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LOSING MAXWELL STREET?

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by

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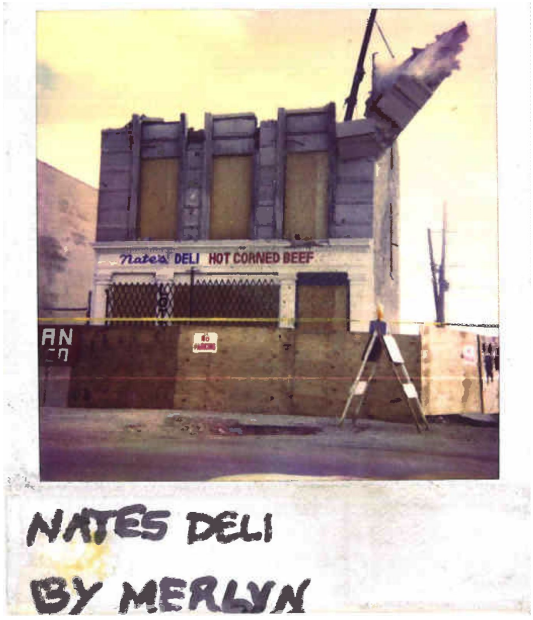

Figure 1: "Nate's Deli," courtesy of Merlyn McFarland.

- Abstract -

Maxwell Street Market might still exist by name in Chicago, but ask anyone involved with the market and they will tell you it is only a "fraction of a fraction," a sliver, of what the old market was. Maxwell Street Market, Chicago's largest open-air market, birthplace of the urban electric blues, and home to many of Chicago's immigrants, has been completely transformed. On the corner where the former market once thrived now sit expensive condos and the basis for a University of Illinois in Chicago narrative of urban renewal and a neighborhood improved. Culturally, what was lost and what has remained of Maxwell Street Market, and what do these losses, persistances, and resistances mean to vendors and advocates of the old market? In an attempt to understand what was "lost" in UIC and the City of Chicago's move and regulation of the Maxwell Street Market and what my informants mean when they call the former market "special" and "unique," I will investigate broadly the sociality of the informal economic space of Maxwell Street and how it is tied to conceptions of public space. I will compare informant-based narratives of public space and who it should benefit to UIC and the City of Chicago's understanding of "properly" used public space with which my informants contend. Finally, I will discuss the ways in which my informant's nostalgia and memories of the market might constitute resistance.

- Introduction -

Well, I guess I could liken it to, in your travels you go to a place that is maybe, oh I don't know, its just there is a certain feeling there, you know what I mean? It's a feeling of, it's hard for me to even put my finger on it,

> *'man this is a really cool place.' It's just a uniqueness. This isn't like downtown. …That [Maxwell Street] was the place to get the deals. That was the place for people to hang out at. To build friendships that were very unique. You can't go to the home depot… and build a relationship with someone, it ain't gonna happen. That person's going to be brought into the office for wasting company time. …Yeah, all that is pretty much gone* (Merlyn McFarland, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 25 May 2012).

Merlyn McFarland, the unofficially titled "Mayor of Maxwell Street," knew Chicago's famous Maxwell Street Market well, and he, along with many informants interviewed for this paper, will tell you that it is "pretty much gone." Today, on Maxwell Street, close to Halsted Street, sits a parking garage, a Caribou Coffee, expensive condos, and the fringes of the University of Illinois in Chicago's expanding campus. This is yet another story of urban decay reversed: neighborhoods becoming prettier and safer, spaces revitalized, and universities expanding. Official UIC discourse might call the neighborhood "improved" or even suggest that their presence in the neighborhood has captured the spirit of a once "declining" Maxwell Street. Some older façades moved and placed onto new buildings and a few statues and informational boards let potential tourists know that this was once a formative and important space in Chicago history.

Those who knew Chicago's once vibrant and informal market consider this gentrified stretch of UIC's Urban Village and UIC's take over of the space a "tragedy," a "shame," and an affront to the memory of the market. This corner of Maxwell Street and Halsted was once the center of the sprawling market, home to the some 2000 vendors, formal and informal. It had both the reputation of a thrift market that was a key and often-weekly trip for Chicago's poor, middle class, and immigrant populations and also of an exciting social and cultural center in Chicago, birthplace of the electric blues. The market was known throughout its iterations for its

informality, its self-sufficiency apart from the city, and its diversity in an otherwise heavily segregated city. Figure 1 at the beginning of this paper captures one of Maxwell Street's well-known institutions, Nate's Deli, at its moment of destruction after its purchase by UIC. The deli was a hub of activity on Maxwell Street and was also notorious for its role as a filming location for the 1980 film *The Blues Brothers*. Previously Lyon's Deli, the original owners of the Jewish deli sold it to Nate, an African-American man who had worked there for years learning their recipes. Nate, who has since passed away, was a treasured member of the Maxwell community, and his deli, for many, captured something essential about Maxwell. To those who knew the market or Nate's deli, the photograph is representative of the cultural loss of Maxwell in addition to the physical loss of the buildings occurring when the photograph was taken. While UIC's takeover of the neighborhood is representative of a classic Chicago story of urban expansion, growth, and, "progress," many former frequenters of the market consider UIC's "progression" of the space to be in fact a devolution and a significant loss.

Yet a market of the same name does persist, located several blocks northeast of this current gentrified Maxwell Street and Halsted space, and is distinguished officially only by the "New" in its "New Maxwell Street Market" title. This is the present day iteration of the famously resilient market that in 1994 was moved by the City of Chicago from its Maxwell Street and Halsted location under significant pressure from UIC, first to Canal Street and then to its current home on Desplaines. Here however, the few vendors who also sold on the old Maxwell Street are quick to emphasize that this market is only a "sliver of a sliver," or hardly even a shadow of what the old market was. Many vendors have since left the market where they once spent decades selling; emphasizing again that the old Maxwell Street is gone. Still the old market, like the new,

did often move and shift and spent decades under the perceived threat of closure or intervention, highlighting perhaps its status as an informal economic center. Market advocates are clear, however, the New Maxwell Street Market might have its own merits but it is not the same Maxwell Street Market that persisted and evolved for over a century in Chicago. In particular, my informants have nearly unanimously insisted that the old Maxwell street was "special," "unique," "exciting," had a "vibe" or was simply unlike anywhere else in a way that the current market is not. As Merlyn states in the opening quote, "It's a feeling of, it's hard for me to even put my finger on it, 'man this is a really cool place.' It's just a uniqueness." It is in this light that this study hopes to address the problem of, culturally, what was lost and what has remained of the old Maxwell Street Market and what these losses, persistences, and sometimes resistances mean to vendors and advocates of the old market.

Ethnographic in nature, this study is based primarily on interviews with former advocates, vendors, documenters, and community members of the original market. This interview data is combined with participant observation of the current market and Maxwell Street market gatherings, and with background knowledge of Maxwell gained through oral history and the photographs, music, and video documentaries that capture the original site. This methodological approach will help focus the study on what remains of an absent site: people's memories and feelings about the legacy of the market and its loss. Investigating the loss of the old Maxwell Street Market in Chicago, this study asks what my informants mean when they say that Maxwell Street is "special" and "unique," and what it was about the former market that gave it a sense of uniqueness and memorability in the eyes of its vendors, fans, and advocates that the current market has all but lost. In particular, this paper seeks to open up the study of an informal

economic center to its role as a place of social experience and cultural importance and to focus on peoples' connection to the market beyond a place of economic necessity. How might my informant's memory of the market today inspire resistance in a way that parallels informal economies relationship to the state?

Engaging with theory regarding informal economy, thrift and material culture, urban anthropology, and public space, I will discuss the importance of experience on Maxwell Street. Investigating Maxwell as a site of informal economy, my analysis will focus in particular on the conflicting narratives about what public space is and who it should benefit that emerge from the old market and from UIC and the City's contrasting perspective of the space. I will investigate entanglements of sociality and urban space to resolve why these markets are incomparable in my informants' eyes and to understand how their story of Maxwell Street interacts with traditional narratives of urban renewal. By focusing on an informant-based interpretation of public space I will discuss in particular Maxwell's role as a community safety net, entrepreneurship and ingenuity, and also the emphasis on social relationships, community, and Maxwell as a "fun" and "exciting" social experience, all elements of the intimate relationship between sociality, public space, and the Maxwell Street economy. All things, also, whose loss in the current market is accentuated by UIC and the City's regulation of the market and gentrification of the former market space. Throughout, I will turn to questions of persistence and resistance, and I will conclude with a discussion of how remembering Maxwell constitutes resistance and inspires my informants to challenge ideas of what "progress" is, or is not.

- Context and Historical Background -

Maxwell Street Market was Chicago's largest open-air market since the early 1900s and an essential shopping and economic hub for minorities, immigrants, and Chicago's working class. It was often described as a place where "the only color that mattered was green," or called the "Ellis Island of the Midwest:" a diverse and lively center of informal economy. More than an economic center, it was also the birth place of the urban blues where blues artists migrating from the south first plugged in their guitars to cords dangling out of apartment windows in the 1930s and 1940s, and where Jewish record labels recorded some of Chicago's most famous blues artists for the first time. Some of the most famous, including Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, played on the streets of Maxwell. It was a home to fledgling entrepreneurs, stolen goods, the "Maxwell Street Polish" sandwich, and the start of several now famous franchises. Morrie Mages Sports was one store that got its start on Maxwell Street before becoming Mages sporting goods, billed as the largest sporting goods store in the world, and eventually a part of Sports Authority. Maxwell Street was the first place you would look when your hubcaps were stolen but also a place my informants insisted they felt uniquely safe. Importantly, it was also a place where people came to walk, observe, dance, and simply enjoy the "vibe." It was considered an economic alternative to the norm -- a market never regulated by the city that provided affordable goods and access to work people could not find elsewhere. Its regulation was based on social relationships, and the periodic self titled figure of the "market master" collected cash from more established vendors and planted it on the desk of the first board alderman in exchange for lack of interference. This environment inspired two big waves of effort and fights to save Maxwell: first to preserve the buildings that UIC was bulldozing, and second to stop the move and regulation of the market.

Talking about UIC's gentrification of the Maxwell Street neighborhood, journalist Ben Joravsky argues in the Chicago Reader, "It's a classic Chicago story of urban renewal: move out the poor, tear down the old buildings, then put up housing so expensive the former residents couldn't dream of coming back. If anyone dares to fight back, clamp down to make sure they have no chance" (2007). He emphasizes both the frequency of these neighborhood renewal stories throughout Chicago and also the particular aggression with which UIC expanded its campus south into Maxwell Street. By calling the story classic he also touches on its acceptance as a common or unsurprising story even if it is acknowledged to be a sad process. Joravsky also calls it a *Chicago* story pointing to the fact that more than being common or unsurprising it is also an urban renewal process that is definitively Chicagoan. It is with these particularly Chicagoan notions of urban renewal that my informants contend. While it is impossible to capture the entirety of Maxwell Street's history here, it is important to situate an understanding of the market's loss within its history and legacy in Chicago and within these "classic" stories of urban renewal.

The new development of Maxwell Street first appears on Chicago maps in the 1850s; prior to the 1850s it was likely a soggy expanse of unpopulated land located near the poorly drained lakefront. The street was named after Dr. Philip Maxwell, an army physician and politician who retired to Chicago, though any motivations for the naming remain unclear (Berkow, 1977). Always a gateway residential community due to economic opportunity, cheap tenant housing, and support from other immigrant families and places like the famous Hull House, Maxwell was home to many waves of immigrants. Immigrating groups included Jews, Irish, Germans, Polish, Italians, African-Americans emigrating from the south, and Mexican

immigrants today. The early days of the market were dominated first by German and Irish immigrants and then by a large stream of Jewish immigrants who inspired the name, still used today by many of my informants, "Jew Town," for the area. The great Chicago Fire actually spared Maxwell Street: while the cow in Mrs. O'Leary's barn that legend says started the fire was fairly close to Maxwell, it was a few key blocks to the north (1977:5). The fact that the neighborhood was spared from the fire added considerably to the original influx of people to that area and also, interestingly, caused a few pre-fire buildings still standing on Maxwell Street at the time of UIC's intrusion to become a point of protest regarding historical preservation. The beginnings of the market itself came after the neighborhood was spared from the fire and peddlers and street stands began popping up along the Jefferson Street area. Since Jefferson was a busy street with traffic down the middle, the peddlers soon spilled over onto the still residential Maxwell Street (1977:5). In fact, in one of the few moments of formality, the city of Chicago addressed the bustling space in 1912 by passing a Chicago City Council ordinance that recognized it as the Maxwell Street Market. Ira Berkow, a Pulitzer prize winning reporter and writer who grew up in an immigrant family in the Maxwell Street Market area, wrote an oral history based book called *Maxwell Street: Survival in a Bazaar* that is currently the most significant written account of Maxwell Street's history, and is therefore helpful to engage with here. Berkow highlights the poverty and intense population density of the area in the early 1900s:

> Streets were mud; sidewalks were wooden slats with nails protruding. Garbage was rarely picked up. When the lungs of an overworked peddler's horse burst in the heat of summer, the beast might lie in the street for days a feast for flies and maggots, before the fire department got around to dragging the carcass off. For every ten people, only one toilet was available. Three and four people slept in a bed…. The sweatshops were, without exception in this area, located in the tenement houses. The noxious odors from the alleys, the close and unsanitary conditions, the lack of light and air insured the maximum probability of disease (Berkow, 1977:6).

These descriptions were characteristic of poor neighborhoods in a rapidly expanding Chicago. Chicago has a tradition of constantly evolving urban planning and quick expansion that is significant to understanding the pervasive lack of historical preservation in Chicago today. The fight to save the buildings on Maxwell Street and have them historically preserved was hindered by the fact that historical preservation is still not a significant city priority. Throughout its over one hundred year existence, Maxwell Street tells the story of a Chicago neighborhood aggressively subjected to gentrification and urban expansion projects.

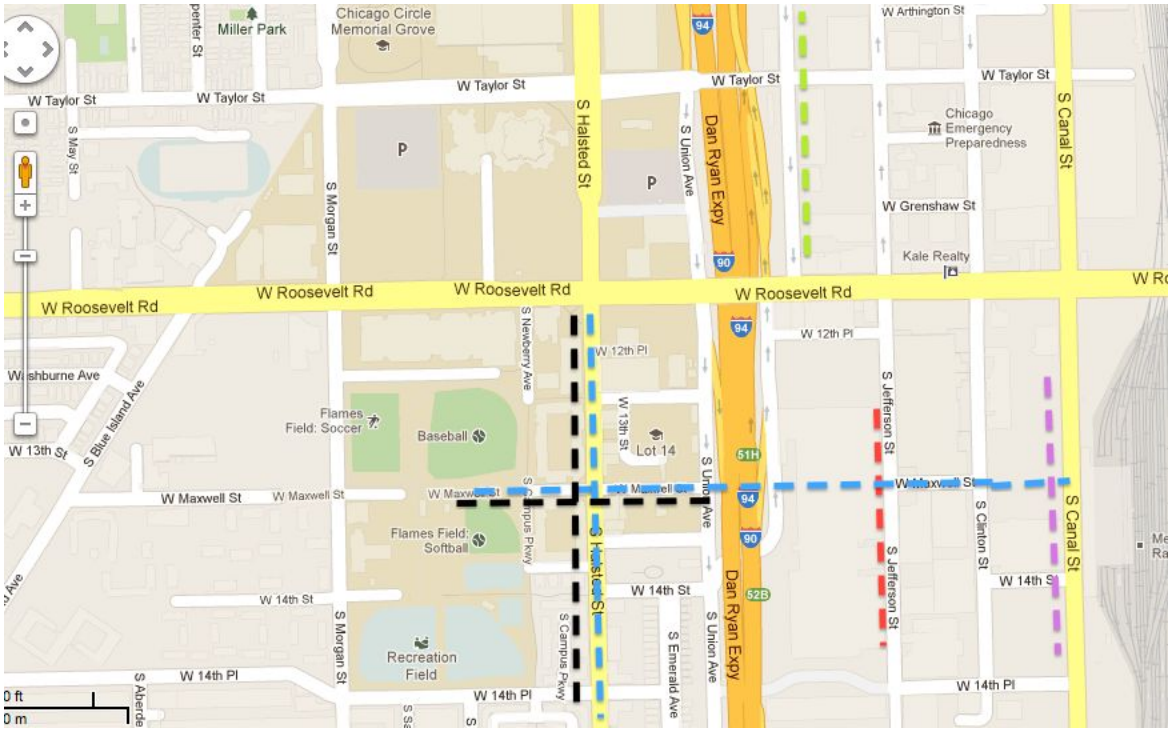

Figure 2: Present day Maxwell Street area with highlighted market locations. Google images, my emphasis.

Map Key

Red: Jefferson Street, first location of pushcarts and street peddlers.
Blue: Maxwell Street and Halsted, market location prior to the construction of the Dan Ryan expressway.
Black: West Maxwell Street and Halsted, market location after the Dan Ryan construction cut it in half.
Purple: Canal Street, market location after the city moved and regulated it in 1994. First home of

the “New Maxwell Street Market.”
Green: Desplaines, market location today and second home of the market after its regulation and move in 1994.

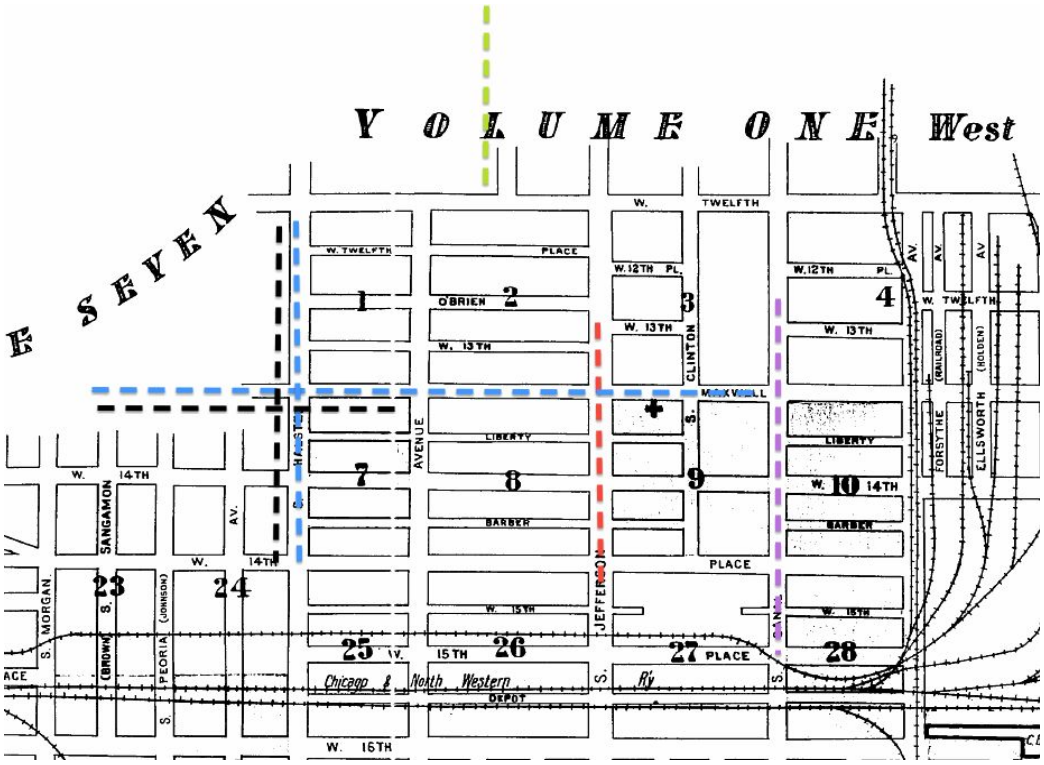

Figure 3: 1914 Map of Maxwell Street area before urban renewal projects shifted the neighborhood with market locations marked. Sanborn Maps, 1905-1951, vol. 8 1914, my emphasis.

Map Key
Red: Jefferson Street, first location of pushcarts and street peddlers.
Blue: Maxwell Street and Halsted, market location prior to the construction of the Dan Ryan expressway.
Black: West Maxwell Street and Halsted, market location after the Dan Ryan construction cut it in half.
Purple: Canal Street, market location after the city moved and regulated it in 1994. First home of the “New Maxwell Street Market.”
Green: DesPlaines, market location today and second home of the market after its regulation and move in 1994.

Figure two and three are maps key to understanding the market’s trajectory and its consistent confrontation with urban renewal projects. Appendix G includes a more detailed map of part of the streets in the early 1900s that also has building footprints indicative of the type of

housing and shops that once lined the streets (fitting with Berkow's description of tenant housing). All market locations marked on the maps are estimations as the market was unregulated, fluid, and in the case of push carts and vendors who sold watches under their sleeves, also mobile. Some of the key urbanization threats to the market over the years include the 1926 adjustment of the Chicago river which runs just to the east of Maxwell, the construction of the aforementioned Dan Ryan Expressway in the late 1950s, and, of course, UIC's expansion into the area. These transitions are readily apparent in the stark geographical changes of these maps.

In red on both maps is Jefferson Street where Berkow describes the first peddlers and push-carts (Berkow, 1977). In blue is the area the market occupied as it expanded onto Maxwell Street prior to the construction of the Dan Ryan expressway, and leading up to its 1962 unveiling. In black is the market after the Dan Ryan project cut the space in half and forced the market west. As Berkow also points out Maxwell Street once extended "east to west for a city mile. In the 1950s and 60s it was cut to half that length" (Berkow, 1977:1), an effect of Dan Ryan construction easily apparent on the map between the blue and black marked areas. Finally in purple and green are the two market locations from after UIC and the City of Chicago's 1994 move and regulation of the market, first to Canal Street and then later to Desplaines where the market remains. I have marked all locations on both sets of maps in an effort to demonstrate the massive change the neighborhood has undergone at the hands of urban expansion projects. Maxwell Street, once a city mile long now lays fragmented thanks not only to the Dan Ryan but also to UIC's absorption of the area into its campus. UIC's current usage of the space described in the introduction is centered on the corner of Halsted and Maxwell and on the block of

Maxwell leading east toward the Dan Ryan. This corner became the crux of the fight to save historical buildings on Maxwell Street, and UIC too acknowledges that it was once the market center, putting up a few "informational boards" about the historical market on the block today. These boards and a couple statues of bluesmen, in a nod to Maxwell's world famous music legacy, who might have once performed on Maxwell are all that remain alongside the few historical facades that UIC haphazardly moved from the neighborhood.

In *Maxwell Street, Survival in a Bazaar* Berkow's chapters are punctuated with news articles from the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Reader* starting as early as 1905 and continuing throughout the century, all suggesting the likely imminent closure of Maxwell. The articles emphasize Berkow's general theme of both the struggle of the Maxwell area and its incredible resilience. They are also indicative of the influence these urban renewal projects like the Dan Ryan had on Maxwell throughout its history, inspiring concern of its imminent demise. The end of the book in particular focuses on the demolition of most of the Maxwell neighborhood in the late 70s, when, due to UIC's interest in the land, the area west of Halsted was almost entirely razed including the vast majority of the shops and buildings he highlights throughout the book. As UIC's expansion into the neighborhood became more aggressive, another potential end to the market was confronted. Since the publishing of the book, my informants understand the 1994 move and regulation by the city as the event that truly altered the market.

For the purposes of this project it is very important to make a distinction between the market as it was before the city's 1994 move and substantial intervention, the effective "end" of the "old" Maxwell, and beginning of the current market that shares a name and a tiny fraction of vendors that participated in the market before 1994. Though Maxwell was often considered

under threat of closure and the market was fairly mobile, the 1994 move to Canal Street is a key event to my informants and more important move than anything previous. This was by far the most significant involvement of the city. For the first time the city was completely regulating and running the market, controlling who could vend there, and even issuing tickets for violations. In addition, the number of vendors at the market dropped dramatically at this point and the homeless and less established vendors were instantly cut out. Finally, there was a substantial resistance against the city to prevent this move that also points to its importance in my informants' eyes. People saw it as a closure of the old Maxwell and a possession of the space that was its namesake; the market was even technically renamed "*new* Maxwell Street Market" after the move. I will refer to the historical Maxwell street market (the market before that 1994 move) as Maxwell, Maxwell Street, Maxwell Street Market, etc., but will always distinguish my references to the market post 1994 as the "New Maxwell Street Market."

- Methodology -

Initially, two components of this project seemed the most methodologically problematic: the act of ethnographically studying a place that was no longer existent, and having such an unbounded multi-site project in an urban environment. Interestingly, both now seem to be important advantages in addressing my research questions. The methodological approach allowed for a focus on what remains of the now extinct site -- people's memories and feelings about the legacy of the market and its loss in a way that has been especially informative and ethnographically rich. In fact, the absence of the market allows me to study how former members, vendors, and advocates perceive what was lost, what might persist, and whether this necessitates resistance. Discussing urban anthropology Hannerz describes the dangers of a

"billiard-ball" approach to ethnography in the city that studies spaces within the city as bounded, "village ethnography" like units (1980). The fact that Maxwell Street was a site where its space within Chicago was important but was also necessarily unbounded, due to the historical market's absence, has allowed me to navigate the dangers of that approach. Similarly, I take into consideration Julian Brash's suggestion that anthropology should engage with ideas of urbanization and cities embedded in broader social relations, not just with the city as a setting for billiard-ball ethnography (2006). Instead I am able to allow my site to engage with issues of right to space, gentrification and ingenuity, and resistance in Chicago outside of the Maxwell Street space in a more organic way as my informants themselves brought them into play. As has been addressed in the historical background section, Maxwell Street's existence within broader waves of urban renewal and expansion in Chicago is significant.

Interviews, therefore, are one of the most important sources of data for the project. I analyzed ten formal interviews of one to two hours duration in addition to many informal conversations with informants. Interview subjects were selected through a "snowballing" process: most interview subjects were recommended by at least one other community member or by the Maxwell Street Foundation. Interview subjects were asked a wide range of questions regarding their experiences and memories of the market, how they felt about its closure, what it meant to them in the context of Chicago, and more.

Due to the nature of my field site being both multi-sited and in Chicago, there was no bounded time that I was "in the field." Over the past year I have scheduled and conducted interviews, visited the current market on many Sundays, and kept in touch with informants. Since I am not from Chicago, my personal knowledge of Maxwell stemmed from first visiting

the current New Maxwell Street Market and then learning more about the history behind the place and particularly its connection to the Blues, both through coursework and eventually personal interest.

My informants and interview subjects come from a wide variety of backgrounds, true to the market itself, but most are older since they had some significant relationship to the market before it was moved and regulated in 1994. Some have strongest memories of the market from the 50s and 60s, while many were also significantly involved in the fight to save the neighborhood in the 1980s, and the fight to save the market in the early 1990s. The largest commonality between my informants is their strong appreciation for Maxwell or involvement in the historical market. Some informants have been street vendors for a significant part of their lives, some have studied the market, some have been market activists, and some have captured the market as artists. While the diversity of my informants is a benefit with regard to understanding the market, it could also be limiting my analysis in that my informants are very self-selecting participants with individually strong and varying associations with the market that might not capture general opinion about the market. As an anthropological researcher, however, I do not aim to define general opinion on the market, but rather to learn from the opinions and strong connection to the market that my informants feel, and in doing so perhaps make a *familiar* story of gentrification unique and *strange.*

This interview data is combined with participant observation in the current market and Maxwell Street market gatherings, and with background knowledge of Maxwell gained through oral history and the photographs, music, and video documentaries that capture the old market. Again, as with the interviews, the documentaries and photographs allow a focus on learning

about the market through the perspective of those that loved it: most of the photographs and documentary footage were captured by filmmakers, photographers, and artists who found the market to be incredibly rich and fascinating artistic material. In particular, Paul Ranstrom's documentary *Cheat You Fair* (2006), named after a long time shop along Maxwell Street of the same name, provided significant interviews and footage of the market in its last days of life in the early 1990s. It was especially helpful to me for its temporal focus on the end of the market and people's emotions with regard to its move and for the interviews of many key Maxwell Street figures who have sadly since passed away. I also examined photographs that ranged from personal collections that people were nice enough to let me hold, look at, and even borrow; photographs belonging to the Maxwell Street Foundation; hundreds of photographs and comments on the internet; and archives at the Chicago History Museum and the University of Chicago's Special Collections Research Center. There is information that is formally archived, in the University of Chicago Special Collections, the Maxwell Street Foundation, and The Chicago Historical society, and information that is informally archived, such as the thousands of photographs, video clips and written memories that flood the internet. My archival information came from a vast and often untraceable range of sources but was useful especially to create a visual sense of the old market, and to see who had an interest, or lack thereof, in preserving the memory of Maxwell Street.

Participant observation and direct observation were also important methods of investigation I used at the current market location on Desplaines and in other gatherings. Due to the nature of the market setting, even strolling casually around the market can make you an unquestioned participant in the Sunday bustle. Interacting as a participant on two different levels,

as a market customer and then as an academic studying the market with certain expectations placed upon me, taught me a lot about the market's relationship with its past and how it has been portrayed and studied thus far as people reacted to my presence studying the market with familiarity and certain expectations.

- Introduction to Analysis -

In an attempt to understand what was "lost" in the move and regulation of the Maxwell Street market, throughout my analysis I will investigate broadly the sociality of the informal economic space of Maxwell Street and how it is tied to my informants' conception of public space. In addition, I will compare these informant based narratives of public space, who it benefits, and why that makes it "special" to UIC and the City of Chicago's understanding of "properly" used public space and the narrative of their transformation of the former Maxwell street space. Finally I will discuss persistence vs. resistance and how remembering Maxwell Street might still constitute a form of resistance for many of my informants that potentially parallels informal economy's relationship to the state. Throughout my analysis I discuss the entanglement of conceptions of urban space with sociality and entrepreneurialism.

Discussing what she felt was different about Maxwell Street, Fern says, "my friends would never realize how you could even explain that place because it was just a unique area" (Fern Packer, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 12 February 2013). In the quote that opened this paper Merlyn explains, "It's a feeling of, it's hard for me to even put my finger on it, 'man this is a really cool place.' It's just a uniqueness" (Merlyn McFarland, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 25 May 2012). *Special* and *unique* were terms my informants used frequently to describe Maxwell Street Market. I use them in this paper only as my informants do, in an attempt

to understand what about Maxwell Street leads my informants to use these terms so consistently. I take them to apply to something that is both impossible to define and meaningful as my informants tend to use them when they emphasize that there is something about Maxwell that they cannot otherwise describe. As these are difficult terms to define, however, I will only use them here when addressing my informants' use of them and investigating what my informants might mean by doing so.

- Experience and the Study of Thrift -

Anthropological theory regarding shopping and thrift often emphasizes the importance of experience, something that is also clearly important to the old Maxwell Street and to my informants' memories of the place. In this study I hope to demonstrate how much of the economic activity of Maxwell was based heavily on experience, learning, and interaction, and how the social and cultural importance of Maxwell also relied on it being an exciting place and a place *to experience*. In the following section I will analyze Maxwell Street Market in terms of anthropological theory about thrift and the importance of shopping experience. Maxwell Street expands these discussions thanks to its combined role as a place of necessity and a place of excitement and adventure. Importantly, this latter element seemed to exist for those who needed to shop on Maxwell Street for reasons of necessity and for those who did not, making it a unique social outlet in Chicago.

Thrift involves the experience of shopping in a way that saves money, but, as explained by Daniel Miller, it can be widely interpreted and in fact vary significantly based on socio-economic class and who is describing it (1998). For example, many wealthy families might consider it thrift and saving when they buy more expensive products that they believe have more

quality and therefore save them money in the long run. On the other hand, someone of a lower socio-economic status might consider thrift to only be buying things at a substantially reduced price or second-hand (Miller 1998).

At the old Maxwell Street thrift spanned both necessity and the excitement of shopping experience. Maxwell Street for decades was the most essential routine shopping stop for Chicago's lower middle class, poor, and immigrant communities. An informant named Kenneth, who grew up and went to preschool in the Maxwell Street neighborhood and even legendarily had his nursery blanket ripped off (and likely sold on Maxwell), discussed the importance and ubiquitous nature of shopping at Maxwell even after he later moved out of the area and lived on the Southside. He explains, "Oh yeah, that was my experience as a child and later on as a young adult, you couldn't function in Chicago being on the lower end without making a trip to Maxwell street." He added, "For some people it was daily, for some people it was a couple times a week. I mean you could not avoid it. Simply because economically there was so much happening" (Kenneth Benson, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 29 November 2012). It is important not to overlook this function of Maxwell and its role as a center for thrift in Chicago. Larry adds that Maxwell was "the outlet store" for Chicago, long before he says those large clothing lines and other stores made discount and thrift into national franchises (Larry Lund, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 11 December 2012). Maxwell was the place to buy rusted tools, clothing, socks, shoes, hubcaps, and all sorts of routine everyday items meant to be used and consumed. Merlyn frequented Maxwell to replace any tools necessary for his flooring business long before he himself became a vendor and market advocate (Merlyn McFarland, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 25 May 2012). Chicagoans' memories of Maxwell are filled with trips to be fitted for

suits and purchases of shoes, socks, hubcaps and more. But the old Maxwell Street market, it seems, captured the complexity of thrift that is essential to Miller's description: it was a necessary outlet and discount shopping stop for a large amount of Chicagoans, but for many, including both those for which Maxwell was an economic necessity and those for which it was not, it was also a site where the experience of saving was important, enjoyable, and even exciting.

Interestingly, many of the items purchased on Maxwell Street pale in comparison to the experience of visiting the market in people's accounts of shopping there. Sometimes informants do not remember exactly what they were at Maxwell to buy: was it a loaf of bread, socks, a new table, repaired shoes, or just a polish sausage sandwich? Very few people treasure individual items purchased at Maxwell, most as previously discussed, were meant to be consumed, used in daily life, and worn out, but almost everyone has a memory of an interaction with a vendor or story to share. While there are sometimes stories of a unique item, a great percentage of the excitement of thrift had to do with finding the best deal, bargaining, and one's interaction with others at the market. While it was a place for thrift in that it provided the most affordable goods to Chicago's poorest populations, it was also a place for thrift in that it provided the thrill of the hunt and the bargain experience. Crewe and Gregson (1998) expand this notion of sociality and experience as a significant factor in informal economic exchanges and common motivations behind participating in thrift through their study of car boot sales in England. While social relationships specifically will be addressed further on, it is important to note that sociality and experience as Crewe and Gregson describe them are a key reason my informants' conception of Maxwell Street as public space is different from UIC's.

As discussed, Maxwell's role as a thrift destination made it essential to many of Chicago's poorest classes, but it also attracted others who could afford to shop elsewhere that enjoyed the novelty of the Maxwell experience and who valued learning to bargain. My informants often delighted in people's resourcefulness as both shoppers and buyers. Describing some of his favorite memories Larry says that he will "never forget the guys who used to roll up their sleeves and say, 'wanna' buy a wristwatch'? And they'd have lines of wristwatches up their sleeve, sort of a mobile shop. I think that was sort of the thing, a real novelty" (Larry Lund, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 11 December 2012). The experience of witnessing the ingenuity of vendors was part of the excitement. Describing other jewelry hawkers that always sat in Nate's Deli, Merlyn explained:

> And they'd go in and be huddled at a little corner table and be wheeling and the money was blowing and the rings and watches and everyone was making money, buy, sell, trade, that kind of stuff, that was absolutely cool! Oh yeah … Back then things were really free. It was going on" (Merlyn McFarland, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 25 May 2012).

Thrift was about the "wheeling," the bargain, and was an essential component of the excitement of the Maxwell experience. The informality of the shopping experience on Maxwell was tied to excitement, the thrill of bargaining, and unpredictability. Another informant Steve said that, "the spirit of the place was 1000 times more exciting than North Michigan Avenue" (Steve Balkin, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 27 May 2012), differentiating the two sorts of consumer experiences and suggesting that the informal one on Maxwell was far more exciting, thrilling and worth experiencing. In fact the replacement of the former market space with the gentrified stretch of expensive condos and chain stores in University Village after 1994 ended up making this differentiation between an exciting economic experience and the more standard box or chain store approach all the more apparent to my informants.

It is important to again emphasize, however, that there is not one group of people for which Maxwell was necessity and one for which it was adventure. On the contrary the process of thrifting on Maxwell was seen as an important economic awareness and good shopping practice for those of all classes. Historically, Maxwell was extremely important for its ability to create a space of adventure, experience, and freedom where people who were often limited in their ability to do so elsewhere in Chicago could let loose on Sundays listening to the blues or eating a polish sausage sandwich after a long night out. While the Maxwell case takes it much further due to its role as a social public space, that is perhaps why Daniel Miller's discussion of thrift is so apt: thrift can exist in many different ways especially at different socio-economic levels, but the *experience* of saving is essential (1998). Throughout the subsequent discussion excitement, experience, social relationships and the uniquely diverse Maxwell Street shopping experience will be important to understanding what exactly was lost with the old Maxwell Street Market.

- Towards an Informant-Defined Public Space -

As this discussion will be framed through my informant's idea of public space and how it connects to sociality, it is important to first clarify what I mean by this definition of public space. While the stores that lined the street did not move as much, as mentioned in the introduction, Ira Berkow's book, and especially the newspaper clippings he includes, highlights that Maxwell Street did in fact move or shift a fair amount throughout its existence and was often under threat of closure. As is often the case with informal economic centers, the market was resilient and evolving. Larry adds, "And you know Maxwell Street moved a lot. It has never been a fixed thing" (Larry Lund, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 11 December 2012). This is important to point out here, however, in relation to the informant definition of public space that is grounded in

a space's accessibility to all people and character. The public space of Maxwell Street was not necessarily rooted throughout its existence to one specifically defined space, so much as to the environment created by the market. Space did become an important part of the fight to save Maxwell Street since the preservation of buildings was key to the struggle in addition to UIC's take over of the namesake Maxwell Street. That said, even then the true "public space" that made those landmarks significant to my informants had much more to do with the culture of Maxwell than with any official zoning of the space that it occupied. Public space, as my informants define it, seems to mean a place that is truly both accessible and accepting to all people: a place where "the only color that mattered was green" and where people of all socio-economic and national backgrounds were welcome. In addition, public space for my informants entails a social space that people can occupy without purpose beyond enjoyment and experience, a space to let loose and participate freely. Finally, for many of my informants the fact that the environment and atmosphere of Maxwell was created by people and "the public" made it more *unique* and more public, in the sense of not just *for* the public but also *by* the public. Essential to understanding this usage of public space is the element of sociality and excitement, and the relationships and connections that my informants value. It is key to understand that this idea of public space is without significant governmental or third party involvement and that what is created on Maxwell Street, especially the overall culture of the space, becomes more important to my informants for exactly that reason. It is important *because* they understand it as being created by people working an informal social network without other party involvement.

As I will explore next, this perceived shift away from Maxwell as a public space according to my informant's conception of it is seen to be a reason for the loss of what they call

the “special” and “unique” atmosphere of Maxwell. In particular, this shift highlights conflicting ideas of how space benefits the public and what public space should be or do. To my informants Maxwell Street is home to ingenuity and entrepreneurialism that is motivated by and created by people without institutional interference, and reliant on interpersonal relationships, interaction, and cooperation. It is valued, therefore, as a public space of a much different sort than the current space filled with expensive condos and chain stores that UIC would eventually replace it with.

In the following section I will investigate the interconnectedness of the interpretation of Maxwell as a truly public and open space and the role of Maxwell as a safety net and source of opportunity for all. This is one of many reasons that Maxwell was seen as a culturally important: a place of authentic entrepreneurialism and ingenuity, where all people were able to find work and take it upon themselves to change their lives. I will also explore the idea of learning from Maxwell as experience, and the importance of cooperation and social relationships, all with regard to the tie between the informal economy and the sociality that made the space uniquely public to my informants.

- Maxwell Street as a Safety Net -

The lack of formal regulation (that in other markets might require among other things yearly fees or assigned stands) of the Maxwell Street Market made it a space open to all who wished to participate or visit, a key component of what made my informants value Maxwell Street as a “unique” space and also as an authentically public one. It was a place prized for the fact that everybody had a chance to sell, do business, make money, and find meaningful work thanks, in part, to the prioritization of money and business ingenuity over all else.

The old market had an ability to allow the very poorest people, those who were simply

down on their luck, or new immigrants to the city, a place to fall back on to survive that provided them with a safety net. This safety net character of the market had two components: the community of others who were in a similar situation willing to help, and the lack of regulation that allowed everyone the opportunity to make some money and build their own work regardless of what they already had, the latter which I will discuss here. I will come back to the importance of cooperation and community on Maxwell Street further on in this paper.

In the front plate of an archival collection of photos of the market through the years, Studs Terkel, the well known Pulitzer prize winning author, historian, and radio-host in Chicago, was quoted in 2005 as saying about Maxwell that, "A grassroots avenue for survival got created there for masses of immigrants and poor people" (Maxwell St Collection). Indeed, through studying archival records of Maxwell it is clear that thousands of immigrants who came to Chicago made Maxwell street their first stop, their safety net from which to build their lives in a new city, partially because there was no threshold, monetary or cultural, for acceptance or partially because of the community's reputation. The fact that Maxwell for many was a place of survival made it all the more culturally important to my informants. Fern frequently discusses Maxwell's importance to her in terms of what it meant for her family:

> I have fond thoughts of Maxwell Street. That my grandparents came to this country and brought my father to be. We had a very good life. A lot of people left Maxwell Street and went on to bigger and better things. And my father would never leave. It basically it was a good and wonderful place for people to start out their life from all of the poverty they had in the old countries. They came to this country to make something out of their lives and they did! And Maxwell Street provided that venue for them. And my family went on to have a good life because of that. Because of my grandparents coming to this country and settling there. It was a very good venue for people to make something out. (Fern Packer, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 12 February 2013).

Fern touches on many elements of the American Dream narrative here. She emphasizes the

importance generally though of Maxwell as a starting point both for immigrants and for Chicagoans and the reality that many people did go on to expand businesses and find monetary success thanks to Maxwell. Maxwell Street is described by Fern as the key venue or avenue for people coming to the United States for the first time to begin their lives and to build themselves up from nothing. There was no limitation on people joining the market or selling on the fringes of the market and many vendors were more than willing to help others get their start.

In addition to the role it served for immigrants as a first stop and place to get on your feet, the market's accessibility to all was also important for the homeless and others living on the periphery of society in Chicago. The fact that the market was unregulated and considered public space available to all allowed anyone who was willing to work to gather items from alleys or condemned buildings, spread them on a towel on the ground, and make some money. The market had many solidly established stands and stores that lined the streets, some of their vendors and owners selling on Maxwell for over sixty years, and many that moved on to become major Chicago institutions. It also, however, had streets packed with push-carts, towels spread with merchandise, and peddlers around the periphery of the market, who also used the ability to sell there as a means of survival.

It is important here to note that I include all forms of entrepreneurialism in my consideration of the Maxwell Street Market area. This includes not just street stands, on folding tables or in permanent booths, but also the aforementioned push-carts and mobile vendors, laying blankets on the ground or covering arms full of watches with their sleeves, and even the shops that lined the Maxwell Street area and formed a part of the Maxwell Street culture that extended outside of Sunday market hours. In fact, as John Gaber notes in his discussion of Manhattan's

14th Street Vendors Market, these more permanent shops and residents can have a highly synergistic relationship with street vendors (Gaber: 1994). In the case of Maxwell, much like the 14th street market in Manhattan that Gaber discusses, the environment created by the street vendors helped the shop owners' business and my informants do not hesitate to consider them both as important parts of the same space, interacting and relying on each other frequently. Merlyn got his start on Maxwell Street cleaning and sweeping many of the shops, and many vendors sell items that owners were unable to sell in their stores. Likewise, many shop owners started as vendors before buying a more permanent space. This is important to note to understand all of the levels of participation in the market that made it a safety net and the importance of considering even these most peripheral vendors in concert with the stores and institutions of Maxwell when investigating the culture of the former Maxwell Street Market. For both immigrants and migrants Maxwell Street has no threshold for participation. The friends or family you might have travelled to the area to join, or even just vendors offering to help you out, were welcoming.

Steve referenced this safety net nature of the market with people who were involved as vendors on even the most peripheral level as one of the reasons he got so attached and devoted to it:

> There were even unlicensed vendors, homeless people who would walk through the alleys and pickup junk, and then put a towel or a sheet out on the sidewalk and lay their stuff out to sell and they wouldn't pay any fee because they were on the periphery, no one bothered them. But they had the most exciting things to sell because they would change every week. And I also felt good that here they were in an environment where they were not only to make a little extra money to mitigate the hardships of their homelessness but they were able to make social connections that could maybe help them find a job and get out of their homelessness (Steve Balkin, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 27 May 2012).

In Balkin's description it seems that it is not that the market was without organization entirely, there was frequently an informal system for collecting some money from vendors and there were many longtime established vendors, even becoming storeowners. Rather everyone was welcome to participate in the space even if they were on the periphery of the market laying down blankets to sell odd items. Steve also mentions social connections and access to work that can allow people to escape poverty. This points to the previously mentioned two-fold nature of Maxwell Street as a safety net: access for anyone to participate and a social community willing to help or build connections. Steve also says, "but they had the most exciting things to sell," which emphasizes how for many of my informants the excitement of the shopping experience was connected to the fact that the originality of Maxwell Street was created even by the poorest people. Maxwell's role as a "grassroots avenue for survival" (Maxwell St Collection) made the things people were selling more exciting to my informants, and as I will investigate shortly, ingenuity is a key component of the Maxwell Street experience. As with my previous discussion of thrift, this view of the safety net component of Maxwell touches on the way in which necessity and excitement or experience was bridged in the market.

Describing his own experience as a vendor, Merlyn emphasized the fact that it was when he lost everything, because of a robbery, and had no more options that he packed his belongings in a truck and drove straight to Maxwell Street. He slept for a few days on the mattress in the back of his truck then with the kindness of a few vendors to lend him space he was able to find things to sell, bargain with shopkeepers for merchandise, make some money, and survive. For him, Maxwell Street was where he fell back when he had nothing else, but it also became a lively adventure. Describing his first impressions of the market Phil said, "it was completely

spontaneous and un-regulated and people living under the radar, living there and selling and hustling and its perfect for poor people perfect for those people who were living on the margins and did not meet societal standards" (Phil Ranstrom, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 4 May 2012). Phil also sees the market as a key space for the city's poor. His emphasis on spontaneity and "living under the radar" seems to associate, as with Steve, part of the excitement of the space with its safety net nature. As indicated above through the experiences of my informants, Maxwell Street both benefitted the public and was created by the public in a way they feel to be "unique" and important.

This safety net created by universal access to participation emphasizes a key paradox of informal economy as presented by Portes and Haller, that while informal economy is often perceived as threatening to the state it is often actually beneficial for the state, the very institution supposed to be oppressing it (Portes and Haller, 2005). Portes and Haller mention that one of the key ways it benefits the state is by creating a cushion or safety net by providing income to a group of the population that would otherwise not have it, protecting the state from upheaval and the costs of welfare support, and sometimes, unfortunately, jail time. Maxwell Street seems to uphold this notion of informal economy, creating a key safety net in the city of Chicago and source of income that for many would not be possible outside of Maxwell. The second component of Portes and Haller's argument here is also interesting in relation to Maxwell: that this protects the state from political upheaval (2005). Interestingly, when the city moved and regulated Maxwell it became a much greater source of resistance to the city of Chicago than the market itself was, highly beneficial to many people that otherwise would not have had the support. It seems probable though that UIC perceived the market as a threat to the campus image

it desired to project, and it is evident that they wanted to push certain populations out for the neighborhood to achieve that image. Though many people considered the market's loss as an inevitability based on the city's idea of "progress," for many of my informants, their assessment of the beneficial nature of this safety-net for the city of Chicago also contributed to their reasonable difficulty in understanding why the city would not want the market there and why they were not more careful with its handling.

It is apparent how this complete accessibility came into conflict with the city's regulation of the space, which, in the move of 1994 effectively cut out any homeless and informal week-by-week vendors instantly. Regulating who was allowed to sell, fining anyone not following the rules, and charging vendors for the permit to sell eliminated the perception that Maxwell was truly open to anyone. Importantly, as I will discuss below, UIC appropriates some of these narratives of opportunity when justifying their take over of the space but does not desire a place of universal accessibility.

- Glorification of the Right to Work -

In the following section I will expand on ideas of access and participation as key to an informant definition of public space to talk about the glorification of people's "right to work." Like with the safety net, this right to work and people's agency on Maxwell Street seemed to make the space and products created more exciting to my informants. Consistently in conversations with informants I came across the concept that the ability to work and to create something from nothing was central and considered one of the most important rights a person has. Below I will address how Maxwell Street, partially thanks to its previously discussed accessibility to all as not just shoppers but also as vendors, was considered an important place for

the development of work ethic. Further, I will discuss how Maxwell was considered to be a place where all people had a right to the benefits of work and to the frequently glorified process of building your life and creating your own success.

Not only did the fact that it provided access to work to all people regardless of background, but also that what was created in Maxwell Street was created entirely, unaided, by people fighting to survive and make a living made Maxwell Street an especially "public" place. Steve stated with a great deal of emotion that:

> The greatest, most sacred, activity for humans to engage in is to create something from nothing. And that's what people did on Maxwell Street. It was the poorest of the poor who came there. They created vibrant businesses. They not only resurrected the area continually to keep it active and buoyant but they resurrected lives (Steve Balkin, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 27 May 2012).

While this relates to previous discussions of Maxwell Street as a safety net for the poor, Steve here even uses the word sacred to describe access to work and to the ability to create. It is evident in the emotion he associates with it that this is deeply important and makes Maxwell to him a tragic space to lose in Chicago. He emphasizes "vibrant businesses" and "active and buoyant" to describe this creation process indicating its remaining impression on him. This process of creation and the agency it gave people was extremely important to the uniqueness of Maxwell Street in they eyes of many of my informants in addition to Steve. The emphasis on process and the ability to learn work ethic for oneself and interact as buyers or sellers connects to the emphasis on experience at Maxwell overall. That ability to participate, experience, and then build your own life was also deeply connected to the sociality of the economic space. In turn, as Steve emphasized, the fact that the space was open to everyone and was a space for entrepreneurship for immigrants and the poor made it then a socially important space to even

those who did were not vendors there.

Merlyn also stressed the essential value of work in one's life and how Maxwell Street allowed for that. He passionately stated, while describing a young lady who assisted him in the small cleaning business he set up with different shops in the neighborhood:

> I set her up so she could go ahead and do the same thing, so she could make some money too. Because work, work is what gives a person identity and value to their life. If a person has no work, nothing meaningful that they can do, they don't feel too good about it, you can't feel like a worthwhile human being if you don't do something (Merlyn McFarland, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 25 May 2012).

The accessibility of the space to all made it a place where the universal right to work and build your own life is also glorified by Merlyn. Work here is not just about making money but also about self-worth, identity, and meaning. Work had social value as evidenced by Merlyn's concluding comment that "you can't feel like a worthwhile human being if you don't do something." Merlyn here also highlights the importance of cooperation, as he gives this girl her start after someone else gave him his, and participation, the importance of her doing work for herself, on Maxwell Street discussed in further sections. As discussed with regards to the safety net Maxwell provided, for many, the market rectified the problem of access to work elsewhere in the city and was therefore a "special" place where that economic process did exist. It is significant to note here as in the earlier discussion of thrift that this aspect of Maxwell Street was not only appreciated or referenced by my informants who might have sold on Maxwell Street and came to Maxwell Street due to tough times, but also those who visited Maxwell Street for other purposes. Even to my informants who visited Maxwell Street to document it, or simply to enjoy it, the accessibility of Maxwell Street to all as a place of work made it a more unique social space to my informants. In turn, the creativity and ingenuity that resulted was both lauded by my

informants and appreciated in terms of a public space thanks to these fringe communities, its safety net, and agency and access to work.

- A Culture of Ingenuity and Entrepreneurialism -

The appreciation of ingenuity and the Maxwell Street environment my informants describe connects deeply to the fact that this ingenuity is perceived as coming directly from people, and especially people working to survive. In addition, they contribute to the view of Maxwell Street as exciting, "unique," and novel: a place to be socially experienced. Ingenuity and resourcefulness were a point of pride for vendors in addition to a source of appreciation among visitors.

As Merlyn brought me tea in his overgrown backyard, he explained each element of his tea tray with great pride: the plastic recycled lids that served as coasters and lids for the mugs, the thrift store bought hot water thermos, the paper oats container that kept the milk container chilled, and the tray he carried everything on that someone had tried to get rid of. He pointed out how each repurposed and recycled item indicated a resourcefulness that was part of the character and pride of Maxwell Street. Resourcefulness and the common sense considered a part of survival, money making, and business on Maxwell, were also a part of Maxwell Street culture. This business sense was credited with creating some of the quirkiness and "uniqueness" Maxwell was known for. The cultural products of Maxwell Street resourcefulness and talent were even as influential as Blues music, certainly a significant contributor to this "quirky" and "unique" Maxwell Street atmosphere.

It is almost a crime to discuss the legacy of Maxwell without discussing the electric Blues, born, or at least transformed on Maxwell Street through the immigration of musicians up

from the southern United States to Chicago's south side and resourcefulness. The electric blues was first created on Maxwell Street as musicians began to plug in to amps for the first time and those who lived in or owned the buildings along the street would run cords out of their buildings and windows so that the musicians could play on the street. Fern's father was one such building owner: "on the weekend he would rent them electricity from his building so they could play on the street." (Fern Packer, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 12 February 2013). Although everyone seemed to appreciate the social environment the music created and the indisputable talent of the musicians, it was first recorded by many Jewish record labels or small shop owners like Fern's father who saw it as another great business opportunity. Fern's father owned a shop that sold guitars and records among other electronics and she describes her father's prioritization of being a businessman: "he was basically a business man. I could tell you as kids we always had all the records. And I don't think he was that interested in the music more in being a businessman" (Fern Packer, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 12 February 2013). Blues, it seems, is representative of both the resourcefulness that people on Maxwell Street prided themselves on and of the idea that Maxwell was a place for good business sense. The product of that economic resourcefulness and creativity could be something as influential and incredible as the Chicago Blues.

The talent and resourcefulness of Maxwell street vendors and blues performers was a significant draw for many coming to the market. It was a part of the entertainment experience and cultural experience of coming to Maxwell Street, and while it drew people to Maxwell for social entertainment reasons it also represented a window into "the other side of Chicago" and was fostered by the accessibility and informality of Maxwell. Bluesmen, like the hawkers whose

job it was to pull you into their shop, or the people who would roll up their sleeves to reveal arms full of watches, exemplify how ingenuity on Maxwell Street was often about sociality, persona, performance, and quirkiness. Maxwell Street's famous "chicken man," who had trained a chicken—often spotted travelling on his head—to perform in the street is another example. Maxwell had many famous "characters," Fern even suggests they were like "characters from a book" (Fern Packer, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 12 February 2013) who contributed to the experience that was visiting Maxwell Street. Evident even in my informants' thrill in sharing the story of an ingenious solution or moment of creativity is the *culture* of ingenuity on Maxwell Street. It was a culture that combined business and making money for survival with sociality and a strong sense of fun. Finally, as was the case with Nate's Deli, the Jewish deli run by a well loved and experienced African-American cook who had bought it from the original owners he worked for, the diversity and social relationships on Maxwell were important contributors to the ingenuity and the "unique" products created. The electric Blues, of course, is one famous example: spanning survival, thrill and social experience, Jewish record labels and African-American bluesmen.

- Learning from Maxwell -

Maxwell Street, thanks in part to the ingenuity and entrepreneurial skill of vendors, was lauded by my informants as a place to learn and experience authentic work ethic and economic practice. This was also often true for my informants who were raised in wealthier homes whose parents brought them to Maxwell so they could "see the other side," learn from other people, and understand what it "really means" to build yourself up. They valued Maxwell Street as an educational experience and avenue to learn and to witness haggling and good entrepreneurial

skills. Importantly, it was the fact that Maxwell was diverse and that people earned their living there that made it an important life lesson for many visitors. The ability to learn and the importance of experiencing Maxwell Street spanned valued entrepreneurial skills and personalities and wild stories. Although the social relationships forged on Maxwell Street and the valued interaction between vendors, customers, or anyone strolling along Maxwell Street will be discussed further on, I will investigate here Maxwell Street as a site to learn good entrepreneurial skills and something that was considered socially authentic. Further on, I will investigate how this prevailing idea of Maxwell as a place for good business and entrepreneurialism comes into conflict with UIC's narrative of what good business might be.

Several of my informants emphasized their trips to Maxwell as a search for experience and for witnessing entrepreneurial skill perhaps less evident elsewhere. Larry says, "but my dad liked it a lot, and also he wanted me always to see the other side of Chicago" (Larry Lund, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 11 December 2012), demonstrating the idea that Maxwell was an authentic view into lower class Chicago and that for his dad it demonstrated a social reality important to teach his son. Larry adds:

> You know Maxwell street was kind of we just went down for entertainment, walked around, and that was our Sunday experience down there, I don't think we ever bought a lot of things, it was just basically entertainment experience, my dad, he thought learning to bargain for things was a good trait to learn, that there was nothing at asking price (Larry Lund, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 11 December 2012).

Here Lund discusses the entertainment and experience component of coming to Maxwell Street in addition to haggling as an important skill to learn. While many people did visit Maxwell to shop on a weekly basis it also played this important social role of entertainment, excitement and unique experience: as previously discussed, importantly a role appreciated by all those who

visited the market regardless of the quantity of products they did or did not buy. Discussing what she thinks was truly unique about Maxwell Fern explains:

> And all the vendors they all had stories and especially the old timers. …the old timers they had been around for years and they had all sorts of cute little stories and things they would tell and they were characters like characters in the book. Basically I think it was very educational for me. I was from the suburbs and my friends would never realize how you could even explain that place because it was just a unique area. But people earned their living there they would earn their whole weeks living there just by going on the weekend. (Fern Packer, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 12 February 2013).

Again, Fern like Larry, discusses how the economic was educational for her on Maxwell Street but also the deeply cultural and social story telling, personality, and character of the street overall. It was access to an experience that she does not seem to think that she would have had otherwise. Story telling and interaction between vendors, customers, community members and passers by, created significant social relationships. Her comment about people earning their living there also emphasizes again how this economic reality made it a "special" place to her. On one hand people valued it in that it offered opportunity not afforded elsewhere because it was completely accessible and unfiltered but people who did not need that opportunity also valued it for the idea that it was where people authentically were making livings.

As the market was moved and began to be run by the city, differences of opinion between the market and the city and UIC regarding what "good business" is became apparent, especially with regard to ideas of sociality and public space. To Merlyn, and to several vendors and market advocates, the city and UIC were intervening on this good business that first brought many of my informants to Maxwell, while the counter narrative might suggest that their gentrification of the space and regulation for the market was good for business of a different sort or at least intended to be.

- Cooperation, Participation and Social Relationships on Maxwell Street -

While this has been addressed throughout, in the following section I will focus on social relationships and cooperation specifically and how they might connect to the sociality of Maxwell Street as a public space. Frequently the narrative of changing your life and achieving economic success involves an element of individualism, especially at an economic site considered informal and sometimes known to involve some theft and hot merchandise. It is especially interesting in that light that I turn the discussion towards Maxwell's already somewhat investigated emphasis on personal collaboration and relationships. How does this emphasis on cooperation, though my informants note that it often must be reciprocal, fit into individualistic models of success and business? In fact, in conversations with many of my informants they related that even if people's primary priority on Maxwell was making money, there was a pride in a code surrounding business conduct and the relationships that spanned business and friendship. Portes and Haller also describe this as a trait of informal economy: personal roles and business roles are closely intertwined in a way that limits the need for oversight since sellers' desire to participate requires the respect of others (Portes and Haller, 2005). This seems to be very true of Maxwell where there was very minimal official regulation and oversight. People still note as a point of pride that there were only two beat cops that walked through the market, often shopping themselves. While theft and stolen merchandise were certainly a reality (although likely less so than Chicago lore insists) it was also largely self-policed. My informants shared stories of people chasing thieves with baseball bats or imploring vendors to return a recently lifted car radio to a distressed owner who had just returned to their car and found it missing. In fact, the old Chicago Police Academy sat adjacent to the Maxwell Street Market, inspiration for many of my informants' stories.

My informants emphasized the importance of Maxwell Street as a social space and a place to just hang out. The element of sociality present in my informant's definition of public space overflows in their descriptions and memories of time spent at the market. Marc explains the environment:

> And it was really much more of a hangout than it was just a shopping experience. There would be trees and people had sofas and furniture out under the trees and they would run an extension cord out to the amplifiers and there would be jam sessions from 10am till 3pm in the afternoon. People would just bring drinks and polish sausages from the hotdog stands and people were dancing. (Marc PoKempner, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 12 December 2012).

This is perhaps the important duality of Maxwell inherent in my informant's understanding of the space and absent from UIC's understanding or at least their concern. The informal economy was deeply based in social ties and interaction and public space also meant a place for everyone to just hang out and be social. Marc adds, "I remember the people warming their hands over the fire that they made out of broken pallets and big 55 gallon drums… and I just remember hanging around and listening to music for hours and people were dancing and having a good time… It was a very public open kind of good time. It was a wonderful time" (Marc PoKempner, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 12 December 2012). This social environment was key to many of my informant's memories and, as Marc mentions, was tied to the understanding of the market as a public space.

Though present throughout this discussion I emphasize here haggling as an example of an economic "skill" that brought people to the market and that also demonstrates social interaction and participation in Maxwell Street. Discussion of haggling for the price of goods on Maxwell Street, a very common practice for vendors, is a key example that straddles both concepts of excitement and social interaction on Maxwell Street and entrepreneurialism and good business

sense. Key to an understanding of haggling is recognizing its essential tie to experience and its subsequent importance both as a source of adventure and also as a business-learning tool, as Larry mentioned. The lack of fixed price, determined instead by interaction and relationship between vendor and customer, mirrored the lack of outside regulation on Maxwell in general. The result seemed to be an opportunity for interaction, for learning business skills, and excitement. It made shopping on Maxwell Street necessarily about participation. Interestingly the electric blues, one of Maxwell Street's most famous legacies, also involved extensive participation between audience and performer (Grazian, 2003). During Blues performances the relationship between audience and performer was close as they called out to each other repeated lyrics and generally interacted. Vendors often performed as well, drawing crowds with theatrical sales pitches or convincing people to enter their shops. Marc remembers fondly that, "they would demonstrate kitchen appliances, chop things and stuff like that, and they were really good at it. They were really funny. They drew a big crowd" (Marc PoKempner, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 12 December 2012). The economic interaction went hand in hand with performance and participation between vendor and buyer.

Relationships that span business and friendship were very prevalent on Maxwell Street as haggling and the overall economic practice emphasized social interaction. Returning to the Merlyn quote that I opened this paper with, he laments the loss of an economy based more on those sorts of relationships and personalization: "You can't go to the home depot… and build a relationship with someone, it ain't gonna happen. That person's going to be brought into the office for wasting company time. …Yeah, all that is pretty much gone" (Merlyn McFarland, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 25 May 2012). He also emphasized his ability to have a

relationship with a shop owner and just come in for a cup of coffee and chat. This fluidity between social relationship and business relationship is key to understanding Maxwell Street as an informal economic space where sociality was extremely important. He touches on it again: "that was the place for people to hang out at. To build friendships that were very unique" (Merlyn McFarland, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 25 May 2012). Maxwell was an important social outlet, and was a public space built on relationships and social interaction as much as economic profit.

- UIC's Public Space -

The emphasis on cooperation drawn from these business and friendship relationships comes directly into conflict with the city's hyper-regulation of the space in the new market when they fine people for sharing their space with a neighbor or someone else (who might not have a permit, or who needed more room but was therefore crossing out of their allotted space). In the following section will address UIC and the city's narrative about the loss of Maxwell Street and both how it conflicts with my informants conception of public space and what it might elucidate about what my informants feel was lost on Maxwell Street. I did not conduct interviews with UIC or Chicago representatives and base my discussion of their narrative solely on its public manifestations and my informants' perceptions of it. The overall narrative that UIC presents of the Maxwell Street space is one of improvement and my informants' memories of Maxwell interject into and confront this idea of "progress." The tensions between my informants understandings of what public space is and who it should benefit and how UIC views the space perhaps complicate the process of "urban improvement," gentrification, and the economic norm.

A story recounted by Merlyn exemplifies a central point of tension between the city's

regulation of the market space and my informants' conception of public space based on social relationships and cooperation. As the city regulated the market, space was divided into small lots and vendors had assigned spaces based on permits and numbers pulled from a lottery. The previously discussed emphasis on cooperation and the overlapping of social relationships and business relationships at the old Maxwell did not fit well within these allotted spaces. Merlyn explains:

> There were so many security people honest to god that would go out with a tape measure. If you were over just a tiny bit they would say just put your stuff back, depends on the guy. Then they'd say 'is this your stuff?' 'no, its my neighbors' 'oh really?' 'he needed some space.' We help out neighbors. 150 years or more we've been doing this and you come to tell us that we can't do it. Write your ticket, I don't care, but I'm going to help my neighbor (Merlyn McFarland, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 25 May 2012).

In this case the city is literally marking the ground with allotted spaces, not uncommon practice for a market, but a practice that contrasts sharply with the fluid use of space in Maxwell that was often shared or negotiated based on personal relationships. The city's concept of what "proper use" of the space is based on their regulations and what is deserving of a fine is very different to how the vendors were accustomed to using their space. Both perspectives, importantly, include ideas of profiting and business, but the former market space was still fluid thanks to negotiations, agreements, and helping others get on their feet. While the city might have seen this as greater emphasis on only the proper, and highly individualized, use of space, or just their best attempt at making the market more traditionally established, for many vendors it was deeply illogical, counter business, and threatening to the nature of their relationships and business interactions. Maxwell Street highlighted the social imbedded-ness of informal economy in a way that was problematic when it was formalized and regulations were applied. This example also points to contrasting interpretations of the public space of the market. On one hand, vendors perceive the

public space to be open, unregulated, and shared as necessary. On the other, the city marks allotted spaces onto the ground and fines those who cross over them, therefore emphasizing only the proper use of that space according to their regulations.

UIC and the city's regulation and move of the market was also seen as a direct threat to what was best for business and what my informants emphasize was a successful place of business and ingenuity for decades without their involvement. It was, indeed, threatening to at least the former way of business on Maxwell Street as now most shops that lined the street are closed or bulldozed and the majority of original vendors have since left or felt pushed from the New Maxwell Street Market. While my informants saw the space as a key informal economic center even into the 90s and an important outlet and social space for the city of Chicago, UIC and the city seem to at least publically view the space as in decline at that time. For my informants, the city and UIC are intruding on a perfectly productive and important place of business, while in the eyes of the city and UIC (or at least in their public presentation of it) they are "revitalizing" the space and making it better for business. Merlyn described a particular argument in talks with the city about the market move:

> [Assuming voice to imitate the city] 'How could we best help you vendors make money? Give us some ideas' and I said, well there are two things, *two*, the first rule in business and any student who is a business major will tell you, as any business man will tell you whose got an ounce of brains, that, the first rule in business is to *stay in business*! That is the first rule. The second rule is very important it's that the government and the city stay out of our business and let us run things! This market has been around for *150 years*, running on its *own*, just running on its own for god sake. We don't need somebody to come in and make a bunch of rules, do this do that, you can't do this you can't do that! I said, that's baloney, stay out of our business and this is how I told them too, exactly how I told them. I was the kind of guy who if I felt very strongly about something I'm sure going to tell you (Merlyn McFarland, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 25 May 2012).

Merlyn's comment is significant in that it effectively captures the conflicting narratives of good

business and proper use of space for economic gains. Merlyn's characterization of city officials in this comment indicates their effort or desire to help the vendors make money and have successful business in the new market space, but their handling of the shift and organization effectively cut out the majority of business as it had been continuing on Maxwell Street for decades. This was likely a casualty of the shift due to misunderstanding or lack of concern about what really was important to the vendors and "unique" to my informants. UIC also see themselves as converting the old space the market occupied into a better space for business and for their economic gains and expansion. UIC seems to present this as a natural process of urban change that they might call a "classic" case of Chicago urban renewal only in a more comfortable sense of inevitable improvement and tradition. This is very different than the aggression of the takeover in Jarovsky's description that calls it a "classic" case of Chicago urban renewal with a tone of concern and discomfort that it is such an established and frequent process. Absent also in UIC's evaluation of the space as "declining" (largely influenced by their desire to use the land and by their prior destruction of the majority of the buildings in the neighborhood) and in the city's regulation of the market is an understanding of the role it played as a social space and the intimate connection between sociality and its informal economic nature.

In contrast, however, the efforts by the city to regulate the market space and by UIC to shut down the market in an effort to clean up the area also reflected an interpretation of what the "proper" approach to public benefit and entrepreneurialism is. One section of the informational sign on Maxwell Street today, called "University Village Marketplace," placed there by UIC reads:

> By the late 1970s, however, the Maxwell Street Market had begun to decline… In the 1990s, the nearby University of Illinois at Chicago was growing and in need of new facilities to service its 25,000 students, many of whom, like the early residents and

> merchants of Maxwell Street, were immigrants…The spirit of Maxwell Street lives on here in the continuing ethnic diversity and the commercial entrepreneurship of a new generation of Chicagoans (University Village Information Board n.d.).

This public statement by UIC is telling of the at least public narrative they present about the space. Interestingly, they re-appropriate some of the same narratives about the importance and the spirit of Maxwell, affirming the market as a place of economic opportunity and success for immigrants. However, they then suggest that it had begun to decline by the time of its forced closure, and then add that all is well because UIC itself, which has taken over the space, is a site for the same sort of opportunity for thousands of immigrants who are the first generation to attend college in their families. A comment that is not untrue but an association that would likely feel brash to many of my informants. Many of my informants also directly object to the idea that the market was in decline. Marc comments about the market in the 80s, when UIC suggests it was in decline, "It was sprawling. I remember it being all over these half a dozen blocks. [On] Halsted it was all the way from Roosevelt really all the way down to the railroad overpass. So it was quite a happening thing. And in the summer it was absolutely sprawling" (Marc PoKempner, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 12 December 2012). As mentioned earlier Ira Berkow points out that the market was often portrayed publically as on the edge of extinction but it was always resilient and thriving. My informants contend that the market remained that way despite any narratives of UIC bringing back the neighborhood from decline.

Called into question once more is the idea of "progress," which some of my informants bring up and face with concern, nostalgia, or frustration. Merlyn again mentions this sentiment among the vendors: "They weren't happy about it at all, a lot of them were really pissed off but knowing that they couldn't make a change they said hey, its how it is, its called "progress" UIC

is going to develop all of this, so we just have to go with the flow and just make the best of it" (Merlyn McFarland, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 25 May 2012). The vendors were very aware that UIC's take over of the space fit into common discourses of gentrification and progress although their responses ranged from sad inevitability, to cause for resistance, and inspired discussion about the future of truly public space, like Maxwell, in Chicago.

When discussing her father, who passed away, having never left Maxwell and always sought its "progress" and success, Fern considers what his feelings about the current space might be. The former Maxwell Street Market Area now has expensive condos and student friendly restaurants, coffee shops, and box stores behind the short list of historical façades moved there in a halfhearted attempt to appease calls for historical preservation. Fern chuckles, noting there is even a Starbucks, all things likely considered to be good business moves by UIC. As Fern discusses her father's hopes for the area she wonders whether as the business man he was, the expensive condos and Starbucks would have made him think those hopes had finally been realized, or not but seems unsatisfied. Has the Maxwell Street area progressed? Become better for business? My informants would respond with a resounding "no," at least not better for the same kind of business that thrived on Maxwell Street, and certainly a lot less exciting. Again I return briefly to Merlyn's quote that opened this paper: the shifting economic norm of the Maxwell street space is certainly not progress or improvement for Merlyn, who sees the box store's less personal approach as a true loss.

- Persistence v. Resistance -

In *On Longing* (1993) Susan Stewart describes the intimate relationship between nostalgia and the past. In particular, souvenirs, she argues, simultaneously work to authenticate

the past and discredit the present and nostalgic reconstruction also involves a process of authentication of the past and denial of the present (Stewart, 1993). This relationship between past and present is comparable to what my informants seem to feel towards Maxwell Street. Their memory of it and its "authenticity" in the past creates resistance to the current economic norm and to the use of space in the city. This is especially useful to consider with regards to the problems entailed in my informants remembering Maxwell and the comparative inauthenticity of the UIC interpretation of the space. Interestingly, study of piracy, a famous example of informal economy, also addresses revolutionary attitudes in response to the perceived loss of an economic freedom or access that might have existed in other times. Piracy also exemplifies the oft-perceived connection, whether by the state, a public that consumes their myths and folklore, or participators themselves, between informal economy and resistance. As Shannon Dawdy and Joe Bonni discuss in *Towards a General Theory of Piracy,* piracy can be seen as "a response to monopolist incursions and restrictions" (2012:676), and modern folklore or re-appropriation of narratives of piracy also become relevant symbols and inspiration for present day resistance. In the context of both this connection between informal economy and resistance, and nostalgia and the invocation of the past as a point of resistance to the present, I conclude by briefly addressing how my informants' feelings about Maxwell Street inspire resistance.

Many of my informants seem to envision themselves as naturally associating with some sort of culture of resistance because of their alliance with Maxwell Street. While not universally true, this is especially common among those who were involved in the fights to save Maxwell Street or who perhaps spent a long time selling on Maxwell or as a community member. They already position themselves against the city, the government in general, the depersonalized

formal economy and certainly UIC. When I ask whether I can use their real names, a typical ethnographic process aimed at protecting the privacy or security of the informants, several of my informants laugh and imply that their association with Maxwell is already a public one. More than that, they seem to imply that their association with Maxwell already characterizes them as resisters in a way that my paper could hardly influence. Kenneth even adds when I ask him with a chuckle, "You can give my name to the FBI!" (Kenneth Benson, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 29 November 2012) which both indicates a level of familiarity with Maxwell and its resistance association but also what I encountered broadly: a willingness to associate boldly with Maxwell as resisters or simply as fans. Merlyn is proud of the moments he stood up to the city and recounted several to me describing people cheering him on.

It was not just that the Maxwell Street Market as an alternative economic space created resistance to the state, though I would argue like many that it was non-threatening to the state, and in fact beneficial. Neither is it just that the protest movements to save Maxwell Street pitted participants as resisters to the city and to UIC's decisions even then. It is also the fact that for many today remembering Maxwell Street Market and continuing to cherish it implies a resistance to the norm. Their nostalgia for and memory of the market space renders the UIC's conversion of the space inauthentic by comparison. Although the literal space the market occupied and the New Maxwell Street Market persist, the loss of the market my informants considered uniquely public and the fully accessible community it supported inspires their resistance to common trends of urban renewal, to UIC's presence in the neighborhood and to a depersonalized economy.

- Conclusion -

Through the move and regulation of the market and UIC's gentrification of the space the market lost what my informants considered to be "special" and "unique" but certainly did not disappear from influence in Chicago. The current market is no longer a public space according to their definition where sociality and informal economy were closely related, where all people are universally welcome to participate regardless of economic status or background, and where human ingenuity existed without third party involvement. Steve notes, "there's kind of this Maxwell Street disease where you come here looking for a bargain and then you connect to the place and it's hard to sever that connection" (Steve Balkin, Interviewed by Hannah Norwood, 27 May 2012). Steve points to Maxwell Street's economic and thrift role but also the social connection people feel with the market. A connection that has persisted after the market's disappearance and that inspires nostalgia, memory, and resistance. Maxwell Street was a deeply and importantly social space both as a place for economic interaction based on experience, participation, and personal relationships, and as a place for hanging out, and community, and fun. My informants present a counter narrative to the commonly accepted, and particularly Chicagoan, practice of urban renewal and gentrification contending that what was lost in the demolishing of the Maxwell Street area and the regulation of the market makes the neighborhood transformation a decline rather than a progression.

There is much more to learn from Maxwell Street than was touched upon here. Maxwell's influence on the memory of decades of Chicagoans and visitors alike is significant. When asked about my place of study many people who had only ever passed through the market once, decades ago, on a trip to Chicago or with relatives were quick to share a Maxwell Street story. In particular, while the market has been studied and explored by many who are passionate about it,

there is great potential for anthropological study of the memory, influence and legacy of the market in Chicago. There has been little anthropological study of informal markets and thrift within the United States and socially embedded informal economy and its connection to nostalgia and resistance would be rich site for further research.

The former location of Nate's deli, pictured in Merlyn's photograph in Figure 1, is now hard to distinguish. The block where it once sat just west on Maxwell Street of the Halsted intersection is occupied by a parking structure, ambiguous retail and condo space, and a Caribou coffee at the corner. Nate and his deli are remembered much like Maxwell Street: for their diversity, for the stories of wheeling and dealing at the corner table, for excellent corned beef, for the kindness of Nate and for the community that was always welcome to congregate within. Nate's deli might be gone but it persists in the memories of my informants and in stories shared about Maxwell. Remembering Nate's deli still inspires resistance to the Caribou Coffee that sits at the corner and the tree lined street that becomes inauthentic by comparison.

- Acknowledgements -

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- Appendices -

Appendix A: Photo courtesy of Merlyn McFarland.

Appendix B: “We carry big sizes up to XXXXXXXXXXL,” photo courtesy of Merlyn McFarland.

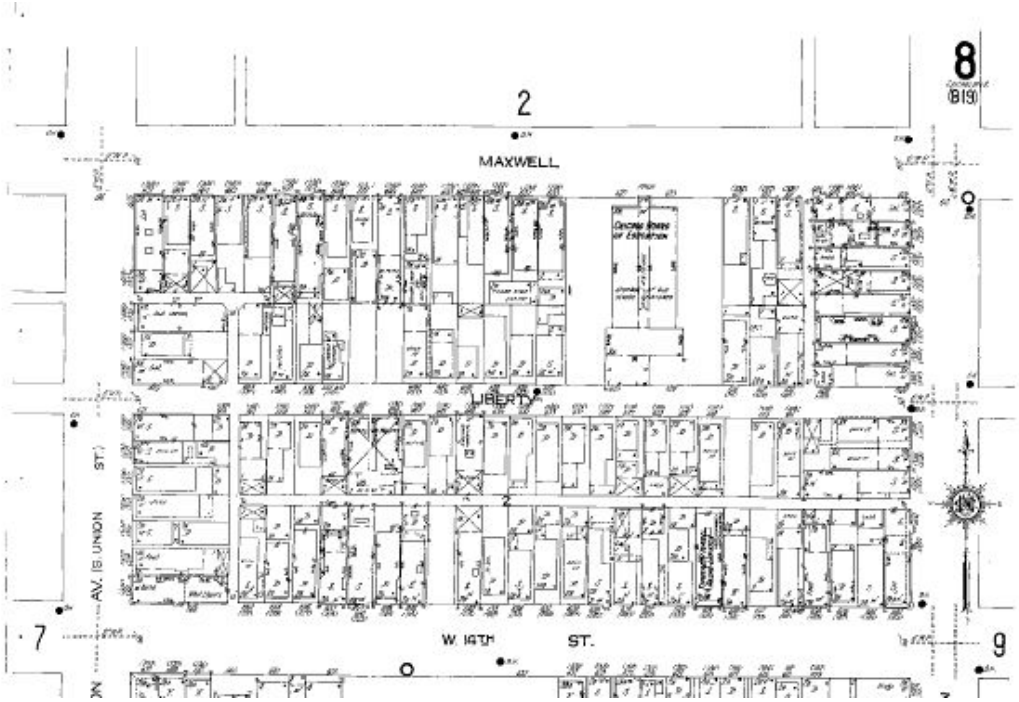
Appendix C: Jim's Original, photo courtesy of Merlyn McFarland.

Appendix D: Inside a polish sausage stand, photo courtesy of Merlyn McFarland.

Appendix E: "Stop UIC Protestors," Steve Balkin Photographs of Maxwell Street, Chicago (Chicago State University).

Appendix F: "Young Protestor #3," Steve Balkin Photographs of Maxwell Street, Chicago (Chicago State University).

Appendix F: “Old school blues band playing on the street,” Steve Balkin Photographs of Maxwell Street, Chicago (Chicago State University).



Appendix G: 1914 map of a block of Maxwell Street including representations of dense tenant housing. Sanborn Maps, 1905-1951, vol. 8 1914.

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