ACCUMULATION TO SPECULATION:
THE CAREERS OF LEVI
AND JOSEPH LEITER
1865--1932

by
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of the requirements for the BA-MA
Program in History

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INTRODUCTION

During the last half of the nineteenth century in America a class of men developed who took advantage of new areas of investment and amassed huge fortunes. Later historians such as Matthew Josephson and Charles A. Beard tagged these men "robber barons" and they became important figures in the development of American business after the Civil War. The "robber barons"-- men such as John D. Rockefeller, the oil king, and Philip Armour, the meat packer-- have been studied by many authors. The wealthy men of the second half of the nineteenth century shared a number of characteristics as they made a spectacular success in business circles and in the social world as well.

Several of these common traits concerned the "robber barons" before they made their millions. Nearly all were "Yankees" from New England. J. P. Morgan, the great banker, and Collis Huntington, the railroad builder, could trace their ancestors to small villages on the Eastern seaboard. These men were also born before 1840, making them all old enough to have served in the Civil War. Yet few of the "robber barons" ever saw the battlefields. Those eligible for service bought substitutes to fight in their places, while they stayed at home and made money by selling supplies to the Union Army.

After the "robber barons" had made their money, they all
looked for dazzling settings to display it. The result was often a huge mansion such as the Chicago home of Potter Palmer, a wealthy merchant. He spent over one million dollars on the construction of his mansion on Lake Shore Drive, then filled it with stained glass and mahogany paneling. Often the contents of these American palaces included rare literary and art collections. The "robber barons" used their millions to purchase old books and paintings, such as the original "Leaves of Grass" which J. P. Morgan bought for his collection. Of course some of the wealth found its way to charity. The "robber barons" donated church bells and steeples, organs and Sunday School books, as they gave to the charities of their choice. Charity ranked second on their list of priorities, more important was the regal lifestyle these rich men provided for themselves and their families. This was another trait they shared. It was not enough to just have the money, they had to use it to enhance their social lives.

European travel lured the wealthy families and their dollars across the Atlantic, where wives and daughters toured palaces and museums, and frequently strolled through the art galleries in search of pieces to ship back to America. Much travel time was spent on searching for marriageable titled nobility. The addition of a title to a woman's name lent a special status to the family. The famous "transatlantic" marriages during the last half of the nineteenth century were very much a part of the "robber barons" and their social lives. The most famous of these marriages took place in 1895, when
Consuelo Vanderbilt married the Ninth Duke of Marlborough. While the "robber barons" possessed these characteristics as a group, they did not share a common method in obtaining their fortunes. Each man was an individual, who with his foresight and careful planning found a way to make millions of dollars in the business world. Some men made their fortunes in oil, while others worked exclusively in railroading or meat packing. Different businesses required distinct business tactics. "They have usually been treated as a class. Yet all were men of devout and adamantive individualism..." These "robber barons" spent their money on like things and lived in the same style, but each man found his own way to success through the new business opportunities available to him after the Civil War.

Chicago had its share of "robber barons" during this time period. Cyrus McCormick, Potter Palmer and Marshall Field became legendary figures in Chicago history. Levi Z. Leiter, though not as well known as the others today, was another member of Chicago's millionaire set after the Civil War. Leiter, the co-founder of the present Marshall Field department store, exhibited the business and social customs of his time. His career from 1865 to the turn of the century reflected the growth of American business, just as his home life revealed prevailing social patterns.

Joseph Leiter, Levi's eldest child and only son, followed his father into the business world. By the time that Joseph entered his father's firm around 1900, he faced new problems
which he and the other sons of the "robber barons" had to solve. As such a son, Joseph Leiter was also in a new class of people. Many of these men failed to live up to parental expectations. The fathers allowed their sons to lead carefree lives and then expected them to live up to their fathers' standards. Sometimes the sons were talented in business, but often they were drifting spendthrifts.¹¹

A comparison of the careers of Levi and Joseph Leiter reveals some differences in methods as well as personality. These differences resulted from the changes in the American business community from 1865 when Levi began his career to 1932 when Joseph ended his career. The world that Levi Leiter knew as a "robber baron" was very different from the world of Joseph Leiter the modern businessman. Levi died in 1904, before the labor unions had successfully gained power and before business was shaken by the Depression.¹² Joseph died in 1932, long after the unions had gained strength and after the country had experienced an economic decline.

The lives of these men show the evolution of American business as the great fortune holders of the nineteenth century gave way to their heirs of the twentieth century. The "robber barons" made millions for their sons to retain, but the cautious investor of the Gilded Age gave way to the later speculator. The constant element in both their lives is a tremendous energy and a spirit of independence. Levi and Joseph Leiter faced new problems with the philosophies and methods of their own times. Levi lived the life of a typical "robber baron" while
Joseph strutted as one of the new generation of wealth.
Levi made slow, steady progress in business; Joseph flashed through the business world in a series of daring gambles.
Yet each man was faithful to the philosophy of his time.
America had simply grown up, and the patterns of the twentieth century were substituted for earlier ways.
PART I. LEVI LEITER

Levi Z. Leiter, the "robber baron", was born in a "square two-story red brick homestead" on November 2, 1834 in Leitersburg, Maryland. Despite the fact that the village was named for the Leiters' ancestor, Andrew Leiter, the family was not wealthy. Levi's father Joseph had a comfortable income as the president of the Planter's Mutual Insurance Company of Maryland. Levi stayed in Leitersburg until he was 18, working in the general store to gain experience. He had the advantages of a "gentleman's education", that is, he went as far as he could in the country schools. At 18 Levi decided to move westward to seek his fortune. He went to Ohio and stayed for two years, but he was not satisfied with his job. In 1856 Levi Leiter came to Chicago where he was hired at Cooley, Wadsworth and Farley as a bookkeeper. He worked hard and soon had the position of head bookkeeper. Another young man named Marshall Field joined the firm at the same time as a salesman. Leiter and Field became good friends and they talked about starting their own store. Leiter's salary at this time was $2500 a year as head bookkeeper and accountant. The two of them saved as much money as they could, and when Potter Palmer offered them a partnership in his store in 1863, they eagerly accepted. The firm of Palmer, Field and Leiter stayed in business during the Civil War, and Leiter remained in the store
to sell goods to the Army instead of enlisting.

By 1865 Potter Palmer was ready to move on to new fields, and his two partners were sure that they could run the store successfully together. They bought out Palmer's interest and the firm of Field, Leiter and Company, dry goods merchants, was born.

Levi Leiter became the head of the wholesale and credit departments, while Marshall Field looked after the retail side of the business. They agreed that their motto should be: "Good goods brings a good class of trade; poor goods a poor class." Field and Leiter deliberately set out to become the leading department store in the city. Leiter's cautious policy of eliminating credit risks was of immense value in helping the firm.

Leiter used many techniques to build a solid credit department at Field, Leiter and Company. His screening process for weeding out credit risks was perhaps the most exacting policy among all the city's merchants. Leiter commissioned all of the store's traveling salesmen as his agents. These men would listen to gossip as they traveled through the towns with which the firm dealt across the country. If they heard anything regarding the financial status of a Field and Leiter client, they immediately telegraphed the news back to Leiter's office. Leiter would contact the bankers and railway agents of the towns to get the facts. He took no chances. He wanted no credit risks at Field and Leiter, and the firm's excellent financial standing enabled it to survive the panics of the 1870's.
If all the usual conditions were satisfied by a customer, Leiter would personally inspect the clients in his office. Sometimes these personal inspections proved disastrous for the clients. Leiter had a bad temper and his "refusals were not subtly proffered. As one customer approached the credit office he was likely to hear the last applicant being ushered out with angry shouts." Levi Leiter was very much a businessman of the nineteenth century in that he believed in the integrity of a good name, and he was always careful to preserve the firm's good name.

The story of Levi Leiter and the man with the dyed moustache has been handed down by writers for years, and even if it is only half true, it shows Leiter's character. According to the story, a new client was waiting nervously for credit approval outside Leiter's office. The man met all of the conditions, and he only needed to see Leiter. As Leiter approached the man he noticed that he had gray hair but a black moustache. Leiter shouted that a dyed moustache signified that the man was a thief, and he threw the man from his office bodily. Although Leiter's severe tactics earned him the reputation of an eccentric, "he seldom made a mistake in deciding whom it was safe to trust." Although Leiter's severe tactics earned him the reputation of an eccentric, "he seldom made a mistake in deciding whom it was safe to trust."9

During the first three years of Field, Leiter and Company, Levi Leiter lived at the Sherman House in bachelor quarters,10 but in 1868 he married Mary Theresa Carver, whose ancestor had been the first president of Plymouth Colony.11 The Leiters had four children: Joseph, Mary Victoria, Nancy and
Marguerite. Leiter's home life in later years became an increasingly important influence in his life.

During his sixteen years at Field, Leiter and Company, Levi Leiter faced several challenges to the firm's survival. Each time he displayed courage and foresight that were reflected in later years by his son Joseph. Through the skillful use of credit and the high quality of its merchandise, the store became one of the leading firms in the city. The gradual opening of the western part of the country continually created new markets for their goods. Chicago became an important rail center for the rest of the country. It seemed as if nothing could stop their growth. Then in October, 1871 Chicago suffered a severe economic blow: the Chicago Fire.

The Field, Leiter and Company store was at Madison and Market streets, and at first it looked as though the partners might be able to save the store from the flames. Both Field and Leiter hurried to the store when news of the fire reached them. They directed rescue efforts as store employees carried the most expensive goods first to the waiting wagons. Leiter had the drivers take the goods over to his house, which was out of the fire's path. The flames steadily grew closer yet Field and Leiter hoped to save the building. They ordered wet blankets hung from the windows to douse sparks and cinders. It was no use. The flames "attacked it from the north and eastwardly in the rear, and it soon yielded." The Field, Leiter and Company building was destroyed along with much of the city's financial district. Many merchants were doubtful
that Chicago would ever be rebuilt, but Levi Leiter "was always a believer in Chicago." 13

The day after the fire a sign was tacked up to the ruins of the Field, Leiter and Company store announcing that all employees were to be paid and were to report for work at the temporary quarters of Field, Leiter and Company on Michigan Avenue. Leiter stayed at home to take an inventory of the rescued goods while Field searched for a temporary shelter. Leiter sent the firm's top employees back east to stop new shipments from reaching Chicago before the store reopened. Field and Leiter agreed upon using an old horse barn on Michigan Avenue, and all the goods were transferred there. 14 The clerks sold from hastily built counters and customers flocked to buy their goods, even in such an unusual setting. 15

Levi Leiter performed an even greater service for Chicago during the days after the fire. The city's financial section had been burned out, and one of the largest foreign insurance companies, the Liverpool Insurance Company, had nearly decided to abandon its Chicago office and move to another city. Leiter knew that if the larger companies stayed and rebuilt, it would encourage the smaller businesses to stay. He personally persuaded these insurance men to rebuild their office here, and even managed to get the Liverpool Insurance Company to establish a branch office in Chicago, which was more than they had done before the fire. 16 Gradually, confidence grew that Chicago would emerge even greater than before, and Leiter was instrumental in rebuilding the business district.
When it came to rebuilding Field and Leiter, the partners decided to make a tremendous effort and build the greatest store the city had ever seen. They chose a new location, at the corner of State and Washington streets, and built a larger store with elegant chandeliers and carpeted floors. Before the year was over they knew that their efforts were successful.

During the years after Field, Leiter and Company successfully weathered the Chicago Fire, the partners faced new challenges to their success. Field, Leiter and Company became known for its fast delivery service, and in the days of horse and buggy travel, the store used its own special delivery wagons pulled by the fastest horses they could find. In 1872 the partners faced a minor crisis involving these horses, the resolution of which showed Leiter's foresight and quick mind.

In that year an epidemic of horse distemper swept the East, slowly working its way toward Chicago. Leiter knew that the disease would reach Chicago, and he read each day's reports with growing alarm. He knew that part of the attraction of Field and Leiter's store was its fast delivery service. What would happen if they lost their horses? Field and Leiter might lose an advantage to their competitors. His first move was to order stand-by teams of oxen, to make sure that the merchandise would be delivered even if their horses were ill. The next step was to treat the sick horses they eventually had.

Leiter ordered the store's State Street stables closed at six p.m. and not opened again until eight a.m. the following
morning. He hoped to eliminate the spreading of the disease by curtailing the horses' contacts, just as his order that their horses wear red flannel stockings was a preventative against the horses' catching cold and weakening their resistance. It was no use. Out of the 67 horses the store owned, three contracted the disease and infected others. The Chicago newspapers charted the daily growth of the disease, noting that "It has stopped the receipt and delivery of goods by most of the wholesale houses—an interruption of business not only expensive to our merchants, but to all their customers." Fortunately the Field and Leiter store was able to continue their deliveries with teams of oxen, while Leiter ordered the delivery men to take care of the sick horses. The Field and Leiter stables began to "resemble horse hospitals, all the drivers acting as nurses." Field, Leiter and Company proudly announced to the public that even during the epidemic, "all orders will be filled promptly, and shipped same day received." The epidemic ran its course and faded, leaving the reputation for fine service of the Field, Leiter and Company store intact.

Another crisis took place in 1876, when fire again destroyed the Field and Leiter store. The partners were determined to rebuild again on the same spot, and Levi Leiter was to negotiate for a new lease. Leiter tried to bluff the landlord into coming down in price but he miscalculated. As Edwin Lyman Lobdell, a Chicago businessman of the time remembered, Leiter's gamble nearly lost them the lease. Lobdell recalled:
in 1876 or 1877, their great store was destroyed by fire. It burned steadily for several days and was a total loss. The lease was automatically cancelled by the fire, but negotiations were started at once for a new deal. Field, Leiter and Company took their time in these negotiations, probably on the theory that no other concern was strong enough to outbid them. In this they were mistaken.

While Leiter waited, Carson, Pirie, Scott and Company got the lease and Field and Leiter had to pay them even more than the original price to get it back. Leiter's bluff had not worked, but fortunately he admitted his error in time to repair the damage.

The firm prospered at State and Washington, but gradually the two men drifted apart. As a Chicago commercial newspaper noted about the Chicago dry goods scene: "There is a fierce rivalry among some of the leading jobbers." Field and Leiter were each trying to pull the store in separate directions, Field wanting to develop the retail side, and Leiter feeling that the wholesale angle was more profitable. Although the store was successful, the partners decided to dissolve their association.

Two different versions of the split have been popularized by Chicago historians. The first version says that Marshall Field wanted to get rid of Levi Leiter because of Leiter's temper, and because Field wanted to run the store himself. Field approached the key executives of the store and got their promises to stay with him if the partners split. "From long association, Field knew that the most effective way of dealing with Levi was to confront him suddenly," so Field approached
Leiter and offered to sell out his partnership for a very low price, or to buy out Leiter's share for the same price. Leiter had twenty-four hours to answer. He wanted to buy Field out, but when he discovered that none of the staff would be able to stay, he honored his word. Leiter sold his half of the store to Field for $2,500,000 and supposedly hated Field for the rest of his life.  

The second version of the Field and Leiter split had Leiter wanting to leave the business to enjoy some time with his family and to pursue other investments. Immediately after announcement of their split in 1881, a Chicago woman wrote to her friend that:

Some people say that Mrs. Leiter has been urging this retirement of her husband's and that she would like to live abroad.  

The general consensus in 1881 seemed to be that Leiter "has so much money already he doesn't need to make more."  

It seems reasonable that the Field and Leiter split left some bad feelings between the two men. After sixteen years the firm was the leading department store in Chicago and "it was in Leiter's office that a reputation was built and it cut the cost of doing business," yet Field made it clear that he thought Leiter was expendable. After Levi Leiter retired from the merchandising field, he did indeed have enough money. During his years at Field and Leiter he had been busy investing in other areas such as Chicago real estate and mining stocks. The opening of the West and the surge in mining investments is reflected in Leiter's career.
After 1881, although Leiter had a very active social life, he kept his hand in investing in the new areas open in American business. As the country moved West, Leiter's investments did, too. He bought land in Wyoming, Montana, Colorado, Utah, Nebraska and South Dakota at a time when the government was just opening these lands for settlement. Levi Leiter continued his policy of diversification in his investments.

Early in 1881 Leiter bought heavily into the Iron Silver Mining Company, and he continued to buy 50,000 shares at a time although the stock slipped in value from $2.05 a share to $1.60 a share. The decline in the stock's value might have scared off other buyers, but Leiter believed that the mining boom was a profitable venture to undertake, so he continued to buy. He invested heavily in the Comstock Lode and held onto this stock until his death in 1904.

The western movement in the country quickened as railroads expanded and opened up the lands for settlement. Leiter was a heavy investor in railroads, such as the Southern California Railroad, and he even foresaw the rise of the elegant railway cars by investing in the Pullman Palace Car Company. With investments like these, Leiter could have retired permanently and watched his wealth accumulate, but he preferred to maintain an active life.

After 1881 the Leiters had much more time for travel and family life. Levi and Mary Theresa Leiter had four very active children and as the children of a "robber baron" they
had the best of everything, including private tutors and French maids. The Leiters' social life followed the trend of the "robber barons," with trips across the Continent and lavish summer "cottages." The Leiter summer home at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin was a typical ornate mansion of the time with:

37 rooms, not to mention innumerable bathrooms containing bath tubs that would accommodate Gargantua himself, and uncounted subterranean passages, dungeons and wine cellars in the basement. It might also be interesting to know that there are nineteen fireplaces. 32

This Wisconsin house was located on 37 acres of land and was called Linden Lodge. In 1880 Linden Lodge was considered the "most pretentious summer home on Lake Geneva." 33

Aside from the summer home in Wisconsin, the Leiters maintained a mansion on Prairie Avenue in Chicago and later a mansion in Washington, D.C. Supposedly, "Mr. Leiter took up his residence in Washington because his wife and daughters found its social atmosphere more congenial than that of Chicago." 34

The Leiters leased James Blaine's house at first, then built one of their own. These homes were often empty as the Leiters spent a great deal of time in the 1880's and 1890's in Europe. By 1887, Mrs. Levi Leiter was able to record in her diary that she had crossed the Atlantic Ocean five times, and had been from Marseilles, France to Alexandria, Egypt eight times. 35

The Leiter lifestyle truly reflected the customs of the "robber barons."

Mrs. Mary Theresa Leiter helped to complete Levi Leiter's life as a "robber baron." As the wife of a wealthy man in the Gilded Age, she moved in the right circles and joined the
right clubs to further the family's prestige. She became the Illinois Vice-Regent of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, an exclusive women's club. This position indicated that the Leiters were held in high regard in society because the Vice-Regent had to be from a family whose social position "would command the confidence of the state." Mrs. Leiter was also a member of Chicago's Fortnightly Club, which numbered Mrs. Potter Palmer and Mrs. Cyrus McCormick among its members.

As the wife of a "robber baron", Mrs. Leiter did not always spend her time frivolously. She felt an obligation to work for charity; as one of the wealthy it was her duty to help the unfortunate. One of the most notable episodes in her charity activities occurred during the Spanish-American War. When the United States Army ran out of hospital space at Chickamauga, she bought an entire hotel and turned it over to the Army for use as a hospital.

Levi Leiter's charitable works were not any lesser than his wife's. He continued in the pattern of the other wealthy men by conscientiously attending to charitable works. Levi's favorite charity was the American Sunday School Union, and as a writer of the time noted: "he has been personally active in founding and maintaining Sunday school work and missions in Chicago." Leiter also joined the other "robber barons" in sponsoring animal rescue work. In fact, animal rescue work was one of the most popular charitable activities of the wealthy set during the late nineteenth century.
Levi Leiter was very prominent in the Illinois Humane Society during the nineteenth century.41 Levi Leiter was unusual in that he went beyond the surface interest in charities exhibited by other rich men. He would give more than token support if he was really interested in the cause. The Newsboys Home was a prime example of Levi Leiter's philanthropy as a "robber baron" and his deep sense of honor. The Newsboys Home had been set up by Leiter to provide a place for these boys to live and to get them off the street. Leiter felt a sort of paternalism towards these boys and wanted to help them. He encouraged them to give their money to the institution for safe keeping.42 Unfortunately the superintendent of the Home ran off with all of their money. Leiter ordered every account to be paid back with his own money and he sent detectives to track down the boys who had left to be sure that everyone was paid back. Levi Leiter had a very deep sense of honor and obligation concerning the Leiter name, a trait he exhibited several years later when his son Joseph brought attention to the Leiter name.

Through Leiter's business success and the Leiters' charity work, the name of Levi Z. Leiter came to be associated with the upper class, one of the better families in society. Perhaps the best illustration of the high social position of the Leiters was the newspaper ad for Steinways' pianos in the 1870's. In one of its newspaper ads to lure prospective customers, the Steinway Company proudly noted that L. Z. Leiter was among the select class of people who had bought a Steinway
During the last half of the nineteenth century, the piano epitomized family value and social aims. One of the indicia of a 'nice' family. Leiter's name was well known to the public by this time, and the company knew its advertising value.

The Leiter family became even more prominent during the last two decades of the nineteenth century through a combination of business deals and social prestige. Levi Leiter's business deals continued to reflect the diversification of the "robber barons." No area of investment that was profitable escaped his notice. Iron ore, for example, yielded him a good profit as one of the newspapers noted:

Mr. L.Z. Leiter of this place made quite a little sum by the recent rise in iron. He purchased 80,000 tons at $16 per ton and sold it a few days ago at $40 per ton. Nearly $2,000,000 on one deal is considerable these days.

That two million dollars was only a fraction of Leiter's income.

Levi Leiter continued to invest in real estate across the country, particularly in Chicago. In 1895 the Illinois Labor Bureau investigated land values in Chicago, especially on the South Side. The 266 acres of land on the South Side were worth $319 million then, not counting the worth of buildings and improvements. The second principal landowner on the South Side was Leiter, "who owned in that section land valued at $10,500,000." By 1904, Leiter owned $3 million worth of property at Clark and Madison streets alone, not to mention his other downtown holdings.
Leiter was also anxious to buy as much land out West as possible for cattle ranching. He fit the pattern of the times as "the final major thrust to the west was spearheaded by two occupational groups, miners and cattleman."\(^{49}\) Leiter followed his contemporaries in buying up the public lands released by the government. As he wrote in 1899, Leiter wanted to buy lands "as soon as the state releases them."\(^{50}\)

Despite his concern with the West, Levi Leiter's primary interest was always in Chicago. He had seen the city grow, particularly after the Chicago Fire, and much of his wealth centered there. Leiter's downtown properties brought in a rich income in rentals, and the market for real estate was so good that he didn't have to be tactful when dealing with tenants. During the last half of the nineteenth century when Leiter was a landlord, the landlords held sway over the tenants and Leiter was coolly aware of this attitude. Often he would send letters to tenants who were slightly late in paying their rent, beginning "I hereby demand that you at once pay to me the following sums of money which have become and are now due me."\(^{51}\)

Leiter also held the prevailing distrust of dealing with labor unions that the rest of the "robber barons" exhibited. The Haymarket Affair of 1886 epitomized management's fear of labor. Levi Leiter was no exception; he didn't believe in dealing with unions. Leiter had his own memories of the Haymarket Affair, as his wife noted in 1886:
My husband, who has such a tender heart sends five hundred dollars for the relief of the families of the six policemen killed by a bomb thrown by the Anarchists.52

Leiter himself expressed his views in a letter to William Le Baron Jenney, a noted architect:

Building material and labor are now exceedingly high. Furthermore the labor unions are unreasonable and unfair. When my building was torn open they would most probably—without cause, call a strike.53

Leiter's distrust of labor unions filtered down to his son Joseph who had to deal with the unions later when they were stronger.

The climax of Levi Leiter's career occurred in 1898 with the famous Chicago Wheat deal of his son Joseph, when Joseph lost $10 million and Levi paid the debt for his son. After this deal cost Levi Leiter several million dollars, he quietly began retiring from the active business world. This 1898 affair awoke Leiter's strong sense of family honor once more and "the old trader went calmly to work for the honor of his name to settle debts which he had not contracted, and for which he could not be held legally responsible."54

The sons of the "robber barons" did not have the same type of feeling about the family name that Leiter as one of the "robber barons" did. By the twentieth century's opening, the era of stock speculation and flashy deals precluded having to worry about a good name and its value. Levi Leiter sold some of his Chicago real estate to pay his son's debts, even calling on his ex-partner Marshall Field to sell the property at the corner of State and Madison streets for over $2 million cash.5
During Leiter's business activities his family retained its social position. In the 1880's, when the children were young, the family stayed often at Linden Lodge or spent a great deal of time aboard their steam yacht, "Daisy," and winning races with their sail boats "Lucy" and "Blossom." The Leiter family continued to take trips to Europe, and as this continued their eldest daughter Mary Victoria often recorded in her diary: "Father and mother gambled at Monaco."  

Levi Leiter's home life was happy, centering around his wife and children. His wife adored him, often remarking "We shall see dear darling Levi today and how happy we shall be." After Leiter retired from the business world, he turned more and more to his family as his primary interests. When his wife wanted to move to Washington or to London so that their daughters might meet eligible males, he went readily. During the last half of the nineteenth century, "to arrange a marriage between one's daughter and a foreign nobleman was to score a grand slam." Levi Leiter's daughters followed the trend of the other high society families, as the eldest Mary Victoria Leiter, married Lord Curzon, the middle daughter Nancy married a major in the British Army and the youngest daughter, Marguerite, became the Countess of Suffolk and Berkshire.  

By 1900 Levi Leiter was living quietly in retirement, letting Joseph run the family affairs. Levi preferred to devote himself to collecting Americana, a passion he shared with many of the wealthy men of his time. Leiter's collection
included rare American manuscripts, such as Thomas Jefferson's personally annotated copy of his book *Notes on the State of Virginia.* The Leiters continued to take summer excursions. On June 9, 1904 Levi Leiter died of heart disease at Bar Harbor, Maine where he had been staying in the Vanderbilt summer cottage during one of these vacations. Leiter's death signified the end of the line of "robber barons" in the Leiter family. As Harlow Higginbotham, his successor at Field's, said of him:

> Mr. Leiter was a forcible, able and efficient businessman. In times gone by when he was in the activities of business life, he was abreast of the times in all things. . . . With him it was business first. . . . he was a man of severe hours. . . . His great activity impaired his health.

Levi Leiter belonged to that generation of businessmen who had accumulated their fortunes by hard work and foresight. Leiter believed strongly in the nineteenth century tradition of honor, for as he said: "The first thing, after all, is a manly, good man. Human effort may be able to supply anything else, but only the Almighty can supply a man."
Levi Leiter left a profitable family business for his son Joseph to manage and $30 million to provide for his family. Joseph Leiter was one of the new breed of businessmen who followed the "robber barons". These modern moguls had been born into wealthy families, so they had not the same early training in hard work that their fathers had had. Joseph's business career was very different from that of his father. Joseph not only faced new obstacles that caused him to change his father's old methods, but he was also of a different generation.

He had been raised differently from Levi, and his whole lifestyle reflected the quickened pace of the twentieth century. No more slow and steady fortunes were accumulated from sure investments; the era of speculation had begun. Joseph felt the importance of: "maintaining as a first principle in life that every cloud has a silver lining if you have the energy to climb high enough to look down on it."¹ Joseph Leiter's life surged with this energy. He never seemed to slow down, whether in business or leisure. Where his father had attended to business first, Joseph made sure that his social life had equal time.

A study of the business executives of 1900, tracing what they had in common, shows that Joseph Leiter matched his contemporaries, both in family background and education.
This study discovered that by 1900, 94% of the business executives had inherited their positions. The majority of them were Episcopalian or Presbyterian, and nearly all of the college graduates had gone to Harvard. Joseph Leiter took over the family business after Levi's death. The Leiters were Episcopalian and he graduated from Harvard in 1891.

Joseph Leiter also fits into the three distinct types of "new" businessmen: the spenders, the conservers and the philanthropists. The spenders used their inheritances to maintain their standard of luxury. These men thought of their wealth as being strictly for their own use. The conservers spent their time trying to build the fortune for future generations. The philanthropists felt a duty to their fellow men, and they spent their money and efforts on charity. Joseph Leiter falls somewhat between the first two classes, being somewhat more of a spender. Joseph lived well and made a great display of having been born to wealth. The differences between the father and the son were partially due to this background.

Joseph Leiter was born in 1868 in Chicago, three years after his father entered the merchandising business. By 1868 the Leiters were well on their way to becoming true "robber barons." Levi Leiter seemed determined to make sure that his son had everything he could ever want or need. Leiter's cash accounts recorded numerous instances where Levi Leiter bought presents for Joseph, but there are no entries for Joseph's sisters: Mary Victoria, Nancy or Marguerite (Daisy).
Levi even made sure that his son had a bicycle during the beginning of the cycling craze that swept the country.  

Joseph became used to having his way most of the time. One of the earliest recorded instances of his stubborn will was written by Mary Victoria during one of the family's frequent European trips. While driving in a carriage across the French countryside, the elder Leiters decided that it was too cold for the children to sit on the top of the carriage and ordered them inside. The girls went, but not Joseph. As Mary Victoria complained "we were all obliged to come below excepting Joe, who remained on top and spoke to the driver." 

Joseph continued to live the typical wealthy son's life: European trips, vacations at Linden Lodge and private tutors. He spent his prep school years at St. Paul's school in Concord, New Hampshire, one of the elite schools in the country. Evidently he did not apply himself to his studies enough during these years. His parents were worried that he would not pass the entrance exams at Harvard, so from 1886-1887 Joseph had a tutor who coached him into passing the Harvard exams. 

Joseph's college days reflected the trends of the Gilded Age. By the time he entered Harvard in 1887, most college students were able to choose their own courses during their last two years. During his first two years Joseph concentrated on foreign languages and history, getting a liberal arts background. In his junior and senior years he focused on political economy, showing that his taste for business was
Joseph Leiter's strong character continued to assert itself during these years. He was very much an individualist. His family realized that he did what he wanted to at a very early age. By the time that he went to college his mother thought that she knew him rather well, but Joseph liked to keep a few surprises up his sleeve. He sometimes tried daring stunts, to see just how far he could go. The etiquette of the time was strict, but Joseph Leiter disregarded the rules of society when he felt like it. Cigar smoking, for example, was governed by certain rules during the Gilded Age, "A man who was gauche enough to smoke a cigar in public would toss it to the ground promptly upon entering into conversation with a lady." Joseph Leiter was too much of an individualist to follow these rules. His shocked mother reported in 1886 "after dinner he sat beside me and smoked in my presence his first cigar. May God bless and keep him is my earnest prayer." Mrs. Leiter was worried about Joseph's soul, but the younger members of the wealthy society took such things in stride. As one social historian put it: "It seemed not enough for many of the wealthy just to have money; they set about to use it in the most conspicuous ways." Joseph Leiter's behavior was like that of the other wealthy heirs. Unorthodox behavior could be acceptable, in fact:

their most-talked-of exploit was the Monkey Dinner, at which a small pet monkey belonging to Joseph Leiter was introduced as a Corsican prince and seated at the table.
Joseph Leiter's adventurous spirit carried over from his social life into his early business career. When Joseph graduated from Harvard, his father presented him with a million dollars, hoping that he would travel around the world and gain experience. Joseph had other ideas. In 1896 he began quietly buying up wheat on the Chicago market. He bought July wheat in April and gambled successfully that the price would go up. He continued to buy, amassing the largest holdings in the Chicago Exchange's history. In the winter of 1897 the St. Lawrence froze over and Philip Armour, the meat packer, found that his shipments of grain from Duluth could not get to Chicago and his packing houses. Armour needed grain and he turned to Joseph Leiter, but Leiter refused. That was his mistake. Armour became angry and he found a way to get even. He hired ice-breaker tug boats down from Duluth and brought in enough grain to flood the Chicago market. The price slumped and Joseph Leiter had to give up after he had lost $10 million. Levi Leiter helped Joseph to pay his debts, and brought Joseph into his firm. Was Joseph ready to quit and quietly follow his father's path of slow, steady investments? No, as Joseph calmly said: "It was a speculation in wheat and corn which caused some comment but was not profitable." Joseph Leiter had been infected with the spirit of speculation around the turn of the century, which "required the stomach to stake everything on one's judgement, . . . because of an all-consuming passion for the risk itself." Joseph Leiter came through his experience a little wiser, ready for new ventures. The
opening of Wyoming lands offered new prospects for business, and his attention focused on cattle ranching.

Joseph took over the direct management of the Leiter Wyoming lands from his father. He continued to buy land near Clearmont, Wyoming, being careful to secure all of the water rights. Joseph was a cattleman, and he deeply resented the growing invasion of Wyoming by sheep ranchers. He often expressed his views to his ranch manager: "I told him that we were positively opposed to allowing any sheep on our range at all or to giving sheep men water privileges of any sort." 19

His primary objective in acquiring the land around Lake DeSmet was to keep the sheep men at bay. "They have got to have water, and having it covered, we can keep them off." 20 Having defeated the sheep men, Joseph considered other possibilities for this land, and he became convinced that Lake DeSmet near Clearmont, Wyoming was an important source of irrigation for the Leiter lands. As early as 1902 Joseph Leiter was interested in the results "if a suitable dam was made to confine the water of the lake." 21 Leiter continued to buy Wyoming land, but the DeSmet project was postponed until much later. Activity closer to Chicago engaged his attention, and Joseph Leiter entered the most important phase of his career around the turn of the century in the Illinois coal fields.

Joseph Leiter began buying coal land in downstate Illinois around 1903, when everyone else felt that the Illinois land was not capable of producing much coal. He hired a geologist, whose core samples convinced him of the richness of
the underlying coal vein. Leiter bought 7,000 acres of Illinois coal land and set up a town named Zeigler, after his father. He set out to develop a model town, "modern in every way--my aim having been to reduce the cost of production as much as possible through the introduction of machinery." Leiter hoped to avoid any labor problems by making his miners so happy that they would never strike. He built workers' houses with running water, renting for $6 to $9 a month for three to six rooms. Electricity was 75¢ a month extra. He installed a cement wash house with hot and cold showers and lockers for the men to use after work. As a contemporary observer noted, he wanted to "place them on a plane of comfort far above the average." Leiter did not think that he would have any trouble with the miners. He miscalculated on the determination of the United Mine Workers Union, and his battle with the union begun in 1904 showed that "the outcome of the Zeigler troubles depends, to a great extent, on the life or death of union labor." When Leiter opened his mine in 1904, all of the smaller mines in Illinois used collective bargaining to set the miners' wages. The 1903 strike in the anthracite coal fields of Pennsylvania had shown the mine operators that the United Mine Workers under John Mitchell were strong enough to cripple coal production. Leiter hoped to increase his coal production and minimize labor problems through the use of machinery in his mines. Mitchell and his miners had no objections to the use of machinery in the mines but "they insisted that the wages of
Joseph Leiter reflected the employers' philosophy of labor. He thought that since he owned the mine, he should set the wages.

Labor unions at Zeigler or anywhere else can't put a collar around my neck and give me orders what kind of labor I shall buy with my money. When I go into the market to purchase labor I propose to retain just as much freedom as does a purchaser in any other kind of a market. The union at Zeigler can't either bully, bluff or frighten me.

Joseph Leiter encountered an obstacle that his father Levi had not faced: labor unions. Joseph tried to impose his way on the unions with a "take it or leave it" attitude, but the union stood fast.

The high-handed attitudes of the nineteenth century "robber barons" did not work successfully in the twentieth century labor market. The working classes had begun to be infected with the spirit of the Progressive reform movement and workers began to demand their just due. They resented their employers' interference in their lives, as George Pullman had discovered in the 1894 strike at his Pullman Palace Car shops. The employers at the turn of the century did "not like a demand or a threat from the man in rough clothing." Each employer felt that "he still has an interest in those wages even after they have legally passed from his control." This was the background for the Zeigler strike.

The mine opened on June 10, 1904, but as early as February Joseph Leiter began stocking arms at his Zeigler office and hiding revolvers in his clothes closet. Leiter braced
himself for trouble after the mine officially opened. As he told his father, "I have been getting rid of union men as fast as I could." Leiter announced that the mine's machinery could handle 500 tons of coal per day; the union said it would handle 75 tons per day. Then Leiter said he would pay 38¢ a ton as wages; the miners demanded 56¢ a ton. The next day, June 11, 1904, 268 men went on strike at the Zeigler mine. Leiter retaliated on July 8th with posted notices ordering ex-workers to leave town. The United Mine Workers then set up a tent city for the strikers and their families at Christopher, Illinois, five miles north of Zeigler. The strike began in earnest.

Joseph Leiter stood fast on his original demands and he used tactics ranging from Pinkerton agents to armed warfare to break the strike. The miners held out and the Zeigler strike became a turning point in labor history as the workers refused to give in to Leiter. Besides using Pinkertons, as Pullman had done in 1894, Leiter had a 14 foot high stockade built across his town, and he settled down to two years of grim combat.

A few months after the beginning of the strike Leiter realized that he would have to bring in scabs to run his mine. This was a tactic that had been successful for the "robber barons" but it was not successful for the younger Leiter. Bringing in new labor meant secrecy was vital, so Leiter used coded telegrams to confuse labor spies as to his intentions. His telegrams to Zeigler were a strange mixture of foreign
languages and made-up words such as: "Pedanteria funerarius salwandus yardstick restrictum of testiculo a picolo," meaning "Do not send men to Effingham. Alter arrangements." 39

Even with such secrecy, the strikers managed to infiltrate railroad cars of scabs coming into Zeigler. The desertion rate of these strikebreakers ranged from 60% to 100%, but still the mine kept producing. 40 The scabs that did reach Zeigler were the unskilled workers and men who needed a job. Leiter soon found out upon getting them to Zeigler "that a great number of them were not only not practical miners, but had never done manual labor in their lives before." 41

As the desertion rate grew, Leiter sent his agents out to find more workers. At first immigrants from Europe were used; but the mine foreman could not work smoothly with them, and Leiter had to caution his manager to "tell him he must use a bit more tact in handling of the foreigners underground." 42 The use of foreign labor, particularly around the turn of the century, was a common practice of employers. American workers became alarmed at foreigners taking jobs away from them. The Zeigler workers were no exception. They became determined to force the Zeigler mines to close and stay closed until all the men on the payroll were UMW men. They began shooting at the trainloads of the foreign strikebreakers going to Zeigler. Leiter began receiving reports such as: "Car of men who arrived here from the East, one shot dead nearly a mile south of Christopher by the strikers." 43 When the foreign workers still deserted, Leiter began
bringing in blacks from Alabama and Kentucky to work in the mines. The use of blacks only increased the miners' desire to wear Leiter down. They began firing on the stockade at night, and as Leiter noted: "they have tried on several occasions to blow us up and for the last three weeks have been bushwhacking all people entering the town at night." Leiter ordered his men to shoot back, as he believed "in the power of might and money. He wore a revolver strapped to his belt, and behind his swivel chair in his office were two high caliber rifles." 

Skirmishes between the strikers and the Zeigler men continued, and the Zeigler mine manager "ordered the rapid fire gun to open fire at every flash they could see. They fired between six and seven hundred rounds." The shooting gradually became a part of the routine as the strike wore on. By March, 1905 the strikers began to drift away from the tent city at Christopher. Leiter held fast, but the UMW would not officially end the strike. By early 1905 Leiter felt that the coal strike was "flattening out," but the UMW refused to give in. The strike was eventually ended not by the union, but by a series of fires and explosions at the Zeigler mine which convinced Leiter that he should lease the mine to another party and turn to other business ventures. On April 3, 1905 an underground explosion, which a later coroner's jury ruled was caused by gunpowder, killed 57 miners. In July of that year the state mine inspector had a fatal accident while he was inspecting the mine and the official reopening of the mine was delayed.
series of accidents, the death toll at the Zeigler mine accounted for half the total of 148 men killed in Illinois mines in 1905. Still Leiter tried to hold onto his mine.

After explosions and fires in 1909 killed 26 more miners, the Zeigler mine was sealed to smother the fire. The common method of smothering underground fires was to drill holes into the shafts and pump water in to drown the fire. Joseph Leiter again disregarded the rules, and pumped in steam instead. The resulting explosion killed three more men, and Leiter was shaken enough by these deaths to agree to lease the mine to an outside firm and let them handle the labor situation. In 1912 he leased his mine to the Bell and Zoller Coal Company, which ran it until it closed in 1949.

Leiter did not admit his defeat, although the company succeeding him did bargain with the UMW. He claimed that his mother wanted him to quit as "she was getting old and she didn't want to be worried any more by the expectation of getting a telegram any time that the mine had blown up and that I had blown up with it." He also noted that "this sort of existence was proving a little too exciting for my wife." This last excuse seems particularly weak because Leiter did not marry until 1908, after the initial hard years of the strike.

Leiter had fought the union and discovered, as had many of the sons of the "robber barons", that the working classes were becoming stronger and much more vocal in demanding their rights. By retiring from the coal business, Joseph Leiter left the problem of unions to other employers. He turned his attention
to his family and the social scene.

Joseph Leiter married late, being 40 years old when he married Juliette Williams in 1908. Joseph's social life was very different from that of his father. Levi Leiter had taken European jaunts and hosted society dinners. Joseph's social life reflected the changing spirit of twentieth century America. The quickened pace of life caused him to "work and play at full blast." Joseph and Juliette Leiter had four children: John and Joseph, Jr. who both died in infancy, Thomas and Nancy. Joseph did not make his family the center of his life as Levi had done. Joseph's activities were more solitary, often taking him away from his family. Theodore Roosevelt's presidency had introduced hunting and shooting as pastimes for the upper classes, and Joseph Leiter followed this trend. He often traveled the world in search of new areas for hunting and he was especially fond of duck shooting. In 1913 he became the first person to cruise around the world in a private yacht without ever crossing the equator. Leiter was restless and it "became a standing joke among his friends that he always should be looked for on the opposite side of the world to that on which he had been heard from last."

The wealthy set of the twentieth century spent more of their summer holidays at New Port, Saratoga or Miami than they did in Europe. Joseph Leiter followed this pattern as he traveled from Palm Beach, to Havana, New Orleans and Washington, D.C. The advent of Prohibition did not upset Joseph; he had a cellar full of wines and liquors like the rest
of the wealthy. When his Virginia wine cellars were raided by thieves in 1921, he employed detectives to get the liquor back. He was concerned because "we have located the thieves but have not located the booze." 63

Joseph's social life was also much more flamboyant than his father's. The "roaring twenties" were literally that for him as he "was a familiar figure at prize fights in the early days and later at the race tracks where the $500,000 Leiter stables were represented." 64 Joseph did not share the charity interests of his father either. The time for private philanthropies had passed. Joseph's collecting tastes ran to Chinese porcelains rather than Americana. 65 The intense energy that both Levi and Joseph Leiter possessed had been channelled into separate directions.

Joseph was also not bound by the old tradition of honoring the family name and paying all debts. He had the new philosophy of getting away with as much as he could. In 1922 he was sued in the New York courts by former partners of his in the International Power Company. He owed them $604,000. Joseph Leiter contended that he had been a resident of Illinois when the debts were contracted, and that the Illinois statute of limitations had run out. When he won the case he felt no compunction to pay off the debt as Levi Leiter had done for him in 1898. 66 Levi had paid more than $10 million in debts for which he was not legally responsible, but Joseph had wriggled free from less than a million dollars without a guilty conscience.
Joseph's business activities during the 1920's centered primarily upon the management of his father's estate including the Chicago real estate operations and the Wyoming ranches. Although Joseph had encouraged his fellow estate trustees to "take as active an interest as possible," he was the major power figure in the handling of the estate. As early as 1922 Marguerite Leiter began suit to wrest control of the estate from her brother. She wanted the Illinois courts to remove Joseph as the head of the estate, and the court battle dragged on for eight years, until in 1931 both Joseph and Marguerite resigned as trustees to settle the case. The only winners were the lawyers who split $1,012,000 in fees.

During the eight year court battle, Joseph Leiter faced yet another obstacle that the "robber barons" did not have to worry about: the financial drain of the Great Depression. The Stock Crash of 1929 hurt the Leiter estate income much more than any mismanagement on Joseph's part. In 1929, the uncollected rentals from the Leiter Chicago properties rose from a total of $140 in July to $1,117 in December, with worse to come. The Leiter Building, which had been such an asset in Levi's day, became a liability to Joseph. From 1923 to 1929 the sales decreased almost 62% in the stores located in the building, which formed part of the Leiter estate income. The Leiter agents found it necessary to eliminate many of the services offered to Leiter tenants. "All services to the public such as delivery, post office, nursery . . . and accommodations desk have been eliminated." No longer were
tenants badgered for rent as in Levi's day. By the late 1920's, Joseph realized that he was lucky to have tenants at all.

The Wyoming ranches fared little better after 1920 as "American agriculture was very sick, with little prospect of recovery." The income from the Leiter Wyoming ranches dropped nearly 50% from 1930 to 1931, and remained at a low level through Joseph's death in 1932. From the great irrigation project at Lake DeSmet came the news that the smaller ranchers benefited the most, with a larger supply of water now made available to them.

Joseph Leiter gradually turned away from active participation in the business world, just as his father had done. "Several years before his death his business activities were confined to directorships." Joseph did not turn his free time towards his family as Levi had done, instead he became a racing fan. At the time of his death in 1932, he owned a stable of 24 thoroughbreds, including his two stake winners, Prince Hotspur and Princess Camelia.

Joseph Leiter died in 1932 as the result of going to a race track with a severe case of pneumonia. Even his death had the theatrics that Levi's lacked. When Joseph died the business world was very different from the world Levi had known. The "robber barons" with their slow accumulation of fortunes had given way to their twentieth century heirs who faced new problems. As one historian has noted: "The nineteenth century accumulators and their first generation
of their inheritors created a gaudy era of personal spending and personal philanthropy, but then... wars, depression, and taxation changed the fabric of American life."
CONCLUSION

The business world changed radically between the generation of Levi Leiter and that of his son Joseph. Levi Leiter was a "robber baron", who lived his life and made his money according to the code of the nineteenth century. He made good investments, took advantage of new opportunities and spent great sums of money to give his family the best of everything. Levi Leiter believed in family honor and paying his debts. He was an individualist in the business world as all the "robber barons" were, yet he shared many of the characteristics of the wealthy men of his time.

Levi's career grew steadily as he moved from Cooley, Wadsworth and Farley to Field and Leiter. He invested in sound commodities such as land and mining stock. He even joined the rest of the country in the westward expansion as he purchased land in various states across the West. Levi's family life was very close-knit, as the nineteenth century demanded. The Leiter family took trips together and lived like a typical wealthy family. But the times changed and the old ways were not the ways of the younger generation.

Joseph Leiter was an heir to inherited wealth. He was clearly a businessman of the twentieth century, a speculator and a gambler. He fought the labor unions and lived the fast life of the Jazz Age. Joseph's business methods had been set
free from the restraints of family honor. He was like his peers in education and lifestyle. He made money wherever and however he could. The fortune Levi left declined with the advent of the Great Depression, but Joseph managed to save enough to live in style and spend freely.

Joseph's career resembled a roller coaster as he moved quickly from one investment to the next. His life hummed with excitement and a fast pace. Joseph Leiter was a twentieth century gambler at heart and he reflected the tremendous surges of the new time.

The history of the Leiter family from 1865 to 1932 mirrors the changes in American business and society, as the American people and their economy changes and adjusted to new forces. The differences between Levi and Joseph Leiter resulted from the adaptations each man made to his time period as well as the difference in personality. Levi became a typical "robber baron" while Joseph became a speculator and a man of the world. Their different backgrounds had prepared them for their lives and each man was in step with his time.

If Levi and Joseph Leiter had reversed roles and lived in the different time periods, would they have been able to reflect the times so faithfully? Would Joseph have become another John D. Rockefeller, forming great trusts and squeezing out the smaller companies? It seems as if Joseph would have been suited for this role, particularly in view of his stubborn battle with the United Mine Workers. Would Levi have been true
to the precepts of the new businessmen? It seems unlikely, for Levi's personality was more suited to the quiet pace of the nineteenth century. Levi did not indulge in the spectacular social scene of his own time period, but if he had been raised as Joseph, with wealth and luxury, he might have resembled his son. As it was, the "robber baron" made way for his son, but it was not the same road he himself had traveled.
INTRODUCTION

1 The legend of the "robber barons" began with Matthew Josephson, The Robber Barons: The Great American Capitalists 1861-1901 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1934) and continued through the works of Charles A. Beard and others. Later histories such as Stewart Hall Holbrook, The Age of the Moguls (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1953) added another dimension to the studies of these men by pointing out their individualism.

2 Josephson, Robber Barons, pp. 5,32.


5 Josephson, Robber Barons, p. 345.


8 Holbrook, Moguls, p. 327.

9 Ibid., p. viii.

10 Levi Zeigler Leiter was named by his mother's sister, Barbara, who died after he was born. She used her fiance's name, Levi, and her last name, Zeigler, to perpetuate the names as she could not marry because of her fatal illness.

PART I. LEVI LEITER


14. The location of this temporary headquarters is the present Art Institute.


28. Ibid.
29 Twyman, History of Marshall Field, p. 36.


41 Ibid.


Leiter owned the present Carsmans building lot.


Levi Z. Leiter to John Winterling, June 1, 1899, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, U. of W.


Journal May 8, 1886, Mary Theresa Leiter Collection, C.H.S.


"Personal Reminiscences," Edwin Lyman Lobdell Collection, C.H.S.

57 Journal February 25, 1882, Mary Victoria Leiter Collection, C.H.S.

58 Journal July 22, 1891, Mary Theresa Leiter Collection, C.H.S.


PART II. JOSEPH LEITER:


5. Journal December 8, 1881, Mary Victoria Leiter Collection, C.H.S.


7. Journal May 9, 1886, Mary Theresa Leiter Collection, C.H.S.


11. Journal June 9, 1886, Mary Theresa Leiter Collection, C.H.S.


14. This wheat deal was the inspiration for The Pit.

16 Finis Farr, Chicago, p. 99.


19 Joseph Leiter to John Winterling, April 2, 1900, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, U. of W.

20 Joseph Leiter to John Winterling, December 12, 1900, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, U. of W.

21 L.Z.Leiter and Joseph Leiter to Frederic Rider, December 14, 1902, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, U. of W.


23 Leiter dated his cornerstone 2904 and said he was a 1,000 years ahead of his time.

24 Joseph Leiter to O.W.Kennedy, January 14, 1904, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, C.H.S.


27 Ibid., p. 300.


29 Coleman, Men and Coal, p. 77.


33 Joseph Leiter to S.P. Robins, February 18, 1904, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, C.H.S.

34 Levi Leiter died the day before the mine opened.

35 Joseph Leiter to H.N. Boyd, February 17, 1904, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, C.H.S.


39 Telegram, W.J. Warr to Hugh Crabbe, November 13, 1904, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, C.H.S.

40 Brownell, Other Illinois, p. 208.

41 Joseph Leiter to Thomas Dewar, December 7, 1904, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, C.H.S.

42 Joseph Leiter to C.E. Jones, December 7, 1904, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, C.H.S.

43 W.J. Warr to Joseph Leiter, November 16, 1904, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, C.H.S.
The strikers particularly resented the searchlight Leiter got from the battleship Maine, which he trained on their camp at night.


Ibid., p. 33.

The Cabinet, Mining Reporter, 1 February 1906, p. 103.

Ibid., p. 33.


Ibid.


62 Joseph to Mummy, February 1, 1905, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, C.H.S.

63 Joe to Nan, October 12, 1921, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, U. of W.


68 Telegram, Joe to Mrs. Colin Campbell, January 24, 1922, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, C.H.S.

69 "Joseph Leiter, Financier, Dies at Age of 63," Chicago Tribune, 11 April 1932, p. 11.


72 E.A. Bronson to Joseph Leiter, February 17, 1930, Levi Z. Leiter Collection, C.H.S.

73 Allen, Lords of Creation, p. 219.


77 Ibid.

78 "Joseph Leiter, Financier," Chicago Tribune, p. 11.

79 Tebbel, The Inheritors, p. 308.
Sources concerning Levi and Joseph Leiter are not readily available; they require much digging. Whole books written on Chicago and Illinois history contain two or three sentences about the Leiters, often concentrating on the 1898 wheat deal or briefly mentioning the Zeigler strike. Much of my research has been with primary materials, which are unfortunately scattered from Chicago to Wyoming. The following sources have been the most valuable for examining the lives of the Leiters and the time period in which they lived.

Primary sources on the Leiters include manuscript collections, newspaper and magazine coverage. There are four manuscript collections of the Leiter family papers. The Levi Z. Leiter Collection, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois is the largest of the Leiter collections. This Chicago collection contains materials from 1881-1946, but the parts dealing with Levi are from 1881-1904. The papers from 1904-1932 cover Joseph Leiter's activities, but not as thoroughly after 1920. This collection consists of cash book accounts from 1881 onward, detailing the expenditures of the Leiter Chicago offices, and letterbooks from 1903-1946, covering primarily the Leiter Chicago real estate and the Zeigler, Illinois mine. The letters from 1904-1906 are the best sources on the Zeigler strike currently available. The second
Levi Z. Leiter Collection, University of Wyoming Library, Laramie, Wyoming has some letters earlier than the Chicago collection, from 1898-1966, but this Wyoming collection deals with activities at the Leiter Wyoming cattle ranches, particularly with the battle between the sheep and cattle ranchers.

Although many of the letters in these two collections were written by family agents, it is worthwhile to sift through them to find the letters written by Joseph and Levi Leiter which reveal their business philosophies. Joseph's letters in 1904-05 regarding the Zeigler strike are one of the clearest records of union against management fights ever recorded.

Two other members of the Leiter family left valuable sources of information in the form of journals, which are unfortunately brief and unfinished. The Mary Theresa Leiter Collection, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois, consists of four journals from 1886 to July of 1891. These journals are incomplete, but they are a good source for material on the family's European trips and for additional glimpses of the characters of Levi and Joseph Leiter as seen by the former's wife and the latter's mother. The Mary Victoria Leiter Collection, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois is only one volume of a journal from 1881-82 when Mary Victoria was ten years old. This source is particularly useful for the Leiter family life and the activities they enjoyed together. Mary Victoria took special care to record the activities of her older brother Joseph, and her journal
is the earliest dated source regarding his boyhood days.

The other collection used for this paper, the Edwin Lyman Lobdell Collection, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois is useful for Lobdell’s contemporary view of the Field and Leiter split. This collection has four sections of Lobdell's Chicago reminiscences of the Gilded Age, but only the last section contains any reference to Levi Leiter.


Surprisingly, other newspaper coverage on the Leiter family activities, at least in the Chicago area, is lacking.
Although the Leiters were important in Chicago through 1881, a search of the Chicago microfilm newspapers has been fruitless. Magazine coverage is just as scarce, the only article, and happily a very valuable one, is Samuel E. Moffett. "Levi Zeigler Leiter." *Cosmopolitan.* (July 1903), pp. 336-38. Moffett's article contains information about Levi Leiter that is not mentioned anywhere else.

Another source of primary material concerning Joseph Leiter proved to be the Registrar's Office, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts, who supplied a list of Joseph's college courses. The Widener Library, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts maintained a clipping file on Joseph Leiter as one of their alumni. This source yielded "Joe Leiter," *Boston Harbor*, 29 June 1901 and "Joseph Leiter Dangerously Ill." *Daily Globe*, 10 February 1902. The two most important sources at Harvard were the Class of 1891 reports, Harvard Class of 1891, Twenty-fifth Anniversary Report 1891-1916, (Norwood, Massachusetts: Plimpton Press, 1916) and Fiftieth Anniversary Report (Boston, Massachusetts: Privately printed, 1941). The 1916 report contains a section on Joseph Leiter that he wrote himself, and is invaluable for his philosophies and activities.

Much of the other primary source materials concern the period in which the Leiter family lived, rather than the family itself. Newspaper coverage of the Field, Leiter and Company store mainly covers the horse epidemic. The *Chicago Tribune*, (November--1872) contains a series of articles on the
spread of the disease. "No Delay." Chicago Tribune, 5 November 1872, p. 1 is the most important news piece regarding the Field and Leiter reaction to the disease. After the disease faded, the Field and Leiter store received no more newspaper coverage. The best material concerning the 1870's and the Chicago dry goods scene is contained in articles from the Chicago Commercial Advertiser, a weekly newspaper. Articles particularly revealing about the success of Chicago merchants were: "Commercial Review: The Trade of Chicago During the Year 1878." (January 2, 1879); "Where to Buy and Sell." (January 2, 1879), p. 15; "Chicago Enterprise." (January 16, 1879), p. 5; "Chicago Dry Goods Scene." (May 15, 1879), p. 6. The newspaper ad regarding the Steinway pianos may be found in "Steinway Pianos," Chicago Tribune, (December 15, 1872), p. 1. A final primary source on the Field and Leiter store is James W. Sheehan and George Upton. The Great Conflagration Chicago: Its Past, Present and Future. Chicago; Union Publishing Company, 1871, which details the destruction caused by the Chicago Fire.

Primary source material regarding the Zeigler mine strike of 1904 relies heavily on the Levi Z. Leiter Chicago Collection. Although this strike was three years long and many lives were lost, contemporary coverage is scanty. The only magazine article C.H. Leichtleiter. "The War at Zeigler," Reader Magazine, (February 1905), pp. 300-06, has proved to be one of the most valuable sources. General background on mining techniques and conditions are available in mining
journals, the most useful articles on coal mining being:

The only other valuable contemporary coverage of the Leiter family is "Leiter Attorneys Gathering Evidence for Chicago Trail," Sheridan Post Enterprise, (April 4, 1926), p. 5. This brief clipping concerns Joseph Leiter's court battle to remain trustee of his father's estate.

The rest of the sources regarding the Leiter family are secondary. While some of them are very good, others are merely repetitions of the same stories handed down by earlier writers. The most valuable secondary sources on Levi's life are somewhat different from the sources concerning Joseph. Biographical coverage such as National Cyclopedia of American Biography, 1913 ed. S.v. "Joseph Leiter" and "Levi Leiter" are very good for an overall look at their careers.

Sources regarding the Field and Leiter partnership


Background on the "robber barons" may be found in many books. The eight best are: Frederick Lewis Allen. *The Lords of Creation.* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966); Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard. *Rise of American Civilization.* (New York: MacMillan, 1930) discusses these men from several angles; Famous Fortunes: Intimate Stories of Financial Success.


The development of the social scene from 1865 to 1932 is covered in many sources, but the most valuable were: Muriel Beadle. *The Fortnightly of Chicago: The City and Its Women 1873-1973*. (Chicago: Henry Regery Company, 1973), which contained material on Mrs. Levi Leiter. Gerald Carson."The

The sources concerning the development of the coal industry and Illinois usually neglect to tell the very important story of Zeigler. The two articles that contain the most information are Dickson Terry, "Final Shutdown for Famous Coal Mine." St. Louis Post-Dispatch. (January 13, 1949) and David E. Goss. "Joseph Leiter and His Coal Mine." Outdoor Illinois, (December, 1972), pp. 8-14, 31-33, which was full of information on the Zeigler mine that couldn't be found elsewhere.

Rand McNally and Company, 1969) was useful for its concise history of Zeigler. A final source, "The Open Forum: The Leiter Estate." Sheridan Post-Enterprise, (April 4, 1926) is the only source available regarding Zeigler and the Lake DeSmet project, and it is very short.

Much of the material on Levi and Joseph Leiter is repetitious, particularly the secondary sources. The primary sources such as letters and telegrams are buried among letters demanding rent or building repairs. Sources on the Leiters have to be ferreted out, and the lack of indexes for the following papers has hampered research efforts:

- Lake Geneva Regional News
- Christopher Herald (Illinois)
- Coal City Courant (Illinois)
- Chicago Inter-Ocean
- The Harvard Crimson

Unfortunately the Leiter Grandchildren cannot be traced, so any work done on the Leiter family has to rely on other sources.