge the workers that they should join the booster association to receive discounts to the soccer and baseball games.}


\footnote{Charles Altemose interview.}

\footnote{\textit{Bethlehem City Directory} (Bethlehem from 1915-1919), and \textit{Bethlehem Globe-times}, January 17, 1927.}
Several factors led to the decision to spend money, recruit players, hire coaches, and build a stadium for a soccer team. First and most importantly, Charles Schwab agreed to finance a team to improve employee relations. Bethlehem Steel had experienced a violent and protracted strike in 1910. Schwab underestimated the hostility of his workers to his decisions during the strike such as firing the workers' delegates, bringing in scabs, and using the police to maintain order. Schwab had been recognized long before the strike as a manager who was "in touch" with his workers. Shocked by the reactions of the workers to these policies, Schwab committed himself to working harder at employee relations. E.G. Grace, who was Schwab's primary assistant and went on to become president of the corporation, said in a speech in 1947, "We hear a lot about employee relations, properly so, and some of you younger fellows may be surprised to learn how much thinking and action there were on that subject by Mr. Schwab." Working on regaining his position as a concerned leader and rebuilding the morale of the workers, Schwab saw the soccer team as part of the process of unifying the workers for the good of the company. In sponsoring a team which would play a game that nearly all immigrant workers were familiar with and enjoyed watching,

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
Schwab created a focal point for his workers to rally around.\textsuperscript{51} He made sure that the team bore the name of the company. In this regard, the soccer team's development, along with the overall sports program, was a form of welfare capitalism.

Two other factors were considered in the creation of the team. The advertising value of the team was certainly one consideration. A world-class soccer team such as the Bethlehem Steel club helped the company and the city in getting their names in the public eye. Schwab was always cognizant of the public perception of his actions and decisions. He was very careful to foster a positive image of the corporation and of the city of Bethlehem.\textsuperscript{52} E.G. Grace said, "Today [1947] there is an emphasis, commendably so, on the subject of public relations. I submit that Mr. Schwab was the greatest public relations man that any company or any industry ever had."\textsuperscript{53} The magnitude of the soccer team to local businessmen as an advertising tool was seen in the concern of local business leaders. The *Bethlehem Globe-Times* reported, "Taking cognizance of the Bethlehem soccer team as a national and international advertising medium, Henry J. Mack, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and W.H. Scott, president of the South Side Businessmen's Association, urge local businessmen to lay

\textsuperscript{51} Brian Glanville details the development of soccer as one of the most popular European sports in *A Book of Soccer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 16 - 20.


aside all cares... in paying tribute to the national champions."54

Finally, the Lewis brothers were a factor in the impetus for the team’s beginning. Schwab was very careful to foster meaningful relationships with his management team. He constantly referred to upper management at Bethlehem Steel as his "boys." He expected complete loyalty and hard work from his managers, and in return he treated them very well with such perks as providing year-end bonuses based on profits [one of the first companies to do this], supporting a country club, and hosting expensive dinners.55 Thus, it is conceivable to see why Schwab was willing to grant the Lewis’ wish for a quality soccer team. In giving his blessing for the creation of a soccer team, Schwab appeased, rather inexpensively compared to some of his other incentives, the desires of two of his most important managers.56 The evidence for the Lewis’ involvement and importance to the soccer team was exemplified by their commitment to the cup competition Bethlehem Steel played for yearly. The teams that competed regularly for the soccer championship of America formed the American Soccer League in 1925. The Bethlehem Globe-Times reported, "The middle of February will see the first of the soccer cup competitions when the opening round in the American Soccer League cup is played. This affair is exclusively for members of the circuit, with the trophy to be annexed a beautiful cup donated by H.E. Lewis of this city."57 The

54 Bethlehem Globe-Times, December 30, 1926.


56 Interviews with Charles Altemose and William Elek.

57 Bethlehem Globe-Times, December 30, 1926.
paper also reports that on June 2, "H.E. Lewis tenders dinner to Bethlehem Steel soccer team at Hotel Bethlehem." Not to be outdone, R.A. Lewis donated the trophy that was given to the winner of the first division of the Lehigh Valley Soccer League for local competition. Welfare capitalism, advertising value, and rewarding of upper management were all factors in the decision made by Bethlehem Steel to sponsor a team in 1912.

The Bethlehem Steel soccer team got off to quick start in competition. In its second year, the team won the American Cup competition for 1913. Experienced European players were recruited to play for the team; the majority of the players were Scotch-Irish because of the connections that Billy Sheridan and William Stark had in the United Kingdom. The names of the players is evidence of their Scotch-Irish heritage. The following is the core group of the players that played for the Bethlehem Steel team from its inception through 1922:

James Campbell
William Duncan
John Ferguson
Thomas C.T. Fleming
Samuel S. Fletcher
William Forrest
George McKelvey
John Murphy
Thomas E. Murray
Frederick W. Pepper
Harry J.L. Ratican

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58 Bethlehem Globe-Times, January 1, 1926.
59 Charles Altemose interview.
60 Bethlehem Booster, July 1, 1918.
Charles Whitson

The team only carried twelve players, and since eleven players from each squad play at one time during a soccer game, it was important that a team have a durable group of excellent players. William Stark recruited first-class European players by offering them jobs in the steel plant and the opportunity to play a good deal of soccer. The players were given positions as sheet metal workers, printers, or machinists depending on their experience and skills. If they were lacking a skill, they were given jobs as laborers in the plant. It was common knowledge throughout the plant and Bethlehem itself that the soccer players were given easy assignments, called "gift jobs," and they only had to perform their duties during the morning. After lunch, the team gathered every day at the Bethlehem Steel field to practice for two to three hours. The soccer players main priority was not to their job at the plant, but rather to focus their efforts on being as well prepared as they could for soccer games.

In 1915, Bethlehem Steel placed an advertisement in the newspaper for the American Cup Championship game that was to be played in Bethlehem between the steel team and the New England states champions, Holyoke, Mass. The game was to take

61 Bethlehem Booster, August 15, 1918 lists the lineup for Bethlehem Steel. The Bethlehem Globe-Times confirms the names of the players in updated line-ups through 1922.
62 Charles Altemose interview.
63 Bethlehem City Directory, 1915 through 1922.
64 Interviews with Charles Altemose and Frank Gutshall.
place the following Saturday, and a general admission ticket cost twenty-five cents. In the same year, Bethlehem Steel had the first $1,000 gate for soccer in America. By 1918, the price of a ticket to a soccer game was fifty cents for the general public; employees of Bethlehem Steel could purchase a booster ticket from the company for $3.00 which allowed them to get into all soccer and baseball games. Children were able to buy a special ticket for fifty cents, in the shape of a blue sailor's hat, and enabled them to get into all games during the season. The team was still drawing crowds well into the thousands for most games despite the increase in prices. For games against heated rivals such as the New York Giants, the team drew crowds in excess of 10,000 fans. From 1912 to 1922, when the team was reorganized, games in Bethlehem drew crowds between 3,000 to 12,000 spectators. In 1918, Bethlehem Steel Corporation built a grandstand on their Bethlehem Steel Field (on the location that is now the football field for Moravian College) to accommodate the

65 Bethlehem Globe-Times, January 8, 1915.
67 Sam Foulds and Paul Harris, America's Soccer Heritage: A History of the Game (Manhattan Beach: Soccer for Americans, 1979), 80.
69 Charles Altemose interview.
70 Bethlehem Globe-Times, various articles.
growing crowds. As they continued to compete for the American and National cups, the Bethlehem fans not only supported the team in the Lehigh Valley, but they followed the team to away sites when they could. In 1920, for example, a group of three to four hundred fans went to Brooklyn on Easter to watch the team compete for the National Cup.

The reason people were willing to spend their money to see the Bethlehem Steel soccer team play was that they were rewarded with some of the best soccer ever played in the United States. The Bethlehem Steel soccer team was an exceptional sports team. As winners of the United States National Championship in soccer, the American Cup from 1915 to 1918, the team was able to travel to Europe to play the best teams. On a trip to Sweden and Denmark in 1919, they played a series of games against national teams from both countries that were considered among the best in Europe. In fourteen games, they played in front of 154,000 spectators, including the King of Sweden. Their record for the fourteen games was eight wins, two loses, and four ties. Overall, the team achieved the greatest record in the history of American Cup competition. Between 1913 and 1918, the Bethlehem team played in every cup finals. They won an astounding four of those five championship games. The "Bethlehem Booters" won the National Cup.

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three times in the same period.\textsuperscript{74} Somewhat similar to the American Cup, the National Cup was called "the premier competition in the country, all teams of any standing in practically every state take part in it."\textsuperscript{75} The people of Bethlehem appreciated the talented team that played in their hometown, and as a result, they were eager to support it.

The steel team was especially popular among the immigrant population. The immigrant families that settled in the area brought with them a love for sports, especially for soccer which was popular in Europe. The Slovaks, Hungarians, Germans, Irish, Mexicans, and Portuguese all played soccer in their home countries, and they brought their enthusiasm for the game with them to America.\textsuperscript{76} From 1916 onwards, the Bethlehem Globe-Times published weekly updates on the scores of soccer games from Europe for the benefit of the immigrant population.\textsuperscript{77} As the immigrant population increased, the number of people who wanted to play and watch soccer grew as well.

\textsuperscript{74} E.G. Gheen, "Sports," \textit{The Bethlehem Booster} 5 July 1, 1918, 12.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid. Competition for the National Cup was initiated in 1914 by a newly formed rival to the American Football Association, the United States Soccer Football Association. Bethlehem Steel competed for both cups. Sam Foulds and Paul Harris, \textit{America's Soccer Heritage: A History of the Game} (Manhattan Beach: Soccer for Americans, 1979), 32.


\textsuperscript{77} Bethlehem Globe-Times, various articles. November 26, 1917 issue has excellent example.
These immigrants made up a large portion of the crowds at the Bethlehem Steel games, and they quickly joined soccer leagues that were just beginning in the Bethlehem area. Immigrants were an important factor in promoting the play of soccer. Those who did not play the game themselves were often ardent supporters. They followed the steel team, and they formed clubs and associations, based on ethnicity, that in turn formed and financially supported soccer teams in popular local leagues. The scores from the home country were exciting for the immigrants, but they quickly transferred their enthusiasm and emotions for soccer to the teams and players located in the local community, and the best and most popular team was the Bethlehem Steel soccer team.

Soccer was also able to find a place in the hearts of natives. The Bethlehem Steel soccer team and its players generated additional enthusiasm for soccer among the locals by playing and living in the Bethlehem area. Charles "Chile" Altemose, who went on to play professional soccer for thirteen years in Philadelphia and New York and was a member of the United States' Olympic soccer team in 1936, remembers becoming interested in the game as kid because of watching the "steel team." Altemose says,

Charles Altemose and William Elek attended games throughout their childhoods in the twenties, and they can distinctly remember the setting of the spectators. The wealthy spectators sat in the grandstand; workers stood with their ethnic groups around the edge of the field or higher in the stands for games in Taylor Stadium at Lehigh. Lastly, the children watched from the ends of the field behind or next to the goalposts.

Charles Altemose interview. Supported by Bethlehem Globe-Times articles describing local teams and their composition.

William Elek interview.

Charles Altemose interview.
"We [children under 12] would pay fifty cents to get a blue hat at the beginning of soccer season. With the hat, we got into all soccer games, but we had to stand at one end of the field because the people who paid more money sat in the grandstand. We were in awe of the players for the steel team. They were so fast and good, and they got paid to play soccer! After school, we would hustle down to the steel field to watch the players practice in the afternoon. We would stand behind the net all day and just retrieve errant kicks for the players."\(^{82}\)

The steel players donated old balls and uniforms to boys who were the initial players for junior high school soccer teams. The steel players, in fact, officiated the junior games in their free time, and the young boys were inspired to show their true talents when these "local stars" were present. Young boys all over town were kicking tin cans or tennis balls, imitating their favorite players on the steel soccer team.\(^{83}\) With their talent on the field and their involvement in the community, the Bethlehem Steel soccer team generated interest in soccer among the native residents of Bethlehem in the teens and twenties.

The soccer team's popularity among all the residents of Bethlehem was exemplified by the coverage it received in the local newspaper. The team was, in many ways, the closest thing that people in Bethlehem had to achieving national recognition for local excellence. The local newspaper carried continuous updates on the status of the team. The paper reported that a mere week after the championship game with Holyoke in 1915 "the Bethlehem club had a strenuous two hours' practice yesterday."\(^{84}\) The

\(^{82}\) Ibid.

\(^{83}\) Interviews with Charles Altemose and William Elek.

\(^{84}\) Bethlehem Globe-Times, January 15, 1915.
paper gave the team front page coverage for the big games during the season. The following story was the lead of the entire Bethlehem Globe-Times newspaper on May 3, 1915:

"In a game that carried with it the championship of the United States, Bethlehem defeated Brooklyn Celtic in the national cup by a score of three to one. The contest was stage in Taylor stadium, Lehigh University, before seven thousand persons. Originally in the contest for this trophy, there were eighty-two teams from all over the country. The Bethlehem Steel company band of hundred pieces enlivened the occasion, and the 'movies' recorded the many sensational plays. The presentation of the trophy and gold watches will take place on Saturday June 5 in New York City."\(^{85}\)

The members of the team were local celebrities. The newspaper carried stories throughout the life of the team on the personal lives of the players. There were stories with headlines like "Tommy Murphy, Soccer Expert, Takes A Wife."\(^{86}\) Bill Carnihan, captain of the soccer team for much of the twenties, received a good deal of press. The Bethlehem Globe-Times wrote, "No more popular player than Bill ever booted the ball in this country. Always of athletic learning, and at one time a boxing aspirant with promise of fame, Carnihan hung up the padded mitts to devote his interest to soccer."\(^{87}\) Players who captured the spectators' hearts were followed throughout their career by the local media. Even players who had achieved a level of fame in Bethlehem but had moved elsewhere during their career were followed with much enthusiasm.\(^{88}\) Sam

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\(^{85}\) Bethlehem Globe-Times, May 3, 1915. Note: The picture on the following page is from the occasion.

\(^{86}\) Bethlehem Globe-Times, July 26, 1917.

\(^{87}\) Bethlehem Globe-Times, March 10, 1927.

\(^{88}\) Bethlehem Globe-Times, December 30, 1926.
Fletcher, for example, who played full back for the Bethlehem Steel soccer team, became manager of a Providence club in 1926, and the *Globe-Times* printed updates of his achievements with a number of "well-wishes" thrown in at the end of the articles.\(^9\)

The increase in the popularity of sports, including soccer, in the Bethlehem area was reflective of the increase experienced throughout the country in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The most popular sport at this time among the immigrant population, nationwide, was the one that they brought over from Europe, soccer. Sam Foulds and Paul Harris in their book, *America's Soccer Heritage*, write,

"Team games such as baseball and soccer had become the prime source of recreation for the younger men of the era. Baseball was the pastime of the native-born Americans and they played it from April until November in the populated areas of the East and Mid-West. Soccer was the sports outlet for the newly arrived immigrants.... who settled in great numbers in the mill towns, mining and steel communities, machine tool centers and shipbuilding districts."\(^{90}\)

In this regard, Bethlehem was not any different than other industrial towns in America in the first few decades of the twentieth century. The areas of settlement that were popular with the immigrants were also the areas where European sports like soccer thrived.

The best evidence of soccer's wide reaching popularity in America was the location of the teams that were able to field good soccer teams for their residents. There were two quality leagues in America in the first quarter of the twentieth century; one

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\(^9\) *Globe-Times*, December 30, 1926.

\(^{90}\) Sam Foulds and Paul Harris, *America's Soccer Heritage: A History of the Game* (Manhattan Beach: Soccer for Americans, 1979), 23.
centered around Chicago, and the other in the Northeast. However, because the level of play was even higher in the Northeast, that league drew in a number of talented midwest teams.\(^91\) Most of the teams that Bethlehem Steel played were located in medium sized industrial towns such as Bethlehem, and there were even some from larger industrial towns.\(^92\) The following is a list of cities which fielded teams that the Bethlehem Steel soccer team played in the 1910s and 1920s:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities With Teams Bethlehem F.C. Competed Against(^93)</th>
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<td>Baltimore</td>
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<td>Boston</td>
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<td>Springfield</td>
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The majority of the teams had corporate sponsors such as Bethlehem Steel. The names of these sponsors also indicates that they were located in industrial areas popular among

\(^91\) Ibid. The members of the league agreed to play each other on a regular basis under the auspices of the American Football [Soccer] Association. There was a third league formed on the West Coast, but it was very small and did not contain the quality of players found in the other leagues.

\(^92\) Bethlehem Globe-Times, various articles.

\(^93\) Bethlehem Globe-Times, December 23, 1926, and Foulks and Harris, America’s Soccer Heritage, and The Bethlehem Booster. This table contains teams that the steel team played at least once a year, but they often played outside teams, from America and abroad, if dates were open and the game was considered worthwhile.
immigrants; among the clubs were the Pawtucket J&P Coats, Indiana Flooring, and the New York Shipbuilding Company. Ethnic clubs sponsored a few teams; the Brooklyn Celtic team was among the most popular in the league. Soccer was thus popular in the areas where immigrants tended to settle.

The first half of the 1920s saw another surge in sports in Bethlehem. This surge would assist in bringing an end to world-class soccer in the area by propelling American sports into the mainstream of American culture. Frank Rauscher, who organized and played semiprofessional football in Hellertown and Bethlehem, remembers the twenties as a booming period in sports in the area. "People came from New York, Reading, and New Jersey to participate in and watch sports programs in Bethlehem. The city of Bethlehem was recognized by its larger neighbor, Allentown, and other towns as the premier sports town." This memory corresponds with the opinions of the sportswriters at the Bethlehem Globe-Times, and the articles and features in the newspaper reflected the development of sports programs in the community. In an editorial on sports, the Bethlehem Globe-Times wrote, "Bethlehem is recognized far and away as one of the premier sports communities in the country."

Several new American sports entered the athletic scene in Bethlehem in the twenties to join the old favorites like baseball and football. Bowling, for example, became quite popular as a participatory sport and, on occasion, as a spectator sport. The

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94 Ibid.
95 Frank Rauscher interview.
newspaper recorded daily updates of scores and league standings. A 1920 article reported, "To get an idea of the extensiveness of bowling in Bethlehem, one has but to note the activities of the following leagues: Bethlehem Steel Main Office, Lehigh Valley Clerks, Bethlehem Inter-department League, Rotarians, Bankers Association, Lehigh Fraternities League, and the Bethlehem Shipbuilders."\textsuperscript{97} While bowling was for the most part strictly a participatory sport, the \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times} noted that on February 25, 1925 "the Sokols, accompanied by a large crowd of rooters added many more when in the last game they pulled together and overcame the lead of their opponents, winning with plenty of pins to spare. The encouragement of their fans has inspired the Sokols to compete in next week’s competition."\textsuperscript{98} In addition to bowling, volleyball and tennis leagues appeared in Bethlehem between 1920 and 1925.\textsuperscript{99} Golf, swimming, and darts leagues, and high school wrestling all initiated programs in the early 1920s.\textsuperscript{100}

Basketball pushed its way to the top echelon of popular sports in Bethlehem in the twenties. Teams like the Temperance Society had been playing since the middle of the teens, but the addition of high school and collegiate basketball in the twenties increased recognition and understanding of the game by local citizens. The adult leagues

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, January 1, 1920.

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, February 25, 1920.

\textsuperscript{99} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, Volleyball - March 3, 1920; Tennis - May 7, 1925. The Saucon Valley Country Club, founded in 1920, provided an exclusive golf facility for company executives.

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, various articles.
in the area were very good; they were able to charge admission to the games at a time when basketball was not a popular national sport on the professional level.\textsuperscript{101} The Lehigh Valley Interscholastic Boys' Basketball League was formed in 1921, and Bethlehem High School was an initial member in the league with Slaton, Catasauqua, Tamaqua, Allentown, and Palmerton. The \textit{Globe-Times} reported that "the success which attended the formation and operation of the basketball league was practically instantaneous." A league was formed for girls a year later, and playing the same schools as the boys, they enjoyed moderate success.\textsuperscript{102} Lehigh University's basketball team was popular with the residents of Bethlehem who crowded into Taylor Gymnasium to watch the team play schools such as the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Toronto.\textsuperscript{103}

Far and away, the most popular sport for participants and spectators in the twenties in Bethlehem was baseball. Baseball was played on all levels from junior high schools through the semiprofessional level. In addition to the attention given to professional teams in the larger cities, there were a plethora of baseball leagues and teams springing up in Bethlehem in the early twenties. The high schools fielded strong teams, and Lehigh University put together some excellent teams throughout the decade that attracted hundreds of local residents to home games.\textsuperscript{104} The Lehigh University team

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, January 28, 1920. The prices ranged from 25 to 50 cents.

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, January 1, 1923.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, January 2, 1923. William Elek interview.

\textsuperscript{104} William Elek interview.
was talented and popular enough to charge fifty cents for admission to their games.\textsuperscript{105}  
The games of the Bethlehem Steel baseball club were the most popular among spectators;  
the various leagues in the city, such as the City League and the Church League, also  
drew crowds for their games.\textsuperscript{106}  
The Bethlehem Steel club, a semiprofessional team along the same lines as the soccer team, brought into town a number of players who had experience on the professional level. The \textit{Globe-Times} reported, "Relative to the signing of players, Manager Keady has lines out for quite a few diamond celebrities. Howard Lohr of Philadelphia, a ball player of big league calibre, was in the city on Saturday, and it is understood that before he left for his home he came to a satisfactory agreement to play with Bethlehem during the coming season. At present, he is the property of the Pittsburgh National League Club."\textsuperscript{107}  
Not a week later, the Bethlehem team was able to sign a star pitcher for the squad. The newspaper noted, "The latest acquisition is Jing Johnson of Athletic fame. Johnson has been of the mainstays of the Philadelphia Athletics for the last two years."\textsuperscript{108}  
The team played other baseball outfits from up and down the East Coast. They were crowd favorites in Bethlehem, and they always drew well -- in the three to eight hundred range -- for their home games.\textsuperscript{109}  

Leagues full of local baseball talent, such as the Industrial and Church leagues,  

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, May 15, 1930.  
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, various articles.  
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, March 8, 1920.  
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, March 12, 1920.  
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, various articles.
continually came on the sports scene in Bethlehem throughout the twenties.\textsuperscript{110} There were also a number of independent teams that played in the area. Advertisements were often listed in the newspaper announcing games between these independent teams who contacted each other and set up a game.\textsuperscript{111} One of the best leagues was the City League which was formed in 1925 with five teams. The teams represented a mix of fraternal and ethnic affiliations as indicated by their names: Young Men’s Italian Association, Knights of Pythia, Hellertown, Atlantic Athletic Association, Ruth Athletic Association, and Wydnor.\textsuperscript{112} The Knights of Pythia, like the other teams, were looking for the best talent to take the field as representatives of the club’s supporters. The Globe-Times reported, "In organizing their team they have scouted the city for players and have succeeded in signing some of the cream talent developed hereabouts."\textsuperscript{113}

Baseball’s popularity grew so fast that it raised concern among certain residents. There was such a deluge of baseball teams in the area by the end of 1925 that people worried about the quality of baseball in Bethlehem. Fred Nonnemacher, a sportswriter for the Bethlehem Globe-Times, wrote:

"Games played in Bethlehem are not receiving the support they should. Some argue that there are entirely too many clubs and that a division of the partisan fans is the cause of the sparse attendance. This is probably true to a certain extent. However, the close proximity of Bethlehem to cities where four major league clubs are fostered is believed to be more

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110} Bethlehem Globe-Times, March 24, 1920 and July 8, 1925.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Bethlehem Globe-Times, March 9, 1925.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Bethlehem Globe-Times, May 9, 1925.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Bethlehem Globe-Times, May 16, 1925.
\end{itemize}
directly responsible for small attendance. Local fans are spoiled in seeing these big league games even though some are far more ragged than the games played on the local lots. Interest in the National pastime, at this time, insofar as local fans are concerned, seems to be centered on whether or not the Philadelphia Athletics will win the pennant or not. College baseball might also be attributed as causing a lack of interest. By the time the college season ends some fans are pretty well fed up with the National pastime. Whatever the cause, interest in local ball playing clans seems to be on the decline instead of increase. \textsuperscript{114}

Baseball, not only survived the winter of 1925 in Bethlehem, but it went onto flourish in the area for many years as the leagues and teams were supplemented with new talent and enthusiasm from immigrants.

Baseball grew more popular, in part, because the immigrant groups who traditionally played soccer began to turn their attention towards baseball in the twenties. The Young Men's Italian Association involvement in the league is a prime example of the shift in focus. Before 1925, this association's involvement in community sports was limited to sponsoring a soccer team, but as the members' priorities changed so did the teams they fielded. \textsuperscript{115} The Catholic Baseball League was formed in 1925, and it contained a number of ethnically-orientated teams. The following are the six teams that participated in the Catholic league in 1925:

- Caseys
- Hungaria Catholic Club
- St. Stanislaus
- Center Catholic Club
- SS. Peter & Paul
- Holy Rosary \textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{114} Bethlehem Globe-Times, June 16, 1925.

\textsuperscript{115} Bethlehem Globe-Times, April 7, 1925.

\textsuperscript{116} Bethlehem Globe-Times, May 6, 1933.
Churches, which were often sponsors of athletic teams, fielded teams that were dominated by the particular ethnic group of the church. Churches on the South Side, that traditionally served distinct ethnic groups fond of soccer, started forming baseball teams. Holy Infancy Roman Catholic Church on East Fourth Street on the South Side was the traditional parish of the Irish and later the Spanish and Portuguese, and SS. Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church was the parish church for the Slovak community. These institutions, representing the wishes of their constituents, formed baseball teams, not soccer teams, in the twenties. Until the mid-twenties, immigrant young men played soccer in the local leagues and watched the Bethlehem Steel soccer team. Now, they focused their energies on a truly American pastime - baseball.

The involvement of immigrants in American sports was not limited to baseball. Basketball and football also caught the attention of the immigrant residents and their children. The Sokol Club, a Slovakian athletic organization, fielded a very strong basketball team from the mid-twenties onwards. Their team was made up entirely of Slovakian residents. The following is the starting line-up for the 1926 Sokol team:

Forward ..... Krajdl
Forward ..... Krivnak
Center ..... Kresge
Guard ..... Fidmik
Guard ..... Wissaljisky

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118 Bethlehem Globe-Times, December 29, 1926.
The Sokols played other ethnic groups that formed basketball teams such as the Hungarians, Italians, and Irish. In football, the local high school began to see an increase in the number of second generation immigrants coming out for the team. Bethlehem Catholic High School, which served the ethnic communities in the area, fielded football teams in the twenties with primarily second generation immigrants. Frank Rauscher, who organized a semiprofessional football league, distinctly remembers more immigrants coming out for teams in the late twenties and early thirties.

As in the teens, Bethlehem's involvement in sports was reflective of the changes occurring across the country. The nation experienced an increase in the popularity of American sports in the twenties. The increase in the popularity of basketball in Bethlehem, as a spectator sport, mirrored the growth of the sport nationwide. In Munice, Indiana, Robert and Helen Lynd reported that in 1924 "during the height of the basketball season when all the cities and towns are fighting for the state championship amidst the delirious backing of the rival citizens, the dominance of this sport is as all-pervasive as football in a college like Dartmouth or Princeton." Baseball leagues were formed all over the country as young men rushed in eager to participate in this

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119 Bethlehem Globe-Times, various articles.
120 Joseph Whitenour interview.
121 Frank Rauscher interview.
122 Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown: A Study in American Culture (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929), 213. The Lynds also reported that despite persistent efforts to cut city expenditures, the city council voted to spend $100,000 in 1923 for a new gymnasium for the high school basketball team. (p.284)
popular American sport.\footnote{123} It was also in this decade that the National Football League was launched, although virtually no franchises made money during the decade. Professional teams became immensely popular as radio brought the game into people's homes. People around the country followed the results of their favorite team eagerly in the daily newspapers.\footnote{124} The effect of this increase in American sports in the twenties was that certain sports, especially baseball, became ingrained in the American culture. Part of being "an American" was playing or following baseball.

As baseball, basketball, and other American sports grew in popularity in the twenties, soccer headed in the opposite direction. In 1926, the steel soccer team played one of the best soccer teams in the country, Philadelphia Football Club, on Christmas, and they were still charging fifty cents at that time for general admission. The newspaper estimated that under one thousand spectators came to the game.\footnote{125} In a year when the team captured another national championship, the attendance at homes games was generally in the hundreds, and it never exceeded 1,200 spectators.\footnote{126} Increasingly as the twenties progressed, the residents of Bethlehem had a growing selection of athletic events on which to spend their money. Sports that were evolving in the teens and early twenties were established by 1925 with teams, leagues, and eager followers among the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[124]{Interviews with Frank Gutshall and Joseph Whitenour.}
\footnotetext[125]{\textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, December 27, 1926.}
\footnotetext[126]{\textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, December 23, 1926 and December 27, 1926.}
\end{footnotes}
constituents. There were basketball, football, and baseball games being played in Bethlehem that could be classified as excellent semiprofessional competition. None of the teams competing in their respective sports were of a comparative talent of the soccer team, yet they captured the attention and support of the residents. The soccer team with all this competition for the money and time of spectators was failing by the mid-twenties to retain the enthusiasm of the Bethlehemites.

The team experienced its first major change in structure in 1922. In that year, a dispute over whether the team should join the newly created American Soccer League and the ability of aging players lead the managers to revamp the whole team. When they were done "clearing house," there was only one player left from the previous year’s squad.\textsuperscript{127} Early in 1923, the \textit{Globe-Times} reported, "On Saturday afternoon on the Bethlehem Steel Field, Whitey Fleming, Jock Ferguson and a host of other former Bethlehem F.C. players will display their wares for their new team, J & P Coats of Pawtucket, R.I. To the leaving of these players is attributed the present status of the Bethlehem F.C. which was compelled to completely reorganize and is experiencing trouble in striking their former championship stride."\textsuperscript{128} The team found their winning ways again in the 1925 season, when they signed some new players for the squad. Stepping outside their traditional pool of talent, the team hired players who were not of Scotch-Irish background, including a goalie from Ireland, a defensive back from Norway,

\textsuperscript{127} Sam Foulds and Paul Harris, \textit{America’s Soccer Heritage: A History of the Game} (Manhattan Beach: Soccer for Americans, 1979), 40. \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, October 2, 1922.

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, January 2, 1923.
and a few players from South America.\textsuperscript{129} Bethlehem continued to compete for the National and American cups, and they eventually joined the American Soccer League in 1925. With the new influx of talent, the team won the league title, the Lewis Cup, in 1925 and 1926.\textsuperscript{130}

Even with the quality of play remaining high, attendance and support of the soccer team spiraled downward throughout the twenties. The general reason given for the folding of the Bethlehem Steel soccer team was the onset of the Depression. In 1930, management at the plant was no longer willing to tolerate workers with easy jobs who did not work for over one-half of the day, everyday.\textsuperscript{131} While the Depression was certainly a factor, the team was losing fan support long before 1930, and the company did not appreciate spending money on a team that was not receiving support. As early as 1919, the newspaper was bemoaning the lack of support for the team. An article from 1919 says, "A mere handful of soccer fans, a crowd not near befitting the excellent reputation established by the Steel Workers, were gathered on the field Saturday afternoon. A good many sports followers apparently do not realize the importance of the honors garnered by the Steel Workers who are American Champions."\textsuperscript{132} The team rebounded from this early dip in attendance, and it was getting crowds in the thousands in the early twenties, but by 1925, the attendance records had turned for the worse.

\textsuperscript{129} Bethlehem Globe-Times, May 12, 1925.


\textsuperscript{131} Bethlehem Globe-Times, May 17, 1930. Interviews with Charles Altemose and William Elek.

\textsuperscript{132} Bethlehem Globe-Times, December 29, 1919.
permanently. Attendance at the games from 1925 until 1930 averaged well below 500 fans, and the attendance at only one game was recorded above 1,000 spectators; this was not even close to the 4,000 to 12,000 spectators the team saw at big games in the 1910s. And, those attendance numbers were generated when the population of the town was roughly 20,000 inhabitants smaller. By 1930, the Bethlehem Steel Corporation was no longer willing to accept such weak support of the team, and with the Depression growing, they had ample reasons to fold the soccer team.

The problems of the Bethlehem Steel soccer team were not unique. Soccer teams across the country felt the loss of support in the twenties. In 1926 the Springfield soccer team was forced to withdraw from the American Soccer League because of "slim patronage" and poor attendance. Industrial towns across the country that supported soccer teams were beginning to experience weak attendance levels. If teams were fortunate enough to avoid folding, they often had to combine operations in a cost saving maneuver as the Pawtucket and Providence franchises did in 1928. In Bethlehem, those who remained loyal to the steel team were forced to plead with members of the community to attend games. An article in the Globe-Times from the end of December in 1926 was entitled "Lay Aside Cares To Attend Soccer Game!" Fred Nonnemacher, a sportswriter for the Globe, in what could be considered a sports editorial wrote,

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133 Bethlehem Globe-Times, December 27, 1926.
134 Bethlehem Globe-Times, December 29, 1926.
135 Sam Foulds and Paul Harris, America's Soccer Heritage: A History of the Game (Manhattan Beach: Soccer for Americans, 1979), 43.
"It pays to advertise. One of the chief functions of the Chambers of Commerce is to keep the names of their cities they represent before the American public. To do that some spend a raft of money. Bethlehem has an institution that has not only contributed in keeping the name of Bethlehem before the public but its fame has invaded foreign shores. Bethlehem soccer is known wherever soccer is played, and it is hard to find a country where the booting game isn't popular. It is honestly said that the soccer team has not received the proper recognition and support it deserves. The team is taken as a matter of fact. The merchants owe soccer something and that something asked for is very little -- it is to encourage the players with moral support by attendance at the games."\textsuperscript{136}

Unfortunately, the merchants’ enthusiasm and support was not enough to overcome the lack of concern and interest among the residents of Bethlehem.

After the soccer team folded, the 1930s saw the shift towards American sports tightened and reinforced. The popularity of high school football and basketball, as both participatory and spectator sports, increased immensely towards the end of the twenties, and it was even greater in the thirties. Basketball became so popular that fifteen teams organized a second, "B" league, and many of the local immigrants found positions on these teams.\textsuperscript{137} Baseball was called the "national pastime" for a good reason. A large portion of the nation enjoyed playing and watching it above all other sports, and Bethlehem was no exception. On a beautiful day in July, 1927, the \textit{Globe-Times} reported, "Fair weather contributed to the preponderance of outdoor sports and recreation in Bethlehem over the week-end. Baseball games were in the majority, practically every field in and near Bethlehem being utilized for the national pastime."\textsuperscript{138} The article

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, December 30, 1926.

\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, January 12, 1934.

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, July 5, 1927.
went on to list all the other activities in Bethlehem, such as golf, tennis, and football, but there was not a single mention of a soccer game anywhere in the region.

In the early thirties, Lehigh University was charging fifty cents to see their baseball team, and they drew crowds of close to five hundred spectators.\textsuperscript{139} The professional baseball teams in the big cities became even more popular. The Lehigh Valley Railroad advertised weekly specials into New York to watch the Yankees play.\textsuperscript{140} The shift towards American sports is highlighted by the games skilled athletes turned to in the thirties. The \textit{Globe-Times} reported, "Many of the old-timers remember that Jimmy Wilson, recently signed by the Philadelphia National League baseball club, played soccer with the Bethlehem Steel team in this city but they apparently did not know that James turned down a big league baseball contract in his youth preferring to play soccer."\textsuperscript{141} By the thirties, athletes like Jimmy Wilson realized that money and fan support were located in popular sports like baseball and not soccer.

Above all others, the rising sport of the thirties for the residents of Bethlehem was football. This contact sport had been in Bethlehem for at least forty years with the play of Lehigh University and a couple of semiprofessional teams dominating the scene, but it was during the thirties that football jumped in popularity, especially among the younger people. Lehigh University drew over ten thousand people to football games for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{139} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, May 30, 1915.
\item \textsuperscript{140} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, June 3, 1933.
\item \textsuperscript{141} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, January 5, 1934.
\end{itemize}
noted rivals such as Lafayette College.\textsuperscript{142} High school football also became a major spectator sport in the thirties. Joe Whritenour, who became a writer for the \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, remembers that the "whole town would be a buzz" with excitement over upcoming high school football games.\textsuperscript{143} In 1929, the school board, motivated by the growing crowds at games, voted to erect a stadium at Liberty [Bethlehem] High School that could accommodate at least 20,000 spectators.\textsuperscript{144} Liberty's sport receipts totaled just over $18,000 for the 1931-32 season with the clear majority of this money coming from the football games. The amount was the largest of any sports club in Bethlehem in the thirties, except for Lehigh University's income from football.\textsuperscript{145} Playing at Lehigh University before their new stadium was built, the Liberty High football team drew 11,000 plus for its 1938 game with Easton. Close to 12,000 came a month later in terrible weather to watch Liberty defeat their archrivals Allentown High School.\textsuperscript{146} These games were large draws in part because the competition was so close by that it was possible for a large percentage of the crowd to come from towns other than Bethlehem, but football on average during the thirties was taking in between $15,000 and $25,000 before expenses.\textsuperscript{147} This would indicate that the team was receiving

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{142} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, various articles.
\item \textsuperscript{143} Joseph Whritenour interview.
\item \textsuperscript{144} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, December 31, 1929.
\item \textsuperscript{145} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, May 12, 1933.
\item \textsuperscript{146} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, November 25, 1938.
\item \textsuperscript{147} \textit{Bethlehem Globe-Times}, various articles between 1933 - 1940.
\end{itemize}
tremendous support from the local residents including the immigrant population.

Despite the dominance of American sports, soccer did not disappear entirely with the loss of the Bethlehem Steel soccer team. It remained in Bethlehem after 1930 because of the local leagues which had been in existence in Bethlehem from the late teens through the thirties. A report from 1919 indicates that "30,000 fans attended twenty-seven games played by the four representative teams of the city," in Saucon Park. The report said that there were also 103 junior games played in the park with over 1,200 youngsters participating in the games."148 Teams with names like North Ends, Smokers Paradise, Fairviews, and Temperance Society competed in the park under the auspices of the Bethlehem and District Soccer League, and as indicated by the attendance numbers, their play was popular with the residents of Bethlehem.149 The Wilbur and Lewis Cups were given to the winners of the senior and junior divisions respectively.150 The players in the league believed they were presenting games as good as the professional boys. The *Globe-Times* reported in 1923:

"A number of players from the North Ends and the Wanderers [a recent addition to league] were spectators at the game on the Steel Field on Saturday afternoon and at the conclusion of the contest, one of the local players ventured the opinion that the pick of these two minor aggregations could give the big Bethlehem F.C. all they could handle. He believed that the youngsters, all native born and developed on the sandlots in this city, would be able to emerge victorious."151

151 *Bethlehem Globe-Times*, January 1, 1923.
By 1927, there were at least three soccer leagues in Bethlehem; the most popular with the fans and the one containing the most talent was the Lehigh Valley Soccer League which had twenty-two teams split evenly into first and second divisions.¹⁵²

A large portion of the soccer that survived in Bethlehem in the thirties, via the local leagues, was carried on by pockets of ethnic groups in the city. The names of the teams was indicative of their support base. There were two from the North Side of Bethlehem that were supported by athletic clubs, such as the Monocacy Indians, who along with supporting baseball and football teams, still had enough soccer enthusiasts to field a team. Many of the players competing for these teams were young men who became interested in soccer as children by watching the Bethlehem Steel soccer team. These clubs had a mixed membership. Nearly all the members were native Americans, but they came from different ancestries such as Pennsylvania Dutch, Irish, and German. There were also two teams in the league from Reading and four teams from Allentown. Of these six teams, half were ethnically affiliated such as the Hibernian Club (Irish) in Allentown. From Bethlehem, there was also a Hungaria Sports Club, German Athletic Club (A.C.), Sokol A.C., Portuguese A.C., an Irish club, and two Spanish-Mexican teams.¹⁵³ These athletic clubs were part of ethnic-oriented social clubs bearing the same name. Members of these clubs were all of the same ethnic group, and the majority


¹⁵³ Interview with Charles Altemose and verified with league standings published in Bethlehem Globe-Times.
of them were first or second generation immigrants.\textsuperscript{154}

The change in the league between its early days and the thirties was the make-up of the actual teams. While ethnic clubs supported a host of teams, they no longer had the interest among the younger generation to field a team with representatives of their own heritage. In essence, the teams held an amateur status but with incentives. The club members supported the team by providing money for uniforms, rides to the games, and an invitation to a "keg and food" party after the game. Sometimes after the game, the supporters would "pass the hat" and collect a few dollars for each player. The most noticeable display of support by the members was their attendance at the games.\textsuperscript{155} In the 1930s, the teams were never made up entirely of players from the ethnic group of the sponsors. Kelly Gutshall, a Pennsylvania Dutch by ancestry, was playing soccer at Muhlenberg College, and though he made no contact with the Portuguese or even knew any Portuguese residents by name in Bethlehem, he was recruited along with other members of his college team to play for the Portuguese A.C.\textsuperscript{156} Chile Altemose remembers playing for the Hungarian S.C. in 1931. His teammates included: five Hungarians, two Mexicans, one Portuguese, one Russian, while the rest were "natives of the U.S."\textsuperscript{157} Membership in the social clubs was strictly limited to those of the


\textsuperscript{155} Interviews with Charles Altemose, Frank Gutshall, and Manuel Palos.

\textsuperscript{156} Frank Gutshall interview.

\textsuperscript{157} Charles Altemose interview.
same ethnic heritage, but the rule for their soccer teams was that the best talent available, regardless of ethnicity, played for the team. This "rule" was instigated in most ethnic clubs in the thirties as it became increasingly difficult to find enough young men within the club to field a team. Bill Elek was manager of the Hungaria Sport Club in the thirties, and he remembers spending days going around the city scouting talent for the team. He says, "It was difficult to put together an all-Hungarian soccer team. Many of our boys were playing in baseball leagues and doing other things, and since our members wanted a soccer team to represent them, we looked for players elsewhere."\(^{158}\) In the early years, 1919-1924, club managers did not travel around searching out talent. There was enough interest and enthusiasm among the young men of the club to put together a team, but lack of interest among those of playing age progressively forced clubs to field teams with a diverse line-up.\(^ {159}\)

The popularity of soccer might have curtailed in the thirties, but those who still enjoyed the game were very enthusiastic. The make-up of the teams was increasingly diversified, but the supporters of the each individual team were unilaterally of one ethnic heritage. As a result, feelings often ran high about the outcomes of the games. There was a noticeable degree of ethnic hostility in Bethlehem in the twenties and thirties.\(^ {160}\) There were over ten thousand workers at Bethlehem Steel, during this time, representing

\(^{158}\) William Elek interview.

\(^{159}\) Interviews with William Elek and Manuel Palos.

\(^{160}\) Frank Gutshall interview.
fifty-eight different nationalities.\textsuperscript{161} The residents of Bethlehem often harbored hostilities for one another based on their relationship at work, and it was common knowledge that promotion and job security at the plant were frequently tied to ethnicity.\textsuperscript{162} Bethlehem Steel, in order to control the workforce and to discourage unionization efforts, fostered rivalries between national groups.\textsuperscript{163} Mike Stofko, a Hungarian employee at the plant says,

"On bull gangs they'd mix the nationalities to keep you in line. You got there in the morning before work and the Italians would be off in one corner talking among themselves. The Slavs would be all together talking among themselves in their language. The Dutch in another. The Dutch always got to be leaders, because they were around longer, I guess. They hated us. We hated them. They'd split us up and drive us, drive us hard all day. Called us 'Hunks' and stuff like that."\textsuperscript{164}

Bethlehem was a city that contained many communities within its geographic borders, and in the drive for preservation and betterment, the members of these communities often saw different ethnic groups as threatening and restrictive to their well-being.

These hostilities spilled onto the athletic fields with one's club team playing for the honor and dignity of the group. When the Portuguese and Mexican teams played, for example, there was always a fight at the end of the game.\textsuperscript{165} One of the reasons

\textsuperscript{161} Bethlehem Booster, 1919.
\textsuperscript{162} Manuel Palos interview.
\textsuperscript{165} Manuel Palos interview.
for the hostility displayed at the soccer games was that both ethnic groups were working in some of the most difficult jobs at the plant, such as the Coke Works, and there was competition to move up in the company. Such extremes were fortunately not very frequent, but there was, at most games involving a club representing an immigrant group, a level of tension and ethnic pride over the results. This in part explains why ethnic associations supported teams into the thirties. The athletic contests provided an additional outlet in the constant defense of one's heritage.

While many immigrants and their children were busy pursuing new American habits and sports as time progressed, they still cared about their ethnicity. The activities of their individual ethnic group were still very much a part of immigrants' lives. The pull of American pursuits and the feeling of commitment to their heritage was not a conflict in most of the immigrants, and especially their children's, lives. Gradually, the American pursuits began to outweigh the ethnic ties, but it was a process of change that developed slowly. It, therefore, demanded that the immigrants balance two different facets in their life. They did not abandon their heritage for the sake of being a "truer Americans." They often had to chose as time went on which sports to compete in and watch, and their involvement in basketball and baseball leagues shows that they steadily began to favor American sports more frequently. But, they still attended soccer games because they were proud of their ethnicity and its customs and traditions. It was a reflection of the pace of the process of social change that immigrants and their children

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166 Manuel Palos interview. This view of competition among workers is also seen in Charles Rumford Walker's book, Steel: The Diary of a Furnace Worker (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922).
had their ties to both their ethnic heritage and the American culture. There was not a conflict between pursuing American sports for their own pleasure, as well as a sense of participating in being American, and rooting for their individual ethnic associations’ soccer team. One was a reflection of where they were going in life; the other was a sign of respect for their heritage and their history.

The reality of the situation was that soccer was declining as a primary sport for the community from the mid-twenties onwards. One of the best examples of the decline of European sports such as soccer was the Hungaria Sports Club’s attempt to field a semiprofessional team. In 1938, the Hungaria Sports Club, building on its impressive success in the Lehigh Valley Soccer League over the previous few years, sought and received permission to enter the American Soccer League. When it was competing in the local soccer league, the team consistently drew crowds well into the hundreds. In the American Soccer League, the team played soccer teams from Massachusetts to Chicago to Baltimore. A number of the teams that Bethlehem Steel played in the teens and twenties were still playing, and the league was considered the best competition in America. In April, one month after signing up for the league, the Hungarians won the National Cup which was still a prominent accomplishment in soccer. But they could not hold public support; on January 2, 1939, less than a year after joining the league, the

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167 Interviews with William Elek and Manuel Palos.


169 Bethlehem Globe-Times, April 11, 1938.
Globe-Times reported:

"Tommy Bellew active as manager of the Bethlehem Hungaria soccer team confided to the writer that unless the game played at Monocacy field this afternoon grosses $100 or better Bethlehem will no longer be represented in the major league. Bellew also confided that in not a single game this season did the club make the necessary overhead when teams visited here but was hopeful that interest would be revived as the season progressed to make it possible to continue as a member of the American Soccer League."\(^{170}\)

The Hungaria soccer team was no longer in existence one year later. The only mention of the Hungaria Sport Club in the newspaper was the publication of its baseball teams' results in the Catholic League.\(^{171}\)

The inability to raise $100 for a soccer game was accentuated by the rising incomes of other local sports. The Hungarians had a team that had all Bethlehem residents playing for it, and the make-up of the team seemed to reflect the structure of the general populous with some natives, some Hungarians, a few Spanish, and a couple of Slovaks. It seems plausible given the history of soccer in Bethlehem and the make-up of the Hungarian team that raising $100 would be relatively easy. Bill Elek remembers the confidence the Hungarians had when the club first entered the American Soccer League. "We felt the team was popular enough in Bethlehem that if we could just win a few games, everything would be alright. As it turned out, winning the championship was not enough."\(^{172}\)

The problem for the Hungarian soccer team was the emotion involving the

\(^{170}\) Bethlehem Globe-Times, January 2, 1939.

\(^{171}\) Bethlehem Globe-Times, January 5, 1940.

\(^{172}\) William Elek interview.
competition and the targeted audience. When the team competed in the local league against inferior competition compared to the teams in American Soccer League, they drew appreciable crowds for the games. The Hungarian team had reasonable crowds for its games in the local league because they were competing against teams of a distinct ethnic origin who also lived in Bethlehem. There were emotions and feelings to show the strength, if not superiority, of the Hungarians over the other residents of Bethlehem.\textsuperscript{173} In the American Soccer League competition, the Hungarians not only needed revenues but they needed the support of a larger section of the community above and beyond those who shared in their Hungarian heritage. The ethnic subcommunities generated interest among their members for games against local ethnic competition, but the community of Bethlehem as a whole was no longer interested in supporting a "major league" soccer team. Bethlehem's interest and money had shifted to more American pursuits.

Social and cultural change is a process, and it occurs gradually over time. Immigrants and their children maintained emotional ties to their ethnic heritage, but they were being pulled, throughout the twenties and thirties, into the mainstream of American society. They had a security blanket in their ethnic subcommunity - a feeling of comfort and belonging. They also had the wonderful world of America in front of them containing money, land, and social acceptance. Ross Yates, in speaking specifically about Bethlehem, said, "Among the immigrants, ethnic pride and the American dream clashed .... Faced with an American culture which was alien to them, and forced to live

\textsuperscript{173} Interviews with William Elek and Manuel Palos.
with neighbors of other national origins, the immigrants from a foreign land could not help but cherish that which was undeniably theirs. And yet, they had supposedly given up the country of their birth in order to be Americans .... America, too, was inescapably theirs! Straddled between two arenas, they were increasingly being Americanized, as Cohen says, through mass culture such as radio. In this natural progression, they were attracted towards American sports. The resulting effect of this movement was a decline in the popularity of the sports of their heritage such as soccer, and accounts in good measure for the demise of the Bethlehem Steel soccer team.

With the growth of options in sports in the teens and the early twenties, the immigrants made choices about their leisure time, money, and ethnic identity. The Bethlehem soccer team was the best professional soccer team in America. For a time, the residents chose to allocate their time and money to following the soccer team. As their assimilation into American culture grew, they gradually began to chose American sports such as baseball, football, and basketball. While immigrants and their descendants displayed interest in the outcome of their ethnic associations’ teams because of their pride, they were eagerly pursuing American sports. Andrei Markovits, while too early in his projection of the demise of soccer, is correct in saying the sport was rejected in the United States because of the development of sports considered more in accordance

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with the national culture of the New World. Soccer remained popular until the 1920s, but the involvement in American sports, especially among ethnic associations, indicates that they were extremely popular throughout the city by the late twenties. As immigrants of all nationalities and American natives watched and played these sports, they came together as a community. Sports in Bethlehem in the period between the world wars was a social barometer. Diverse ethnic groups came together as a symbolic community as they pursued American sports at the cost of a dying interest in soccer.

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Vita

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