

Summary of Thesis

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This dissertation provides original contributions to the field of sport history at the nexus of place, space, and cultural identity. It brings together urban history, migration studies, and local community histories to understand cultural relationships in a dynamic and understudied city. Two questions for the foundation for this project. The first asks how the existing geography and urban layout framed the emergence of local sport and physical culture clubs. That inquiry naturally facilitated a follow-up question, namely: how, then, did the presence of ethnic sport and social clubs shape the physical and cultural evolution of the city?

The development of sport and urban centers in metropolises across the United States, such as New York City, Chicago, Boston, and New Orleans, have been afforded substantial realms within sport literature. Literature on smaller industrial areas, which emerged concurrent with the advent of increased transportation networks across the Great Lakes in the form of canals and railways, has been comparatively light. Roy Rosenzweig addressed that concern in his work on the labor history of immigrants in Worcester, Massachusetts, when he claimed, “the evidence from one-medium sized city can only resolve these questions in tentative ways.” He did, however, provide a caveat that if reliable data could be elicited from comparable cities, scholars could draw grander conclusions about sport, immigration, and cultural synthesis across the United States. I argue that Rochester fits the requirements for Rosenzweig’s plea for a comparable city. Therefore, this work acts both as a continuation of prominent sport and urban historians (Reiss, Hardy, and Rosenzweig) and as a novel entry within sport studies.