

HISTORICAL SEX WORK



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HISTORICAL SEX WORK

New Contributions from History and Archaeology

EDITED BY

Kristen R. Fellows, Angela J. Smith,
and Anna M. Munns

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1

The View from Two Fields

History and Archaeology of Historical Sex Work

ANGELA J. SMITH, ANNA M. MUNNS, AND KRISTEN R. FELLOWS

Since the 1980s scholarship centered on the historical sex trade—prostitution, brothels, madams, cribs, streetwalkers, pimps, houses of ill fame, and so on—has grown in significant ways.¹ Though not a dominant line of historical or archaeological research, this area of inquiry has expanded within both scholarly disciplines. Moreover, this research has impacted broader discussions of gender, sexuality, women's history, urban studies, and feminist scholarship. There also seems to be an interest from the general public in the history of sex work and sex workers, evidenced in the past two decades by popular television series like HBO's *Deadwood* and *Westworld* and AMC's *Hell on Wheels*, which all portray historical sex workers in complicated and meaningful roles. Even early popular histories such as Herbert Asbury's (1938) *The French Quarter* and Al Rose's (1974) *Storyville, New Orleans*, or, more recently, Karen Abbott's (2008) *Sin in the Second City* have made the history of sex work more visible to the public, albeit by romanticizing the stories involved. Academic work does not happen in a vacuum, and the expanded focus on the world of historical vice in both research and popular culture demonstrates shifts in cultural mores and interests that have influenced scholarship in both arenas. This volume represents not only a continuation of this scholarship but a deepening of questions being asked and understandings being developed within the realm of academic research.

The chapters in this volume represent some of the most recent work from both fields that look into the lives of those involved in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century sex trade throughout the United States as

well as the national and local contexts for this labor. To date, most research has focused on major urban centers, a handful of sites, and feminine gender identities and materialities. Working from scholarly foundations laid in previous decades, many of the contributors to this volume are beginning to push research into new and exciting directions. These chapters broaden the geographic scope of scholarship and work to expand both the who and the how of this line of inquiry. Moreover, by placing historians and archaeologists side by side, we hope to expand the readership of these chapters beyond disciplinary silos and strengthen the scholarship of the historical sex trade.

To understand the context for the essays in this volume, this chapter includes a discussion of primary sources available to scholars and an overview of the scholarly literature in both fields. Our goal has been to place the two disciplines into dialogue with one another, so we have integrated the scholarship from both fields into a single literature review. This process revealed patterns that were often parallel, as well as highlighted points of divergence when either historians or archaeologists focused on different topics or themes. Trends within each field also shaped a divergent scholarly trajectory in each discipline. The literature review demonstrates points of intersection to the reader and the changes in scholarly approaches to the topic over time. A timeline emerges that shows an uptick in historical scholarship that expands the field beginning in the 1980s as part of the “new” social and cultural history. Archaeologists followed suit a decade later, after urban cultural resource management work produced notable findings. As a result of this work, archaeologists expanded the available knowledge with material culture analysis and contributed to a greater understanding of the places and conditions in which sex workers found themselves beyond the information gleaned in the archives. The literature review reveals the contrasting approaches between the two fields. It also demonstrates the potential for collaboration, which is demonstrated through our work in this volume.²

Getting beyond the Superficial: Primary Source Challenges When Studying Historical Sex Work

Both historians and archaeologists use primary source evidence to reconstruct the past. Historians have traditionally relied on large bodies of archival records for their source material, and archaeologists have

predominantly focused on the material culture uncovered during excavations and documents associated with a single site. Importantly, neither the documentary nor the material records will ever offer scholars of the past everything we want to know.

Thus, locating sources is the largest hurdle for scholars of historical sex work. The sources that document the experiences of those involved in the United States sex trade are often scant and difficult to pin down. Many sex workers moved through cities and towns under assumed names and left few, if any, records (textual or material) of their lives. In fact, many of these women purposefully obfuscated records in an effort to mask their identity. After all, their profession was not exactly legal, and operating in a world of vice had a social stigma. There are few first-person sources that detail the experiences and motivations of women who entered sex work. Yet, in the last 40 years, historians and archaeologists have mined a variety of sources in innovative ways to shed new light on this fringe world.

Prostitution reform reports from the Progressive Era provide some of the best sources for sex trade information.³ These sources have provided significant material for scholars to deconstruct and interpret for research and have opened pathways for scholars to approach the topic with new questions and methods (Gilfoyle 1994). Published reports of vice commissions throughout the country provide material that many historians have used to understand both the reformers and those they sought to reform.

Some of the most valuable sources are court records, including census, magistrate, arrest, and jury trial documents. These materials are typically found in government records housed in local archives. Unfortunately, because of the volume of these records, particularly in large urban areas, many have been destroyed. Such decisions by municipal officials in many towns and cities throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries have left a fragmented record for researchers. Of those, however, trial records are less voluminous and tend to be available. They provide names, addresses, indictments, testimony, and trial outcomes to scholars and have become cornerstones in recent historical sex work historiography. There are also published accounts in newspapers and records of various reform organizations. Finally, scholars have begun to mine land ownership records to understand vice districts. Cross-referencing land ownership records with census and newspaper searches in Ancestry.com or the Library of Congress' Chronicling America website provides a wealth of information for contemporary scholars. By systematically triangulating

these sources, recent historical sex work scholars have opened new gendered, spatial, economic, social, and cultural interpretations.

While archaeologists have relied on historians for the broader historical context in which to place site-specific studies, archaeologists incorporate their own analyses of documentary sources into the study of material remains from excavations of brothel sites. In archaeological research, material remains work in tandem with documentary evidence, sometimes confirming and at other times calling into question interpretations based on textual sources (Seifert 2005). Much of this work has been conducted under the auspices of cultural resource management (CRM), which involves archaeological testing and mitigation of future sites of modern development (e.g., Foster et al. 2005; Seifert 1991; Yamin 2005).⁴ The work done on this topic in the CRM setting set the stage for the growing interest in research on historical sex work within academic archaeology (e.g., Crist 2005; Dawdy and Weyhing 2008; Meyer et al. 2005; Van Buren and Gensmer 2017). As will become evident in the review of the literature, the brothel as a site type is the most easily accessible aspect of the historical sex trade for archaeologists. The more ephemeral nature of cribs, street walking, and other less formal types of historical prostitution do not leave much trace material.

It is not only source availability that makes historical sex work tricky for researchers; evaluating sources for biases is also difficult because of the subject matter. Generally speaking, scholars of the past recognize the biases inherent in the various types of data used in research. For documentary sources it is important to consider who created the document, their cultural influences (i.e., religion, gender, class), their intended purpose for the document, and their assumed audience, among other factors. Obviously, first-person accounts such as diaries or personal letters will offer dramatically different data than court dockets, even when discussing the same event.

Likewise, the material record comes with biases unique to this type of data. Some of the largest issues come in the form of preservation and deposition or creation of the record. Physical conditions such as moisture levels and acidity of the surrounding soil matrix can dramatically alter or even eliminate some types of material culture. Human or animal activities can also greatly disturb deposits from an earlier era. And some artifacts are poorly represented in the archaeological assemblage from the beginning. For instance, items that tend to be passed from generation to

generation despite some wear and tear might never find their way to the trash pit or privy. Repurposing objects that no longer serve their original function is yet another reason an artifact might not be discarded. Both the documentary and archaeological records represent imperfect data sets. Overall, we can all agree that the more lines of evidence are brought to bear on the past, the stronger the interpretation will be.

Both documents and artifacts have their strengths and shortcomings. As the chapters in this volume ask new and innovative questions of the primary sources, they highlight the need for continued creativity and ingenuity in studying the historical sex trade. In the final chapter we explore questions of methodological and interpretive innovations as necessitated by the limited nature of these primary sources, as well as points of intersection between the fields and the chapters. In the meantime, we encourage readers to consider that limitations in primary sources can sometimes lead scholars to push beyond the obvious and produce interesting and insightful interpretations.

Primary Themes

While historians and archaeologists have often approached the study of historical sex work from different perspectives, they have focused on similar themes. Both historical and archaeological studies of historical sex work have been heavily influenced by feminist theory and other trends that have turned toward more inclusive discussions of the past. Recent research in both fields has worked to complicate the image of women engaged in sex work and to allow for the interplay between structure and agency since at least the 1990s (Gilfoyle 2005). The scholarship trajectory of historical sex work mirrors that of many subaltern groups and falls in line with general trends of research in both the humanities and social sciences. In the review of the literature we weave together the work done in both fields, a slightly more complicated task than might appear at first blush. Instead of taking a purely chronological approach, we discuss a variety of intersecting themes between the two fields. To be certain, there is a temporal framework to the scholarship and there are moments and areas where each field has led the discussion. This review will introduce the reader to scholarly debates and frameworks that, regardless of discipline, offer valuable context and complementary insights into historical sex work.

Points of Origin

Many of the foundational works from both disciplines sought to bring attention to women who had previously been overlooked. Before 1980 US historians devoted little attention to prostitutes, brothels, brothel owners, or red-light districts; when they did, it was usually a subsection of a larger study. This was due in part to the fringe nature of the topic and limited primary source material. During the 1960s and into the 1970s, historians expanded their research in new directions and focused on areas previously understudied. Historical sex trade research is part of a scholarly trend tagged “the new social history.” During this period, researchers began to focus on social concerns including education, labor, social issues, gender, race, and ethnicity. These changes pushed the field toward a more “bottom-up” orientation with an emphasis on common people. Since the 1980s historical sex trade scholarship has focused on questions of gender, labor, race, crime, legal frameworks, and reform, as well as local, regional, and national perspectives. These scholars have argued, both explicitly and implicitly, that historical sex work is important to understanding the place of women in society, the social meaning of sexuality, and the process of reform.

Archaeological investigations by CRM firms initially brought historical sex work to the field of historical archaeology in the 1980s, but little was published beyond technical site reports (Seifert 1991). This leads one to wonder how much of this research has gone unpublished, thus making it difficult for other scholars to access. Excavations were taking place on at least one site associated with the historical sex trade as early as the 1970s (Vermeer 2006, citing a Spude 2005 personal communication); however, publications on archaeological work related to this topic seem to be rare until the early 2000s. As archaeologists adopted postmodern and feminist perspectives in the early 1990s (e.g., see Conkey and Gero 1991; Specter 1993), opportunities arose for more nuanced archaeological studies concerning women, and the topic of historical sex work fit easily into this changing academic climate. Surveys and excavations in Washington, DC, were especially central to the development of prostitution-related research in historical archaeology, and Donna Seifert was instrumental in publishing the results of those investigations (Cheek and Seifert 1994; Seifert 1991, 1994). The “Sin City” special issue of *Historical Archaeology*, edited by Seifert (2005), has provided a foundation for subsequent studies

on historical sex work and was the first time multiple archaeological articles were published together on sites related to the sex trade in the United States.

Focus on Women, Gender, and Sexualities

The women involved in historical sex work have often been the focus of studies by archaeologists and historians alike. Gender was brought to the forefront as an analytical framework for sex work studies with the wave of feminist scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s. Many scholars have placed a heavy emphasis on describing the lived experiences of women involved in the sex trade.⁵ Historical sex work scholarship produced in the 1980s was influenced by the social and cultural history movement and utilized new interpretive approaches. One of the most influential books to date is Ruth Rosen's (1982) *The Lost Sisterhood*. Rosen, a historian of gender and society, uses Progressive Era reform sources to weave a layered examination of sex workers and vice reformers through the lens of gender and class. Rosen argues that prostitution was usually a short-term economic solution for women who were in situations where they unexpectedly needed to generate income. Her complex analysis also reveals how a growing middle class pushed for vice reform to cure "the social evil" of prostitution. Before the turn of the century, it was common for cities and towns to have red-light districts. Reformers were successful in pushing the sex trade out of the public eye.

As historical archaeologists began to analyze sites of former sex work establishments, primarily brothels, the gender roles and expectations entwined in the remains were an important place to start (Seifert 1991). Earlier historians had established that middle- and upper-class women were responsible for work related to the domestic sphere, which meant that employment options were few for working-class women. As sex work was one option, the daily lives of these women and their material manifestations were of particular interest. In some cases, it was valuable to simply find evidence of working women in the archaeological record to interpret a site (e.g., Spude 2005). What much of this early historical and archaeological work on gender did was bring women back into the broader historical narrative. By studying gender and specifically women, these scholars were helping to change the larger narrative on who matters in the past as well as the present.

The social meaning of women's sexuality and sexual agency has been

tied to historians' discussions of historical sex work. Research on the cultural history of women and leisure has touched on changing cultural dating practices and the corresponding marginalization of prostitution in the early twentieth century (Peiss 1986). Other authors such as Elizabeth Clement (2006) draw attention to an array of female sexual norms during this period, between formal courting on one end of the spectrum and prostitution on the other. Working-class youth moved away from supervised courtship and toward amusement activities, which increased the incidence of premarital sex. In the middle of this spectrum were "treating girls," women who traded dates and varying degrees of sexual attention for gifts, dinner, and entertainment. This practice emerged during the 1890s and coincided with the rise of women employed outside the home. Many women wanted to enjoy entertainment in the public sphere while also being perceived as respectable and not as prostitutes who would travel the streets alone. Working women exercised sexual agency and degrees of control of their sexual lives.

Meanwhile, archaeologists have directly addressed the many challenges female prostitutes faced regarding their sexual health. Julia Costello (2000) and Michael Meyer, Erica Gibson, and Julia Costello (2005) present medicine bottles, syringes, and douches recovered from Los Angeles brothels and cribs as likely evidence for sex workers' routine healthcare. Thomas Crist's (2005) article cites possible abortion or infanticide based on the neonatal remains recovered from a privy shaft associated with a Five Points brothel in New York City. Diana diZerega Wall (2005) points to the influence of the Comstock laws, which placed restrictions on the educational material related to sex during the late 1800s. Consequently, these restrictions severely limited women's access to contraceptives, an issue that would have had a particularly high impact on sex workers. Further, Rosemary Joyce (2008) explains that prostitution during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drew particular public ire because it did not follow the Western heteronormative model for sexuality (that is, sex for reproduction). In this example, it is clear that cultural and social contexts are key to understanding lived experiences when studying historical sex work. Two chapters in this volume help to further some of these topics on sexuality. Mark Warner (Chapter 11) explores the role of the brothel and brothel inmates in men's sexual health. And Jade Luiz (Chapter 6) speaks to the fact that contraceptives were not always effective

or accessible for inmates as she explores the presence of children in a brothel in Boston.

Although essential to the discussion, the men involved in sex work have taken a back seat in the scholarship. Some authors have addressed the men who interacted with sex workers through law enforcement and reform efforts (e.g., Best 1998; Gilfoyle 1992), but the participants in the illicit business have not been a key focus. Timothy Gilfoyle (1992) provides a notable exception as he addresses the influence of sporting men and pimps in nineteenth-century New York City. “Sporting men,” he explains, are men who “shared an infatuation with prostitution and promiscuous sexual behavior. . . . Sporting-male ideas and activity served to promote a certain gender solidarity among nineteenth-century urban males” (Gilfoyle 1992:115). He argues that men had a significant and gendered role in both the economy and the cultural tone of this world. Kristen Fellows, AnneMarie Kooistra, and Mark Warner (Chapters 9, 10, and 11 herein) expand on these discussions of men involved in the sex trade.

Class

The socioeconomic impact of sex work has been key for many archaeological studies due to the wealth of physical evidence available. Meanwhile, several historians have approached sex work through the context of labor. In both cases, the intersection of gender and class has propelled these discussions forward.

The availability of large material culture datasets from brothel sites has contributed to the leading focus on consumption patterns in archaeological research. The studies stemmed primarily from brothel sites, though some crib sites have also been analyzed, and sought to illuminate the daily lives of working women within these establishments. Items such as food remains, household decor, ceramic wares, and clothing provided new insights into the sex workers’ lived experiences, and their consumption patterns could be compared to those of their clients and neighbors. The method for analyzing proportions of household artifact assemblages proposed by Stanley South (1977) has been adopted by brothel archaeologists to compare brothel artifact assemblages to those of neighboring working-class households and other brothels (e.g., Costello 2003; Meyer et al. 2005; Seifert 1991, 1994; Seifert and Balicki 2005; Seifert et al. 2000; Spude 2005; Yamin 2005). Donna Seifert (2005:2) affirms that many of these

publications were “developed to address the archaeology of the brothel as a site type.”

These archaeologists steered away from romanticized images of wealthy prostitutes and did not dwell on the moral judgment or criminality of their actions. The scholars instead used their analyses to explain how the sex trade (and its employees) fit into the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the era. Archaeologists have found evidence of conspicuous consumption within the brothel; however, the sex workers likely maintained a working-class lifestyle after hours (see Ketz et al. 2005 [St. Paul]; Meyer et al. 2005 [Los Angeles]; and Yamin 2005 [Five Points] for examples).

Madams serve as another window into the daily workings of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century brothel. Research on madams Mary Ann Hall (O’Brien 2005; Seifert and Balicki 2005; Seifert et al. 2000) and Nina Clifford (Ketz et al. 2005) has demonstrated the value of documentary evidence as complementary to the material culture excavated at these Washington, DC, and St. Paul, Minnesota, brothel sites. Through these efforts, brothel hierarchies have been teased apart and nuances within and between brothels have become increasingly clearer.

While the material remains uncovered archaeologically lend themselves to class-based analysis, historians have also explored the intersection of class and historical sex work. Gilfoyle (1992) examines New York City and the evolution of street life and sexual vice. He argues that prostitution was not just sex for hire but a contested, shifting, social, cultural, and political geography that rose and fell over time. After 1820, he demonstrates, underworld prostitution rose along with the burgeoning city and growing industrialization and provided a variety of choices for various economic classes. The fringe economy that resulted created fortunes for those who owned real estate and opened new opportunities for men and women. However, the level of prosperity achieved in the sex trade varied greatly, and several historians have explored a general hierarchy of sex work (e.g., Butler 1985; Gilfoyle 1992; Goldman 1981; MacKell 2004; Rosen 1982). Sex work took many forms, ranging from extravagant parlor houses to shanty rooms or “cribs” and single women conducting business on the streets. These various tiers in the sex work hierarchy were characterized by factors such as cost and safety, and women often descended these tiers as they aged (see also Munns 2017). In Chapter 3 of this volume, Anna

Munns explores the legal implications of this hierarchy for the women involved in the industry.

Sharon Wood (2005) presents the story of women who began to establish women's independence in the labor force around 1880 in the mid-western city of Davenport, Iowa, and how that affected commercial sex work. She argues that sex work cannot be properly examined without also considering the labor, political and social climate of the time and place. Between 1875 and 1910, Davenport's population doubled from 20,000 to 40,000, and a growing number of women in that population began to seek employment. Those who could not find work in stores or factories had to fall back on working as servants or domestics, but they provided a new distinction, a single woman in the public sphere. Middle-class reformers who were also working women began to see all working women, including prostitutes, as wage earners like themselves, and they began to organize accordingly. Woods has methodically reconstructed the details of women in a growing city who crossed class lines and worked together in remarkable ways.

Marilynn Wood Hill (1993) creates a social profile of brothel prostitutes as New York grew into an industrial city. Hill argues for the appeal and benefits that drew women into the profession. She proposes that the control of one's labor and the support of others in the same profession offer significant rewards for the women. Hill concludes that brothel prostitutes asserted their rights as citizens by using the courts to press their interests and lived full lives with a wide range of human relationships.

Larger Societal Context

Many historians have focused on the broader societal context of the sex trade to explain its existence and evolution, and a key part of this discussion has been the involvement of reformers and anti-vice campaigns. Ruth Rosen (1982) explains that before the turn of the twentieth century, prostitution was considered a "necessary evil" both legally and culturally. Red-light districts were legal or tolerated, and this arrangement helped isolate vice to specific areas, which in turn made it easier for the city to control. In some areas, prostitution was regulated (though often informally) by local law enforcement. Sociologist Joel Best (1998) offers St. Paul, Minnesota, in the late nineteenth century as an example of this practice. Best explores the effect of semiregulated prostitution in early St. Paul

and reconstructs the social landscape of the brothels, the madams, and the identities of many of the prostitutes.

By the turn of the twentieth century, reformers were pressing for change. Instead of seeing prostitution as a “necessary evil” that should be accepted, reform groups began to push for solutions to the “social evil” (Rosen 1982). Historian Mara L. Keire (2010) discusses the regulation of vice in the United States, arguing that throughout the nation, Progressive Era reformers shifted their reform tactics from a moralistic approach to a business-oriented one. This approach allowed the reformers to treat the districts as monopolies that the reformers called the “vice trust.” She explains that in addition to eliminating red-light districts, they were motivated by a desire to break the political machines in the big cities. By employing this language, the reformers utilized the laws governing commerce to attain their reform goals.

With the momentum of the Progressive Era came changing legislation. Mark T. Connelly (1980) argues that the movement grew out of the anxieties and social tension of rapid political, cultural, and economic change. Prostitutes represented loose morals, the spread of disease, and the decline of rural values, as well as urban political and moral corruption. He claims that prostitution was a symbol to the reformers, an attempt at control when so much was out of their control. Barbara Hobson (1990) extends Connelly’s argument that prostitution reform efforts did not work because those working for reform saw it as a proxy for a world out of their control. She claims that reform failed because the reformers were not focused on the people affected, the women working in the sex industry. She also takes on the prickly question of the nature of prostitution for women. She argues that prostitution is both exploitive and empowering for practitioners and suggests that this tension is what makes the issue difficult.

“White slavery,” or sex trafficking of white women, was a crucial part of the Progressives’ platform to end prostitution. While highly sensationalized in the media, the concept of white slavery was deeply entwined with race and immigration. Attention was drawn specifically to white women who were being sexually exploited. Women of color did not receive the same concern from reformers; in fact, nonwhite men and women were often viewed as partially responsible for the loss of young white women’s innocence. In response, the Mann Act, a federal statute passed in 1910, brought cases of white slavery to court. However, this legislation did not necessarily free vulnerable women from sex trafficking and instead

legitimized grounds for policing women's sexuality (Pliley 2014). Ashley Baggett and Carol Bentley (Chapter 4, this volume) expand on the discussion of reform movements and white slavery and examine how this social movement intersected with the incipient film industry. The role of new technologies in the national movement of moralizing and reforming ideas is an interesting feature of the larger societal context. Ultimately, Progressive Era reforms made sex workers' lives more difficult and forced their work out of the visible brothels in red-light districts and into a shadow economy. That arrangement did nothing to eliminate prostitution; rather, it pushed sex trade underground and ultimately increased violence against prostitutes (Rosen 1982).

Place and Space

In research on historical sex work across the United States, some historians and archaeologists have set their sights on large, urban areas or medium-sized cities, while others have chosen to explore the sex trade in the developing western United States. These various settings offered very different experiences for the sex workers involved. Although beyond the scope of this literature review, archaeologists typically differentiate between place and space in that place is an area imbued with cultural meaning (e.g., Creese 2013). Urban centers provide a very different social and physical landscape than smaller frontier towns in more western locales. For some historians who study the sex trade in the late nineteenth century, the relevant discussion is one of the frontier and the development of the West and then the Midwest. Despite differences in approach, geographic and social landscapes have factored into historical and archaeological studies of the sex trade.

Historians have tended to focus on heavily populated urban areas such as New York (Gilfoyle 1992; Hill 1993; Stansell 1986), Chicago (Blair 2010), San Francisco (Shumsky and Springer 1981; Shumsky 1986), and New Orleans (Long 2004), as well as mid-sized midwestern cities Minneapolis, Minnesota (Petersen 2013), and Davenport, Iowa (Wood 2005). This is in part because primary sources are more readily available in larger cities. These scholars have paid special attention to the red-light district, an important construct of the urban sex trade landscape. Mara Keire (2010) has addressed sociability within these spaces or "vice districts."⁶ Penny Petersen (2013) explores the sex trade in Minneapolis, a midwestern city on the banks of the Mississippi River. She argues that the madams and the sex

trade were embedded in city life and that it is impossible to understand the history of Minneapolis without understanding their role. Through her in-depth archival research into city records, she uncovers a vanished urban social and physical landscape and connects the disparate dots between landownership records, government records, and newspapers.

The western frontier provided an entirely different space for sex workers. The image of the frontier prostitute is a ubiquitous part of twentieth-century American cultural history. Through television characters like Miss Kitty on *Gunsmoke* to Miss Mona in the Broadway and film musical *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, these lovable, beautiful women captured our collective historical imagination. However, the sex worker of the American West was quite different from the media stereotype. Several significant studies explore the circumstances of the sex worker on the western frontier and the differences between the development of the profession there and its practice in large urban centers. Marion Goldman (1981), a sociologist, wrote the first significant historical study on Far West prostitution. She explores the relationship between frontier prostitution and community life in the 1870s Comstock Lode camp in western Nevada. She concludes that prostitutes were not living at the edges of the community but were intricately woven into it. Focusing largely on the Great Plains region and excluding the West Coast, Anne Butler (1985) challenges the idea of a “sisterhood” of prostitutes in the West and argues that these women lived rough-and-tumble lives. The women were, with few exceptions, young and poor; many of them were married but continued to work as prostitutes since their spouses were often marginally employed; the income, for most of them, provided only a subsistence living; violence and addiction were painfully common; and their lives mirrored the lack of order and social structure in the frontier West.

Most published archaeological studies of historical sex work have taken place in large or medium-sized cities such as Boston (Stevens and Ordoñez 2005), Los Angeles (Costello 2000), New York (Milne and Crabtree 2001; Yamin 2005), St. Paul (Ketz et al. 2005), and Washington, DC (O’Brien 2005; Seifert 1991). As brothel archaeology became more common in the 1990s and early 2000s, its scholars tended to focus on the buildings that housed bawdy acts, whether the buildings functioned as residences, businesses, or both. The predominance of brothel studies, as opposed to more independent forms of prostitution such as streetwalking, in archaeology

is mainly due to the discovery of such sites during urban development projects (Voss 2008). In addition, brothels often take center stage in archaeological investigations simply due to the abundance of material and documentary remains (Seifert 2005). Jennifer Lupu and Alexander Keim (Chapters 2 and 5, this volume) move beyond the level of the brothel and explore how neighborhoods within the urban landscape of Washington, DC, and Boston, respectively, structured and were structured by the historical sex trade of these larger cities.

More ephemeral, short-term forms of engagement with the sex trade are harder to access through the material record but were quite common along the Western frontier. Catherine Holder Spude (2005, 2015) and Kelly Dixon (2005) have published some of the only archaeological studies of early sex work and saloons on the frontier. And Julia Costello (2003, Los Angeles) and Mary Van Buren and Kristin Gensmer (2017, Ouray, CO) offer some of the few publications that analyze assemblages from crib sites in the American West. As with urban areas, the involvement of CRM firms has promoted the study of frontier prostitution sites such as Sandpoint, Idaho (e.g., Chapter 11, this volume). University research has also contributed to recent work on midwestern and western sites, which has importantly contributed to several master's theses (e.g., Ouray, CO, Burnette 2014; Gensmer 2012; Horobik 2011; Fargo, ND, Munns 2017).

Race

Recently, the thematic focus for much historical sex work research has begun to shift beyond gender to race. Historians have long mentioned race in the context of immigration, especially in the American West; however, it has been rare for race to be used as an analytical framework for sex work studies. Since the 2000s historians have begun to acknowledge and explore the experiences of black Americans on the margins of society, while incorporating other common themes mentioned earlier such as labor and sexuality. Case studies by historians like Alecia Long (2004, New Orleans), Cynthia Blair (2010, Chicago), and Penny Petersen (2013, Minneapolis) have placed a much-needed spotlight on what being black meant for city sex workers. Notably, this is an area in which archaeologists have not followed suit. While race is often mentioned in archaeological studies as an important facet of sex workers' identities, it is not expanded upon. Outside the subfield of sex work, both fields have engaged in a

wealth of studies pertaining to race and intersectionality, which present a strong foundation for pushing the discussion of race and historical sex work forward.

Some historical accounts of turn-of-the-century sex work focus on interactions with the legal system and the influence of the Civil War, especially in the South. Black women caught up in the criminal justice system at the end of the nineteenth century had been born before the Civil War and likely into slavery. Kali Gross (2006) describes black female incarceration in Philadelphia at the turn of the twentieth century. She shows that there was a strong systemic bias and how this bias sheds light on the current disproportionate rate of arrest and conviction in the same population more than a century later. While Gross' work does not focus directly on historical sex work, it expands the interpretation of black women, criminality, and life on the margins, which often included prostitution.

The sexuality of sex workers of color has proved to be another complex area of interest. Alecia Long (2004) analyzes how the mores about commercial sex, vice, and race changed along with corresponding definitions of respectability and acceptable sexual behavior in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in New Orleans. As Penny Petersen (2013:86) describes, an African American woman in the South during the post-Civil War era was likely held to a "peculiar and convoluted standard of sexual behavior." However, sex workers also found opportunities in these expectations. Ida Dorsey, a madam in Minneapolis, strategically harnessed racist stereotypes of sexualized black women by offering sexual services considered deviant at the time, such as shadow dances and stripteases. White madams could not provide the same services, and the "exotic" nature of Dorsey's business intrigued wealthy male clientele in the city, creating a niche for herself and her business in the Minneapolis sex trade (Petersen 2013). Petersen (Chapter 7, this volume) continues her exploration of Dorsey, while Angela Smith (Chapter 8, this volume) presents a biographical account of Melvina Massey, a black madam in Fargo, North Dakota. These chapters deepen our understandings of how race intersected with sex work as both madams worked to make the most of their exotic, racialized sexuality.

Other historians have framed their analyses of black women in sex work through the context of labor. Cynthia Blair (2010) describes how working-class women in turn-of-the-century cities already faced daily struggles due to their gender and class, and race also played a significant

role in their efforts to provide for themselves and their families. Black women had limited options because their race shut them out of the booming industrial work and reduced their options to domestic work and prostitution. Even then, the difficulty was not usually in finding a job but in being hired, as employers tended to hire white immigrants over local black women. As a result, prostitution was one of the only viable options for employment. Black women are often invisible in primary sources, but Blair interprets the perspective of these women working in an urban setting with human dimensions and the ability to act on their own behalf. Angela Smith's account of Melvina Massey (Chapter 8, this volume) provides another example to augment Blair's argument that black women were actively working these fringe social settings to create better lives for themselves.

Thematic Framework of the Volume

As the review of the literature has shown, historical and archaeological research on historical sex work has helped create a more inclusive and nuanced view of social relations in United States history. The research performed on the women, spaces, and materials involved in the historical sex trade (dating to roughly 1850–1920), largely conducted within feminist and gendered frameworks, has helped to expand understandings of gender, sexualities, labor, class, and race. In large part, the chapters in this volume represent an expansion on this scholarship, both in terms of geography and themes. These studies cover localities including Washington, DC, Fargo, Minneapolis, Boston, New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Sandpoint, Idaho. While a few historical monographs have been published in the recent past, it has been more than a decade since multiple scholars have been in dialogue with one another in the special volume of *Historical Archaeology* (Seifert 2005).⁷

In addition to showcasing new scholarship, one of the primary goals for this project has been to bring historians and archaeologists into dialogue with one another, cutting across disciplinary lines; therefore, chapters are organized into thematic sections rather than sections based on academic specialty. In some cases readers may not necessarily know if an author is a historian or archaeologist just by reading the chapter, as methodologies in both fields are fluid. For example, not all of the scholars trained as archaeologists examine material culture, and some historians focus on reading

landscapes and built environments. This melding together of methodologies between the two fields demonstrates the complementary nature of the scholarship.

The “Law and Spatial Order” section of this volume addresses the complex relationship between the sex trade and society. These chapters do not center on a single brothel or sex worker but instead look at the surrounding neighborhoods and the influence of prostitution in terms of public opinion, legal repercussions, and placement within the city. In some respects, these chapters are focused on larger contextual issues of the historical sex trade, rather than site- or person-specific case studies. Taken as a whole, these authors innovate in the methods and source materials being used and add to our knowledge of the physical, social, and legal landscapes in which sex workers were living and working in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In Chapter 2, prostitution is introduced as a significant feature on the urban landscape, and historical spatial data is analyzed through the use of geographic information systems (GIS). Jennifer Lupu’s research demonstrates the contradictory design and construction processes that resulted in the development of brothel districts near prominent political buildings in the nation’s capital and the resulting illusion of governmental control over the illegal activities taking place in the Hooker’s Division neighborhood. Of course, power, while frequently imbalanced, is never unidirectional, and this red-light district played a significant role in changing and challenging the symbolic image of Washington, DC, in the nineteenth century.

Speaking to previous research that has focused on hierarchies of historical sex work (parlor houses, bawdy houses, cribs, streetwalkers), Chapter 3 analyzes criminal charges from court dockets to explore the legal and social landscape of the sex trade in late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century Fargo, North Dakota. Applying anthropological linguistic analysis to these records, Anna Munns teases apart how the legal system differentiated between women participating at various levels of this hierarchy. Moreover, her research illustrates the difficulties researchers, and archaeologists in particular, have in accessing historical sex workers outside the brothel setting. Not only does this chapter add to work being done on smaller cities, but it helps to broaden the scope of the legal landscape of historical sex work.

Ashley Baggett and Carol Bentley (Chapter 4, this volume) examine the early twentieth-century fear of “white slavery,” that white women were being kidnapped and forced into prostitution. Situating the use of white slavery within the anti-vice Progressive reform movements and their relationship to the historical sex trade, Baggett and Bentley examine the role of the incipient film industry in larger social conversations. As major cities banned some of these films and worked to distance themselves from the trafficking of white women, the legal system began to use policy inspired by the white slavery scare to regulate sex outside of marriage. This chapter broadens our view of the social and legal landscapes associated with the historical sex trade.

In the final chapter of “Law and Spatial Order,” Alexander Keim argues that while “respectable” women of Boston’s middle and upper classes were largely confined to the domestic realm, working women, including sex workers, inhabited spaces beyond the confines of the brothel and physically embodied the tactics of resisting dominant ideologies meant to keep the elite in power. Using materials recovered from the privy of a brothel in the North End, a working-class neighborhood, he shows how these women’s flashy and publicly used tactics helped to construct the social and physical landscapes of their neighborhood in a manner that contradicted dominant narratives and helped to shape the urban landscape of Boston.

The second section of this volume, “Illuminating Brothel Diversity: Children and Women of Color,” expands on who is included in the research of the historical sex trade. Although women involved in the sex trade shared techniques and knowledge to prevent or terminate unplanned pregnancies, the presence of children in brothels has long been acknowledged by scholars, and yet children in the brothel setting have remained understudied. Evidence is often scanty, and primary sources tend to emphasize the more sexually explicit and illicit aspects of the brothel, making children a more challenging population to locate. Likewise, while all scholars have acknowledged the presence of women of color within the historical sex trade, the majority of historical and archaeological research has focused primarily on white women. Blair’s (2010) groundbreaking work in Chicago has perhaps been the most significant exception as her work has begun to deepen the discussion on the intersection of race and

sex work. The three chapters in this section contribute to expanding the focus of this scholarship by exploring these under-researched populations.

In Chapter 6, Jade Luiz skillfully reconstructs the presence of children in Boston's nineteenth-century brothels. To do so, she uses archaeological evidence from 27/29 Endicott Street in Boston's North End and pieces together primary source evidence to create a narrative of the children who resided there. Despite a somewhat small data set, Luiz introduces the types of questions we can and should be asking of these artifacts of childhood found within the historical sex trade. Her research also demonstrates the interdependence of archaeological and historical methodologies when studying those who are among the least accessible in either type of primary source.

Penny Petersen's research in Chapter 7 works to reconstruct the life and businesses of Ida Dorsey, an African American madam working in the Upper Midwest, namely in St. Paul and then later Minneapolis, Minnesota. Exploiting the "exotic," racialized otherness of herself and the black women who worked for her, Dorsey used the media to create the image of a lascivious yet highly sought-after bordello. Her business acumen proved substantial, as her success allowed her to accumulate wealth and power and enabled her to financially care for her extended kin network. Dorsey's rise and skillful use of racial stereotypes to promote herself and her business are detailed in this biographical account.

In Chapter 8 Angela Smith introduces Melvina Massey, another successful African American madam on the edge of the Great Plains. Massey owned and operated her brothel, the Crystal Palace, in Fargo, North Dakota, between 1892 and 1911. Smith traces Massey from antebellum Virginia to Progressive Era Fargo and explores her successful transition from slave society to entrepreneur. Massey navigated the legal system with ease and often used her outsider standing in a small-town location to her advantage. While in many ways living outside of respectable society, Massey demonstrated a shrewd mind for business and achieved a level of success most individuals, and certainly most black women, did not at this time.

"On the Flip Side: Men and Masculinities" serves as the final section of this volume. As mentioned earlier, women have served as the dominant focus of the research coming out of both history and archaeology. As a product of a larger feminist research agenda, this is not surprising, and it was most definitely necessary. Up until the critical and feminist turn within academia, white men were taken as the given starting point

of any historical endeavor. Earlier researchers looking into the historical sex trade have done tremendous work placing women at the center of legitimate academic work while also exposing gender as a social construct worthy of detailed attention. However, since the late 1990s, gender and sexuality studies have grown beyond focusing primarily on women. Scholars such as Barbara Voss (2008) have called for a similar examination of masculine gender identities, among others. Importantly, gender identities, masculine or feminine, did not develop in isolation from one another. Although the chapters in this section take men as their primary focus, the authors emphasize the importance of the interplay between the women and men involved in the sex trade. This section does not aim to reify common conceptions of historical masculinity or strip the women involved in the sex trade of their agency but rather to help deconstruct how masculine gender identities and sexualities in the United States have come into being and in fact problematize the taken-for-granted nature of gender in general.

In Chapter 9 Kristen Fellows presents a new branch of the research project Smith began in Chapter 8, which centered on Melvina Massey. Fellows' work begins by examining how the scale of the city, in this case Fargo, affected the material realities of Massey's brothel, the Crystal Palace. Although not a proper parlor house by big-city standards, for this place and time, it was a relatively upscale business. Fellows then examines the sociospatial dynamics of this brothel and how they helped to reinforce hegemonic heteronormative masculinity. While brothels are typically discussed as feminine spaces, given the fact that they were furnished, run by, and inhabited by women, this chapter explores how certain areas within the Crystal Palace were constructed in a manner that enabled and encouraged interaction between the male patrons and what that homosocial interaction meant for the construction of gendered identities.

In Chapter 10 AnneMarie Kooistra takes Tom Savage, a saloon owner, prize-fighter, politician, and rooming-house proprietor, as the primary focus of her research. Through an examination of his career in Los Angeles, she explores the shifting gendered realities of who controlled the flow of capital within the red-light district following the turn of the century. Importantly, political access seems to have been crucial for Savage's success, while this realm of influence was all but denied to his female counterparts. As men gained more control in the vice districts of LA, the city simultaneously seems to have abandoned the implicit acceptance of

prostitution. Ultimately, Kooistra's work sheds light on what would be the decline of the "independent" madam, the rise of the female "manager" (working for male bosses), and the tendency for sex workers' profits to flow into the hands of men.

Having recovered a wealth of artifacts from two brothels in Sandpoint, Idaho, Mark Warner (Chapter 11) combines documentary and archaeological sources to explore alternative reasons men may have visited women working in these institutions: treatment for venereal disease and impotence. This aspect of male sexuality has been touched on by a handful of historians but has not been addressed by archaeologists to date. Warner's chapter turns toward masculine identities and sexualities and how female sex workers played multiple roles in helping to create and reinforce gendered norms. Like the other chapters in this section, Warner's research further brings men and masculinities into the discussion on historical sex work and gender studies more generally.

As this volume is intended to bring archaeologists and historians into greater dialogue, we have used the final chapter, Chapter 12, to explore both points of intersection between the individual chapters and avenues for future research. Despite differences in primary source materials or, at times, the nature of questions being asked of the data, these chapters demonstrate that the two disciplines are in fact not that far afield from one another when studying the historical sex trade. After all, we are all scholars of the past attempting to better understand the broader significance of historical sex work for the larger societal context in which we currently find ourselves. Present-day gendered, classed, and racialized social constructions have not developed out of thin air. This final chapter explores the spaces where we might learn from one another in an effort to strengthen and deepen the arguments being made in our respective fields.

Increasing discussion, interaction, and citations between archaeologists and historians will strengthen interpretations of the historical sex trade and its significance for our understandings of the past. With the existing historical and archaeological scholarship serving as a foundation, these chapters represent a new wave of research into the historical sex trade. Beyond the interdisciplinary framework of this volume, one of the primary contributions of these chapters will be a shift in the foci and topics that have been included in the literature to date. These studies speak to the fact that this topic has reached a new level of maturation and respectability within both history and archaeology. They also branch off

from earlier works and establish new paths of their own. Both fields have moved beyond having to argue that these women are worthy of our time and focus. And so this volume begins to move the discussion beyond the traditional focus on the women workers of the historical sex trade and their material conditions and broadens the theoretical and methodological approaches that are being taken in such research.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. Determining the best phrase to describe this category of scholarship is not as easy as it might seem. We have chosen “historical sex work,” “historical sex trade,” and other similar variations. This phrasing includes a wide range of research on various aspects of the commercial sex trade, including prostitutes, madams, brothels, red-light districts, social conditions, sex work economy, and regulation of and attempts at government reform of sex workers. This phrase does not include more contemporary forms of sex work like erotic dancing, strippers, pornographic film, erotic massage, or escorts. Other scholars have discussed the issue of labels (e.g., Gilfoyle 1999; see also Lupu, Chapter 2, this volume).

2. Given the geographic and temporal scope of the volume, the literature review focuses on historical sex work of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States.

3. The Progressive Era occurred between 1890 and 1920 and was characterized by widespread economic, political, social, and moral reforms. Citizens responded to rapid industrialization and economic growth by pushing broad reforms. Reformers lobbied for prohibition, food production inspections, expanded education opportunities, workplace safety, and cleaning up the city streets. Vice was a major emphasis for moral reform during this period.

4. A Section 106 Review is required of any building project that receives federal money. An archaeologist must confirm that the site does not have human remains or culturally significant materials present.

5. See the final chapter of this volume for a discussion on how agency has shaped the discourse in both fields.

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6. Other forms of both reputable and illicit entertainment of the time, such as night-life and alcohol consumption, are also inextricably linked to the spaces associated with the sex trade but are outside the scope of this volume. For more information on these related topics, see works such as Dixon 2005; Erenberg 1981; Kasson 1978; Keire 2010; Nasaw 1993; Peiss 1986; Peretti 2011; Spude 2015. For more information on bachelor sub-culture, see Chudacoff 1999; Ownby 1993; and Stott 2009.

7. It should be noted that Gilfoyle, serving as a discussant, was the only historian to participate in this endeavor. Also of note: a 2019 publication by Rebecca Yamin and Donna Seifert, *The Archaeology of Prostitution and Clandestine Pursuits*, synthesizes the archaeological research of multiple scholars involved in historical sex work studies.

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LAW AND SPATIAL ORDER

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2

Landscapes of Power and Desire

A Geographical Analysis of Washington, DC's Nineteenth-Century Brothel District

JENNIFER A. LUPU

Oppressive taxation; a discrimination against one class of people for another; thievery, murder, etc. are more manacing to the destruction of good morals than all the whiskey that is sold and all the houses of prostitution that now exists. The District of Columbia has the most inconsistent Government in the world.

Washington Bee (4 April 1896:4)

From 1860 to 1914, public prostitution flourished in Washington, DC. During this time, many brothel locations were publicly known and are listed in census records. Previous scholarship on Washington's brothels has either addressed only the Civil War period (Lowry 1994, 1997) or focused primarily on a single brothel or daily life in brothels (Seifert and Balicki 2005; Seifert et al. 1998; Seifert 1991). Building on these literatures, I analyze the landscape of public prostitution in 1880s Washington, specifically examining the spatial dynamics of the main brothel neighborhood, the Hooker's Division, in the context of the city's physical and symbolic landscapes. The Hooker's Division brothels were inescapably influenced by the space the neighborhood occupied within the city. Simultaneously, the presence of a prominent "scarlet district" in the nation's capital became an essential part of the city's identity and eventually a topic of intense contestation and debate.

In order to explore the geospatial setting of the brothel district in nineteenth-century Washington, I first discuss the city as a whole, analyzing early city plans and subsequent redevelopment in order to understand the

physical representations of morality, power, and capitalism imbued within the urban landscape. Next, I provide a history of sex work in nineteenth-century Washington, focusing particularly on the development of the clustered brothel neighborhoods that helped shape Washington's urban landscape. Finally, I turn specifically to the spatial dynamics of power that create symbolic relationships of surveillance and concealment between governmental authorities and nineteenth-century sex workers.

Washington, DC, provides an ideal site for this type of spatial analysis, in part because as the nation's capital, it was intended to be seen as a model for the nation. When George Washington and Pierre Charles L'Enfant designed Washington, DC, they intended to physically represent American political ideals and social values (Luria 2006). Their idealized vision of the city was undercut by reality when funding fell short and many of the remaining lots were occupied by slums, saloons, and brothels.

By the 1870s the main brothel neighborhood was centrally located within the city; brothels likely clustered there for a variety of reasons. During the second half of the nineteenth century, governmental and military authorities—both in Washington and in other American cities—attempted to zone brothels for easier surveillance and oversight (Harnett and Dawdy 2013; Seifert et al. 1998). But other factors pushed brothels into this Washington neighborhood specifically. Before and during the Civil War, this area hosted many brothels because it was near a polluted canal and therefore considered undesirable by the city's wealthier inhabitants. Additionally, its central location and easy access to politicians and bureaucrats allowed sex workers to attract clients. Finally, many of the neighborhood's blocks had alleys, which allowed for secretive or hidden interactions between sex workers and clients, police, and other sex workers. Due to these factors, the Hooker's Division neighborhood was ideally located both for the development of a thriving sex trade and for placating the governmental pressures for oversight and control.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Washington's brothels were not technically illegal but quasi-illicit. Because of this, sex work was not hidden or underground as it generally is today; rather, brothels were publicly visible and were explicitly documented in newspapers and census records. According to newspaper commentary, prostitution was seen as an inescapable social vice (Washington Times, 7 September 1894:1). Although women and other individuals were arrested for sex work-related offenses, arrests were sporadic and rarely impacted the

larger and more prestigious brothels (Seifert 2005). Additionally, prostitution cases were not tried in criminal courts but were tried in a lower circuit court, and the resulting penalty often involved only a small fine.

During this era, the terms “prostitute” and “prostitution” were common, as were other euphemisms and terms such as “woman of ill repute,” “harlot,” or “person of unsavory reputation.” Many of these have derogatory connotations, so I prefer to use the term “sex worker,” which recognizes compensated sexual exchanges as a type of labor. When discussing the historic sources or their content, I use the terms “prostitute” and “prostitution” to engage with the texts. I also use “prostitution” to describe the particular form of sex work that was common during the nineteenth century, recognizing that while sex work has existed in many different geographical and historical contexts, the practice of this type of labor is shaped by its particular social world. When I am discussing individuals in my own terms, I prefer to use the term “sex workers.” I also use “sex work” as an umbrella term for this type of labor in all periods or in general.

While most of the brothels listed in census records were inhabited entirely by women, some brothels were run by families or married couples. Census records only indicate gender as perceived by the census taker or possibly as claimed by the respondent. Historical documentary sources imply the gender non-conformity of some nineteenth-century sex workers, and these individuals (and others) may not have identified with the same terms used to describe them in historical sources. I avoid projecting contemporary heteronormativity and binarist constructions of gender onto past actors. Simultaneously, it is important to recognize that women were the majority of those affected by sex work policing and that governmental and social regulation of sex work is inextricably tied to sexism and misogyny.

As the nation's capital, Washington was seen and intended as a representation of American political ideals. Unlike New York and New Orleans, which were often seen as wild and lawless places, Washington was intended to be a model of morality. After the Civil War, Senator Charles Sumner called Washington “an example for all the land,” echoing sentiments that imagined the capital city as a nexus of symbolic as well as political leadership (Masur 2010). The (predominantly) women of the sex work industry directly coopted the built infrastructure of a city designed to represent their moral opposite and in doing so changed the city's associated meanings. The Hooker's Division neighborhood and its residents

refused to conform to social morality and patterns of racial segregation, resulting in sexually explicit, women-headed households that were more racially mixed than the surrounding neighborhoods. Because of their prevalence and centrality within the city, brothels and sex workers shaped the social and sexual landscapes of Washington City and changed the city's symbolic implications.

Building Washington City

Being told that we were entering Washington City, I continued looking for the houses for some little time; but seeing none, I thought I had misunderstood the gentleman who made the remark, and turning round for an explanation, he told me, laughing, that we were almost in the very middle of it.

An early visitor's account of entering Washington
(quoted in Luria 2006 from Reps 1991:60)

In order to contextualize the placement of brothel neighborhoods and sex work landscapes within historic Washington, I will discuss the historic development of this particular urban landscape and the specific implications of the city's design. Despite ambitious design plans for the nation's new capital city, "congress refused to grant all but the most minimal funds, so the capital, which had been confidently touted as the 'city of magnificent distances,' became instead a poorly developed town whose muddy streets and empty lots invoked endless satire" (Luria 2006:15). The city's development, both in idealized plans and in the reality of construction projects, provides valuable insights into the enactment of social inequalities and the character of the city during this period.

Throughout the nineteenth century, some of the city's poorest urban slums were mere blocks away from the White House and surrounded the massive white dome of the Capitol building (Press 1984).¹ Many of these slums were home to Washington's brothels throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This urban setting and its associated politics were part of the context of the brothel neighborhood and influenced the meanings associated with that place. The locations of brothels highlight the spaces where idealized visions of city planners were confronted by the real city, underscoring the issues of poverty and inequality rampant within the district.

Washington was designed during the eighteenth century by Pierre Charles L'Enfant, a French engineer who had served under George

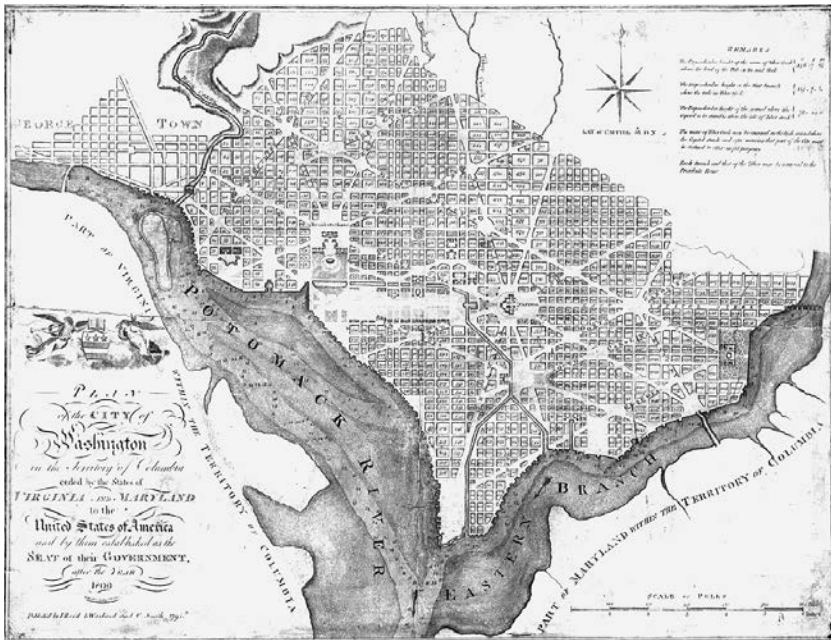


Figure 2.1. “Plan of the City of Washington in the Territory of Columbia,” John Reid, 1795.

Washington during the Revolutionary War (Green 1967). Through the collaboration between George Washington and L’Enfant, Washington was planned with the intention of physically representing the political and moral values of the nation (Luria 2006). Washington City’s plan (Figure 2.1) illustrates the perceived value and primacy of democratic government and the role of capitalism in American society. From the earliest plans, the political heart of the city was centrally located, with the intended spot of the Capitol lying at almost the direct center of the city. Sarah Luria (2006:6) describes Washington’s design, stating, “the Capitol was to be built upon the highest point of land, over a manmade cascade forty feet wide that emptied into a canal bordering the grand mall and leading to the president’s residence a mile and a half away.” The city’s designers placed these features centrally for both practical and symbolic reasons.

Although idealistically intended to promote the city’s capitalist trade endeavors, L’Enfant’s canal in fact became one of the city’s most notable failures. Running through the heart of the city, the canal was intended to be “a tribute to eighteenth-century ideals of circulation” (Luria 2006:41). It was constructed in 1815 and connected the Tiber Creek with the Eastern

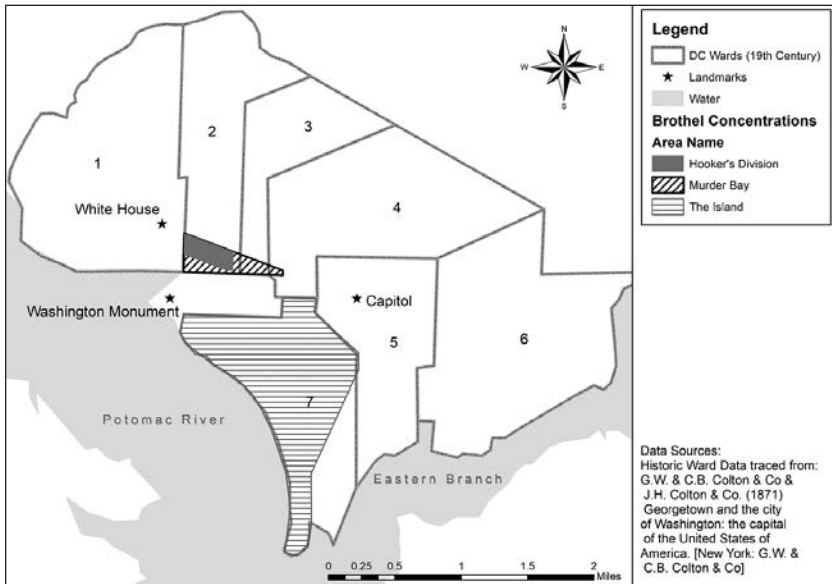


Figure 2.2. Brothel districts in Washington.

Branch and the portion of the Potomac River to the west of the National Mall. However, “by midcentury, the fetid waters of the Washington City Canal bred mosquitoes that carried malaria and plagued the city” (Luria 2006:41), and “by 1859 it had become notorious throughout the city as little more than an open sewer, and a sewer that drained improperly at that” (Press 1984:54). The canal separated most of the southwest quadrant from the rest of the city, and this area came to be known as “the Island.” These factors contributed to the development of slums in the areas surrounding the canal, including some of the city’s most notorious brothel districts, including the Island, Murder Bay, and Hooker’s Division. Eventually, the real funding and sewage problems associated with the canal superseded idealist fantasies, and by the 1880s the canal was no longer a part of the city’s landscape; Mitchell’s 1886 map of the city shows completed streets in the former location of the canal.

Intended to be a magnificent capital for a new nation, Washington’s built environment was a product of grand visions, inadequate funding, and inescapable social inequalities. The city’s plan was intended to represent American political and social values, and in a general sense it did so. The Capitol and White House are still central points in the city, occupying higher ground than their surroundings. Between 1860 and 1880, these

monuments would have been impressive and notable, in striking contrast to the polluted canal and surrounding slums in their foreground.

The Development and History of Washington's Brothels

One who visits Washington now will find three numerous classes of people, well-marked & easily identified. Besides these there is a promiscuous lot of all sorts & kinds conglomerated who I supposed might be called the citizens. The first & most numerous class is composed of soldiers of every rank, hue, nation, uniform & branch. The other two great classes are politicians & prostitutes, both very numerous & abt equal in numbers, honesty & morality.

Charles B. Haydon (1993:138), November 30, 1861

Although prostitution was rarely mentioned in newspapers before the Civil War, there certainly were brothels in Washington. The history of public prostitution in Washington, discussed in this section, provides important context for understanding the social factors and governmental approaches to sex work that helped shape the landscape of the 1880s Hooker's Division. While the 1880s were a particularly well-documented decade for public prostitution, earlier documentary evidence indicates that the 1880s brothel dynamics were part of a long and often tenuous relationship between sex workers, governmental authorities, and the public.

Court records from the early nineteenth century include several cases of women tried for prostitution or operating a bawdy house (Weinert 1964). However, the number of brothels in the city increased drastically during and after the Civil War, according to an 1863 study of prostitution conducted by the *Evening Star*, a prominent Washington newspaper (Evening Star [ES], 12 November 1863:2). It claims, "the whole number of public prostitutes of every grade and color in Washington will not exceed 5,000, of whom not more than a tenth resided in the District of Columbia previous to the war" (ES, 12 November 1863:2). According to the United States Census, in 1860 the total population of Washington City was approximately 61,000 (National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, United States Federal Census [USFC] 1860). Thus, the nearly 5,000 prostitutes made up nearly 10% of the total population of the city at this time. Even so, the *Evening Star's* count is likely an underestimate and may not consider part-time or informal sex work. Still, it is useful to indicate the proliferation of sex workers in this period of Washington's history. Although sex work has almost certainly existed in every

period since the colonies, the Civil War began a pattern of ubiquitous public brothels in Washington, and that pattern continued into the early twentieth century. Because such a large percentage of the city's residents were involved in sex work, the trade was regularly mentioned in newspaper articles and guidebooks to the city. Brothels and their residents likely would have been noticed by any visitors to the city and contributed to the larger fabric of Washington social life.

The same *Evening Star* article also includes counts of known prostitutes within the city, separated by race and ward. Washington is divided into seven wards, the nineteenth-century boundaries of which can be seen in Figure 2.2. The *Evening Star* article lists 2,313 white prostitutes (with the highest numbers in the first, second, and seventh wards) and 1,542 "colored" prostitutes, who are not listed by ward. Census data and first-person accounts indicate that brothel neighborhoods tended to be more racially mixed than the surrounding city (Bellard 1975; USFC 1880).

The 1863 *Evening Star* article further claims, "at least a third of the whole number, white and black, are street walkers of a character of unblushing indecency never before known in Washington, and are colonists from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and some few from the western cities" (ES, 12 November 1863:2). Other visitors to and inhabitants of Washington, DC, repeated this perception that many of the prostitutes were not native Washingtonians (and the canard that the most lascivious ones tended to be from other American cities). In his 1869 guide to the nation's capital, John Ellis writes of Washington's prostitutes, "New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and New Orleans furnish the greater portion of them. To the credit of Washington, be it said, the city furnishes very few" (Ellis 1869:458). Whether this was fact or perception, a few decades later the 1880 census lists approximately two-thirds (66%) of women with the occupation "prostitute" with birthplaces in DC, Maryland, or Virginia. This census also includes resident prostitutes from all the cities listed, among others. Ellis' claims may have been part of an intentional or unintentional effort to absolve the capital of blame for its prostitution problem.

During the Civil War, bawdy houses were spread throughout the city, although there were a few particularly dense areas, known as "the Island" and "Murder Bay." Brothels were popular among soldiers, in part because brothels regularly flouted the laws against selling liquor to soldiers (Bellard 1975:252). Because of this the provost marshal kept lists of various

establishments in the city that sold liquor, which included a list of known bawdy houses (National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, Provost Marshal's Department of Washington, 22nd US Army Corps of Engineers [USACE], 1864, Bawdy Houses Manuscript, Record Group [RG] 393, Vol. 298).² The register lists several houses along various alleyways, including Marble Alley, which was in a respectable neighborhood near the National Mall, and Fighting Alley, which was more notorious. Based on newspaper data, alleys were often associated with DC's brothels, although most brothels have addresses that front on streets, according to the provost marshal's list and various US census data (USACE 1864:RG 393:298, USFC 1880). Some of the alley brothels were described in a journal from one of the men who patrolled bawdy houses for the marshal's office. Bellard writes, "The Island Squad visited all the low places, that lay between Penn. Ave. and the river, and contained the worst places in the city [including] one called Tin Cup Alley, when we came to a sort of a court surrounded by houses, that were occupied by white and black, all mixed up together, on the principle that you pays your money and takes your choice" (Bellard 1975:256). Some brothels rated by the provost marshal list as higher-class establishments were also located in these notorious areas. Notably, a brothel run by Mary Ann Hall was located near the Capitol and the canal. The archaeological remains from this brothel were excavated and analyzed in the 1990s, and researchers found a wealth of expensive material goods (Seifert et al. 1998). Indicated by the variety of addresses listed by the provost marshal, houses of ill repute of different classes and racial compositions could be found mixed together in many of the city's neighborhoods.

Brothels were still widespread throughout the city after the war, although they eventually began to cluster more completely into particular districts. Police reports from the 1870s show prostitution arrests in every precinct (Seifert et al. 1998), and a guidebook from 1869 states, "Houses of Ill-Fame are numerous, and are scattered all through the city. With rare exceptions, however, they have not yet ventured to intrude into respectable neighborhoods" (Ellis 1869:458). By the late nineteenth century, however, brothels tended to cluster in a few key neighborhoods within the city, according to census records and newspaper commentary (USFC 1880; *Morning Times*, 29 March 1896).

The consolidation of brothels into distinct districts also occurred in other American cities at this time. Shannon Dawdy and Alexandra

Harnett discuss this process in New Orleans and claim, “tight spatial clustering of cribs and brothels probably indicates an attempt to regulate and zone prostitution” (Harnett and Dawdy 2013:46). This certainly seemed to be true in Washington, DC, as the clustering of brothels had its roots in monitoring and policing the brothels (Seifert et al. 1998:49). In the following section, I explore this phenomenon visually, providing new types of evidence for this practice of implied spatial dominance.

One of the Washington neighborhoods known for its prostitution—nicknamed the Hooker’s Division after General Hooker—was part of Murder Bay (see Figure 2.2), and eventually became DC’s most well-known scarlet section. The 1880 census indicates that this area was densely populated by brothels (USFC 1880), and an 1890 newspaper article (Figure 2.3) described this area and included a map of all the “bagnios”—another term for brothels—in the area (LOC 1890:Hooker 20540-4650). Seifert (1991:104) explains, “Like other urban red-light districts, Hooker’s Division was located close to the city center, but separate from respectable middle- and upper-class neighborhoods.” As discussed in depth in the next section, the Hooker’s Division’s central location in the city, directly between the White House and the Capitol, would have promoted the impression of governmental surveillance.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the character of Hooker’s Division remained linked with notorious characters, particularly prostitutes. An 1871 *Evening Star* article described a court case in which an individual named “Martin alias Reddy Welch” was charged with “keeping a disorderly house,” a term sometimes used as a euphemism for a brothel. The article includes a summary of the testimony including a police officer, a sergeant, neighbors, and others who all claimed to have seen numerous prostitutes going in and out of the house. But “the court, after listening to all of the testimony, stated that he had heard nothing tending to establish this house as any worse than others in that locality. He dismissed the case” (ES, 18 July 1871:4). Not only does this indicate that the division contained numerous brothels, but it is also one of many reports that brothels were not strictly policed during this era.

Throughout the nineteenth century, reports describe police treatment of sex work as either lax or overtly corrupt. An 1888 fire insurance map places Police Station No. 1 on the same block as many of the Hooker’s Division brothels that are listed openly in the 1880 census (Sanborn Map Company 1888:34). During the 1913 Senate subcommittee hearings on the

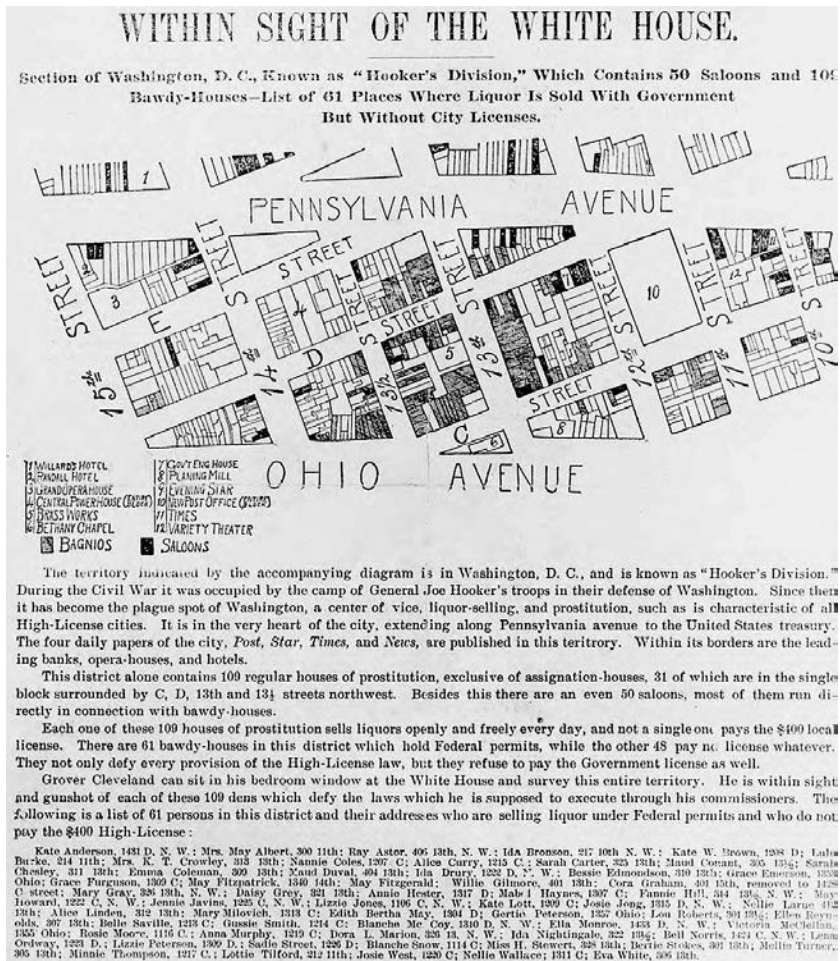


Figure 2.3. Unknown newspaper clipping showing the locations of bagnios (brothels), 1890. (Library of Congress.)

proposed "abatement of houses of ill fame," multiple testimonies from residents, experts, and reformers claim that police can be seen, both in uniform and plain clothes, entering and exiting known brothels without making arrests or disrupting business, in some cases suggesting that the officers were patronizing brothels (United States Senate 1913). Further, newspapers would sometimes report occasions where police were seen to be conversing openly with division sex workers, including an instance where a uniformed police officer was seen in Slate Alley talking to a madam, Cora Strauss, who leaned out her brothel's window and

handed him some money, which he pocketed as he went on his way (Evening Critic, 25 May 1883). Although some brothels were allowed to carry out business openly without penalty, this was contingent on factors of race and class; higher-class brothels could afford bribes, and lower-class brothels were often more extensively policed (Seifert 2005). In addition, a newspaper report from 1860 suggests that all-white brothels were not policed as strictly as predominantly black brothels (ES, 10 September 1860:3). Because policing and adjudicating practices around prostitution were not standardized during this time, individual biases and social inequalities influenced which sex workers were allowed to operate freely versus which ones were subject to raids, arrests, and fines.

By the 1870s public discontent with prostitution was gaining momentum, and various initiatives were proposed to either eradicate or license brothels in the city (Seifert et al. 1998:51). A March 29, 1896, *Morning Times* article pressed for stricter policing of prostitution, stating, “the argument that, should the scarlet section be abolished, bawdy houses would scatter throughout the city, is ridiculous in view of our social conditions.” The author asserts that brothels are clustered in a single neighborhood by this time, although this was not entirely true. Police records from the 1880s show arrests of prostitutes were significantly higher in the wards containing the Hooker’s Division and the area formerly called “The Island” (Seifert et al. 1998). By contrast, during the 1913 Senate hearings, Cuno H. Rudolph, president of the Board of Commissioners of DC, argued that if the abatement bill were passed, “it would result in [prostitution’s] distribution to points which are now free from it . . . very much like a proposition to prevent the pollution of a river by closing up the mouths of the sewers” (United States Senate 1913:5). Although the two positions projected different outcomes, they outline a shared premise: while prostitution occurred (to some extent) throughout the rest of city at this time, the Hooker’s Division represented the public face of the sex trade in Washington.

Public responses to brothels and sex work were not simple or universal in late nineteenth-century Washington. On January 4, 1877, the *National Republican* published a long article about a notorious character named “XX Williams.” One of his crimes, according to the article, was that

With the ostensible purpose of ridding the city of a pest and removing the social evil, the marshal of the court, backed by Williams and

others as notorious, made wholesale raids of the brothels colonized in the locality of “Hooker’s Division,” hustled the women into court, and had them mulcted in heavy fines. This operation was repeatedly performed and the unsuspecting judge did not see that he was made a cat’s-paw to fill the pockets of this infamous clique and deplete the court treasury. (National Republican, 4 January 1877:1)

This account is particularly interesting because it implies both that prostitution was rampant in the city, especially in Hooker’s Division, and that the women were being unfairly punished (based on the use of the term “mulcted” and the comment that they were “wholesale raids,” not raids based on law-breaking). While prostitution is described here as a “social evil” and the writer is therefore clearly not in favor of legalized or public prostitution, his official laxity was common in the mid- to late nineteenth century and represents a critical complexity in the process of criminalizing sex work in the United States.

These anecdotes support Ruth Rosen’s assessment of the changing attitudes toward prostitution during this period, as she states, “What earlier Victorians had discreetly regarded as a ‘necessary evil,’ turn-of-the-century Americans came to view as the ‘Social Evil,’ a moral problem and a national menace” (Rosen 1982:xi). Following a nationwide trend, the early 1900s marked the beginning of the end for public prostitution in Washington. Seifert (1991:93) explains, “Purity-movement, Progressive, and religious leaders succeeded in their cause in Washington, DC, in February of 1914.” These efforts were coupled with other social forces pushing for an end to public prostitution, including that “in 1900 the city celebrated the centennial of its founding, stimulating the desire to make Washington a truly graceful and attractive seat of government” (Press 1984:64). In 1914 Congress officially made owning a brothel a “legal nuisance,” and public prostitution went underground (Seifert et al. 1998; United States Senate 1913). The second half of the nineteenth century therefore represents a particular historic moment when prostitution in Washington was public and not strictly illegal, which is different from Washington’s sex work scene in other times.

As social pressure to eradicate or more strictly police prostitution increased, debates ranged about how to approach the project (United States Senate 1913). While many politicians called for increased criminalization and extensive policing, some women’s groups and reformers supported

rehabilitation efforts and fought against the arrests and forced removal of prostitutes (Seifert et al. 1998). One of the organizations aimed at rehabilitating prostitutes was the Florence Crittenton Mission, located at 218 Third Street NW, just a few blocks east of the Hooker's Division area (ES, 25 November 1896:5). However, this organization, along with other similar projects, was racially segregated, with the vast majority of space and resources going to all-white reformatories (United States Bureau of the Census et al. 1905). Congressional legislation and reform institutions often referred to prostitution as "white slavery," which erased the agency of those in the sex trade through the language of coercion and marginalized the experiences of sex workers of color. This constructed binary between victimhood and agency, with its associated racial implications, persists in twenty-first-century discourses of sex work.

Throughout the nineteenth century, brothels played an important and visible role in Washington City society. They are regularly mentioned in newspapers and listed explicitly in census records. Although sex workers were arrested for prostitution-related offenses throughout this period, newspaper commentaries on court cases show that in many instances, prostitution was leniently regulated. Within this social context, before criminalization, sex workers claimed public spaces in the center of the city and some profited handsomely from the thriving market of available clients (Seifert 2005:1).

Surveillance and Concealment

Panopticism is the general principle of a new "political anatomy" whose object and end are not the relations of sovereignty but the relations of discipline.

Michel Foucault (1995:208)

Beginning during the Civil War and continuing through the late nineteenth century, brothels began to congregate in the Hooker's Division neighborhood, which was centrally located between the White House and the Capitol. This neighborhood was a desirable location for a brothel because its proximity to government offices and tourist attractions ensured easy access to prospective clients. The clustering of brothels in a single neighborhood was in part the product of governmental zoning of prostitution to allow for easier oversight. Why did governmental and police authorities allow sex work to take root in this part of the city specifically,

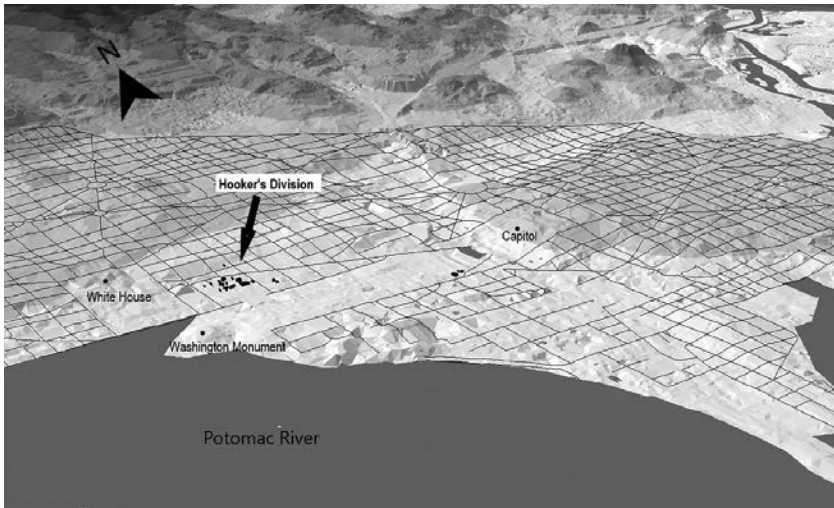


Figure 2.4. Brothel structures and major monuments modeled on a digital elevation model.

especially because it was so close to major governmental institutions? In this section, I use geographic data including topographic maps, geographic information systems (GIS) modeling tools, and archival documentary data to engage with this question. I argue that the location of the brothel neighborhood suggested governmental surveillance because it is located within the direct line of sight between the White House and the Capitol, but the infrastructure in the neighborhood undercuts this perception.

To explore these spatial dynamics, I used Esri's ArcGIS software to create maps that model sightlines and visibility within Washington. First, I present and discuss a map I created that shows where major monuments can be seen from within the city and surrounding area. I explain how the pervasive visibility of Washington's major monuments, specifically the Capitol Dome, the White House, and the Washington Monument, relate to the theoretical underpinnings of perceived panoptic surveillance. Then, I present a map that models the lines of sight between the Hooker's Division neighborhood and two major monuments—the White House and the Capitol dome. Although the Hooker's Division lies directly between the Capitol and White House, implying a governmental panoptic gaze, my visibility models indicated that in reality, views of the neighborhood were obscured from the monuments. In part, this was due to the fact that

the neighborhood was on a lower elevation than the surrounding blocks. Additionally, the blocks in the Hooker's Division were filled with narrow and intricate alleyways, which created the infrastructure for concealment and secrecy.

Nearly all of the women listed as prostitutes in the 1880 US Census resided in houses in the Hooker's Division. Although they were not the only sex workers in the city, these women were probably the most well-known and publicly prominent prostitutes. Other women in the city may have pursued sex work part-time or as a way of earning money on the side, and some women may have only come into the city or worked as sex workers when Congress was in session (Ellis 1869). By contrast, the women explicitly listed as "prostitutes" in the census tended to reside together in houses. They may have declared this occupation to census takers, or the census taker may have assumed their occupation based on their appearance and location. Regardless, the census data indicate that the Hooker's Division neighborhood was a thriving center of the sex trade in 1880s Washington.

The Hooker's Division occupied a low-lying area of the city in between the White House and the Capitol. This would have given the impression that Washington's political institutions were watching over the brothel district, which was likely intentional. The panoptic gaze is apparent in many parts of the city, but none is so directly in sight of the White House and the Capitol as the Hooker's Division. Looking down Pennsylvania Avenue, the street along the northern portion of the Hooker's Division, one could see from the White House at one end to the Capitol at the other. Both would be visible from many of the streets and rooftops of the Hooker's Division neighborhood. Here, power lies in the impression of surveillance rather than actual surveillance. Of course, no one was on guard at the Capitol, keeping watch on the brothels. However, the clustered brothels directly within the sight lines of the Capitol and White House would have appeared easier to monitor and control. Simultaneously, residents and visitors to the Hooker's Division would have perceived governmental surveillance, as the architecture of the White House and Capitol loomed over the neighborhood.

This perception of surveillance is one of many tactics for obedience and submission that urban designers often used during this period. Mark Le-
one noted similar urban design tactics at work in Annapolis, a nearby political center that is particularly applicable as a comparative example with

Washington. Leone (2005:8) contends that Annapolis' design was directly influenced by baroque era European cities, explaining, "Baroque urban design employed lines of sight, usually along principal streets, ending in a symbol of monarchical authority at the focal point. Thus any pedestrian in such an urban setting confronted objects of papal or royal authority everywhere throughout the day. The symbols of authority thus appeared to be unavoidable." While Washington was constructed by the leaders of the newly forming Democratic nation, it included similar design elements that represented governmental power. Even today, the Capitol looms over much of the city and is visible along many of the city's major streets.

Foucault discusses this type of surveilling gaze as a mechanism for power and control. He states, "one and the same gaze watches for disorder, anticipates the danger of crime, penalizing every deviation. And should any part of this universal gaze chance to slacken, the collapse of the State itself would be imminent" (Foucault 1980:72). Here again, this universal gaze is not human but rather symbolic. In Washington government buildings loom over the city, implying that government control is ever present. Foucault's ideas are prominent in Leone's analysis of Annapolis. Leone (2005:12) further generalizes, "I argue that urban planning embodies a tension experienced as a desire for social control because the plan is based on the idea of citizens with sufficient individual freedom to recognize and respond to a summons by the monarch or the state." Foucault's panoptic state appears in Leone's analysis of Annapolis and similarly materializes within the built landscape of Washington.

The White House, Washington Monument, and Capitol are each visible from many places in the city. Figure 2.5, an intervisibility analysis map of the three sites, depicts both where these monuments are visible from a viewer in the city and also the parts of the city that can be seen from inside one of these three monuments. Although the Capitol and White House were built during the late eighteenth century, the Washington Monument was built during the mid-nineteenth century and completed in 1884, becoming the tallest building in the world at the time (National Park Service 2019). While not always visible through the city's history, the monument would have been prominent during the 1880s and 1890s, when the Hooker's Division neighborhood was thriving. Light gray areas of the map indicate places in the city where any one of these three structures is visible. Dark gray denotes areas where two of the three structures are visible or, conversely, where that place can be viewed from two different

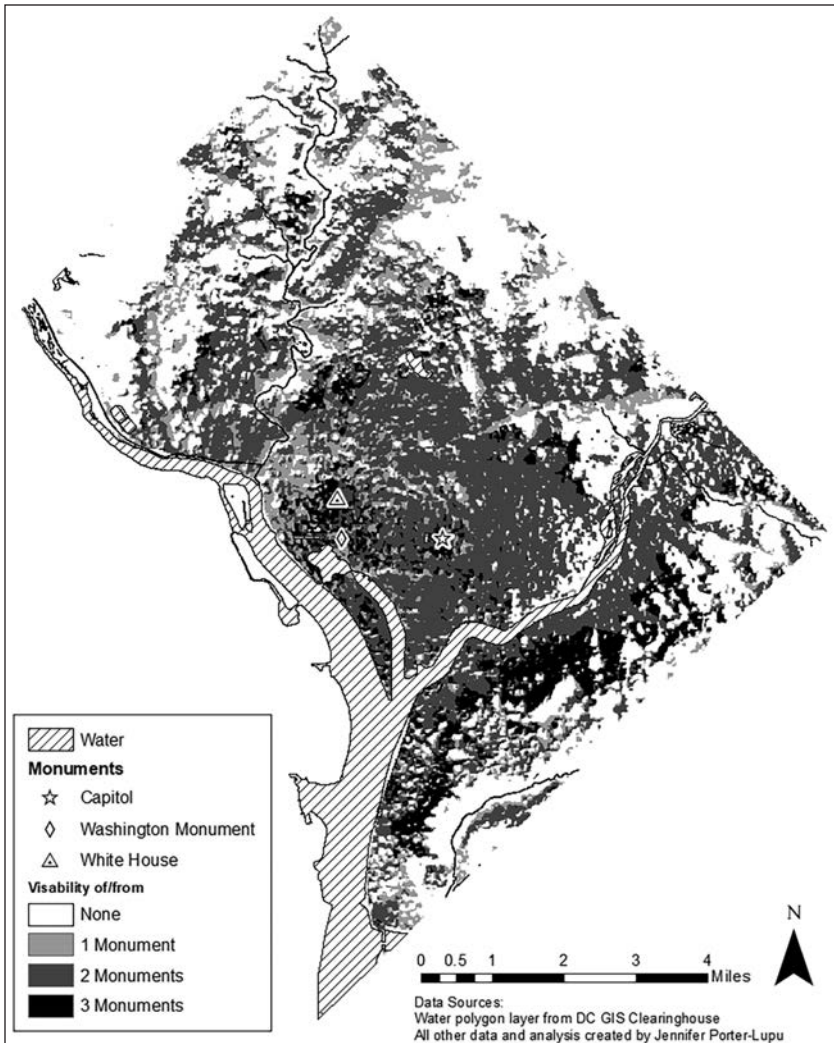


Figure 2.5. Intervisibility of major monuments in Washington, DC.

monuments. Black indicates that all three structures are visible or that this location can be seen from all three monuments.³ The Capitol, White House, and Washington Monument are located on elevated points and are some of the tallest and most prominent structures in the city; therefore, their resulting visibility is extensive. Figure 2.5 highlights the fact that these monuments were visible within most of the city, implying panoptic surveillance.

My cumulative viewshed analysis map (Figure 2.5) is a graphic representation of the principle of surveillance as it was inscribed within Washington's landscape. The map shows that the vast majority of the city is viewable from one of the three monuments and that at least one of the three is visible from most places in the city. While Washington as a whole ascribes to these tenets, the Hooker's Division neighborhood logically should be particularly visible because of its central location directly between the White House and Capitol. However, my visibility analysis indicated that the Hooker's Division was more obscured than surrounding blocks.

The location of the Hooker's Division between two symbols of governmental power is symbolic of the original intent behind the zoning of the prostitution district. Seifert, Balicki, O'Brien, Heck, McGowan, and Smith (1998:49) explain, "To better control his men's leisure activities, Hooker reportedly sought to concentrate all of the city's bawdy houses in this already notorious area." In Washington, a city of idealized visions, the location of brothels was particularly symbolic of the nation's attempted power apparatuses. Foucault (1980:97) supports such a study of power, claiming, "what is needed is a study of power in its external visage, at the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application." Brothels were a clear, stated target of governmental surveillance; therefore, a study of the power relationships between the government and brothels is particularly valuable.

On a smaller scale, the map in Figure 2.6 depicts the visibility of the Hooker's Division neighborhood from the Capitol or White House. This map considers the way buildings would obstruct views, based on the angle and height of a viewer on the second floor the White House and a balcony within the Capitol dome.⁴ The elevations used in creating the model also represent the point on the structure of the White House or Capitol that observers within the city would be able to see from the patterned parts of the map in Figure 2.6. If only the tip of the dome is visible, some of its symbolic intimidating power is lost, and observers in the Capitol could not ascend to the height of the peak. Changing observer heights slightly would only minimally change the resulting map. Therefore, while these numbers are approximate, they illustrate the general visibility to and from these buildings with a high degree of accuracy. The darker gray areas in the map indicate the places that both are visible from the Capitol and also

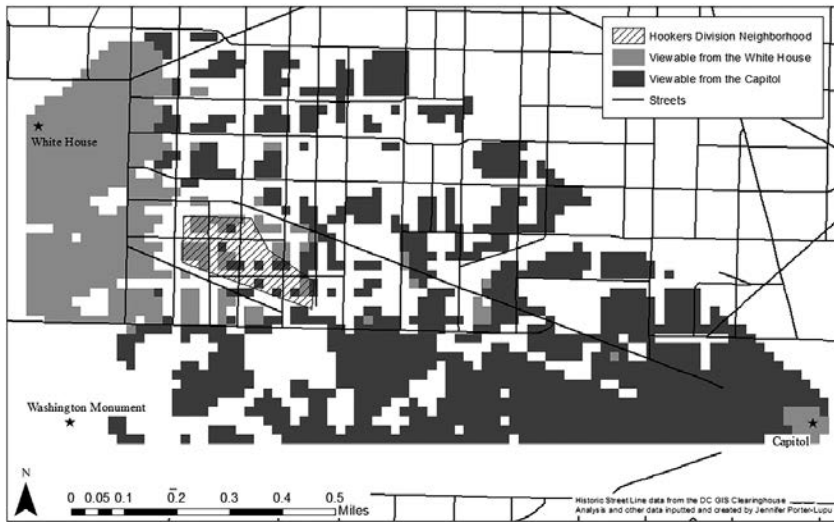


Figure 2.6. Model of views from the Capitol and the White House.

where the Capitol's dome is viewable from within the city; the lighter gray areas show the same for the White House.

The Hooker's Division therefore would have appeared to be under the Capitol's shadow, but in actuality the locations of buildings and the viewing angle would have obscured the majority of the Division. Figure 2.7 is a mid-nineteenth-century photo looking from the Capitol toward the White House. Figure 2.8 shows a model I created of the view from the Capitol in the same direction, with 1880 brothels highlighted. The photo mirrors the result of the viewshed analysis, showing how the neighborhood as a whole appears to be surveilled, when in actuality the area is distant, often foggy, and generally obscured. Politicians would have had the impression that they were in control while actually allowing sex workers to operate with a high degree of independence and secrecy. The many alleyways in the neighborhood also allowed for sex workers to protect the privacy of their operation and clients.

Alleyways provided the infrastructure of concealment and privacy, so brothels in the Hooker's Division clustered on blocks with alleys and used the alleys frequently. Although brothels did not usually front on alleys, it is possible the alley allowed visitors to enter more discreetly through the back entrance of the brothel. One article describes a testimony presented at the trial of several women "charged with living lives of prostitution and



Figure 2.7. View from the Capitol, looking northwest along Pennsylvania Ave. Taken ca. 1843 by W. C. Handy. (Historical Society of Washington, DC, Photo Archives.)

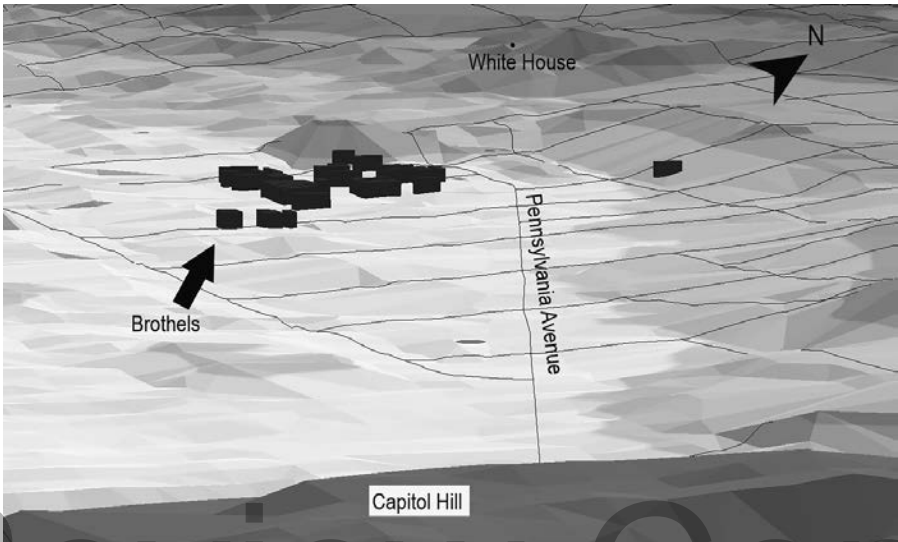


Figure 2.8. View from Capitol Hill, looking toward Hooker's Division. Brothels are the black structures.

being persons of evil life and fame.” The testimony, given by a Sergeant Vernon, stated “that these were the worst kind of characters about the Division and Murder Bay; that they burrow in low dens in an alley between 13th and 13½ street, where they hide from the officers” (ES, 5 May 1871:4). In this case, all the women tried were women of color. While census data from 1870 and 1880 indicates this area was racially mixed (USFC 1870, 1880), policing of white brothels was far more lax than policing of nonwhite brothels. However, the testimony of Sergeant Vernon indicates that brothels in the Division were linked with its alleyways and that sex workers used this infrastructure to evade the law. The theme of using the alleyway to hide from the policeman’s gaze is common in writings on alleys, newspaper articles, and primary source accounts of Washington in various decades of the nineteenth century (Bellard 1975; Borchert 1980; Weller and Weller 1909). The abundance of alleyways in the Hooker’s Division added infrastructure that supported concealment and privacy.

The Hooker’s Division neighborhood appears on two-dimensional maps as conveniently located for maximum governmental surveillance. However, my analysis indicates that for a viewer in the White House and Capitol, the actual visibility of the Hooker’s Division neighborhood was less extensive than that of surrounding blocks. While the Hooker’s Division is spatially located in a way that suggests governmental surveillance, it can also be seen as being hidden in a low-lying part of the city. Alleyways further provided infrastructural means for secrecy and concealment. These realities do not contradict the nature of governmental surveillance; rather, this duality highlights the contradictions within practices of pan-optic and governmental power.

Conclusion

During the nineteenth century, the prominence and spatial dynamics of Washington’s public prostitution scene reshaped the physical city and undercut the symbolic implications of Washington’s urban design. As regulatory agencies pushed for the congregation of brothels in a single neighborhood, market considerations for the sex trade in tension with urban planning and political pressure influenced the specific location. At the junction of various spatial, social, and economic pressures, the Hooker’s Division was positioned directly between the White House and the Capitol on one of the lowest points of land in the city. As my visibility

analysis depicts, this location allowed for the impression of governmental surveillance and control while simultaneously concealing the brothels and sex workers within the city's topography. The built infrastructure of the Hooker's Division included numerous alleyways, which allowed for increased privacy for both sex workers and their clients. Additionally, the neighborhood's proximity to government buildings allowed sex workers to more easily find and attract prospective clients, many of whom were politicians.

The location of the Hooker's Division neighborhood and its spatial relationship to monuments of governance shaped the experiences of those patronizing Washington's brothels, as well as the experiences of sex workers living and working there. The looming Capitol and White House reminded visitors and residents of the government's constant presence. Alleyways increased privacy and became associated with prostitution, extending the boundaries of this sexualized landscape beyond the brothel structures. While the physicality of this neighborhood shaped experiences of brothels, the clustering of brothels in a single area ultimately changed the meanings associated with this neighborhood and the city around it.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. The Capitol's dome was completed in 1866.
2. The term "bawdy house" can refer to a disorderly house, generally. However, scholarship on brothels and newspaper sources corroborate that in this case, all or most of the establishments listed were brothels (Lowry 1994; Seifert et al. 1998).
3. This map does not take into account the obstruction of architecture but does consider the elevations of the surrounding terrain. Because Washington's buildings were rarely taller than two or three stories during the 1880s (Sanborn Map Company 1888), incorporating them would not have changed the visibility model significantly.

4. To create these maps, I used Esri's ArcGIS 10 software. I used a DEM (digital elevation model) of the city's topography combined with block polygons valued to represent the average height of 1880 buildings (based on the 1888 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps). I first digitized all of the blocks between the Capitol and White House that could potentially obstruct views of any part of the Hooker's Division and created a raster map where blocks with buildings had a value of 20 ft and the surrounding city had a value of 0 ft. I then combined the raster map with the DEM of the city, through which the software added the height values for each point on both maps. The result was a raster map containing the elevation of every point in this area of Washington, buildings included. I then performed a visibility analysis on this map, incorporating relevant observer positions in the White House and Capitol.

Review Copy

3

The Legal Language of Sex

Interpreting a Prostitution Hierarchy
Using the Terminology of Criminal Charges

ANNA M. MUNNS

Sex workers across the United States found steady business during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and those in Fargo, North Dakota, were no exception. “Houses of ill fame” provided a euphemistic yet unquestionable name for the residences and businesses of many madams and prostitutes involved in Fargo’s historical sex trade. However, brothel prostitution was not the only form of sex work that followed the emerging frontier; streetwalking and other independent forms of prostitution offered a livelihood that was more flexible, though less lucrative, for many sex workers. This research explores the hierarchical structure of prostitution in Fargo and how the public’s view of prostitution affected the members of the city’s turn-of-the-century sex trade.

Police records offer a valuable entry point for investigating this complex relationship between sex workers and the public. These documents demonstrate very different tolerances for the varying types of sex work, and gender played an important role in these interactions with local police. As public opinion toward prostitution shifted throughout this era, the police—as well as the sex workers—were tasked with navigating society’s expectations for dealing with these crimes. Prostitution was viewed contradictorily as both a significant source of income for the city and a moral atrocity. By comparing the arrests of brothel madams with those of other individuals arrested for prostitution-related crimes, this chapter identifies and differentiates between the different types of prostitution active in Fargo at that time.

Defining a Prostitution Hierarchy

While their approaches may differ, historians and archaeologists have both considered the existence of a prostitution hierarchy directly related to socioeconomic status. This hierarchy was especially relevant along the expanding Western frontier, and authors of academic works and popular histories have defined tiers of sex work that rank different types of prostitution in terms of profitability, cleanliness, discretion, and safety (e.g., Agnew 2008; Butler 1985; Goldman 1981; MacKell 2004; Rutter 2005). Brothels were on the higher end of this scale, and they provided the most promising opportunities. Communal living offered some level of safety from violent clients, relatively stable business, and, in the highest-quality brothels, clean sheets (MacKell 2004; Rutter 2005). In the more expensive brothels, additional services might have been offered, such as entertainment or companionship, and brothel prostitutes maintained a level of secrecy for their clientele (Goldman 1981). However, access to brothel resources also required dependence on madams or landlords, and brothel quality varied greatly, ranging from fancy parlor houses and high-end brothels to common and low-end brothels, where cleanliness was not necessarily a priority (MacKell 2004; Rutter 2005).

On the other end of the prostitution hierarchy were independent forms of prostitution, which took place in small houses, rooms, and on the street. Cottage and crib girls often rented rooms or worked from shacks and independently managed their own businesses and clients. However, crib girls generally lived in poverty, while cottage girls had more financial success. Streetwalkers were often homeless and did business wherever they could (Goldman 1981; Rutter 2005). Like higher-end brothels, clients sought out cottage girls and occasionally enjoyed other services, like dancing, in addition to sex. Meanwhile, crib girls and streetwalkers offered only sex and were responsible for soliciting their clients, often loudly and conspicuously along streets and alleys, and served many more customers each night (Goldman 1981; MacKell 2004). Independence in the sex trade brought many challenges, including the constant threat of violence and uncertain financial stability. In fact, some prostitutes in the lower tiers of the prostitution hierarchy did not achieve independence at all and paid a portion of their earnings to pimps in exchange for protection and more consistent work (Gilfoyle 1992). However, pimps often abused and

engaged in romantic relationships with the women who worked for them, sometimes even encouraging drug use (Rutter 2005). Struggles with drug addiction and diseases further complicated the lives of these women in the sex trade, and many did not survive their dangerous and unsanitary living conditions (MacKell 2004; Rutter 2005).

The prostitution hierarchy was closely related to the socioeconomic status of its members, with communal brothels generating the most income and individual streetwalkers facing the most economically challenging—and potentially dangerous—situations on their own. The buildings (or lack thereof) that housed acts of prostitution also played a key role in this hierarchy. While settings did vary within each tier of the hierarchy, brothel tenants generally occupied large boardinghouses (MacKell 2004; Rutter 2005); cottage girls set up shop in boardinghouses, saloons, or small, two-room houses (Goldman 1981; Rutter 2005); crib prostitutes were confined to extremely small single rooms in complexes, saloons, or shacks (Butler 1985; MacKell 2004); and streetwalkers inhabited run-down apartments or lived on the streets (MacKell 2004; Rutter 2005). In a single city, sex trade services were often available from multiple tiers of this hierarchy, which catered to most budgets but also resulted in notable economic disparities.

In the West, these types of sex work often overlapped. For example, several authors discuss the work of dance hall girls, some of whom were also prostitutes (Butler 1985; MacKell 2004; Simmons 1989). These sex workers fell between the categories of “cottage girl” and “crib girl.” Men controlled their working conditions at either dance halls or saloons, but these women were not as impoverished as crib girls. The division between brothels and saloons in the West was also fuzzy, which presents challenges for analyzing these buildings in the archaeological record (Dixon 2005; Spude 2005, 2015).

The West’s many blurry, hierarchical tiers differed from the few clearer-cut types of prostitution in large, urban cities to the east. For instance, evidence for crib prostitution in the eastern United States was less common than in the West (Voss 2008; and see Costello 2003; Meyer et al. 2005; Van Buren and Gensmer 2017 for historical archaeology of crib prostitution). Brothel prostitutes and their madams differed greatly from streetwalkers and their pimps in cities such as Chicago and New York (e.g., Blair 2010; Gilfoyle 1992). Further, a brothel hierarchy was apparent in big cities, and

archaeological investigations of Washington, DC brothels have shed some light on these important distinctions.

Many archaeologists have considered the brothel a unique site type, and these authors frequently incorporate class-based discussions into their work. In one study, Donna Seifert and Joseph Balicki (2005) analyzed artifact patterns, or relative frequencies of artifacts, recovered from Mary Ann Hall's brothel in Washington, DC. The authors compare the brothel's artifact assemblage to artifact patterns from working-class households, middle-class households, and other brothels active in the same area. The expensive wares recovered from Hall's brothel were in stark contrast to other nearby brothels and households, leading the authors to argue that Hall's brothel was "a high-class establishment" (Seifert and Balicki 2005:59).

Respectability and Gender Roles

From the mid-1800s to early 1900s, the term "middle class" meant less about income and more about social respectability than it does today (Spude 2015). Middle-class families intentionally distanced themselves from the working class by seeking education, prioritizing religious values, and redefining the role of women in the household. Middle-class wives were largely unemployed and assumed responsibility for the moral values upheld and demonstrated by the household. Also known as "the cult(ure) of domesticity" this female realm separated women from the public, male workforce (Hill 1993). Gentility, or Victorian culture, was inextricably linked to domesticity by the middle class as it provided the rules of proper etiquette and moral behaviors that could be passed on to the next generation (Fitts 1999). A middle-class identity carried social value, but it also confined women to their homes.

For women of turn-of-the-century America, class, gender, and sexuality were deeply entwined. Some women formed sexual relationships with men via marriage to access middle-class socioeconomic status, just as some women in the sex trade were able to exchange sex for economic prosperity (Seifert 1991). Notably, iconic Victorian household items such as distinct serving wares, drinking wares, and fancy decor have been recovered from brothels (e.g., Costello 2000; Praetzelis and Praetzelis 2001), further entwining the middle-class lifestyle with sex. Higher-class brothel madams could offer genteel accoutrements like those of middle-class households, and in doing so, they created a familiar space for their

clients. In addition, as madams capitalized on these symbols of gentility, they created a niche that allowed brothel prostitution to continue with minimal regulation. Lines of Victorian respectability became blurred in the brothels, which madams used to their advantage. Some interpretations of these Victorian artifacts have assumed that because sex workers, specifically those living in brothels, had access to higher-class items such as expensive dining sets, they lived a higher quality of life than their working-class neighbors (Best 1982; Gilfoyle 1992; Stansell 1986).

More recently, others have argued that even though prostitution often served as an escape from poverty, it did not necessarily indicate that the prostitutes themselves had middle-class wealth (e.g., Butler 1985; Costello 2003; Ketz et al. 2005; Meyer et al. 2005; Milne and Crabtree 2001; Van Buren and Gensmer 2017; Yamin 2005). Rebecca Yamin's (2005) research at a Five Points brothel indicated that while upper-middle-class food was served on Victorian ceramics within the brothel, it was consumed mainly by the clients rather than the prostitutes. At the very least, women likely did not have access to the higher-quality foods outside of working hours, as is indicated by the high presence of more modest ceramics and food remains. While the interior of the brothel spoke to the gendered expectations of middle-class women, the prostitutes did not necessarily share these luxuries.

Prostitution in Fargo

Minimal literature documents turn-of-the-century prostitution in Fargo, North Dakota. One of the most important (and only) sources is historian Carroll Engelhardt's (2007) *Gateway to the Northern Plains*.¹ *Gateway* provides a brief introduction to some of Fargo's most prominent madams, who lived in an area known as "the hollow" or "under the hill" (Engelhardt 2007:224). Tracks for the Northern Pacific Railroad were located just east of this area, and they were accompanied by an industrial zone, which lined the Red River with lumberyards, coal sheds, feed mills, and the Northern Pacific Elevator (Sanborn Map Company 1910). Working-class neighborhoods like the Hollow tended to attract illicit activity because the associated buildings were physically (and therefore visibly) distant from middle-class residences (Rosen 1982). These vice districts often formed near railroad tracks that were outside (but near) the business district (e.g., Keire 2010; Rose 1974; Selcer 1991). This was no different

in Fargo, and the Hollow allowed sex workers some freedom due to the marginal spatial location and low cost of housing (see Petersen 2013 for a similar case in Minneapolis). In fact, as the Northern Pacific Railroad brought more newcomers to the Red River Valley, individuals of low socioeconomic status, including ethnic minorities and seasonal agricultural laborers, also sought shelter in this marginal area. Engelhardt (2007:223) refers to the area near the tracks as a “hobo jungle.”

Despite its location, society was by no means detached from the Hollow, and sex workers continually dealt with competing opinions from Fargo’s general public. On one hand, the city received significant sources of income from the informal regulation of the sex trade, which fined established brothels during this period and indirectly benefited Fargo residents. On the other, social purists viewed the support of such activity as morally degrading (Engelhardt 2007). This follows a familiar pattern of anti-vice movements in the United States at that time, which pitted “necessary evil” against “social evil” (Rosen 1982:14). Like in other cities with sex commerce, opinions on Fargo’s sex trade came from all sides. Sex workers, clients, brothel neighbors, police, reformers, politicians, and the media all had unique interests in the sex trade.

Challenges for the Hollow

In addition to prostitution, other forms of vice, such as consumption of alcohol, also faced the public spotlight. As citizens voted to establish the state of North Dakota in 1889, they also approved prohibition legislation. The next year marked the official closure of North Dakota’s saloons, which pushed Fargo’s saloons east across the Red River and into Moorhead, Minnesota. Moorhead continued to sell alcohol legally for many years, which further complicated Fargo’s dry status. “Jag wagons” shuttled alcohol consumers to and from each side of the river. Despite the prohibition efforts, drunkenness, and the violence associated with it, persisted in Fargo (Engelhardt 2007).

The city of Fargo was also affected by several natural disasters, including the 1893 fire and a flood in 1897. The fire claimed much of the city’s business district and residences east of Broadway, but a comparison between the Sanborn maps from 1892 and 1896 indicate that the Hollow remained mostly intact (Engelhardt 2007; Sanborn Map Company 1892, 1896). Four years later, the Red River crested at 40 feet, creating a devastating flood. Many working-class families suffered as a result, and this

time the Hollow was inundated (Engelhardt 2007). Yet Fargo and the Hollow eventually recovered and business continued.

Natural disasters were not the Fargo madams' only threat. While regulators wanted to continue fining madams for their brothels, anti-vice reformers sought to end prostitution altogether. Neighbors of the Hollow joined reformers' anti-vice campaigns as they attempted to rid their neighborhoods of the disreputable business. In fact, these neighbors formed the First Ward Improvement League to organize their cause (Engelhardt 2007). First-ward residents first filed a petition against neighboring brothels in 1890, which resulted in the restriction of houses of ill fame to the Hollow. In 1893 Fargo's City Council received a petition from local citizens—the majority of whom were women—to eliminate the city's brothels (Johnson 1950). Several police raids occurred in the following years, but madams always resumed business after the dust had settled (Engelhardt 2007).

The business of prostitution prevailed as sex workers successfully navigated the turbulent social climate until Fargo residents' efforts to rid the city of (unofficially) regulated sex work finally succeeded. Engelhardt notes that brothels disappeared from Fargo in 1916. While prostitution obviously continued after police began enforcing the restrictions, it was limited. The structured brothels run by local madams were no longer present after these police raids, and independent forms of prostitution most likely replaced them (Engelhardt 2007).²

Documentary Analysis: Arrest Records

Documentary analysis is becoming more common in historical archaeology as archaeologists reach beyond the scope of traditional archaeological survey and excavation when such methods are either impractical or impossible, as scholars have demonstrated in *Documentary Analysis in the New World* (Beaudry 1988). In her chapter, Mary Beaudry (1988) encourages historical archaeologists to analyze documents using similar methods to those that have been used to analyze the archaeological record. Specifically, Beaudry advocates for quantification and textual analysis of documents that pertain to material goods, such as itemized probate inventories. Other archaeologists such as Craig Cipolla (2013) have continued to analyze documentary evidence in innovative ways, branching away from documentary analyses that deal strictly with material culture.

In his study of the Brothertown Indians, Cipolla uses documentary evidence to trace how the meaning of the word “Brothertown” changed over time. Through his linguistic approach, Cipolla found that “Brothertown” first referred to a location, but in later documents, the term was used as an adjective to describe a people, the Brothertown Indians. In one instance, the term even served as a name for the people themselves: “the Brothertowns.” Drawing from linguistic anthropology, Cipolla analyzed the shifting language in these documents to interpret the transformation of a complex group identity.

Methods like Beaudry’s and Cipolla’s have enabled scholars to take their analyses of archival documents in new directions. Sociologist Joel Best (1998) documented the turnover of prostitutes within several St. Paul, Minnesota, brothels by recording the terminology used to charge the defendant, the amount fined, and the outcome of the arrest (e.g., a fine was paid or a case was dismissed) during the mid- to late nineteenth century. From month to month, the same woman could be charged for various reasons, and brothel prostitutes appeared and disappeared from the records. This chapter follows a similar methodology but instead aggregates this type of data rather than tracking individuals to analyze the use of certain terminologies over time.

Due to the illicit nature of sex work, documentary records tracing the intimate details of prostitutes’ lives are limited. This chapter employs both textual and quantitative methods to interpret a set of arrest records. Data were collected from nine Police Magistrate Court dockets and one criminal calendar housed at the North Dakota State University Archives. No dockets are available from before October 2, 1893, and the first prostitution-related crime appears in July 1894. The criminal charges related to prostitution that were analyzed for this chapter spanned a 20-year period, from July 1894 to November 1914 (North Dakota State University Archives [NDSU], 2 October 1893–12 September 1898: Police Magistrate Court Dockets Series, Mss 116 [CD] Box 1; NDSU, 12 September 1898–26 November 1901: CD Box 2; NDSU, 29 November 1901–29 May 1905: CD Box 2; NDSU, 1 June 1905–28 March 1908: CD Box 3; NDSU, 3 April 1908–30 December 1909: CD Box 3; NDSU, 3 January 1910–28 October 1910, CD Box 4; NDSU, 31 October 1910–30 August 1912: CD Box 4; NDSU, 1 September 1912–24 November 1913, CD Box 5; NDSU, 25 November 1913–24 November 1914: CD Box 6; NDSU, 22 April 1896–3 December 1896, Police Magistrate Court Miscellaneous Ledgers Series, Mss 116: Box 7, Criminal

Calendar A). Complaint records that did not lead to an arrest were not considered for this analysis.

Data were collected for each prostitution-related crime in the dockets, including female vagrancy. Details for each arrest were then transcribed, including a list of arrested persons, their associated criminal charges and fines, and a statement indicating the outcome of the arrest.³ Some entries contained multiple arrests, while others documented the arrest of a single individual. If the defendant was unable to pay the fine, one day in jail paid for approximately \$1.25 of the amount owed, so a \$10.00 fine would require eight days of jail time.

Another important parameter for this analysis is gender. While gender was rarely stated in the dockets, several techniques were used to infer the gender of each arrested person. It was most often determined from the defendant's first name; however, titles such as "Miss" or "Mrs.," descriptions referring to the defendant as a "boy" or "girl," and gendered pronouns ("his" or "her") were also used to associate a gender with each defendant. Additionally, if an individual's first name was not identified, but the individual was arrested at the same time and for the same crime as a woman, the defendant was considered male. If the gender was unable to be determined because there was no name associated with the arrest, the name was unreadable due to illegible handwriting or damage to the document, or the first name was abbreviated and no gendered pronouns were listed, the individual's gender was listed as "unknown."

Finally, it is important to note that several police magistrates and city justices of the peace recorded prostitution-related arrests during the 20-year period of study. They included William H. Barnett, E. C. Gearey, Martin Ryan, Henry F. Miller, and Augustus Roberts. Although not listed as a justice of the peace or magistrate, A. Plummer also contributed many entries to the dockets. Partly due to the wide range of authors, the written records varied, and the court dockets were certainly not immune to error or bias.

Identifying Types of Prostitution in Fargo: Textual Analysis of Criminal Charges in Arrest Records

Most of the key phrases used to charge Fargo inhabitants for prostitution-related crimes originated in city ordinances. The language from the ordinances was used in the more than 1,600 prostitution-related arrests from

July 1894 through November 1914. These 1908 city ordinances set a relatively standardized language for charging individuals with prostitution-related crimes.

Relevant Prostitution-Related Ordinances for the City of Fargo
(Resser and Roberts 1908):

Chapter VI: Title I

§ 23. Vagrants, what are, penalty.

Chapter VI: Title IV

§ 1. Houses or resorts of ill-fame unlawful, reputation, penalty.

§ 2. Unlawful to resort to houses of ill-fame, penalty.

§ 3. Unlawful to let house or room for lewd purposes, penalty.

§ 4. Unlawful to entice persons to house or room for lewd purposes, penalty.

§ 5. Unlawful for inmate of house of ill-fame to appear in public, penalty.

§ 6. Duty of chief of police and police officers to enforce this ordinance.

Each ordinance is explained in detail in W. C. Resser and S. G. Roberts' (1908) *Ordinances of the City of Fargo*.

The Brothel Madam Cohort

The first stage in the analysis of the Police Magistrate Court dockets was the linguistic analysis of the terminology used to charge individuals involved with sex work. The purpose of unpacking this terminology was to identify whether a prostitution hierarchy existed in Fargo, and if it did, which forms of prostitution were active at the time. In analysis of the arrest records, a group of madams quickly distinguished themselves from the other defendants; they were wealthy, often appeared in court by proxy of another individual, and their names were frequently repeated in the records.⁴ Carroll Engelhardt (2007) also made note of several of these brothel madams, as they received (and paid for) unique attention and protection from the local police. Essentially, these madams paid an unofficial licensing fee to the city each month to keep their brothels open. They were also afforded leniency in the due date of their payments, and some madams were offered installment plans by the city, allowing them to continue

to evade imprisonment (Engelhardt 2007). Of these madams, Melvina Massey arguably made the most impressive name for herself. Massey was a black madam who frequently appeared in police records and newspaper articles for her confidence and industrious attitude. She also has been the focus of much historical research (Engelhardt 2007; Fellows, Chapter 9, this volume; Smith et al. 2013; Smith, Chapter 8, this volume).

Throughout this chapter, this unique group of brothel madams is referred to as the “madam cohort.” Members of this cohort were charged relatively consistent fines each month to maintain their brothels within the city, and several arrest records indicate that these women plied their trade in the Hollow. To be considered a member of the madam cohort, a madam had to meet several conditions: 1) the madam must have pled guilty to the charge and paid the monthly fine, 2) at least one other madam must have been charged with the same crime, and 3) the amount fined and the terminology used to charge the madam must have been similar to that of the other madam or madams charged during the same month (e.g., charged \$56.50 for “keeping a house of ill fame”). This monthly pattern of charging the madam cohort continued from July 1894 through June 1912, resulting in a total of 802 payments by the members of the madam cohort. Although this pattern continued for nearly 20 years, several notable gaps occurred. Members of the madam cohort were arrested on a fairly consistent basis during four distinct periods, during which no more than six months passed between each charge. The breaks in these four periods may have corresponded with local anti-vice campaigns. As the campaigns gained traction in the city, supporters attempted to cease the informal regulation of the brothels altogether, likely resulting in the madams’ periodic absence from the dockets (Engelhardt 2007). The four periods of consistent madam cohort charges cover the following time frames: Period I, July 1894–May 1899; Period II, May 1904–November 1907; Period III, July 1908–October 1908; and Period IV, May 1910–June 1912.

Interestingly, the terminology used to charge these madams shifted during these four periods. Table 3.1 displays a summary of the charges used for the madam cohort. “Keeping a house of ill fame” was the most common charge, and this terminology persisted throughout all four periods. However, the usage of “keeping a house of ill fame” declined in the later periods. In Period I both madams and some inmates were charged. This group of inmates followed a similar pattern to that of the madams,

Table 3.1. Regular charges for the madam cohort

Charge Terminology	Number of Charges				Total
	Period I: July 1894– May 1899	Period II: May 1904– November 1907	Period III: July 1908– October 1908	Period IV: May 1910– June 1912	
Keeping (and main- taining) a house of ill fame	253	233	4	10	500
Keeping a disorderly house		74	2		76
Resorting to rooms (for immoral purposes)				67	67
Disorderly conduct				53	53
Being an inmate of a house of ill fame	45				45
Keeping a bawdy house		9	32		41
Keeping a house of prostitution	1			19	20
Total	299	316	38	149	802

Source: Munns 2017.

with a group of inmates charged together and for the same crime and fine. Due to the nature of their relationships with the madams, they were included in the analysis of the madam cohort. However, the regular inmate charges were short lived; they ended before Period II.

The euphemistic phrase “keeping a house of ill fame” draws from traditional Victorian terminology. In the 1880 United States Federal Census, the professions of Fargo’s middle-class wives were often listed as “keeping house,” a full-time job for those who were dedicated to maintaining the domestic sphere of the genteel lifestyle (USFC 1880, Dakota Territory, Cass, Fargo, Enumeration District 058:7). In the dockets, brothel madams were charged with “keeping houses *of ill fame*” (emphasis added). Not only is the actual act of prostitution hidden within this terminology, but there is some overlap between this terminology and the terminology referring to the occupation of middle-class women in the 1880 United States Federal Census records. However, the madams’ occupation was cleverly

marked in the dockets to differentiate them from other women in the city. As Mary Beaudry (1988:44) states with reference to probate inventories, “marking occurred as a means of setting objects or terms apart from others, usually through modification or detail associated with them.” In the current case, “of ill fame” was used as a modifier to set these madams apart from other women. The madams were publicly associated with aspects of gentility and Victorian society, yet they did not occupy the same social status as middle-class women.

Over time the consistency between charges gradually declined, and “keeping a house of ill fame” became less common when charging the madam cohort for their crimes. By Period IV the charges often differed from month to month. While some of the language discrepancies were due to a change in author, it was not unusual for a single magistrate’s terminology to vary in the dockets, especially during Periods III and IV. For example, Police Magistrate Henry F. Miller charged the madam cohort for “disorderly conduct” in February and March of 1911, then for “resorting to rooms for immoral purposes” in August, and again for “disorderly conduct” in September (NDSU 1910–1912:CD Box 4). Police Magistrate Martin Ryan demonstrated a similar case in Period III (NDSU 1908–1909:CD Box 3). In fact, some of these new charges were common among women and men who were not members of the madam cohort and are discussed in the next section.

The madams faced fluctuating fines over time as well. The most common monthly fines for the madam cohort were \$56.50 in Period I, \$50 in Period II, and \$100 in Periods III and IV. After June 1912 individuals were occasionally charged with “keeping a house of prostitution” or “keeping a house of ill fame”; however, they were never again charged with the same regularity and consistency of the madam cohort. In addition, these individuals were likely arrested outside of the designated red-light district, and many probably operated small, family-owned businesses.⁵

Arrests of Other Women and Men Involved in Fargo’s Sex Trade

Madams were not the only individuals charged with prostitution-related crimes in early Fargo. Other women and some men appeared in the dockets due to their involvement with the sex trade. In fact, these cases allow for a closer look at the more ephemeral forms of prostitution, such as streetwalking, and provide insight into Fargo’s prostitution hierarchy. Although the language used to charge these people was similarly drawn

from the city ordinances listed earlier, the terminology was much less consistent than that of the madam cohort (see Munns 2017 for more details).

While members of the madam cohort bore some surface-level social resemblances to middle-class women, streetwalkers encountered a consistent lack of social acceptance. Marilyn Wood Hill (1993) discusses the legal struggles streetwalkers faced due to the “immoral” nature of their work. These women served as public figures of the sex trade, and laws were enacted to curb their behavior. “Vagrancy” was a vaguely defined criminal charge for socially deviant individuals who roamed the city streets, which often included homeless individuals and unaccompanied women, whether they were prostitutes or not. The term “vagrancy” quickly became associated with prostitution, and it provided police officers with the authority to arrest suspected sex workers. Marion Goldman (1981:77) adds a racial connotation to this prostitution terminology as she describes “Caucasian prostitute-vagrants,” whose occupation was distinct from other types of sex work due to the “utter demoralization” of these vagrant women. Donna Seifert (2016) also notes the relevance of discussing vagrancy as it relates to prostitution, as these charges shed light on the lives of these otherwise invisible and unprotected women. As discussed earlier, these women on the lower tiers of the prostitution hierarchy often faced abuse and received unreliable sources of income.

Apart from “keeping a house of ill fame,” the most common charge recorded during this analysis was female vagrancy. In Fargo, the city ordinance for vagrancy provided a catchall regulation for persons “loitering or strolling about the streets, alleys, avenues or lanes” or “loitering or strolling about, or frequenting or remaining at . . . any grocery, tippling house, beer house, eating house, market place, house of ill-fame or of bad repute, ten-pin alley or billiard room, or who shall lead an idle, immoral, or profligate course of life” (Resser and Roberts 1908:106–107). Women and men convicted of vagrancy were fined between \$5 and \$20, and a warrant was not required to make an arrest. Interestingly, an association with a “house of ill-fame or of bad repute” appears within the vagrancy ordinance, even though separate charges existed for keepers and inmates of those notorious houses. Vagrancy was a more flexible way to charge individuals for prostitution-related crimes as it was not restricted to a single location, such as a house of prostitution. “Vagrancy” also likely offered the police a blank check to make arrests when acts of prostitution were suspected but could not be proven.

While vagrancy charges were more or less standardized and aligned with the text of the city ordinance, some variability between authors is apparent. This charge was listed in the dockets as “vagrancy,” “being a vagrant,” and sometimes abbreviated simply as “vag.” Two women received charges for “vagrancy and boding an idle, immoral and profligate life,” drawing directly from the colorful terminology of the ordinance (NDSU 1893–1898:CD Box 1:369). Although female vagrancy may not have referred exclusively to streetwalking, it is evident that these concepts were intertwined in Fargo. For example, Hazel Gray was arrested in December of 1911 for streetwalking and then again in January of 1912, but this time for vagrancy (NDSU 1910–1912:CD Box 4:282, 285). Similarly, Vallie Cordelle was arrested in September of 1912 for vagrancy and one month later for soliciting on the street (NDSU 1912–1913:CD Box 5:18, 38). In fact, an explicit arrest for “street walking” in Fargo was rare; this terminology appears in only seven of the 1,614 prostitution-related arrests between July 1894 and November 1914.

Hill (1993) explains that while women were arrested for vagrancy, it was often perfectly acceptable for men to walk city streets alone. In fact, vagrant men were often arrested for drunkenness, begging, or disease as opposed to soliciting acts of prostitution. Due to this discrepancy, data pertaining to men arrested for vagrancy were not recorded for this analysis. However, this is not to say that men were never arrested for sex-related crimes in the city of Fargo. In fact, a charge for “resorting to rooms” either “for immoral purposes” or “for the purpose of prostitution” often involved both men and women who were arrested for a sexual transaction. In many cases, a man and a woman were arrested at the same time and charged with the same crime, presumably caught in an act of prostitution together. The men may also have been arrested if they were renting hotel rooms to sex workers (saloon owners could have been involved as well, but no saloons were officially in business at the time due to North Dakota’s prohibition laws).

This analysis intends to draw attention to several types of sex work that are often overlooked in archaeological analyses due to their temporary nature and lack of evidence in the archaeological record. As such, it is important to recognize the limitations of the dataset. The arrest records include few details about the women charged with vagrancy and “soliciting on the street.” While these charges serve as indicators for streetwalking in this investigation, it is possible that many of the female vagrancy charges

were used to address homelessness, rather than prostitution. Similarly, some of the soliciting charges may have been related to panhandling. While this chapter considers prostitution-related arrests using a broad, inclusive approach, future studies will benefit from pairing arrest records with other sources of data to further tease apart the circumstances of the arrests.

Location as an Indicator of Prostitution Type

As seen in the aforementioned examples, the language of most of these prostitution-related charges followed a similar structure. Specifically, the charges often referred to a particular location that either housed an act of prostitution or alluded to the potential for such acts. For example, variations of “keeping *a house* of prostitution,” “resorting *to rooms* for the purpose of prostitution,” and “soliciting *on the street*” all refer to a location pertaining to acts of prostitution. Vagrancy is somewhat more complex due to the generality of the city ordinance, but the mobility of the arrested individuals and the connection between streetwalking and vagrancy charges in Fargo point to streets or spaces of temporary occupation as the locations related to their arrests.

While “house” implies a brothel, as discussed in the madam cohort section, what was meant by “rooms”? The prostitution hierarchy considers brothels at the top of the hierarchy and street prostitution at the bottom. In the middle of this hierarchy lies cottage or crib prostitution, performed by prostitutes who rented rooms. This form of prostitution was especially common in the West, as it was more mobile than brothel prostitution while also generating more reliable and safer income than streetwalking. However, crib prostitution faced harsh regulations, especially as eradication efforts increased during the early twentieth century, and cribs were often shut down prior to brothels or parlor houses (Costello 2003). The association between “resorting to rooms” terminology and crib prostitution was demonstrated in a *Fargo Forum* article dating to October 16, 1909. The article describes a police raid and the arrests of two black women working out of a crib and one man who were all charged with “resorting to rooms for immoral purposes” near the Hollow (*Fargo Forum* [FF], 16 October 1909:6). Judging from the recurring language used to charge women and men for “resorting to rooms,” crib prostitution was quite common in Fargo.

Locations listed in the criminal charges mentioned above provide an intriguing point of intersection between the arrest records and the types of prostitution conducted. By associating the language used in the dockets with known forms of prostitution, we can identify brothel prostitution, crib prostitution, and streetwalking in turn-of-the-century Fargo. While it is recognized that this method is not without drawbacks, and some discrepancy between authors may account for differences in language used in the dockets, at a general level it allows for a city-wide analysis of prostitution and how it was handled by the police. The next step is to consider these three types of prostitution in terms of the defendants' ability to pay fines and their interactions with local police. To accomplish this, the quantitative analysis portion of this chapter utilizes location terminology to identify and articulate inequalities between these different forms of prostitution.

Articulating Inequalities within a Prostitution Hierarchy: Quantitative Analysis of Arrest Outcomes

The madam cohort is indeed an anomaly when compared to the other 812 arrests of men and women involved in Fargo's sex trade. In this section, the madam cohort is excluded from the analysis to highlight the differences between the charges of individuals in the lower tiers of the prostitution hierarchy. The fines and associated arrest outcomes analyzed here draw attention to the monetary and social inequalities apparent in the sex trade at the time. Gender differences in particular make a necessarily noteworthy appearance in these documents.

"Houses," "rooms," and "the street" were the primary locations listed (or in the case of vagrancy, implied) in prostitution-related charges. Table 3.2 displays the average fines for each location, and it is clear that the location listed in the prostitution-related charge played a role in the amount each defendant was fined. On average, if "house" was listed in the record, the defendant received about double the fine of an individual arrested for "resorting to rooms." It is interesting that houses are mentioned here, apart from charges for the madam cohort. In fact, the fines were lower than for those of the madam cohort, and several men were charged with running these houses as well. This may indicate the presence of lower-class brothels owned by a family or landlord.

Table 3.2. Average fines by gender and location

Gender	Hallway		House		Place		Room		Room and Street		Street		Not Indicated	
	No. of Charges	Avg. Fine (\$)	No. of Charges	Avg. Fine (\$)	No. of Charges	Avg. Fine (\$)	No. of Charges	Avg. Fine (\$)	No. of Charges	Avg. Fine (\$)	No. of Charges	Avg. Fine (\$)	No. of Charges	Avg. Fine (\$)
Women	1	10.00	88	37.48	1	5.00	151	21.68	3	20.00	196	17.75	32	18.28
Men	1	10.00	18	36.21			72	17.85			7	15.00	13	10.77
Unknown			2	10.00			25	16.40			5	19.00	4	11.25

Source: Munns 2017.

Note: Data for the madam cohort are not included. In addition, only the final amount owed, paid, or dismissed for each defendant is considered, even if bail was initially held at a different amount. The other 193 cases are excluded due to the absence of a fine amount listed in the dockets.

Individuals arrested for prostitution-related crimes dealt with a variety of potential outcomes for their arrests, as listed in Table 3.3. The majority of defendants paid their fines and were discharged from city custody; however, this was not the case for everyone. Many defendants had their cases dismissed altogether with no stipulations. Others could not afford to pay the fine or perhaps used their jail time as a survival tactic when faced with harsh winter weather (Seifert 2016) and were committed to jail. Suspended sentences allowed the defendants to leave city custody, provided they adhered to strict probationary conditions, which often forced them to leave town. Finally, a few individuals were sent to another judge or trial for an ongoing battle with Fargo's legal system.

Surprisingly, the city committed about 20% of defendants and dismissed about 20% of cases with charges related to the "house" and "street" locations. Meanwhile, 24% of "room" cases were dismissed, and 15% resulted in incarceration. Why were cases dismissed for so many defendants who "resorted to rooms"? This notable difference turns our attention to another important variable: the gender of the individuals arrested for these crimes. Very few men were arrested for prostitution in houses or on the streets, but many men were arrested for resorting to rooms with women. Therefore, what effect did gender have on the outcomes of these arrests?

This analysis reveals very different legal experiences between women and men arrested for prostitution, demonstrating that gender certainly played a prominent role in the sex trade. Returning to Table 3.2, on average women were fined more for their crimes in every location (with the exception of the hallway, which accounted for only two charges). Close attention should be paid to the "room" location, since both men and women shared most of the charges in this category. "Rooms" offer the greatest gap between average fines for men and women in identified locations, totaling \$3.72. If left unpaid, that amount would be the difference of nearly three days in jail. When the location was not indicated, an even greater discrepancy is visible.

In Table 3.4 the sheer number of women arrested for acts of prostitution was considerably higher than for men, accounting for more than 74% of the prostitution charges. Comparable percentages of women and men charged with prostitution-related crimes did not pay their fines and were committed to jail. However, when it came to paying the fines and having the cases dismissed, gender made a noticeable difference. Approximately

Table 3.3. Arrest outcomes by location

	Hallway		House		Place		Room		Room and Street		Street		Not Indicated		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Arrest Outcome																
Case dismissed	0.00	29	22.14	0.00	81	24.25	0.00	53	19.13	15	23.44	178	21.92			
Committed	0.00	26	19.85	0.00	52	15.57	0.00	56	20.22	6	9.37	140	17.24			
Committed, then paid later	0.00	2	1.53	0.00	5	1.50	0.00	8	2.89		0.00	15	1.85			
Committed, then sentence suspended later	0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	3	1.08		0.00	3	0.37			
Paid and discharged	2	100.00	65	49.62	1	100.00	169	50.60	2	66.67	133	48.01	40	62.50	412	50.74
Sent to another judge or trial	0.00	1	0.76	0.00	5	1.50	0.00	3	1.08		0.00	9	1.11			
Sentence appealed	0.00	1	0.76	0.00		0.00	0.00		0.00		0.00	1	0.12			
Sentence suspended	0.00	2	1.53	0.00	12	3.59	0.00	8	2.89	3	4.69	25	3.08			
Sentence suspended upon partial payment	0.00	1	0.76	0.00		0.00	0.00	1	0.36		0.00	2	0.25			
Not indicated	0.00	4	3.05	0.00	10	2.99	1	33.33	12	4.33		0.00	27	3.33		
Total	2	100.00	131	100.00	1	100.00	334	100.00	3	100.00	277	100	64	100.00	812	100.00

Source: Munns 2017.

Note: Data for the madam cohort are not included.

55% of women were required to pay their fine either to prevent their incarceration or to end their jail sentence early, while only about 45% of men paid a fine. In addition, only about 20% of women had their cases dismissed and were discharged, compared to 31% of men who walked away without a fine or jail time. The data presented here begin to reveal a gendered component to Fargo's prostitution hierarchy. Men were afforded more leniency than women when it was time to pay for their crimes.

Several arrested individuals were listed with abbreviated names, including H. J. Robinson, G. F. Bailey, and O. H. Hart. This is noteworthy since the individual's first name is abbreviated, but the last name is still identified. Did these names belong to men or women or both? And why were these names abbreviated? Several entries within the dockets, such as the arrests of Jennette Howard and N. Heam, imply that these unidentified individuals may be men. Both Howard and Heam were arrested on January 9, 1896, and charged with "resorting to rooms for the purpose of prostitution." They each paid their fines and were discharged. Heam was most likely a male client of Howard's, but his name was abbreviated in the court docket (NDSU 1893–1898:CD Box 1:276).

Although no gender was directly identified in N. Heam's case, there are other cases where a man with an abbreviated first name was arrested and his gender was identified. For example, Robert and Netty Moore, R. McIntosh, and Flora McDougal were arrested on July 14, 1903. While R. McIntosh's first name was not listed, the magistrate identifies him as male when he refers to McIntosh's payment of the fine: "McIntosh gives *his* in cash" (emphasis added; NDSU 1901–1905:CD Box 2:150). In another entry, W. S. and Mrs. W. S. Engle were arrested on December 4, 1912 for "resorting to rooms" (NDSU 1912–1913:CD Box 5:97). In instances where a married woman was arrested under her husband's name, his first name is often abbreviated, such as the case with the Engles.

Final Thoughts

At least three forms of prostitution were well documented in turn-of-the-century Fargo: brothel prostitution, crib prostitution, and streetwalking. The public's understanding of the prostitution hierarchy was reflected in city ordinances and in the arrest outcomes for individuals involved in the sex trade. This analysis clearly demonstrates bias on behalf of the local police; their actions reflected which types of prostitution were acceptable

Table 3.4. Arrest outcomes by gender

Arrest Outcome	Women		Men		Unknown		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Case dismissed	121	19.83	50	31.06	7	15.22	178	25.00
Committed	100	16.53	29	18.01	11	23.91	140	17.24
Committed, then paid later	15	2.48		0.00		0.00	15	1.85
Committed, then sentence suspended later	3	0.50		0.00		0.00	3	0.37
Paid and discharged	318	52.56	72	44.72	22	47.83	412	50.74
Sent to another judge or trial	6	0.99	2	1.24	1	2.17	9	1.11
Sentence appealed	1	0.17		0.00		0.00	1	0.12
Sentence suspended	20	3.47	4	2.48	1	2.17	25	0.00
Sentence suspended upon partial payment	1	0.17	1	0.62		0.00	2	0.25
Not indicated	20	3.31	3	1.86	4	8.70	27	3.33
Total	605	100.00	161	100.00	46	100.00	812	100.00

Source: Munns 2017.

Note: Data for the madam cohort are not included.

and which were not. Madams held an unrivaled economic position in the red-light district; they balanced a middle-class lifestyle and the reputation of a criminal. Members of the madam cohort were charged a steep monthly fine and, provided they could pay that fine, were granted some leniency within the legal system. Madams could operate their businesses openly and with minimal interruption by police, which demonstrated a certain level of tolerance for brothel prostitution.

While the madams were initially afforded several advantages within the red-light district, it is clear their high status gradually declined over time. The informal regulation of brothels became less socially acceptable, and this was reflected in the documents as fines increased and the terminology used to charge the madam cohort shifted away from its Victorian roots. By the madams' final period of monthly regulation, most were charged with the same terminology used to arrest crib prostitutes, and the euphemistic "ill fame" terminology used to describe their brothels had all but disappeared. The madams' success ended completely when

police raids permanently closed the brothels, and the standardized cohort charges disappeared from the dockets after 1912.

Among the lower levels of the prostitution hierarchy, crib prostitutes and streetwalkers were never considered acceptable and were frequently targeted by the police.⁶ However, their fines and punishments were much less serious than were those of brothel madams. Although these types of prostitution were considered unacceptable, the fines were not exorbitant and were often payable by the defendants. For those who did not or could not pay the fines, outcomes varied. Some were discharged with only a warning and others spent time in jail.

Further, the comparison of charges, fines, and arrest outcomes between women and men reveal the gendered context of their arrests. Women were the predominant recipients of charges for “keeping houses of ill fame” and “streetwalking.” Meanwhile, “resorting to rooms” offered a gender-neutral way to charge both men and women involved in prostitution. However, fines and arrest outcomes were consistently harsher for women than they were for men. Many men walked away without consequence, while the women with whom they were charged paid fines or were incarcerated. Perhaps this stark discrepancy between men and women may be explained if some of these men owned local hotels and rented rooms for sex. If madams held influence within the city, male business owners certainly did as well. While more research is needed to investigate exactly who these men were, the data presented reveal notable, though perhaps unsurprising, gendered biases within Fargo’s legal system.

Men and women were also identified differently in the dockets. Men sometimes appeared in the records with an abbreviated first name, affording them a certain level of anonymity. Interestingly, abbreviated first names were not the only way individuals’ identities were obscured in the court dockets. Some men and women were identified simply as John or Mary Doe. “Miss Doe” was also a common alias for arrested women. Perhaps these women were intoxicated or simply refused to provide their names, but these pseudonyms may also speak to further complexities within the prostitution hierarchy, which offer interesting avenues for future research. While gender influenced the arrests of individuals involved in the sex trade, the racial identification of two women in the *Fargo Forum* article mentioned previously (FF, 16 October 1909:6) demonstrates that race was also a noteworthy construct in the sex trade, and future research should address its role within the prostitution hierarchy as well.

Legal terminology, arrest outcomes, and fines for individuals involved in early Fargo's sex trade provide evidence for a prostitution hierarchy that considered gendered and class-based differences. Brothel madams were regularly fined using consistent language that was recorded during frequent interactions with local law enforcement. In contrast, variation within the terminology of charges and fines for other individuals allows us to explore lower tiers of the prostitution hierarchy. Charges for women and men were also treated differently, resulting in higher fines and stricter regulations for women and legal leniency and partial anonymity for men. The local police clearly targeted female sex workers rather than their male clients, demonstrating how Fargo's legal system acknowledged both the public's opinion of prostitution and the class-based prostitution hierarchy, all while perpetuating gender inequalities.

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Notes

1. The Fargo History Project (<http://fargohistory.com/>) presents another valuable source of information on prostitution in Fargo. The website includes a timeline of important events, several articles on prostitution, and a documentary on the well-known brothel madam Melvina Massey.

2. Local political leaders changed frequently, and each must have maintained a unique stance on prostitution. While these individuals were not researched in depth for this chapter, their influence would have been palpable within the Hollow.

3. "Fines" and consistent processing "costs" were frequently listed as separate fees. For simplicity, the sum of each fine and its cost was calculated to demonstrate the total amount owed by each individual, and the term "fine" will be used throughout this chapter to refer to this combined amount.

4. Beginning in 1904, madams were recorded as "appear[ing] in court" by another individual, most often by a young man named G. L. Washburn, but occasionally a fellow madam or brothel employee served this role (NDSU 1901–1905:CD Box 2:343).

5. In cities and rural areas, couples (often a husband and wife) were known for their illicit family-owned businesses. See Best (1998), Gilfoyle (1992), and Hill (1993) for examples.

6. While this analysis revealed several tiers of a prostitution hierarchy, the divisions between these tiers were likely not so rigid. Women probably moved between different types of sex work as their personal situation shifted, making these distinctions much more fluid than they may appear in this chapter. In fact, there may have been overlap between prostitution types, especially between crib and street prostitution.

Review Copy

4

“Alleged Crusades” and “Self-Fooled Reformers”

The Rise and Fall of White Slavery Hysteria in the 1910s

ASHLEY BAGGETT AND CAROL A. BENTLEY

“Can these things be true?” . . . Today there is not a man or woman in the world who has given reasonable consideration to the question, but knows . . . that there does now exist this nefarious trade in the bodies and souls of women.

Clifford G. Roe (1911a)

Always there are to be found men and women so eager to figure in the public prints that they endorse these alleged crusades [on “white slavery”] and spout virtuously about the great moral lessons. . . . None but these self-fooled reformers care a whoop about the lessons.

Moving Picture World (14 October 1916)

Starting in the early 1900s, Americans increasingly voiced concern about the “white slave traffic”—a phrase initially used in nineteenth-century England and even in antebellum America but generally understood as the kidnapping and forced prostitution of immigrant and native-born white women (Connelly 1980; Leab 1976; Stange 1998). Although a problematic term to refer to anything but race-based slavery in American history, in the early twentieth century what is currently known as human trafficking was designated “white slavery.” Progressives feared that the percentage of white women coerced into sex work was between 40% and 100% during this period.¹ This would have made prostitution and white slavery synonymous for reformers even if the numbers were not accurate (Rosen 1982). In Progressives’ attempt to perfect society and rid the country of all vice,

including prostitution, reformers focused on white slavery and the subsequent moral outcry as key to eliminating sex work entirely. Although Progressives did not succeed in eradicating prostitution, they shifted the discussion on sex work in the early 1900s by portraying white sex workers as innocent women forced into the profession against their will, and these reformers utilized new methods, especially film, in their crusade.

Bringing public attention to prostitution through their campaign against white slavery, reformers decried the “plague . . . which consumes sixty thousand of our girls each year” and generated conversations on the issue by creating a moral panic through images of young, helpless, white women with fear-mongering captions such as “For God’s Sake Save Me!” (Roe 1911b). Other tracts appealed to family duty and parents’ desire to protect their daughters with such phrases as “Danger, mothers beware” and “for God’s sake save my daughter!” (Bell 1910). By 1911 the hysteria reached a fever pitch propelling Chicago prosecutor Clifford Roe to declare white slavery so well-known that everyone knew of the “nefarious trade in the bodies and souls of women” (Bell 1910). Laws, sociological studies, various publications, and, notably, films reflected the heightened awareness by discussing white slavery and occasionally proposed solutions. The budding film industry weighed in on the issue by both making movies under the guise of social reform and providing industry commentary in trade journals.

Even as the campaign against white slavery reached its height in the early 1910s, however, the movement began its decline. Along with the reduction of the hysteria, the passage of key pieces of legislation and removal of most red-light districts with abatement laws facilitated the end (Long 2004). One influential film journal in 1916 even pointed to the questionable nature of the “alleged crusade” against white slavery, stating that reformers were “self-fooled” and lacked the support of the public (*Moving Picture World* [MPW], 14 October 1916:227). By 1920 a backlash had silenced the movement, white slavery no longer commanded the public’s attention, and white slavery films were barred from the screen in any context. Legally, prostitution had been forced largely underground, and consequently, the discussion and portrayal of sex workers again shifted.

During its heyday, the movement gained such widespread support from professionals in the social sciences and the legal system that reformers successfully pressured officials to pass state and national legislation. How, then, could such a vocal outcry from Progressives decline so quickly when

sex work involving white women had not been eliminated? Commercialized culture provides insight into part of the answer. Often reflecting and sometimes guiding public opinion, the film industry produced films that American citizens would enjoy watching (Bowser 1990; Grieveson 2004). A rash of white slave films emerged in the early 1910s under the guise of social-consciousness raising, including the box office hit *Traffic in Souls* (1913), but support for such films did not last long. Key to this shift was the silent picture *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic* (1913) and its subsequent fight over the public discourse of white slavery. The legal system and shifts in court rulings also provide some insight. As sociological studies uncovered smaller white slave traffic statistics than had been claimed, the issue appeared less of a threat, especially as red-light districts were closed. Courts responded by reinterpreting criminal statutes that had been passed to combat white slavery. Together commercialized culture, published studies, and the legal system signaled the decline in the crusade against white slavery in the 1910s, earlier than previously assumed.

Progressivism and White Slavery

In the Progressive Era, reformers sought to perfect society through solving social problems. Often working across multiple organizations and associations, Progressives engaged both directly with society by providing services and indirectly by pursuing legal changes in public policy (Recchiuti 2007). The social purity movement emerged as one of the period's many influential crusades to combat immorality and to work for "the reconstitution of society upon a new cultural foundation" (Pivar 1973). Social purists sought many changes, such as higher age of consent laws, but most notably, these reformers called for the end of prostitution.

Reformers believed the coercion of young women into prostitution to be an international problem and the main (if not only) cause for white women in sex work. From Greece to Russia to Canada, reports circulated about a global organization trafficking young women. American social purity crusaders sought to awaken the American public by exposing the issue at home through publishing stories about white women kidnapped into prostitution (Soderlund 2013). Inspired by British journalist William T. Stead, Dr. Bessie Chapman wrote an article in 1885 for the Women's Christian Temperance Union's journal *Union Signal* (17 February 1887:8–9) about a "Chicago girl of undoubted respectability" who was forced into

prostitution in Michigan's lumber camps. The story explained the process by which young girls were seduced and trapped into "these vile dens and the vice they foster is the curse of our country," but even with its "pitiful tale" and demands for legal remedies, the exposé did not ignite a response from the general American public.

Rising Hysteria

Not until 1907 did a frenzy over white slavery erupt. Prosecutor Clifford Roe helped to propel the issue after having tried a case brought forth by Ernest A. Bell, a pastor of Chicago's Midnight Mission. Roe set an important precedent in his prosecution and conviction of Panzy Williams, a white slaver, under the vague but useful Illinois criminal statute of pandering, but still the media did not cover much of the case. Soon after, however, Roe reportedly investigated a note from a prostitute that stated she was being held as a "white slave," and investigations by the Citizens Association and the Chicago Law and Order League found "a gigantic white slave business flourishing throughout North America" (Roe 1911a). Upon being made public, stories about the danger of white women being forced into prostitution proliferated (Langum 1994).

Often writers directly compared white slavery to the enslavement of African Americans prior to the Civil War. The intentional connection served to legitimate and produce more of an outcry. By the start of the twentieth century, Americans collectively misremembered the Civil War, facilitating reconciliation between the North and the South, but even still, former abolitionists won the view on slavery as a moral evil (Blight 2002; Foster 1988). Social purists in the Progressive Era utilized this stigma with slavery to demand action. Jane Addams (1912) wrote,

Perhaps this analogy to the abolition of slavery is most striking in that these groups . . . are like those earlier associations which differed widely in regard to chattel slavery . . . yet gradually all of these associations reached the point of view of the abolitionist. . . . Such gradual conversion to the point of view of abolition is the experience of every society or group of people who seriously face the difficulties and complications of the social evil.

Despite the lack of initial agreement on white slavery, Addams argued everyone would inevitably recognize the seriousness of such an evil as Americans did with race-based slavery. Others, such as Dr. William

Dewitt Hyde, declared, “There are more victims of the white slavery today than there were of black slavery fifty years ago” (New Advocate, 19 June 1911:6). Given that nearly four million African Americans were enslaved on the eve of the Civil War, Hyde essentially declared more than four million women suffered in sex slavery by 1911. The assertion demonstrates not only the immorality but also the pressing need for change.

In addition to the well-defined rhetoric, reformers explained white slavery in detail. With more than a few isolated cases of women forced into prostitution, the white slave trade was understood as an underground organization that trafficked young women through all major U.S. cities where prostitution had a larger presence. White slavers preyed on immigrant women considering their economic vulnerability, and tracts often discussed Asian, German, Italian, and Jewish women who were forced into prostitution in urban areas. White women, however, increasingly dominated the publications, insinuating immigrants enabled international organizations to get a foothold in the United States, though the “real” threat was to the purity and respectability of white women. Many reformers acted under the assumption that white women would never consent to sex work and their existence as prostitutes had to be the result of coercion (D’Emilio and Freedman 1988). These were not just any young women but—in an attempt to personalize the problem—someone’s daughter or sister. African American women, on the other hand, were viewed by whites as hypersexualized and therefore as supposedly willing sex workers (Bederman 1995).

The techniques traffickers used varied but, as white slavery crusaders argued, followed a predictable pattern. Publications such as the social purity journal *The Light* pointed to the new vulnerability of white women with urbanization. Being trusting and ignorant to the manipulation of traffickers, white women became vulnerable as they moved to the city from rural areas. In *Fighting the Traffic on Young Girls*, Ernest Bell (1910) argued white slavers posed as individuals seeking employees for a play, film, store, or hotel. Other times, reformers pointed to “the love game”—seduction of a trusting young woman as the path to her ruin. Courting her and making promises of marriage, the white slaver convinced the victim to abscond with him, but upon realization that he would not marry, she was supposedly trapped, having lost her reputation and virginity. Some reformers pointed to traffickers’ abducting women in public places, including the post office, and “immoral” leisure activities at dance halls

and theaters induced more fear (Peiss 1986). After a victim's drink was drugged, she was abducted to a temporary house, usually in another major city, before being sold to a house of prostitution. Even if women tried to escape, reformers argued the physical abuse, emotional devastation, and economic destitution left white slaves with little ability to do so. Bell (1910) described the cycle of control: "She cannot escape while she is in debt to the keeper—and she is never allowed to get out of debt—at least until all desire to leave the life is dead within her."

This archetype of white slavery dominated reformers' messages about prostitution, but with the new awareness came proposed solutions. Sociologists, women's rights advocates, lawyers, settlement house workers, doctors, and many other experts assured the public that the problem could be fixed. Education served as one important method. Reformers tried to convince parents to avoid sending their daughters to the cities for work or "at least take the trouble to know with whom she goes away" (Roe 1911a). Parents were informed about "metropolitan life" and educated on social hygiene to teach their sons and daughters the "purpose, and problems and perils of sex" rather than perceive the discussion of sex as taboo (Bell 1910). Parents also were to hold responsibility for their children's leisure time—to monitor it closely for any immoral activities. Such activities often included trips to the cinema, where "vice procurers" were purported to be lurking, waiting for female victims (Stamp 1999).

Other advocates focused on educating the public on the sexual double standard and the supposed rehabilitation of prostitutes. The sexual double standard, social purists and social hygiene proponents asserted, treated boys and girls differently regarding premarital sex. This, they stated, led "boys [to] grow up to regard vice on their part as a comparatively innocent thing. . . . It creates the demand in a large part for the victims of that [white slave] traffic" (Shearer 1911). Reformers did not push the issue on grounds of equality; rather, prostitution as a whole could be solved by holding a man accountable for his sexual promiscuity.

Progressives also moved from pushing punitive measures, such as jail sentences and fines, toward "rehabilitation" for young women under 18 engaged in prostitution. Bell (1910) wrote, "Oh, Christian women, mothers, give recognition to the fact: yes, welcome it, that a fallen woman can be saved, and extend to her sympathy, encouragement, and love!" As historian Ruth Rosen (1982) argues, "'rehabilitation' in reformatories, industrial schools, or 'training farms' meant practicing sewing, scrubbing, and

cooking in preparation for work as a domestic servant . . . which merely prepared young women to return to unskilled work 'suitable' to their class and gender." Those deemed "feeble minded," however, often were denied the path to "redemption." According to a Massachusetts study, 51% of prostitutes were supposedly "feeble minded" and consequently institutionalized or, in some states, sterilized (Massachusetts Commission for Investigation of White Slave Traffic 1914). Houses of refuge, including the Beulah Home, also emerged to save "the penitent Magdalene" with the similar agenda of "redemption" and moral instruction (Bell 1910; National Vigilance Association 1899). Despite such high hopes, few institutions existed nationally to "rehabilitate fallen women" (Rosen 1982).

White slavery crusaders, desiring an end to white women's engagement in sex work, demanded punitive measures in the form of changes to the legal system. Local vice commissions emerged to study the problem, and with Roe's successful prosecution via a pandering law, Illinois amended its criminal statutes in 1908 and 1909 to strengthen the pandering law and its usage for fighting white slave traffic. With the strength of several studies and the US Immigration Commission's report on importation of women for prostitution, reformers lobbied the federal government to address the "epidemic" of white slavery (Grittner 1990). By 1908 Congress had ratified an international treaty to stop the trafficking of women, and ultimately, the passage of the 1910 White Slave Traffic Act, also known as the Mann Act, marked the most notable federal success.

The Mann Act used vague wording to prohibit the movement of women across state lines for any "immoral purpose"; consequently, the act enabled courts to crack down on more than white slavery by permitting prosecution of those transporting sex workers not coerced into prostitution and adults who went across state lines to engage in "immorality" (*Caminetti v. United States* 1917:242 US 470). Its ability to address prostitution, white slavery, and premarital and extramarital sex made the Mann Act useful to social purists and other Progressives who sought to use the state in its war against "immorality." Consequently, the crusade on white slavery gained momentum with the support of the federal government. By 1913, 603 cases resulted in a conviction of a white slaver with an average sentence of one to two years (*State Times Advocate*, 22 October 1913). The movement seemed at its zenith in 1913, but even at its high point, the war on white slavery started to unravel.

The Film Industry Weighs In

The film industry unwittingly played a key role in the downward spiral of the white slave traffic movement and the discussion of white prostitutes only as victims to human trafficking. By the 1910s the business of film was still in its infancy. Profits were not yet large, studios were still spread across the United States rather than solely in Hollywood, and anyone with the means to secure a camera could attempt to become a filmmaker (Bowser 1990; Mahar 2006). Yet film was becoming increasingly sophisticated in narrative structure, length, and topical nature, thus enabling it to respond to public demand while catering to the public's calls for "clean" moving pictures that would "uplift" the industry and the morals of the viewing public (Bowser 1990; Mahar 2006). As film continued to mature as an industry, it sought greater respectability as more than just an entertainment medium for the working-class masses (Mahar 2006).

White slavery films, hinging on the prevalence of the topic at the time, raised grave concerns about clean films and industry respectability.² The film industry did not shy away from the topic and used white slavery as a platform to legitimize film as a contender in the public discussion of the issue. This was due in part to the fact that the film industry and theaters were already at the heart of the issue, labeled as one of the prominent places where women might encounter, and be hunted by, vice procurers (Roe 1911a). These claims, however, were not bolstered by any actual evidence of a connection between theaters and white slavery (MPW, 12 March 1910:370).

Given such claims, the industry sought to promote its educational value by taking up the topic of white slavery, which became part of the complex series of motivations that propelled the film industry in this period. The desire to situate film within the framework of the uplift movement was a means to establish not only cultural legitimacy but also industry growth and profits (Mahar 2006). This resulted in largely contradictory motives and strategies, as the industry flirted with short-term goals at the potential expense of long-term sustainability. White slavery films are a key example of a foray into using film for social reform *and* profits, but combining these aims created a great risk to the industry if it backfired (Brownlow 1990; Mahar 2006).

The emergence of white slave films helped fuel public alarm over the

issue through “highly emotional melodramatic narratives” that centered on vulnerable young white women who became unwitting victims (Campbell 2006). The first white slave film, *Traffic in Souls*, was released in November 1913 and offered just such a narrative. In particular, Swedish immigrant “Little Sister” serves as the film’s main focus. She was abducted but ultimately rescued by her sister and the police while the slavers are captured and punished. Though the filmmakers claimed the film to be an exposé on white slave trafficking, film scholar Shelley Stamp (1999) argues that *Traffic in Souls* found approval due to the “melodramatic plot of punishment and redemption” that promoted a moral language both the film industry’s National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures and reformers advocated at this time. Upon its release, film journals, with their fingers on the pulse of industry standards and workings, readily endorsed the film and its message. *Moving Picture World* (22 November 1913:849) praised the fact that “the forces of law and order are upheld” and claimed the moral of the film was “impressively clear,” warmly welcoming its overall message.³

What is clear from the contemporary reviews of *Traffic in Souls* is that the film’s melodramatic angle made it less about white slavery and more a story of caution, the redeeming love of family, and the heroic crime fighting police. White slavery served as a plot device rather than the driving force of the narrative, effectively creating the formula for a palatable film while still providing box office success. As the industry lauded *Traffic in Souls*, the idea that film could serve an educational purpose on the topic of white slavery with the endorsement of key reformers was challenged just weeks later by the 30-minute film *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic*, which deviated widely from the formula created by its predecessor (Grieverson 2004). Written by director Frank Beal and sociologist Samuel H. London, *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic* advertised itself as being based on facts gathered by London during his investigations of white slavery with the Department of Justice and Rockefeller’s Bureau of Social Hygiene. This featured prominently in the opening intertitles, proclaiming with authority that it was “the only authentic white slave picture ever made,” followed by an array of impressive endorsements from judges and reformers. Promotional advertising emphasized these supporters and touted London’s expertise as a sociologist and investigator in a bid to avoid criticism, echoing some of the advertising strategies of *Traffic in Souls* (Campbell 2006). The producers promised that it was a film “without any

exaggeration or fictional indulgence,” but it was that very promise that infuriated the public.

The Inside of the White Slave Traffic focused on the methodologies of trafficking, opening with a procurer who needs to acquire a new girl and watches women on the streets, looking for a target. He settles on Annie, a beautiful young white working girl, and uses the techniques of slavers as reported by reformers in order to procure her. Annie, a well-dressed and therefore respectable woman, shares a meal with the slaver, where she is drugged and taken to his house for the night, effectively shattering her reputation (Bell 1910). When she returns home the following morning, her father orders her out of the house, leaving Annie vulnerable and penniless. The procurer quickly comes to her “rescue” and marries her in a fraudulent ceremony; then he promptly abandons her. A supposed “friend” offers to get Annie an annulment and marry her himself if she will go to New Orleans to do so. Once in New Orleans, she finds herself in the world of white slavery.

Initially, Annie refuses to work as a prostitute and begins traveling from town to town to find other employment, only to be barred by a nationwide system of complicit traffickers that block her efforts and keep a constant eye on her whereabouts. Growing desperate and looking increasingly worn, Annie returns to her slaver in New Orleans and is subsequently arrested for solicitation, imprisoned, and ostensibly rehabilitated. Rehabilitation does not work in the long term, as Annie finds herself unable to live on her wages as a shop girl. She ultimately returns to her slaver and is trapped in a life from which there is no escape.

The film ends with Annie’s visible devastation as she sits, weary and aged beyond her years, against the backdrop of a well-furnished bedroom in an upscale brothel. Then, the film cuts to a shot of her grave, implying that she either committed suicide or was “slaved” to death. The film portrays Annie as an innocent young woman made the victim of a social evil and cruelly lured into a world of sexual slavery. There is no overarching melodrama, no redemption, no heroic police involvement, and no punishment for the slavers to be found in London’s film. It therefore lacked all the elements that made *Traffic in Souls* palatable. Yet other issues with the film besides these emerged, namely through London’s promise that it would be true and accurate to white slavery conditions, which ultimately became the downfall of the film, London himself, and the genre of white slave films.

London's efforts to provide accuracy led to a quasi-documentary style that highlighted the reality of prostitution by including scenes of actual prostitutes and brothels that were filmed in El Paso, New York City, and New Orleans (Brownlow 1990; Grieveson 2004). The level of realism achieved ultimately crossed from education into outright obscenity and failed to deliver on the moral uplift promised. Additionally, London's attention to detail in providing lists of code words and demonstrating the tactics used by white slavers to procure and keep girls under their control gave male viewers a "how-to" guide and simultaneously promoted crime. This took the idea of film's memetic capacity and that of prurient viewing (Grieveson 2004), along with the ability to be "injurious to public morals" (Leigh 1908), to a new and potentially terrifying level. Indeed, London's film was promoting the myth of a nationwide trafficking system that was unproven by investigations headed by philanthropist John D. Rockefeller Jr. and others. This prompted Rockefeller to distance himself from white slave films, as they exploited vice in a manner that was harmful to the work of the Social Hygiene Bureau (Grieveson 2004).

Salaciousness was hardly the only reason for the film to be criticized, even if that came to be the defining issue. In his efforts for accuracy, London drew attention to social conditions behind prostitution as a whole. Early in the film, London actively critiques the "out of my house" policy, in which Annie's father throws her out of the family home and, with no other recourse, into the arms of her procurer. Had her family not shunned her, Annie would not have fallen victim to prostitution. Later, when Annie must return to slaving after the network bars her from respectable employment and she is subsequently arrested while speaking with a potential client, an intertitle pointedly reads "One law for man—Another for woman," as it is only Annie who is arrested. The utilization of classic reformer rhetoric calls attention to the fact that Annie, and therefore white slaves and prostitutes, should not be the only party facing consequences; the men involved should too. Given the fact that he takes this point no further than the brief intertitle, London's efforts in combating this issue are viewed as insincere and further demonstrate the undelivered educational benefits of the film.

After her arrest, Annie is reportedly rehabilitated. Though the exact method is not specified, this ties to the efforts made by reformers who sought to "rescue" and "redeem" all prostitutes (Rosen 1982). *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic* argues that rehabilitation is not effective when

Annie finds she cannot support herself on the meager wages of respectable work and, in the film's final scenes, returns to slaving. Here London deviates from the arguments reformers used to support efforts to reform sex workers, hinting that larger social issues are at the root of prostitution that go beyond the white slave myths portrayed. This provided him with the opportunity to make a powerful social commentary on prostitution, but he does not take the topic far enough to engage in the complexity of prostitution during the period or offer a moral lesson. Instead, London sticks with the dominant discussion of white women in sex work as victims of white slavery. Altogether, these potentially redeeming elements of the film were not enough to justify its exhibition when released to the public.

Given the nature of the film, the social commentary it provided, and its emphasis on realism that spills into salaciousness, it comes as no surprise *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic* gave the National Board of Censorship considerable pause. The very "truth" London wanted to show was at the heart of the board's concerns, as there was no uplifting plot to soften the harsh realities being shown. The board's initial instructions for cutting scenes and shooting new ones sought to turn the film into another *Traffic in Souls*, making it easier to pass (Grieverson 2004). These suggestions were quickly revoked, as the board feared that London would exploit its decision for publicity reasons, "turning a 'pass' into open endorsement" (Stamp 1999). Instead, the board designated it as "a special release," putting the power to censor the film into the hands of local communities.

Not long after the National Board of Censorship's decision, the public—namely progressive organizations, local censor boards, police, and the federal government—spoke loud and clear against the film (Grieverson 2004; Mahar 2006; Outlook, 14 February 1914:345–350; Repplier 1914; Wheeler 2004). These groups condemned *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic* and the genre as a whole. The film industry quickly followed suit. Initially, reviews of the film found some redeemable elements of the film. *Motion Picture News* (20 December 1913:31), for example, praised its stance against the "out of my house" policy. *Variety* (12 December 1913:12) offered a more middling stance on the film, commenting that "the question of whether it'll serve for good or evil is one the communities . . . will quickly decide." "Thousands" turned away from the theater by its second showing (*Variety*, 12 December 1913:25). The popularity fed into fears of the film's potentially harmful nature, particularly as many filmgoers

were women, and drew the attention of local police forces (Stamp 2000). In *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic*, the board gave local communities and police forces carte blanche to censor the film according to their own moral codes. The fact that films were not yet covered by freedom of speech meant the police had free rein to interfere with ostensibly obscene films unless stopped by the courts (Wittern-Keller 2008).

In late December New York City police officers, reacting to public backlash, subsequently raided Park Theater and stopped the film before physically removing reels of film from the premises. As a result, a legal battle ensued between producer Samuel London and the police (Grieveson 2004). Initially, London was successful in getting injunctions to end the police interference with his film and moved it to the Bijou; there, too, police attempted to seize it (Variety, 19 December 1913:17). When London returned to court for another injunction, it was denied. London was soon arrested and convicted, along with exhibitor Harry C. Bohn, for violating criminal statute 1140a, which made a misdemeanor of any exhibition “which would tend to the corruption of the morals of youth or others” (Sociological Film Corp. v. City of New York, 83 Misc. 605 1913).

The backlash in New York City was just the beginning. Despite London’s pending legal problems, the film continued to look for new locations for exhibition but found few cities that were willing to allow its release. By the end of January 1914, white slave films were banned in Chicago, Bridgeport, San Francisco, and Kansas City as potentially injurious to the public (Variety, 9, 23, 30 January 1914; MPW, 3 January 1914:58). When London’s trial concluded in March, the ban had extended even further, with Pittsburgh countering the supposed moral lesson by emphatically stating, “The public safety department declared such conditions as described in the white slave play do not exist in Pittsburgh!” (Variety, 6 March 1914:12). Similarly, popular serials such as *Outlook* (14 February 1914:347) condemned the films: “‘The Inside of the White Slave Traffic’ is a pernicious offense against decency. Such a film represents the commercialization of the subject and the exploitation of it for private gain in the worst degree.” The moral argument for white slave *anything* was losing ground as communities rejected the idea that white slavery existed and therefore no lesson was needed.

The film industry wasted little time in deriding *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic*, disavowing its previously supportive stance on *Traffic in Souls*. It continued to do so throughout London’s trial with *Moving Picture*

World (24 January 1914:387) leading the way, in a tone that cast doubt on white slavery as a whole: “There is no mistaking the sentiment of the reputable film producers touching . . . the so-called secrets of the white slave trade. [They] have unanimously gone on record as violently opposed to this degradation. . . . The public conscience has revolted . . . [and] police are on the alert.” The sudden about-face demonstrates a clear bowing of the industry to public opinion. Whether or not the industry truly agreed that white slavery did not exist or did not belong on-screen is unclear, but disavowing the films was certainly the only way the industry could save face amid such a powerful backlash that could have far-reaching consequences if it did not cater to public opinion.

Though white slave films largely died out as quickly as they appeared, the impact made on both the public and the film industry was long-lasting. Ultimately the topic was pushed underground, the problem banished from the screen, reappearing only briefly in 1916 when it was roundly condemned once again. *Moving Picture World* (14 October 1916:227) declared that only “self-fooled” reformers retained any interest in “alleged” crusades against white slavery. Though white slavery was gone from the screen, prostitution as a whole continued and efforts to eliminate it without the aid of film and without the discussion focused on white prostitutes as victims of white slavery remained a goal of reformers.

The Waning of Hysteria

The backlash to *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic* directly affected the public’s views on the issue. In their legal battle to uphold the right to produce and exhibit white slavery films, Samuel H. London and Harry C. Bohn unsuccessfully tried to argue the film’s value in combating a national evil. Their troubles did not end with the New York State Supreme Court, however. Additional suits were filed against the Sociological Research Film Corporation for damages caused to people’s businesses that were shown in *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic* and, in a separate civil case, for monetary remuneration for costs incurred in fighting the exhibition of the film (*Merle v. Sociological Research Film Corporation*, 166 App. Div. 376, 152 NY Supp. 829 (1915); *New York Sun*, 21 Dec 1913:1). Although both suits failed, they demonstrated the loss of public support, causing the crusade against traffickers to begin its decline.

In 1914 Anna M. Dwyer of the Chicago Morals Court railed against the

“indifference of public opinion” on white slavery that encouraged Americans to “bury the fact in obscurity” (Times Picayune, 11 January 1914:8). Instead of having abolished white slavery, Dwyer argued, Americans had only stopped caring. Part of the issue lay in the fact that the archetype of white slavery used in educational pamphlets and films was emerging more as a myth than fact. Sociological studies in Illinois, New York, Missouri, and Connecticut during the early to mid-1910s failed to demonstrate an organized, international body involved in white slavery. Even the highly publicized 1910 Rockefeller Grand Jury could only show “isolated instances of vice” and that “New York City does not harbor an organized traffic in women’s bodies” (Rockefeller Grand Jury Report 1910:471–473). This lack of an organization behind white slavery chipped away at reformers’ claims and credibility on the subject.

The studies, moreover, failed to prove the majority of young, white women who entered prostitution did so through forcible means. Rosen (1982) argues this discussion of white slavery purported by reformers ultimately damaged the integrity of the movement as white sex workers engaged in prostitution for many other reasons. Citing several studies, she reveals that only 0.3% to 30% of women claimed white slavery as the cause for entrance into prostitution. The average of all the investigations ended up falling at less than 10%. These studies did show human trafficking existed in the early 1900s, but the problem for the American public lay in the fact these statistics disproved the archetype utilized by reformers and sensationalized by the media. *Current Opinion* (February 1914:129, November 1913:348) deemed white slavery “the witchcraft days in old Salem,” arguing that hysteria drove the white slavery crusade rather than a genuine epidemic. As the published findings of these works failed to uphold the extent of coerced prostitution initially believed, Americans increasingly viewed white slavery as a non-issue.

The decline in public concern coincided with reformers changing legal approaches and directly impacted the Mann Act. With the Mann Act supposedly addressing human trafficking at the federal level, reformers redirected focus to the state level and lost momentum (Keire 2010). Dwyer connected the lack of public support to shifts already occurring in the legal system by stating, “the white slave law falling into disuse.” Criminal cases continued through the late 1910s, finding some of the plaintiffs guilty, but the legal system’s application of the Mann Act and treatment of white slavery had begun to change. Some judges backed away from

the Mann Act by claiming it was never intended to be a “social cure” (Times Picayune, 24 September 1913:1). When deciding if Lee Baker of Peabody, Kansas, had violated the Mann Act in a 1913 trial, Judge John C. Pollock argued that an individual must be proven to have taken a woman across state lines for commercial purposes, not just immoral purposes as stated in the Mann Act, to be found guilty. Pollock’s ruling created controversy in the media as he attempted to narrow the application of the law. Despite Pollock’s decision, the legal system actually turned from using the Mann Act to address white slavery and instead focused more on combating premarital sex. Historian David J. Langum (1994) demonstrates that between 1917 and 1928 “noncommercial cases dominated the thoughts and activities of the federal morals police” with 70% of Mann Act cases involving “interstate adulterers or boyfriends and girlfriend,” not young women abducted and forced into prostitution. The Mann Act then became a means of regulating morality and race rather than aggressive legislation to combat human trafficking (Antoniazzi 2011; Bederman 1995). With the Mann Act providing less help in addressing white slavery, many reformers turned to local governments to pass red-light abatement laws and civil courts to end prostitution (Keire 2010). More success with this approach meant smaller, locally driven measures and the decline of a more cohesive, national crusade.

As with most reform movements, white slavery faced increased scrutiny and backlash as the archetype failed to manifest itself. By the start of the Great War, European news quickly replaced white slavery in the American media, and in the public’s minds and the courts, the white slavery crusade faded away. Despite this setback, Progressives did not end the war on vice, but social purists altered their approach to attack supposed immorality. Venereal disease became a focus of reformers, and so-called red-light districts or legalized areas of prostitution faced increased scrutiny of local governments, especially as the United States committed to enter World War I (Brandt 1987; Clarke 1917; Landau 2013). White slavery, on the other hand, did not factor into the shifting reform movement. By 1922 Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty declared that white slavery “formerly existed” and had been “very thoroughly broken up” (United States Department of Justice 1922). Without public outcry and legal support, the crusade on white slavery ended, and the campaign on prostitution shifted.

Conclusion

In an October 1914 address, the head of Chicago's censor board proclaimed, "The white slave moving picture is gone. The public is tired of the subject in drama, reel and story" (MPW, 3 October 1914:74). The loss of public support for the white slavery movement had far-reaching consequences both for society and the moving picture industry. In part, reformers inadvertently brought about the demise of the crusade by disseminating stories and generating hysteria over an international organization behind the abduction and coercion of young white women into sex work. Many studies failed to substantiate this archetype, which to some meant the entire claim of coerced prostitution must be false. The rapid rise and fall of the white slavery crusade was definitely linked to this fabricated archetype, but white slave films propelled the backlash. The widespread reaction to white slave films effectively drove the topic underground while the push to end prostitution continued through other means, especially government pressure to protect soldiers from prostitutes carrying venereal diseases in the limited vice districts that still existed. Not surprisingly, even at its height, the movement against white slavery began its decline.

In response to the shift in public opinion on white slavery, the legal system and film industry shifted. Courts began utilizing the Mann Act more for regulating sex outside of marriage than for cracking down on traffickers. After all, credible officials claimed white slavery had been "very thoroughly broken up" (United States Department of Justice 1922). The film industry similarly refashioned itself in the wake of censorship efforts. It banned white slave films and vocally stood against the portrayal of such a topic. White slavery had briefly ignited reformers, the legal system, and commercialized culture. People collaborated to eradicate the plague that supposedly ravaged its young, white daughters but ultimately quashed the discussion of white slavery and means of disseminating the message about its downfall.

Notes

1. The term "Progressive" came into use around 1910 as these individuals saw themselves making progress in society. Progressives were largely white, college-educated, middle- to upper-class reformers who sought to fix the problems resulting from industrialization. In doing so, they relied on efficiency and expertise and use of the government—that the government could and should intervene in social, economic, and politi-

cal problems to generate positive change. There was, however, no unifying organization, central leadership or consensus of goals, which led to diversity on how best to approach and solve the problems.

2. White slave films have previously been addressed in part in works by Shelley Stamp (1999), Kevin Brownlow (1990), Lee Grieveson (2004), Russell Campbell (2006), and Karen Mahar (2006). Each of these works focuses on different methodologies. Stamp looks at censorship issues and the interaction of young women with films in the Progressive Era. Grieveson focuses on white slave films as part of the larger issues with censorship and the need for the film industry to legitimize itself as an industry, and Mahar touches on the legitimizing angle as well. Brownlow discusses white slave films as part of a rash of social problem films of the time that formed a makeshift, short-lived genre in the Progressive Era. None of these works tie white slave films to the rise and fall of the myth as this chapter does.

3. The importance of film journals as evidence of both the film industry and the public's thoughts on current film trends as they happened cannot be understated. Published weekly and run independently of the industry, with a focus on providing public insight to exhibitors, trade journals featured regular correspondents within major cities that reported on local film news for several pages of each issue, along with soliciting the public for contributing articles, letters, and opinions regarding film reviews, censorship, industry trends, and more. These items from the public featured each week and typically included the name and location of the contributor and were part of a trend to market the journal to not only exhibitors but the general public visiting theaters. The regular contributors, local correspondents, and publicly solicited opinions allow us to trace both the film industry and the public's initial embrace and later rejection of white slave films.

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5

Sex Workers in the City

Brothels, Working Women, and the Urban Landscape of
Nineteenth-Century Boston's North End Neighborhood

ALEXANDER D. KEIM

For urban centers across the globe, the nineteenth century was a period of rapid and extreme economic, social, and cultural changes. Few cities experienced these changes more acutely than Boston, Massachusetts. It was during this period that Boston transitioned from “a small, pleasant, somewhat rustic colonial town” into an increasingly crowded and cosmopolitan urban metropolis (O'Connor 1991:75). Boston's upper class—comprised of an admixture of the colonial Puritan elite, merchants who made their fortunes in shipping, and the scions of manufacturing clans, together colloquially referred to as “Boston Bramins”—saw their traditional place at the top of city's power structure threatened. At the same time, economic and industrial revolutions fueled by mass migration to the city sparked the growth of the Boston's middle class and the emergence of an urban working class. Each of these groups had their own ideas about the future of the city and their respective places within it, both in terms of their relationship to power and the physical layout of the city. As French sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991:59) observed, “new social relationships call for a new space, and vice versa.”

One arena for this contest was the role brothels and the sex workers who lived and worked within them would play in defining the material, social, and cultural aspects of the urban landscape. By the urban landscape I mean both the physical spaces inhabited by human beings and the sensory phenomena produced in those spaces as well as the intangible, socially created attributes and associations that are an irreducible part of

how human beings experience the world around them and make landscapes an “entity that exists by virtue of its being perceived, experienced, and contextualized by people” (Knapp and Ashmore 1999:1). Just as there are multiple ways of perceiving and experiencing the landscape, so too are there multiple landscapes that exist in the same physical space (Thomas 1993). The physical presence of brothels, the neighborhoods in which they were concentrated, and the experience of observing and interacting with sex workers were part of the daily life for many Bostonians during this period. These perceptions and interactions were experienced and understood differently by individuals and groups from different social and economic backgrounds. This individually perceived and socially mediated landscape is an active component in determining how individual agents perform and perceive their own actions and the actions of others (Zierden and Herman 1996:223). Because the landscape is the stage for and a determinant of human action, it “both reflects past activities and encodes the cultural landscape in which people’s views of the world are formed” (Yamin and Metheny 1996:xv).

This chapter is a historical archaeological study of the role brothels and sex workers played in the physical, social, and cultural construction of the urban landscape of Boston, Massachusetts and its North End neighborhood during the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. To understand how the city’s inhabitants engaged in this contested process in the context of the disparate resources and opportunities available to them, I will adopt French sociologist Michel de Certeau’s metaphor of “strategy versus tactics” as it pertains to social practice. In his work *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau (1984:xiv) posits that while powerful institutions and individuals organize material and social systems in their own interests through large scale strategic practice, agentive “consumers” reorganize those systems and reappropriate the products (including spaces) to their own ends through “tactics.” Using this framework, this chapter establishes the economic, social, and cultural contexts in which the physical and mental construction of the landscape need to be interpreted both at the macro scale of the neighborhood as well as the micro scale of the embodied individual. This study incorporates material recovered archaeologically from a privy dating to between 1850 and 1880 at the 27/29 Endicott Street site associated with a brothel and later a boarding-house in the working-class North End neighborhood. This material culture is evidence of the deployment of tactical practices by working-class

residents of Boston, including sex workers, and through analysis it illustrates how and why different tactics were used in response to the Boston elite's competing strategic practices to define the urban landscape in their own terms and toward their own ends.

Nineteenth-Century Boston, Gentility, and the North End "Slum"

Since its founding in 1630, with a few notable periods of disruption surrounding the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, Boston was one of North America's leading urban areas (Handlin 1959:1). The hegemony of Boston's elites over their city—and the economic, social, and cultural structures upon which that hegemony was based—was challenged for the first time in the second quarter of the nineteenth century as Boston struggled to absorb the influx of tens of thousands of immigrants. While the changes to Boston's urban landscape were partially necessitated by the remarkable growth in the city during this period—between 1790 and 1865, the population grew from 18,038 to 140,000 (Puleo 2010:162)—the changes in the urban landscape were also a product of nineteenth-century Boston's changing social relationships. Changes in economic activity increased economic inequality, which in turn changed the practices and culture of the city's elites, while changes in the workforce created both a growing middle class and the appearance of an unskilled urban proletariat comprising rural migrants and international immigrants. One of the neighborhoods this exploding working-class population settled in was Boston's North End, which quickly gained the reputation as the city's first "slum."

While Boston had long drawn its share of impoverished individuals and families from elsewhere in New England and beyond, before this transition the city had never had the kind of residential neighborhoods that combined a densely settled working-class population with the perception of dilapidated and unsanitary material conditions and rampant immoral behavior. The idea of the slum was constructed to a large degree by the new and very popular literary genre: the "urban sketch" or the "urban exposé." Boston's contributions to the genre include 1844's *Mysteries of Boston*, 1865's *Boston by Daylight and Gaslight* by retired police officer Edward Savage, and *Boston Turned Inside Out!* published in 1880 by preacher Henry Morgan. At one point in Morgan's overwrought and virulently anti-Catholic treatise, two of his characters—the shrewd but

virtuous New Hampshire Yankee Johnathan Jerks and his companion freed-slave-turned-butler Sambo—embark on a late night stroll through the city and wander into the North End neighborhood, providing us with a window into how Morgan (standing in for the city's largely Protestant, American-born middle-class residents who were the audience of this and similar writing) perceived that part of the city. Jerks and Sambo describe the North End as “one of the lowest quarters of the city, abounding in dark lanes, and noisome alleys; where rickety and tumble-down tenements gave shelter to a squalid and degraded population,—the offspring of foreign lands” (Morgan 1880:372). They barely escape this “dangerous neighborhood” alive. Passing by a “low groggery,” the two are witness to a drunken brawl that ends in a fatal stabbing, with the dull thud of the body hitting the pavement serving as “the signal for men, women, and children to pour from the surrounding buildings . . . a curious and excited crowd” (Morgan 1880:373).

This imagining of working-class neighborhoods and their residents as something novel and exotic also provided the still developing middle class with something to define itself against. During the nineteenth century an identity and ideology distinct from that of the traditional elites and the working class developed, defined and articulated above all by a set of ideals that prescribed “a rising standard of refinement . . . achieved as an increasing segmentation and codification of roles, behaviors, and feelings in public and private” (Kasson 1990:7). Perhaps the most important component of this emerging ideology was the concept of gentility. Genteel people were expected to demonstrate grace, politeness, sincerity, and respectability, and the public performance of embodied comportment and behavior were so integral to the inculcation and expression of this ideology that “one could only assess gentility by the eye, the ear, or the nose” (Upton 2008:86).

Gentility, along with other aspects of emerging nineteenth-century middle-class identity, was highly gendered, touching on all aspects of life, including the urban landscape. Deemed to possess a greater capacity for morality and compassion than men, genteel women were to emotionally nurture their husbands and raise the children while maintaining a functioning household. This moral sensitivity, however, supposedly rendered genteel women so physically and physiologically delicate that they were barely capable of inhabiting public urban spaces, and then only while chaperoned and for a limited time. One of the most important aspects of

gentility was the emphasis on “respectability,” especially for women. Because a woman’s respectability and even her physical safety could depend on avoiding any outward manifestations of immoral attitudes or behaviors, the only proper and “safe” place for women was in their own homes or spaces that acted as extensions of the home. Both the home and middle-class residential neighborhood were constructed as gendered “female” spaces, the only spaces females could inhabit and remain “respectable.”

The Strategic Construction of Boston’s Urban Landscape

It is within this context of social, cultural, and economic change that the urban landscape of Boston was materially and socially constructed by the individuals and groups residing within it. Playing a key role in how the landscape was constructed was the inherent disparity between the resources available to those constructing Boston’s urban landscape. Boston’s elite and, to an extent, middle class sought to shape the macro-scale physical and social environment to their economic, social, and cultural advantage by engaging in what de Certeau identified as “strategic” practice. The possession of power and resources facilitates individuals and groups to make broad, long-term strategies to achieve their goals and further their own interests, consolidating their power and using it to dictate the terms of social life to the other members of society (de Certeau 1984:xviii). De Certeau (1984:38) characterizes strategic practices as “privileging spatial relationships” with two key components: “the establishment of a place of power . . . [and] elaborating theoretical places (systems and totalizing discourses) capable of articulating an ensemble of physical places in which forces are distributed.” When referring to “a place of power” de Certeau (1984:xix, 36) is talking about both the ability to make claims about which behavior and values are socially proper and acceptable, as well as about the establishment of a literal, physical place—carefully defined and delineated from the places controlled by and associated with others—to act as a “home base” from which resources can be accumulated and distributed and in which relations to exterior forces can be managed.

One way this strategic practice expressed itself in practical terms was through a campaign to alter the established economically heterogeneous residential pattern in the city through the practice of real-estate development (Figure 5.1). New and rebuilt residential developments were typically segregated by social and economic class and featured a built environment

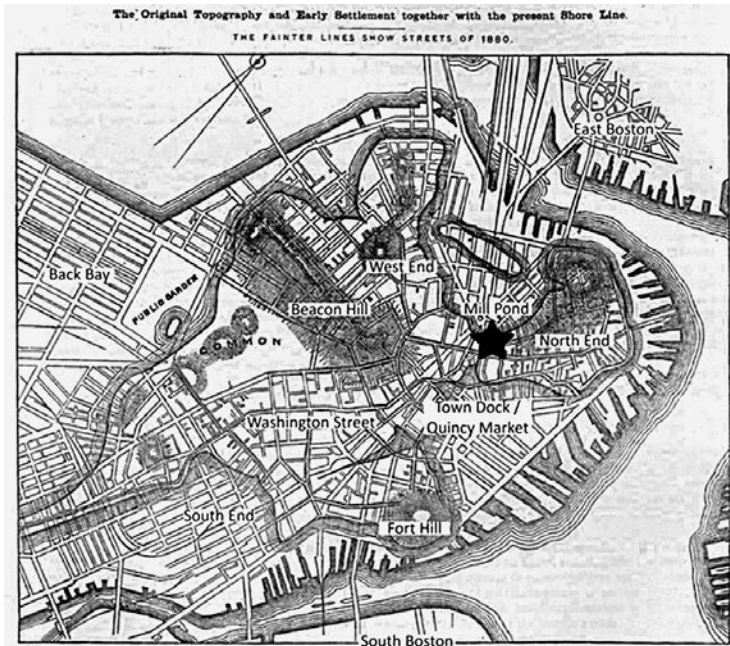


Figure 5.1. Waring 1886 map showing landmass, topography, and street layout of Boston, ca. 1880. Labels indicate neighborhoods; star indicates location of 27/29 Endicott Street site. (Courtesy of University of Texas Libraries.)

that protected the social and cultural prerogatives of those engaging in the development. Private developers, supported by government officials, constructed spaces and residential structures with the twofold intention of making a profit and encouraging through the form of the landscape and the symbolic messages it carried the social practices and cultural attitudes that would reproduce a social world that more closely fit their strategic goals. These neighborhoods were designed to appeal to the upper and upper-middle classes' social and cultural emphasis on order, gentility, and morality through an urban landscape unlike the crowded, unorganized, multi-vocal, and undifferentiated landscape of the central waterfront and the North End (Deutsch 2000:8).

The geographical separation and segregation of activity considered in violation of notions of gentility and respectability was part of this strategic practice. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, there was a general loosening of social controls and sexual mores associated with the decline of Puritan influence in city affairs and, to a degree, Boston began

to tolerate public engagement in “immoral” behavior. This included toleration of drinking in bars, saloons, and groceries, all of which sold inexpensive liquor by the drink and were well known as raucous hangouts for working-class men. Dance halls and bawdy houses—public places where people could drink, dance, sometimes gamble, and acquire the services of sex workers—also became more popular and more prevalent. Parts of Boston’s Beacon Hill neighborhood and the adjacent West End became known as “Mt. Whoredom” on account of their many bawdy houses, and as many as half the stores in the area were groceries selling liquor (Hobson 1987:14). At the same time the North End developed its own reputation as a place of ill repute. Both neighborhoods were beginning to be associated with immorality and crime and became spaces of physical and moral danger (Hobson 1987:12–15). These landscapes were (in theory) off-limits to “respectable” people, though arrest records demonstrate that men of all classes frequented brothels and solicited sex work (Hobson 1987:33).

By the early nineteenth century, certain Bostonians prominent in public life and private industry made a concerted effort to remake areas of Beacon Hill around the newly constructed State House into an elite residential neighborhood (O’Connor 1991:68). Josiah Quincy, who served as Boston’s Mayor from 1823–1829, used the resources at his disposal to reorder the morality of the urban landscape, contributing to the material and social construction of Beacon Hill as an elite space whose physical forms and socio-cultural values were to be tightly under elite control. Under Quincy’s direction the 1820s saw a series of unprecedented raids of bawdy houses and arrests of sex workers and their clients in and around Beacon Hill and the West End. Prostitution cases per capita would never be higher in Boston than in the mid-1820s (Hobson 1987:18). Yet while vice was vigorously hounded out of the West End, not only were no serious attempts made to remove it from its place in the landscape of the North End, but Quincy and Boston’s constabulary actively thwarted measures to do so.

During the summer of 1825, a week of simmering upset over the growing prevalence of vice and sex work in the North End culminated in a series of attacks against two well-known brothels, a disturbance that became known as the Bawdyhouse Riots. On the evening of July 22, an angry mob surrounded a brothel called the Bee Hive on Prince Street and burned it to the ground. On July 24 they tried to replicate the feat at the Tin Pot on Ann Street but were just barely thwarted by the efforts of police (Savage

1865:64). Far from being comprised of slum dwellers without means, 12 of the rioters arrested immediately paid bail and hired lawyers to defend themselves. The rioters styled themselves the moral police of their neighborhood and claimed they were attempting to remove the offending elements from their landscape (Hobson 1987:24). Rather than support this crusade for public morality, those in power saw that the arrested rioters were prosecuted and publicly castigated in the Boston press (Cheney and Boston Affiliates 1983:61). Those who had the resources and means to project their own ideologies and goals onto the urban landscape punished those who attempted to do the same in disregard of the elites' strategic prerogative. By the 1840s the North End had become particularly notorious for brothels and saloons, as well as for theft and violence directed against unwary middle- and upper-class patrons, earning it the name the "Black Sea" or "Murder District" (Goldfeld 2009:96). By simultaneously raiding the West End bawdy houses located steps from upper-class Beacon Hill and tacitly permitting the operation of prostitution in the increasingly working-class neighborhood of the North End, "the municipal campaign against vice on Boston in the early decades of the nineteenth century was beginning the process of demarcating the social landscape of American cities. It pushed sex commerce to the fringes of the cityscape, both geographically and in relation to other legitimate businesses or respectable neighborhoods" (Hobson 1987:24). The strategic construction of the city's landscape provided middle-class and elite members of society with a place to engage in immoral acts outside of the "moral" spaces they had constructed for themselves.

The Urban Landscape of 27/29 Endicott Street

Having explored the means and motives of Boston's elite and middle-class residents to physically and culturally construct the North End as an urban landscape of vice and immorality, the remainder of this chapter will use archaeological and documentary evidence to better understand the material and social conditions of the North End's landscape as they were actually experienced as part of the everyday lives of its residents. These residents used tactical practice to construct an urban landscape that challenged the preconceptions of the powerful, and sought to create spaces that furthered the goals and ideologies of the neighborhood's residents. This construction of an alternative urban landscape was particularly

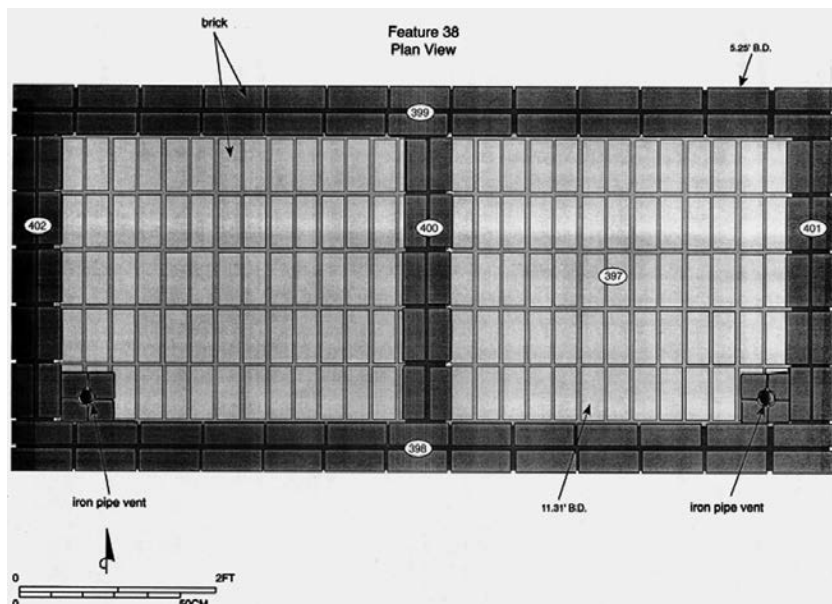


Figure 5.2. Plan view of 27/29 Endicott Street privy. (Cheek and Balicki 2000.)

significant to the North End's working-class women, including sex workers.

This article will examine the cultural material recovered from a privy feature at the Mill Pond Site (BOS-HA-14) in the North End to reconstruct some of the tactical practices used by working-class women in the North End to construct their own version of their neighborhood's urban landscape. The privy was associated with 27/29 Endicott Street, a three-story brick row house constructed around 1846 and demolished in the early twentieth century. The structure served as rental housing for most of its existence and operated as a brothel from at least 1850 until 1867. A two-chamber privy shaft was in the enclosed rear yard of the property. The shaft contained a mix of household and personal items as well as floral and faunal remains deposited sometime between the early 1850s and 1883 (Dudek 1999). The 27/29 Endicott Street privy feature was a 4.5 ft by 8.5 ft (1.37 m by 2.59 m) brick vault with two separate shafts of equal size, each measuring approximately 3 ft square (Figure 5.2). While it was operational, the privy would have been covered by a wooden superstructure with two seats. The wooden superstructure for the privy appears in the back lot in the 1867 Sanborn and the 1874 Hopkins maps, but it no longer

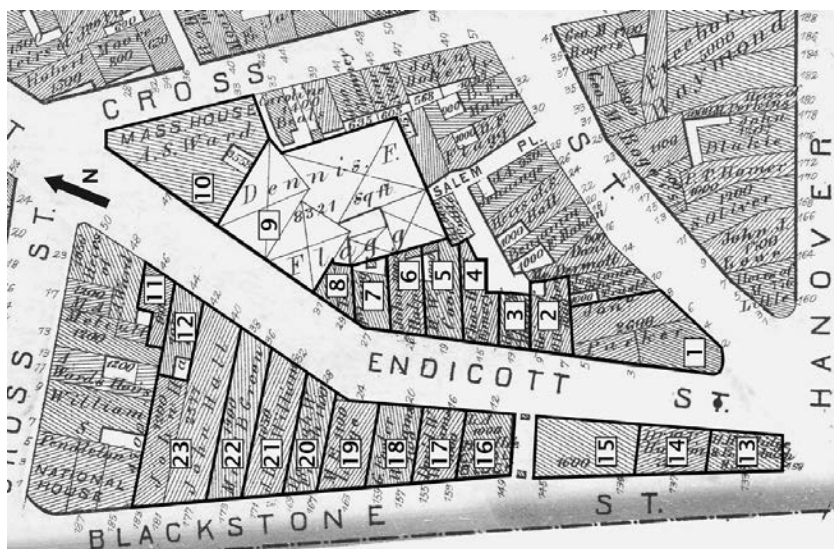


Figure 5.3. Detail of 1874 Hopkins map of Boston showing wooden privy structure behind 27/29 Endicott.

appears on the Bromley fire insurance map of 1883, indicating that use of the privy was discontinued, the superstructure torn down, and the shafts filled by 1883 (Figure 5.3).

Archaeologists excavating the privy encountered two distinct strata in the west chamber of the privy and three strata in the east chamber. In the west chamber, the lower level was designated HN 233 and the upper level HN 230. The fill of the east chamber of the privy comprised three levels: the lowest was designated HN 235, the middle HN 234, and the upper HN 236 (Dudek 1999:9–13; Table 5.1). Information recovered from census and municipal tax records indicated that a brothel operated at 27/29 Endicott Street from about 1850 until the brothel closed in 1867. Materials recovered from HN 233 and HN 235 were deposited while the brothel was in operation, while materials from HN 230 and HN 234 were a mixture of materials deposited during the brothel's occupation, the “clean-out” of the structure to prepare it for its new owner and tenants after the brothel closed, and its subsequent occupation as a tenement (Keim 2015). A similar depositional process was identified at a brothel located at 12 Orange Street in New York, identified during the excavation of the Five Points neighborhood in New York (Yamin 2000:314).

Table 5.1. Date ranges for contexts related to 27/29 Endicott privy

Harris Number: West Chamber	Date of Deposition	Harris Number: East Chamber	Date of Deposition	Harris Number: Cistern	Date of Deposition
230	ca. 1867–1883 (TPQ 1876)	236	ca. 1880–1883 (TPQ 1865)	229	TPQ 1868
		234	ca. 1867–ca. 1880 (TPQ 1859)		
233	1846–ca. 1867 (TPQ 1852)	235	1846–ca. 1867 (TPQ 1856)		

Source: Keim 2015.

Documentary evidence of the material, economic, and social activity in the block immediately surrounding the 27/29 Endicott Street brothel can shed light on the degree to which the North End’s reputation as a “slum” was based on real material conditions and actions, and the degree to which it was a social construction of nonresident observers, who were motivated partially by ideological zeal and partially by their failure to comprehend the unfamiliar social practices and cultural values of the people who inhabited the neighborhoods. The block is depicted with numbers identifying individual lots in Figure 5.3, and the results of the documentary research on the physical and social environment of the Endicott Street block between 1850 and 1880 is summarized in Table 5.2.

The east side of the Endicott block was a series of three-story brick rowhouses used primarily and discontinuously as boardinghouses, lodging houses, tenements, and brothels throughout this 30-year period, a pattern typical of nineteenth-century working-class neighborhoods. The types of brothels operating on the Endicott block were likely parlor houses, wherein clients were entertained in the parlor atmosphere imitating the conventions of middle-class and elite respectability, followed by paid sex upstairs in a room that a sex worker typically rented from the brothel’s madam (Johnson 2012:35–36).

That at least some of the brothels on Endicott Street served a higher class of customer is supported by their appearance in published guides to brothels. Published under a pseudonym in 1859, the *Directory to the Seraglios* listed six brothels for Boston, three of which were on Endicott Street: “Miss Porter” at 11 Endicott (lot 3), “Mrs. Ambush” at 31 Endicott (lot 8), and “Miss Mary Adams” at 27/29 Endicott (lot 7) (Figure 5.4). These

Table 5.2. Summary of block data (BD 1850–1880; BA SB 1850–1865 Ward 3, 1866–1875 Ward 2, 1876–1880 Ward 7)

Lot #	Address (post-1856)	Building Type	Floors	Sq. Ft./ Person	Significant Usage of Lot (Years)	Ownership (Years, Owner Residence) (o.c. = Out of City)	
1	1/3-5/5.5 Endicott, 1 Salem	Brick, stone, or iron warehouse	3	128.6	Pawnbroker (1851–1880); secondhand clothing (1858–1866); watchmaker (1868–1879); music teacher (1870–1875); billiard hall (1865–1869); furniture dealer (1852–1857); machine sewing (1856–1860)	Andrew L. Chamberlain (1852–1856, West End); Johnathan Parker (1858–1872, North End); Susan E. Parker (1873–1880, North End)	
2	7/9 Endicott	Brick rowhouse	3	375.0	Brothel (1850–1865); lodging house (1866–1880); doctor's office (1850–1878)	Ozias H. Mather (1850–1871, South End); Mather heirs (1872–1880)	
3	11/13 Endicott	Brick rowhouse	3	300.0	Brothel/female boardinghouse (1850–1875); doctor's office (1850–1865); hairdresser (1866–1875)	Augustus H. Mather (1850–1865, South Cove); Mather heirs (1866–1880)	
4	15/17 Endicott	Brick rowhouse	3	103.4	Tenement (1850–1880); pawnbroker (1850–1880)	Samuel Gould (1850–1866, North End); Altamon Nashland (1867–1869, o.c.); Charles H. Emery co. (1870–1873, o.c.); Jacob Schuh (1874–1880, Somerville)	
5	19/21 Endicott	Brick rowhouse	3	157.9	Tenement (1850–1853); brothel (1854–1869); boardinghouse (1870–1880); doctor's office (1851–1877)	John Burrill (1850–1852, North End); Marquis F. Josselyn (1853–1857, North End); Josselyn heirs (1858–1861); James M. Cook (1862–1865, Taunton); Mercy W. Cook (1866–1880, S. End)	
6	23/25 Endicott	Brick rowhouse	3	157.9	Tenement (1850–1856); boardinghouse (1857–1870); lodging house (1871–1880); doctor's office (1852–1867); secondhand clothing (1868–1880)	Edmund Smith (1850–1870, North End); John Halpine (1871–1879, West End)	
7	27/29 Endicott	Brick rowhouse	3	168.8	Brothel (1851–1866); tenement (1867–1878); lodging house (1879–1880); doctor's office (1872)	Joseph Smith (1850–1853); Smith heirs (1854–1866); Dennis F. Flagg (1868–1880, South End)	

(continued)

Table 5.2—Continued

Lot #	Address (post-1856)	Building Type	Floors	Sq. Ft. / Person	Significant Usage of Lot (Years)	Ownership (Years, Owner Residence) (o.c. = Out of City)
8	30/31 Endicott	Wood house	3	171.4	Brothel (1852–1864); boardinghouse (1865–1880)	Mary K. Quincy (1850–1858, occupant); Marshall J. Culter (1860–1863, South End); Dennis F. Flagg (1864–1880, South End)
9	35 Endicott	Wood and brick stable	4	NA	Sale and boarding stable (1850–1880)	J. J. Dunklee and A.E. Tilton (1850–1871, downtown); Dennis F. Flagg (1872–1880, South End)
10	37/39/43/47 Endicott	Brick hotel	4	487.8	Massachusetts House Hotel (1850–1880); mason (1868–1876)	Atremas Ward heirs (1850–1880, downtown)
11	46 Endicott	Brick rowhouse	3	150.0	Tenement (1850–1880)	Marcus A. Metcalf (1850–1861, North End; 1862–1880, Malden)
12	44 Endicott	Brick rowhouse	3	95.5	Tenement (1850–1880)	Cornelius Driscoll (1850–1861, downtown); Alice C. Driscoll (1862–1872, downtown); John Hall (1873–1875, Roxbury)
13	158 Hanover, 133 Blackstone	Brick, stone, or iron warehouse	4	NA	Boot and shoe store (1850–1880); barber-shop (1870–1880)	Nathaniel Faxon (1853–1860, downtown); Faxon heirs (1861–1880)
14	135/137 Blackstone	Brick warehouse with storefront	4	342.0	Carpet manufacturer (1854–1857); cigar maker (1861–1871); restaurant (1859–1880)	Franklin Crosby (1855–1863); D.T.V. Hunttoon (1864–1880, Canton)
15	139/141/143/145 Blackstone	Brick, stone, or iron warehouse	4	NA	Furniture dealer (1854–1880); produce (1855–1880); grain and flour (1855–1868); grocery (1870–1880)	Edward Blake heirs (1853–1880)

16	149/151 Blackstone	Brick, stone, or iron warehouse	3	NA	Groceries and provisions (1853–1875)	John D. Williams heirs (1853–1880)
17	153/155 Blackstone	Brick, stone, or iron warehouse	3	NA	Liquor wholesale (1850–1880); cellar bar- room (1850–1880)	John D. Williams heirs (1853–1860); David W. Williams (1861–1871, downtown; 1872–1880, Roxbury)
18	157/159 Blackstone	Brick warehouse	3	NA	Liquor wholesale (1850–1880); cellar barroom (1850–1880); counting house (1867–1880)	John D. Williams heirs (1853–1860); G. Foster Williams (1861–1870, downtown; 1862–1873, Roxbury); Thomas Taff (1874–1876, Charles- town); Taff heirs (1877–1880)
19	161/163 Blackstone	Brick, stone, or iron warehouse	3	NA	Liquor wholesale (1850–1880); cel- lar barroom (1850–1880); corn broker (1870–1874)	John D. Williams heirs (1853–1880)
20	165/167 Blackstone	Brick, stone, or iron warehouse	3	NA	Wine wholesale and retail (1853–1880); brooms (1853–1856)	John D. Williams heirs (1853–1880)
21	169 Blackstone	Brick or stone warehouse	3	NA	Grocer (1854–1880); cellar barroom (1866–1880)	John D. Williams heirs (1853–1880); Emma F. Williams (1874–1880, North End)
22	171/173 Blackstone	Brick or stone warehouse	3	NA	Grocer (1853–1860); mahogany warehouse (1861–1865); table and door manufacturer (1867–1880)	Anna B. Green heirs (1850–1880)
23	175/177 Blackstone	Wood warehouse	4	NA	Door, table, sash manufacturer and dealer (1853–1880)	Gilman Collamore (1853–1865, North End); Bartlett Doe (1866–1870); John Hall (1871–1880, Roxbury)

Source: Keim 2015.

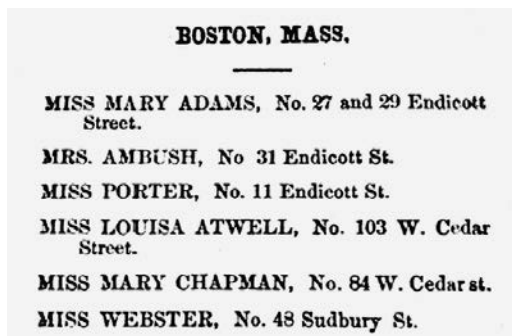


Figure 5.4. Detail from ca. 1859 brothel guide, showing listings from Boston. (Loveyer 1859.)

names all correspond to the heads of household living at those properties at that time. Published guides to brothels also usually only included more “respectable” institutions, and in fact the *Directory* warns readers to “beware all houses not recommended” within it. The fact that three of the five structures listed as houses of “prostitution” in the Street Books were included in a brothel guide implies that the sex work on this block was geared toward a middle-class clientele (Loveyer 1859:43).

Other residences on the block were two tenements housing almost exclusively Irish immigrants, and the Massachusetts House hotel catering to tradesmen and middle-class families. With many guests staying long term, most nineteenth-century American urban hotels more closely resembled the functions and features of boardinghouses than what we think of as hotels today. The remainder of the structures on the block operated as commercial and industrial buildings. A three-story commercial building that contained a number of different shops, counting houses, and industrial spaces in addition to renting rooms to tenants—mostly immigrants—who also worked there. The most significant business for the daily lives of the block’s residents would have been the multiple pawn shops and secondhand stores that offered money for used goods and played an important role in the economic functioning of working-class households and neighborhoods (Woloson 2007:75–76). The remaining lots on the Endicott block were long brick or stone warehouses that served as retail shops, storage warehouses, and factories—sometimes all in one building. There was also a restaurant, a grocery, and multiple retail barrooms operating out of the cellars of the liquor wholesalers. As public establishments that served alcohol and food and provided a public and relaxing space for socializing, saloons, groceries, barrooms, and restaurants were among the most socially important and durable institutions

in the working-class urban neighborhood (Chudacoff 1981:122). Saloons provided a range of services to working-class and immigrant customers. They cashed checks and made loans, served as post offices for migrant and transient workers, provided help finding work and acclimating to city life, and were often the headquarters of local political organizations and unions (Harring 1983:156–157).

The Tactical Construction of the North End Neighborhood

Far from an urban environment dominated by seedy brothels and teeming tenements, the block on which 27/29 Endicott Street was located had a heterogeneous character, blending the stereotypical elements of the imagined “slum” with professional, commercial, and industrial concerns, sometimes within the same structure. The structures and residents that populated “slums” were imagined to be an undifferentiated mass of misery, but this data suggests that reputation belies a landscape that is diverse in makeup and purpose. The Endicott block illustrates how the reality of working-class neighborhoods and working-class lives are erased by the conception of the landscape as a “slum.” While enthusiastically acknowledging that “the deplorable life choices available to inner-city residents were real in material and absolute senses,” historian Alan Mayne (1993:1–2) asserts that “the term slum encoded with the meanings of a dominant bourgeois culture, in fact obscured and distorted the varied spatial forms and social conditions to which it was applied.”

While their elite and middle-class counterparts sought to construct an urban landscape that facilitated their large scale economic, social, and cultural goals, the working-class residents of the North End sought to use their habitual, everyday embodied actions to challenge those with the resources to control the structures and institutions that seemed to dominate urban life—which included understandings about the nature and possibilities of space within the landscape—in ways that helped them survive and thrive in conditions that presented enormous challenges. De Certeau termed this kind of activity, which emphasizes “making do” with the means and opportunities available within the larger system that is outside of the individual’s control, as “tactical practice.” Tactical practices are enacted by individuals and groups who do not exert ultimate control over the places and spaces they inhabit and therefore “must play on and within a terrain imposed on it and organized by a foreign power” (de Certeau

1984:37). Drawing on tacit, practical knowledge of what resources are available in spaces and how they are “supposed” to operate, agents can express their own meanings, create their own sets of symbols and significations, and reproduce them all without “producing” or “controlling” the spaces (or materials) with which they do so.

A significant example of this working-class reappropriation of the landscape was the deliberate effort to transform the streets from an impersonal public space into an actively inhabited domestic space by making them the setting for an array of daily household and social practices. The advent of urban industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century radically altered the roles and expectations of working-class women, without providing them with the material or ideological resources to press their claims or develop an understanding of their situation (Stansell 1986:36–37). Working-class women provided these things for themselves by tactically using the urban landscape to engineer a family economy that could provide the necessities of food and shelter by making full use of the available resources and opportunities. They also used the landscape to develop networks of economic, emotional, and social support with other working-class women to further legitimize their developing practices and identities. In the nineteenth century North End working-class women made their lives as wives and mothers on the streets as much as in their tenements and boardinghouses (Stansell 1986:52).

Public spaces that provided fresh air and distracting conversation, the front stoop being the classic example, were the preferred location for numerous household production activities like garment sewing or lace making through which working women made contributions to their household economy (Deutsch 2000:7). Numerous artifacts related to sewing recovered from the 27/29 Endicott Street privy, used by the servants, sex workers, or perhaps the madam who resided there. Fifty-five straight pins, eight copper-alloy eyes, and two thimbles were recovered from the privy, the material signature of both the practice of needle work and the construction of the landscape through enacting this quintessentially domestic practice in the public space of the urban landscape. Traditionally, artifacts like sewing implements are interpreted as evidence of female contributions to the household economy—artifacts representing the “domestic sphere” used *within* the domicile. In the context of documentary evidence suggesting these practices were enacted outside the confines of

home, they may also be evidence of public practice and the kind of tactical practices that created a working-class urban landscape.

The street was also the setting for social interactions with pawn brokers, shop keepers, and sympathetic neighbors that “[knitted] together the household with the world of the street . . . and created the material basis for a dense neighborhood life” (Stansell 1986:419). Women incorporated their neighbors into their domestic lives, forming attachments to each other and their children that made the neighborhood an important resource in the negotiations and struggles with the adverse conditions of urban life (Stansell 1982:42). Having social life play out in public was also a survival strategy for working-class women. Domestic squabbles and neighborhood fights were common, and violence against women was a component of working-class culture and practice (Chudacoff 1981:122). Working-class women attempted to protect the emotional and physical safety of those with whom they had developed networks of mutual support by “entering briskly and forcefully into domestic frays between husbands and wives,” frequently dragging the quarrels out of the tenements and into the street where neighbors and passersby were encouraged to adjudicate and reconcile the parties (Stansell 1986:54).

Instead of being understood as evidence of loving relationships and vital support networks, the playing out of working-class social life on the streets of the North End was interpreted by outsiders as more evidence for the dysfunction of the neighborhoods’ residents. Because middle-class Bostonians were “intensely conscious of their own yearnings and the restraint demanded by middle-class respectability, they were disturbed, even challenged, by the seeming disorderliness in the lives of the poor” (Bender 1975:126). To middle-class observers, the practices necessary for working families to survive and thrive in small communities seemed a perpetual, disorderly carnival of behavior that violated genteel standards of grace, politeness, sincerity, and domesticity (Deutsch 2000:2). Working-class women subverted the strict notions of female behavior and respectability that lay at the heart of the ideologies of gentility and domesticity, and driving this attitude was the presence of domestic family life in the public street, which was “antagonistic to ardently held beliefs about childhood, womanhood, and ultimately the nature of civilized urban society” (Stansell 1982:310). From a middle-class perspective, the fact that domestic activities were enacted in the street rather than in the enclave of

the home was evidence of parental neglect, family disintegration, and a pervasive urban pathology (Stansell 1982:311).

The presence of women and feminine practices outside of the home was an impossibility according to genteel ideology, and the threat this posed to the ontological security generated by middle-class ideology required a way of perceiving and constructing the landscape and its inhabitants that reorganized the relationship between space, gender, and morality so that it more closely agreed with the preconceptions of someone embodying the ideology of gentility. This was achieved by reconstructing the gendered characteristics of working-class women, altering the perception of their embodied practice and behavior so that they possessed none of the characteristics of femininity and therefore belonged in the “male” space of the public street. Working-class women were frequently described in contemporary accounts and urban exposes as masculine in comportment, dress, gestures, and social behaviors. A typical account populated tenements with “formidable women, with uncombed hair and disordered dress, [who] gossiped while leaning on railways, or screamed in frantic quarrels” (Glaab and Brown 1983:249). Everything about the working-class woman in that description constitutes a violation of genteel femininity. Working-class women were also described as perpetually drunk—drinking being a male practice in genteel culture—and abusive or neglectful to their children, demonstrating not just a lack of a womanly compassion but also an absence of the core characteristic of female maternal identity (Stansell 1982:312). Stansell (1982:322) explains how, “like prostitutes, mothers of street children became a kind of half sex in the eyes of reformers, outside the bounds of humanity by virtue of their inability or unwillingness to replicate the innate abilities of true womanhood.” Having constructed working-class women as inherently masculine, the middle class could encounter their practices in the male space of the street without challenging their ontological security.

The genteel conception of the relationship between gender and the urban landscape was further challenged by the introduction of a new archetype to the nineteenth-century urban social milieu: the young female wage earner, the “working girl.” At a time when rising prices and declining wages reduced social mobility and forced many working-class families to rely on multiple sources of income to survive, new industrial technologies and commercial practices increased opportunities for women—particularly young women—to earn a weekly wage in the labor force (Chudacoff

1981:51). Whether they earned their living through factory labor, domestic service, in shops and downtown offices, or through casual or full-time sex work, young female workers were increasingly visible throughout the urban landscape (Deutsch 2000:81). This visibility only increased as young women began to withhold portions of their income from their families and spend it on the goods and leisure activities that began to characterize youth culture (Stansell 1982:83).

The ubiquity of women in the city's streets came into sharp conflict with the highly gendered values and expectations that lay at the heart of a developing genteel middle-class culture. Because they were in violation of these social norms, working girls of all types inhabiting and moving through urban space, alone or in groups, were frequently subjected to social condemnation and, more troublingly, physical and sexual assault. Working women of all kinds rejected this conception of gender and space and the social and physical violence it encouraged. Refusing to passively accept these circumstances, working women used the potential afforded by their embodied, gendered, and interactive presence in the landscape to assert their right to urban space and to force a reevaluation of the status quo. Sex workers and other working women "sought to create a city that met their needs" by constructing a landscape that they could inhabit according to their own dispositions and remain safe and respected (Deutsch 2000:18).

Women working outside the sex work industry are included in this analysis because when discussing how lived experience shapes social life, perceptions of who or what someone is can matter more than reality. Many members of the American middle and upper classes made little distinction between sex workers and women who earned their living at more "respectable" trades. Additionally, working-class women often turned to sex work in times of financial distress or supplemented their income with casual prostitution (Stansell 1986:176). Even full-time sex work was almost always a temporary stage in life—75% of Boston's mid-century sex workers were under the age of 25—to be set aside after a few years for a more respectable job or marriage (Hobson 1987:86). Combined with the reality that domestic servants and other female non-sex workers routinely lived at brothels and contributed to their archaeological remains, it is appropriate from an interpretive level to consider sex workers within the context of the larger world of working women of which they were part.

One aspect of tactical practice is using material culture in unexpected

ways and in unusual settings creating new spaces. This reappropriation and reconstruction of space was one of the “innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other’s game, that is, the space instituted by others, characteristic of the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations” (de Certeau 1984:18). Working-class people, as dominated members of society, are well aware of the normative expectations of the dominant cultural paradigm (Giddens 1979:72). Because they knew the expectations of those who controlled the urban spaces they inhabited, they could challenge the meanings and possibilities associated with those spaces by taking opportunities to boldly defy those expectations. Individuals used embodied tactical practices to violate social norms and bring into dialogue values and traditions those with power wanted beyond discussion. Having forced the acknowledgment of alternate ways of constructing and conceiving the world, sex workers and other working women could then attempt to convince others to perceive and accept the urban landscape that they constructed.

Young working women chose not to conform to the standards of genteel female dress, comportment, or social behavior in public urban space and instead reappropriated the ideology and spaces controlled by others to make a declaration of their perspectives on and desires for daily urban life (Giddens 1984:80). Not only did they dress and adorn themselves to be visible, they also promenaded in unchaperoned groups, failed to modestly cover their heads and faces, made eye contact with strange men and women, engaged in flirtatious behavior with men of all classes and displayed high spirits and sociable behavior that did not conform to the conception of the dour, desperate working girl popular among the middle class (Stansell 1986:123). The kind of working-class costume worn in the public urban landscape by the sex workers at 27/29 Endicott emphasized a glittering, eye catching surface and forms and accessories that claimed as much street space as possible (Upton 2008:97). Working women adorned and comported themselves to create a bold and noticeable presence in the city street, dressing in bright colors and clashing patterns, in forms accentuating the hips, and wearing wide hats that permitted eye contact (Stansell 1986:96). Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu remarks that this kind of subversive, heterodox practice is an intentional and effective way to bring into consciousness and modify categories of thought that orient individual and collective ideas of what’s acceptable (Bourdieu 1990:141).

The embodied adornment of some working-class people, particularly young working women, communicated a rejection of genteel values and practices, and the intention to produce and reproduce through practice a separate way of understanding and experiencing the world. Artifacts recovered from the 27/29 Endicott Street privy provide some evidence of the adornment and comportment that were an integral part in the public performance of working-class women. Fifty-four scraps of fabric and textiles were recovered from the privy, but unfortunately they are so fragmentary and decomposed that they only offer a window into the types of fabrics worn—wool and silk for certain and likely other kinds of textiles as well. A bone object that was either a corset stay or a fan strut was found: either use would have been a necessary component for a fashionable presentation that used the shape of the female body and embodied practice to attract the attention of observers. Several clear and colored glass beads were found that would likely have been sewn into clothing or accessories to add detail and sparkle to an outfit.

The 27/29 Endicott privy contained buttons of multiple types and sizes, including some that would have been part of expensive garments and others that demonstrate how working women engaged in highly symbolic display and action tactically, as consumers within a system they did not control. Twenty mother of pearl buttons were recovered from the privy feature, including 16 from the brothel context, of which 4 were decorated with intricate designs. These types of buttons were mass produced beginning in the nineteenth century, and iridescent sheen and capacity for detailed decoration at a relatively inexpensive price made them popular for working-class consumers looking to achieve flashy, fashionable presentation within limited means (Stevens 2000:14). Three embossed metal button backs were recovered from the brothel context as well (Figure 5.6). The fronts of these buttons would have been fabric-covered and might have been periodically re-covered by a tailor or dressmaker to match new outfits (Stevens 2000:16). The versatility and reusability of the metal-backed cloth-covered buttons suggest that the sex workers emphasized cost-effective ways to add detail to their wardrobe. Mother of pearl buttons were recovered from the brothel contexts at a higher ratio than during the later occupation of 27/29 Endicott, which could reflect changing tastes but could also indicate sex workers' emphasis on style and flash in clothing within their limited means. This would have been part of a strategy to achieve a fashionable "silhouette" with inferior materials, making a



Figure 5.5. Lettered metal back-
ing of imported cloth-covered
button. (Photo by author.)

dress that co-opted genteel and stylish forms but without the latest fabrics and trims (Wass and Fandrich 2010:266–267).

Jewelry was an important part of working-class fashion but was looked down upon as irredeemably ostentatious by those ascribing to middle-class gentility and indicative of the immorality and irresponsibility of working-class women (Kasson 1990:121). Two gold-washed, engraved stick pins with glass stone settings recovered from the privy would have been ostentatious items of adornment, inviting the attention of passersby on the street (Figure 5.6). One plain gold ring was also excavated (Figure 5.7). The size of the ring suggests that it was worn by a woman, although a married man losing his wedding band in the absolute worst place cannot be discounted.

Jewelry recovered from the privy also incorporated and reappropriated some material and symbolic elements of middle-class culture into the embodied practices that constructed working-class social identities and the urban landscapes in which they were contextualized and performed. Since they possessed so few of the social and cultural resources needed to shape social attitudes on their own, part of working women's project of constructing landscapes that accepted their presence was the reappropriation of the social and cultural capital with which the symbols and materials representing middle-class gentility were imbued. A good example of this phenomenon was the choice made by women at 27/29 Endicott to incorporate genteel "mourning" jewelry into their costuming. Intrigued by the ability of the ritual practices surrounding mourning to serve as emblems of the virtues of sincerity and morality, genteel women during the nineteenth century increasingly incorporated forms and styles associated

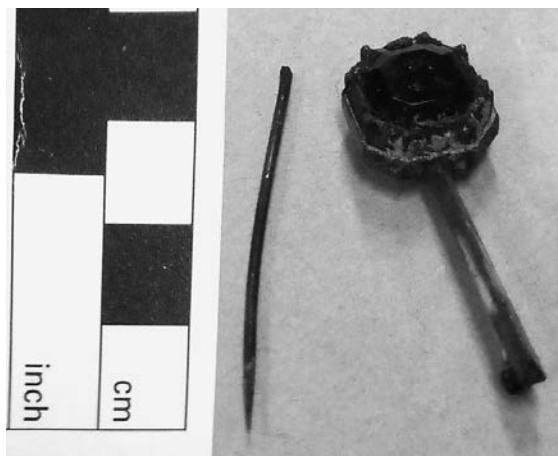


Figure 5.6. A gold-washed, engraved stick pin with glass stone setting. (Photo by author.)

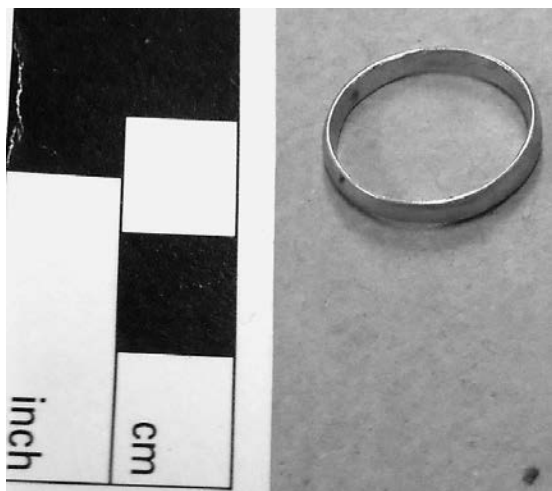


Figure 5.7. Gold ring recovered from 27/29 Endicott Street. (Photo by author.)



Figure 5.8. Mourning locket from 27/29 Endicott Street. (Johnson 2010.)

with publicly mourning the dead into their clothing and adornment, a process encouraged when Queen Victoria spent the remainder of her life in deep mourning following the death of the prince consort Albert in 1861 (Halttunen 1982:136–137, Lindbergh 1999:54). The glass and metal face of what was likely a mourning locket, a popular item in the latter half of the nineteenth century that would have contained the hair or other memento of a passed loved one, was recovered from HN 233 within the Endicott Street privy (Figure 5.8). Two black cut glass items recovered from HN 234—an imitation gemstone and a faceted bead—were also very possibly representative of other mourning jewelry. Worn by a sex worker or someone employed by the brothel, items reflecting the middle-class culture of mourning would have been a dynamic and controversial presence in the landscape, reappropriating the middle-class values and claiming them for an individual who was in other ways the antithesis of genteel womanhood. By tactically challenging the dominant conception of how women were to appear and act in the urban landscape, working women communicated their defiance of ideals of gentility and domesticity and asserted the validity of different ways of consuming and assigning meaning to urban space.

More direct evidence of the tactical practice of public display comes from the 154 leather shoe remains recovered from the privy, which historical and contextual evidence suggests were deposited during the operation of the brothel or during the cleanout related to its closing. Studying costuming recovered from the 27/29 Endicott privy, Sarah Stevens (2000:29) found that there were two types of shoes in the privy: shoes manufactured with turned soles that would have had cloth uppers—the part of the shoe that covers the top of your foot and contains the laces—and all-leather shoes manufactured with wooden pegs. The turned shoes would have been a slipper or a light boot whose cloth upper might have matched a particular gown or outfit (Figure 5.9). These were among the most fashionable types of women's footwear in America at this time and were considered particularly symbolic of social status (Wass and Fandrich 2010:313–314). The pegged shoes—also called brogans—were cheaper, heavier, typically worn as work shoes, and were decidedly unfashionable (Figure 5.10; Stevens 2000:54).

The turned-sole shoes would have been the type worn by sex workers not only when entertaining in the brothel but also, based on the amount of wear displayed by the turned sole shoes, out in the urban landscape



Figure 5.9. Remains of a turned sole recovered from 27/29 Endicott privy. (Photo by author.)



Figure 5.10. Remains of a brogan type shoe recovered from 27/29 Endicott privy. (Photo by author.)

while seeking potential clients in saloons or restaurants and in non-work settings when performing their “working girl” identity in the public. This mixture of footwear is evidence that the sex workers at the brothel varied their dress and self-presentations in non-work settings. Using this versatility as a tactical practice, sex workers would have had options as to when and where to construct their ideal urban landscape. Wearing the brogans and a corresponding outfit that was inexpensive, functional, and unfashionable would have allowed a working-class woman to conform to a middle-class observer’s expectations of her. One advantage of following a conservative line of behavior and claiming the identity of a put-upon working-class woman traveling through the landscape was that it was less likely to result in embarrassment or conflict in a setting where the actor thinks a bold personal presentation is unlikely to be tolerated, particularly outside of working-class neighborhoods like the North End. Deploying the proper tactical practice requires precise timing and placement in order to use the system in unintended ways (de Certeau 1984:xix).

Summary

The role of brothels and sex workers (along with their fellow working women) in the construction of the material, social, and cultural urban landscape of nineteenth-century Boston provides insight into how this particular community developed and illustrates how the actions and interests of individuals and groups act to shape broad social structures. Brothels, both as physical locations for the sex trade and as powerful symbols, were used by Boston’s elites to strategically construct landscapes and locations of morality and respectability in a rapidly changing city and maintain control of its residents. By shaping, controlling, and defining the urban landscape, these elites hoped to maintain their social and cultural supremacy and reorganize the social relationships and social identities of the city’s residents. This chapter also only touches upon the role that the imagined slum played in the development and expression of genteel, middle-class identity and culture (see Brighton 2011; Fitts 2001).

For their part, the working-class residents of neighborhoods labeled “slums”—especially working-class women—sought to construct landscapes that facilitated their ends using tactics available to them: the enactment of embodied practice in public settings that contradicted the values and norms propagated by the powerful and tactically reused the materials

and symbols of the dominant culture. This is particularly true of female sex workers and other working women. By enacting spatial practices that involved dressing and acting in public in such a way as to reappropriate and call into question the presiding norms for female public behavior, working girls sought to dissolve old understandings and generate spaces more amenable to their needs and goals. Working girls' public social practice deliberately created what sociologist Erving Goffman (1959:210) identifies as a scene, "when an individual acts in such a way as to intentionally destroy or threaten the polite appearance of consensus" in order to create a new set of understandings. Young working women chose not to conform to the standards of genteel female dress, comportment, or social behavior in public urban space and instead reappropriated the ideology and spaces controlled by others to make a declaration of their perspectives on and desires for daily urban life (Giddens 1984:80).

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Children and Women of Color

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6

Ghosts in the Archives

Using Archaeology to Discuss Brothel Childhoods

JADE LUIZ

In the course of my research into the brothel at 27/29 Endicott Street in Boston's North End, I rediscovered one of my favorite artifacts from the site: a fragment of a child's motto mug that, when whole, would have read, "handle your tools without mittens; remember, the cat who wears gloves catches no mice" and "constant dropping wears away stones, and little strokes fell mighty oaks" (Figure 6.1). I began to picture the childhood of the person who would have used that mug, emblazoned with one of Benjamin Franklin's maxims about honest toil and virtuous living, but who in fact resided in a brothel and was likely the product of prostitution. Despite a rich documentary record of nineteenth-century prostitution, there is little direct evidence of the everyday lives of brothel residents. This is especially true for children who lived in brothels. They constitute a population that traditionally has been invisible within the historical record, receiving little note within the archaeological study of prostitution. Attempting to study the residents of brothels, whether they are madams, sex workers, or children, is often akin to searching for ghosts in the archives.

Prostitution in general can be difficult to track within the historical record. Oftentimes women engaged in prostitution gave false names and ages to public officials or obfuscated their profession. Efforts to mine the historical record to investigate daily lived experiences at brothels lead to the inevitable conclusion that historical documentation is in the main limited to accounts written by people residing outside of the space, such as male patrons who wrote erotic novels and guidebooks to red-light districts or moral reformers and government officials who composed tracts

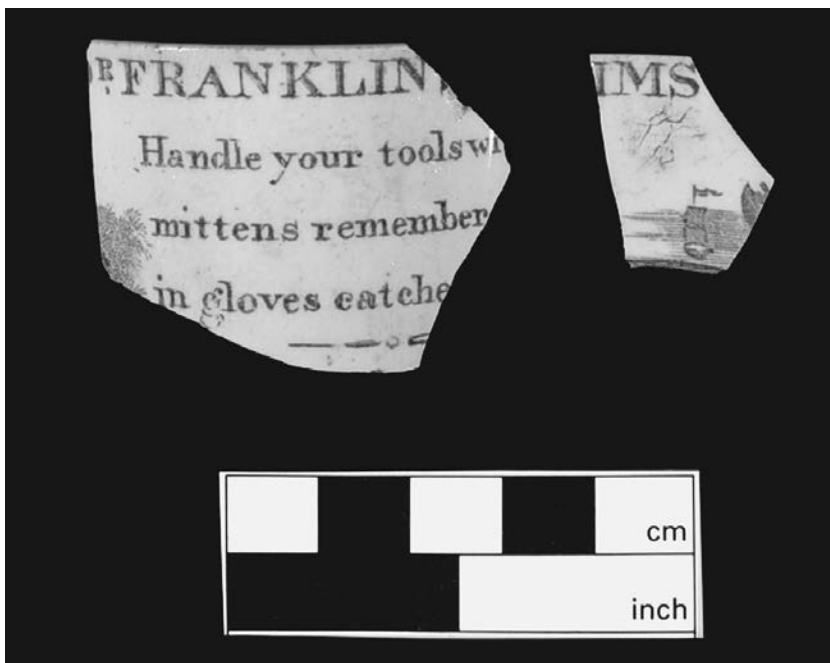


Figure 6.1. Green transfer-printed pearlware mug. (Photo by Michael Hamilton.)

and enacted laws condemning prostitution as a social evil. Most available “eyewitness” observations are therefore biased toward erotic titillation or moral and religious pity or condemnation, preventing a three-dimensional understanding of the women in sex work. Even the few instances in which prostitutes are able to share their stories (e.g., Kimball 1970; Pinzer 1997; Rose 1974), this concern for bias does not disappear.

If identifying the lived experience of nineteenth-century sex workers is difficult, understanding the childhoods of their offspring can seem insurmountable. Scholars such as Jane Baxter (2005), Katheryn Kamp (2001), Rebecca Yamin (2002), and Laurie Wilkie (2000) have made compelling arguments for the study of children and childhood as specific, social entities separate from adults and adulthood. These studies have expanded to include the place of children in studies of gender and a greater understanding of the agency of children in general. Despite this, though many archaeologists studying prostitution note child-related artifacts at their sites, few have engaged directly with this evidence.

Engaging with the material evidence of children within the brothel at 27/29 Endicott Street within the context of nineteenth-century childhood

and parenthood renders children more visible. The same questions that have been posed about the identity, health, and embodied experience of women engaged in prostitution should now be asked about the children who also inhabited these spaces. Despite the often fragmentary nature of traces of brothel childhoods, as the case study from 27/29 Endicott Street in Boston demonstrates, such study has great potential to add to the understanding of both nineteenth-century prostitution and childhood.

Children in the Archaeological Record of Brothels

The hesitation to study brothel children archaeologically is understandable. In many cases the evidence of children in the context of prostitution is extremely slight and limited to only a handful of artifacts. In one of the seminal works on the historical archaeology of prostitution, Donna Seifert (1991:100) identifies children's artifacts making up only 4% of the "activity" class of artifacts. In the 2005 Society for Historical Archaeology journal issue on prostitution, four of the papers reported children's artifacts, although again the numbers are small (Crist 2005; Ketz et al. 2005; Seifert 2005; Yamin 2005). In all of these sites, children are not present at all in the documentary record, and little interpretive attempt is made to address the presence of these artifacts. Other researchers who might have found evidence of children at their sites also encounter this issue of limited artifacts and instead focus on the more numerous materials that can speak to the women employed in the brothels under study (Foster et al. 2005; Gensmer 2012). Even Thomas Crist's (2005) work on neonate remains recovered from the Orange Street privy in Five Points, New York, discusses the reality of pregnancy and childbirth within nineteenth-century brothels but is unable to discuss the childhood of those children from the brothel that survived and, perhaps, continued to live with their mothers. In the 27/29 Endicott privy, the subject of this paper, archaeologists recovered only 27 artifacts (most of them shoes) directly related to the children who would have used them.

Additionally, artifacts in archaeological assemblages commonly classified as toys cannot always be directly related to children. Even something that seems ubiquitously childlike, like a doll, within the context of prostitution can take on a different social meaning. For example, Kelly Dixon describes the practice at a saloon and brothel in nineteenth-century Skagway, Alaska, of placing dolls atop a piano in the bar served as stand-in

for available prostitutes (Dixon 2005:132). Additionally, archaeologists must consider, in a place where sex is purchased and sold, that children's toys could be used to play out the sexual fantasies of adult patrons or could possibly hint at the sexual exploitation of children within sites of prostitution.

Despite these limitations, however, the study of child-related artifacts recovered from sites of prostitution can illuminate the lives of the children who lived there. As Jane Baxter (2005:42) suggests, items purchased for children often say more about the expectations of the parents or guardians than they do of the children themselves (Wilkie 2000:102). While an archaeological context such as a privy limits deposition to loss and discard, thereby prohibiting the study of what Baxter (2005) calls "patterns of play across a landscape," an analysis of children's artifacts can contribute to an understanding of the expectations that the parents of these children might have had. The pervasiveness of child-related artifacts in sites of prostitution suggests the possibility for understanding where children fit within spaces designed for the sale of sex and sensual experience.

While most archaeological studies of child-related artifacts and toys have utilized materials from rural or middle-class contexts, in Rebecca Yamin's (2002:114) analysis of child-related artifacts from the tenement sites of Five Points, New York, and industrial Paterson, New Jersey, she argues that play and the socialization of children was a contentious field between working-class parents and middle-class reformers. While the toys analyzed were similar to those often recovered from nineteenth-century sites (marbles, doll pieces, toy tea sets, etc.), instead of interpreting these sites as evidence of the instilling of middle-class values within working-class children, Yamin (2002:118) argues that it was more likely that the working-class parents at these sites were attempting to provide a childhood for their children in a time when child labor was high. It is possible a similar goal is being pursued within the 27/29 Endicott Street brothel.

Reconciling Prostitute Mothers in the Nineteenth Century

The sexual, public-bodied, and commercially engaged prostitute was seen as a threat to the "morality" of nineteenth-century society and appeared to contemporary middle-class observers to lead lives contrary to cultural expectations of middle-class womanhood. In this discussion, I use the

term “middle-class” to mean the shared ideology of striving white-collar workers and their families oriented around Christian evangelism and self-control (Blumin 1989:5). Social expectations of women, often glossed as the “cult of true womanhood” or the “cult of domesticity” (Welter 1966), required that a woman be pious, submissive, domestic, virginal before marriage, and monogamous with a disinterest in sex after marriage. More recent examinations of feminine and masculine “spheres” in the nineteenth century recognize this perception of “respectable” womanhood was, at best, an ideal of a white, urban, middle-class (Spencer-Wood and Camp 2013), but these ideals were also manipulated to serve women working in the public arena as activists or employees (Lasser 2001) and were likely not as restrictive as Welter’s analysis would suggest (Christensen 2013). Still, the dichotomy between the more masculine public sphere and the more feminine private or domestic sphere is not wholly without merit. In many ways the race- and class-based codes of conduct seen in the cult of true womanhood reinforced hierarchies of power and excluded women from the political and public arena in many ways (Roberts 2002). In nineteenth-century media, motherhood was especially emphasized and considered the most important role of the Victorian woman. Contemporary moralists and reformers believed that the mother, as the homemaker, transmitted moral and cultural values to her children and prepared them for the social demands of the middle-class world (Hill 1993:17). In his reformist work *Prostitution in the United States*, Howard Woolston (1921:52) declares that “rearing children is not in harmony with prostitution” and that “the mother’s care for her child, even though it be illegitimate, is one of the strongest forces to conserve her against promiscuity.”

In actuality, the idealized values of “true womanhood” that so defined the middle-class reform literature were in many ways a simplification of middle-class reality and unattainable luxuries for the working-class woman. Despite the inherent emphasis on domesticity, middle-class women were able to expand the domestic sphere into the male-dominated public sphere through works that encouraged civic protection and reform of domestic concerns (Spencer-Wood 2013:174). By manipulating the ideals of female domesticity, middle-class women were able to achieve a place in the public sphere. As to working-class women, many had to work outside the home to support an entire family or add to their husband’s inadequate income. Prostitution was a common income supplement as well

as a major alternative to hard, industrial labor at starvation wages (Cott and Pleck 1979:569). In depressed neighborhoods, as long as it was not practiced openly, prostitution was tolerated and in some ways accepted (Hill 1993:179). Because of this, prostitutes who had children often took advantage of childcare options afforded to other women laborers who worked away from the home. For instance, a mother might leave a child in the care of relatives or neighbors (Hill 1993:313).

Much middle-class reform literature mentions the children, and the necessity for providing for them in cases of bastardy or desertion, as a key reason that women voluntarily entered into sex work. Very little is said, however, about the inevitable outcome of prostitution in an era of unreliable and virtually inaccessible methods of birth control. In one of the interviews Al Rose (1974:148) claims to have conducted of Storyville, New Orleans, residents, “Violet,” born in a brothel, wondered, “Why do people think whores can’t have kids?” when she described the birth of many children in the same brothel attic where she had been born. In 1859 William Sanger (1859:480) suggested that 57% of the children of prostitutes in New York City were born after their mothers entered “the trade.” In addition, he determined that 73 of the reported 732 children in New York born to prostitutes were still living with their mothers (Sanger 1859:483). Sanger only accounted for those children who had been reported to him: it is doubtless that the number of children with mothers in sex work was considerably higher. Regardless, prostitute mothers were not a unique phenomenon.

Baby Farms as a Childcare Option

Prostitutes who carried a child to term and who lacked a close social network (such as an accepting family or neighbors) had few good options if they did not want to keep a child with them at a brothel. Many sent their children to boarding schools if they could afford it. Sometimes they placed their children in the care of older women (often ex-prostitutes) or in something known as a “baby farm.” Baby farms earned their notoriety in Victorian Britain, where the “farmers” would typically receive either monthly payments to assume care of wanted infants or a sum for the disposal of unwanted infants. Infants kept alive would usually suffer from inadequate nourishment and be drugged to keep them quiet and passive (Bentley 2005:200).

Though surprisingly absent in much of the American reform literature, baby farming was not an uncommon practice in the United States. In both the British and American context, baby farms were rarely actual farms. Many times they were crowded urban dwellings. In *Neglected Neighbors*, Charles and Eugenia Weller (1909:31) describe the treatment of infants left in the care of Elsie Ranson of Washington, DC, as being “on the principle that sunlight and fresh air are injurious.” A local example of the danger of employing a “baby farmer” to care for an illegitimate child can be found in the 1875 murder investigation of Holliston, Massachusetts, resident Mary Reynolds and her husband. In this case, the setting *was* a farm. Newspaper reports suggest that Reynolds was well known to the community as a baby farmer (Boston Herald, 27 January 1875). Train officials testified at her trial that she must have received around 200 infants from Boston over several years, and she received \$50 per month from a charity of Boston ladies for the care of poor children. The *Framingham Gazette* (27 January 1875) reported that many of the infants in Reynolds’ care came from the home for destitute children, although there is some indication that infants were removed from situations in which the mother was simply deemed too poor.

When five infants died in quick succession, Reynolds and her husband were arrested for murder. Two women in her employ, Mary Colby and Eliza Sheehan (Eliza Sheehan’s son Thomas was among the dead infants), acted as witnesses for the prosecution and reported that Reynolds physically abused the infants in her care and routinely drugged them with laudanum so that they would not cry. In the end, despite the coroner’s determination that three infants whose remains were exhumed had died from laudanum overdoses and had been physically abused and neglected (Framingham Gazette, 4 February 1875), Reynolds and her husband were found not guilty. After the verdict, there was even a proposal to charge Mary Colby with perjury (Boston Daily Advertiser, 6 February 1875), illustrating the danger poor women faced if they came forward and accused baby farmers of wrongdoing.

The Fate of Prostitute’s Children

Beyond these concerns, the futures of children of nineteenth-century sex workers were far from certain. By the 1830s child prostitution had become a major public concern (Gilfoyle 1992:65). While most child prostitutes

came from families of unskilled industrial laborers working to supplement the family income, some were also children of prostitutes and had been born and raised in brothels. “Violet,” who began washing and disinfecting her mother’s clients at the age of 10 for a few dollars’ tip, fully assumed a position as a prostitute at the brothel by the time she was 12. On reflection, she had never seen anything wrong, immoral, or unusual about her experience, having spent her whole life in the brothel environment (Rose 1974:150). “Violet” in no way believed her experience to be unique and recalled that she knew of many mother-daughter prostitute acts and how she was part of one herself (Rose 1974:148). There was little legal deterrence to young girl becoming a prostitute. During the middle of the nineteenth century, the age of consent in New York was as low as 10; in other states it averaged 12 and was generally not raised until 1885 (Gilfoyle 1992:69).

There is evidence, however, that the brothel community took responsibility for the children raised within it. As Marilyn Hill (1993:325) describes in her work on prostitution in nineteenth-century New York, when two older girls bullied the four-year-old daughter of the prostitute Mary Bowen and took the money she had been given, her mother, using her influence and relationship with the police, had the two girls arrested. Similarly, after the son of prostitute Susan “Jenny” Sweet got into trouble for stealing, Sweet had him sent on a whaling voyage out of concern for his welfare and in order to break his connection with his “bad associates” (Hill 1993:316). Although motherhood was doubtless a strain and hazard of prostitution, many prostitutes welcomed or sought out the opportunity to become mothers. In some instances, courts awarded custody of orphans or abused children to prostitutes and madams who were well known by the authorities. This was despite public perception that prostitutes had a detrimental effect on the children they reared (Hill 1993:317).

Fellow prostitutes who perhaps did not have children of their own recognized the importance of motherhood and were known to contribute monetarily if a prostitute sent her child to a baby farm and was unable to make the regular payment or to offer comfort and consolation for a lost child (Rosen 1982:105). It is likely that the idea of motherhood as being woman’s “first duty of life” filtered down from the middle-class through popular culture and advertisements (Hill 1993:317). It is just as likely, however, that many prostitutes, eroticized and disparaged as they

were by their clients and society, simply felt maternal affection for their infants and the infants of their peers.

Case Study: The Brothel at 27/29 Endicott Street

The majority of the nineteenth-century artifacts associated with 27/29 Endicott Street were recovered from a filled privy vault (Feature 38) at the back of the former lot. The privy was discovered during Phase III excavation of the Mill Pond Site (BOS-HA-14) in advance of Boston's Big Dig project (Cheek 1998). The 27/29 Endicott Street lot initially ran atop Boston's filled-in Mill Pond to the west and fronted what is now Salem Street to the east. The Mill Pond fell within Boston's North End neighborhood, the area encompassing the original Boston settlement on the Shawmut Peninsula. Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the North End served as the hub of shipping and workshop manufacture in the region.

By 1810, however, the population of Boston had grown to more than 30,000 people. This rapid increase necessitated a series of landmaking projects on the Shawmut Peninsula to accommodate the rapidly growing population and make up for deteriorating portions of the old town. The filling of the defunct mill pond, completed in 1828, was a particularly massive early landmaking process encompassing more than 20 years (although limited landmaking had already taken place throughout previous centuries to extend the shoreline of the mill pond) (Seasholes 1998:174).

Already by the early nineteenth century, wealthy merchants, businessmen, lawyers, and retired sea captains had moved out of the overcrowded old town and built large brick homes in parts of the West End and the South End, neighborhoods that quickly became fashionable residential districts (O'Connor 2001:75). When the top of Beacon Hill was removed for use as fill, the flattened area became desirable real estate. This made the southwest slope, and its proximity to the newly constructed State House, a new residential district (O'Connor 2001:79). This movement toward Beacon Hill also served to shift the downtown and business districts away from the now crowded North End.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, textile manufacturing took hold, and the new factory system grew to a multimillion-dollar industry by the 1830s (O'Connor 2001:86). Because of this, people flooded from

rural areas into cities such as Boston. These changes in the neighborhood's makeup lead city officials and reformers to largely regard the North End as an overcrowded slum. In particular young, unmarried women looking to supplement the family income took up jobs in the different factories cropping up in Boston throughout the nineteenth century. Rather than (or in addition to) the limited pay and opportunities available to them in the Boston economy, many women turned to prostitution to support themselves (Hobson 1990:76).

Following the filling of the mill pond in 1835, what would become the 27/29 Endicott Street lot changed ownership many times. Structures and outbuildings were added and removed with each successive owner including an extensive stable on the same parcel built between 1823 and 1831, though after 1845 the area was primarily made up of residences with ground-floor businesses. The 1867 Sanborn Fire Insurance map depicts the building at 27 Endicott Street as a three-story brick structure with a stone foundation and metal or slate roof, while the adjoining house at 29 Endicott Street was a narrow three-story wooden structure (Sanborn Map Company 1867).

The artifact assemblage of the privy feature is remarkably rich for its size. Just under 8,000 artifacts were recovered from the privy vault and represent at least 343 minimum ceramic vessels and 286 minimum glass vessels. The artifacts recovered relate to personal hygiene, health, and personal adornment with the most prolific artifact types related to dining; 360 of the 629 minimum vessels are associated to dining practices as well as tea and alcohol consumption. Additionally, 1,099 faunal elements and 1,164 botanical elements from the privy deposit have been identified, contributing to data about the types of food consumed at the brothel during its operation.

Determining when the 27/29 Endicott Street lot transitioned in and out of housing a brothel is not as simple. Between 1845 and 1851, various residents were listed at the two addresses either in the capacity of boarder or business owner (*Boston City Directory* 1840–1886). From the earliest occupation, a grocer or fruit seller was always recorded at 27 Endicott Street. The last, Isaac Whitcomb, continued to operate a grocery at the site until about 1855 and overlapped the period in which Mary A. Adams was managing a brothel at the site. The residents who boarded at the property were mostly clerks and tradesmen such as Samuel Safford, a carriage maker who lived on the property for four years, with a laborer or mariner

occasionally being recorded at the property. Additionally, Nathaniel O. Hart reported his housewright business as being run from the property for three years while his residence was elsewhere in the city.

From 1853 to 1867, however, the residents changed dramatically. By 1853 the number of individuals who listed 27 or 29 Endicott Street as their residence in the Boston City Directory dropped from an average of four individuals a year to one woman—the widow Mary A. Adams. For the following 12 years, single females, first Adams and, after 1857, Louisa Cowan, were listed as the primary residents of the property with no occupations reported. In 1859 an anonymous author under the pen name “A. Free Loveyer” included the property in a gentlemen’s “sporting guide” that admonished its readers to “beware all houses not recommended” (Loveyer 1859). The 27/29 Endicott Street brothel appears at the top of a list of only six recommended Boston brothels, despite the numerous options available throughout the city during this time (Loveyer 1859:43). It is interesting to note that, while North Street was generally considered the red-light district during the second half of the nineteenth century and was the subject of several police crackdowns on prostitution (Boston College, Edward Savage Collection, *Annals of Boston* [diary], Box 6, Brookline, MA), four of the six recommended brothels listed in Loveyer’s (1859:43) guide had Endicott Street addresses. The other two brothels listed were located in the West End.

It is possible that Endicott Street was where respectable and expensive brothels were located. High-status houses promised some level of discretion and elegance that prevented their attracting the attention paid to rougher brothels on North Street, the city’s red-light district. In addition, Endicott Street was closer to the Boston and Main railway depot built on Haymarket Square in 1845. Recent literature on historical red-light districts suggests that the placement of the Endicott Street houses likely illustrates the type of clientele that they hoped to attract. Historians have noted that red-light districts were also situated near railways (see Rose 1974:73, Keire 2010:25). In his case study from Wallace, Idaho, Theodore Charles (2014) notes that visitors to the city would need to pass through the red-light district to get to the business district. While his is a comparatively rural example from the American West, it is possible that a similar phenomenon influenced the organization of brothels in Boston, with higher-class houses with better reputations located on Endicott Street in the North End to attract middle-class businessmen traveling to Boston by

train. North Street was more conveniently located in relationship to the docks, likely servicing a greater number of laborers and men in maritime trades.

In addition to information collected from the Boston City directory, the federal and state census data for 1855, 1860, and 1865 also show that Mary Adams and Louisa Cowen were sharing their residence with multiple women below age 30, usually with no occupation listed, providing additional evidence that 27/29 Endicott Street operated as a house of prostitution during these years (Massachusetts State Census 1855, 1865; USFC 1860). The majority of the women employed by the brothel in these three years were American-born women from New England, despite the high immigrant population in the neighborhood. Indeed, only two of the nine women working for Mary Adams were Irish-born foreigners. When Louisa Cowan and her employees were recorded at the site in 1860, all of the women working for her were American. Additionally, the census records two Black servants—25-year-old Adeline Jones and 24-year-old Sarah Hill, both from Massachusetts. The last record for Louisa Cowan's tenure as the brothel madam, the 1865 Massachusetts census, shows three foreign-born women working for Cowan as prostitutes (Dora Adams from England, Emma Healy from Ireland, and Carrie Allen from Nova Scotia). She also employed a white servant from Nova Scotia, Margaret Hobo.

The 1865 census is also the first appearance at the house of Maine-born prostitute Mary Lake, who would take over the brothel the following year. Lake is documented as the brothel's madam or manager in the 1866 Tax Valuation list in which she is listed as the primary taxpayer at the residence, with her occupation as "prostitution." Perhaps when the land was sold to Dennis Flagg in 1867, he chose not to condone a brothel as a tenant, as that year the residence appears to change back to a boardinghouse with no documentary evidence to suggest that prostitution was taking place in an organized way (i.e., with a manager or madam).

In 1867 Mary Lake married William Padelford, a homeopathic doctor who moved his practice, such as it was, to 29 Endicott Street. That same year, the harbor police officer William Gray was a tenant; he was recorded in the tax valuation book and the Boston City Directory. For the next two years, multiple tenants were recorded in the city directory as boarders at the site, including the Inas and Segar families in 1870. In addition to 13-year-old George Lake, who appears as a member of the Padelford

family in the 1870 census, Alice Doyle, a 30-year-old tailoress, was also recorded. In 1874 Mary Padelford gave birth to Alice Padelford, who died of cholera infantum the following month.

In 1876 the Padelfords finally left Endicott Street but remained in the neighborhood for several years, first at 203 Eliot Street and then at 88 Portland Street. The 27/29 Endicott Street property appears to have been occupied solely by the gentleman Luther B. Hall during 1877 and 1878. No one is recorded as in residence there in the 1879 Boston City Directory, but the tax valuation records the residence as a “house by females.” This perhaps suggests a short-lived brothel, but there is no other documentary evidence to support this. The driver Robert Emerson and his wife Minnie are recorded as residents at 27 Endicott Street in 1880 and continued to reside at the property, apparently exclusively, until 1886.

Children at the Endicott Street Brothel?

Unlike most of the other brothel residents, Mary Lake left a more concrete trail of her life before and after her time as a prostitute and madam at 27/29 Endicott Street. Lake first appears in the 1850 Federal Census living with her family, the Doyles, in Perry, Maine. Her life course provides a lens into what might have led women to work as prostitutes at brothels. While she is listed in the census as Mary Lake, there is no record of her marriage in either Maine (or at her actual birthplace of New Brunswick, Canada). In 1870 the first child documented in the historical record for the site is noted in the census: Mary Lake’s, now Mary Padelford’s, son, George. I have not yet determined if George was “born on the other side of the blanket,” as polite Victorians might have said, although he is reported in the 1860 Maine census as a younger child of Mary’s family instead of as Mary’s son. Given Mary’s future profession, one might surmise that he may have been illegitimate. There is, however, no historical documentation that suggests he was residing with his mother at 27/29 Endicott Street before her marriage to William Padelford.

Mary and William Padelford’s daughter, Alice, was born in March of 1874, but sadly only lived for a month and a half before succumbing to cholera infantum, a bacterial infection commonly transmitted at the time through improperly sterilized milk bottles (DuPuis 2002:20). The 1870 census contains the only documented children at the site. In addition to the Padelfords, the 4 Segar children (2 boys and 2 girls), aged 8, 11, 16, and

17, and the 4 Inas children (3 boys and 1 girl), aged 7, 10, 12, and 16, were recorded as boarding at the site with their parents in 1870. According to city directories and tax valuations, both families seemed to have spent (at most) only a year at the property.

Children's Artifacts from the 27/29 Endicott Street Privy

The 27/29 Endicott Street assemblage contains several artifacts relating directly to children. Specifically, there are a dozen baby, child, and youth shoes that have been previously studied and published by Stevens and Ordoñez (2005). Also from the same context, archaeologists found small fragments of a green transferware Dr. Franklin's Maxims mug. The only toys that were recovered from the privy were three undecorated ceramic marbles, one ceramic marble with handpainted polychrome bull's-eyes, and a broken toy drum stick. In addition, two nearly complete name mugs were recovered from the lower strata of the east privy chamber, one with the name Frances and one with a partial name beginning "Loui . . ." (possibly Louisa or Louis). As Sally Crawford (2009:63) suggests in her discussion of the biographies of children's objects, child-related artifacts can follow several different paths to the child. Apart from being given directly to children, objects might be abandoned by adults and retrieved by children, children might damage adult objects, precipitating their discard from the "adult world," or naturally occurring objects, like sticks, might skip adult interaction altogether before becoming integrated into childhood.

The only toys recovered from the Endicott Street privy, marbles and part of a toy drumstick (Figure 6.2), can also help in piecing together a brothel childhood when combined with historical methods. The marbles recovered from the brothel privy are some of the most common forms. Three of the four can be classified as "commies," or crude, inexpensive, mass produced ceramic marbles. The Endicott Street "commie" marbles are undecorated and irregularly shaped. The fourth marble is porcelain handpainted with polychrome bull's-eyes. Jeff Carskadden and Richard Gartley (1990:63) date this type of bull's-eye marble to between 1850 and around 1870. While archaeologists cannot ignore the possibility of the marbles having been used in adult games, such as solitaire or gambling, the types of marbles recovered from the privy suggest that they most likely belonged to the children residing in the building.



Figure 6.2. Ceramic marbles and wooden drumstick. (Photo by Michael Hamilton.)

Marbles are especially ubiquitous children's toys in the archaeological record, likely because they were made from durable materials and, in the course of game play, were often lost (Carskadden and Gartley 1990:55; Wilkie 2000:102). Rebecca Yamin's (2002:122) article on working-class toys in Five Points, New York, interprets marbles as a male-oriented game. It was active, played in the street, and could take place far from the home. In addition to being seen as a boys' game, marbles is a game best played with companions. Margaretha Vlahos (2014:266) argues that marbles represent child-structured play, or play initiated by the children themselves rather than adults. Within child-structured play, children negotiate the rules that govern the game. One can imagine that, despite the domestic environment of the marble's owner, there was still a level of camaraderie with either the neighborhood children or other children residing in the

brothel, countering the public perception of the life of a prostitute's child being lonely and full of misery.

The broken drumstick immediately conjures an image of a small child, likely a boy, wandering through the property, happily banging on a toy drum. As Karin Calvert (1992:111) suggests, a drumstick could speak to a young boy being socialized in expected, nineteenth-century, middle-class masculinity. Boys would have been given noisy toys that allowed them to exercise strength and action, separating them from the quiet, delicate, feminine pursuits expected of their female peers. Another important element to note is the historically military association of a toy drum. Boston, while not seeing active fighting during the Civil War, was the site of several reminders of the conflict throughout the 1860s. In addition to several parades and celebrations, Endicott Street itself was the site of a violent draft riot in 1863 in which women and young children participated actively (Edward Savage Collection, Annals of Boston). Giving a young resident a toy drum may have contributed to the patriotic “scenery” of the space during the Civil War. Unfortunately, it is difficult to assign a date of use or breakage to the drumstick, as similar instruments were in constant use throughout the nineteenth century.

Several artifacts provide evidence for the presence of at least one infant. A pair of glass nursing shields was recovered from the privy and would have been tucked into a corset to protect garments from expressed breast milk during lactation. A bottle that once contained Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup, a tonic of mostly opiates and alcohol that would have been administered to a teething baby, was also among the finds. While the nursing shields might have been worn by Mary Padelford after the birth of Alice and then discarded after Alice's death, it is unlikely that Alice would have begun teething early enough for her to use Winslow's Soothing Syrup for its intended purpose. It is possible, if Alice was being bottle fed, that Padelford might have given her doses to help with the stress of being weaned (Calvert 1992:77). If the soothing syrup does pertain to Alice Padelford's short life, another interpretation is that Mary and William Padelford were choosing to administer it to her as a relief from diarrhea and intestinal discomfort, which she would have suffered from as a result of cholera infantum, another cure advertisers claimed the syrup could administer. Indeed, an 1860 advertisement for Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup claimed to provide a “speedy remedy” for *cholera infantum* (New York Times, 9 August 1860). Despite these possible interpretations, the



Figure 6.3. Children's mugs.

presence of shoes that are small enough for an older baby or toddler suggests that children other than the Padelfords' or Inas' lived at the site during the course of its occupation.

Perhaps the most provocative child-related artifacts from 27/29 Endicott Street are the three mugs recovered from the privy. The names on the 27/29 Endicott Street mugs (Figure 6.3) are written in script rather than block letters, and the cartouches surrounding the names are decorated with floral motifs. In one respect, the giving of mugs often had social importance. Occasionally they would be used as prizes for accomplishment in public institutions such as Sunday school (Crewe and Hadley 2013:93). Often mugs given for accomplishment include indications of what the reward was being given for, such as "a present for knitting well," although this wasn't the exclusive form of prize mugs (McClinton 2014). The choice of script lettering on the Endicott Street mugs possibly suggests an aspiration toward elegant handwriting and the floral motifs potentially related

to idealized nineteenth-century aesthetics equating natural beauty with moral uprightness, as explored archaeologically by Robert Fitts (1999). The presence of a Dr. Franklin's Maxims mug also contributes to the promotion of idealized middle-class values. The cheerful men chopping oaks and making hay on the mug further transmit an image of idealized pastoral America, seemingly in stark contrast to the interior of an urban brothel. It is likely that much more is going on, however.

Reserving particular mugs for children not only attempted to instill expectations of middle-class gentility but also served as a very particular training in proper dining. Mothers were instructed by various domestic guides to provide a "special cup, plate, and spoon to each child" (Green and Perry 1983:48). As Fitts (1999:49) suggests, this was most likely to help teach children that each place setting was the property of the diner in front of it; a name on a vessel helped a child identify with it as theirs. Even if these mugs were purchased secondhand or were being passed down, they still show some concern in the proper socialization of children.

While most adult mugs and cups that were recovered from the privy were blue transfer-printed pearlware of different designs, the children's mugs are visually very different in form and pattern. Providing a piece of dining ware that differed substantially from that of other diners conveyed a clear distinction between the child's place setting and those of the adults with whom they might share the table. By having a special place setting, the provider of these mugs may have been giving the child something that was specially theirs (Yamin 2002:121), doubtless a rarity in an environment where the children's needs might have been seen as secondary to the success of the brothel as a business. In addition, the nineteenth century is when childhood as a special class of development is recognized and nurtured. Rather than dressing children as miniature adults (Baxter 2005), middle-class Victorians in particular become concerned with preserving the purity and innocence of childhood. The production of cheap ceramics specifically for children allowed for the inevitable breakage of dishware without too much anxiety and also recognized the distinction between childhood and adulthood with child-targeted products (Jones and Kaktins 2015).

The possibility that the mugs recovered were not specifically purchased for the children using them, however, cannot be ignored. The Dr. Franklin's Maxims mug would have already been out of production by the time the building at 27/29 Endicott Street was constructed and may represent

secondhand purchasing or curation by one of the residents. After all, one of the madams was named Louisa, and Mary Lake's middle name was Frances. It is possible that women employed at the brothel had acquired these mugs as young women or curated them as mementos from their childhood. Whether the owners of the name mugs had been reared in the brothel and were later employed by it or had come to sex work later in life is, unfortunately, impossible to know.

Despite the prevalent middle-class reform opinion that the children of prostitutes were entirely unwanted and uncared for, there is historical evidence to suggest that at least some children entered into a community within the brothel, however subversive that community might have been. Though we may not know who the children were who used these toys, there is some indication that these children were being cared for in ways that aligned, at least tangentially, with middle-class expectations of gentility. The marbles and toy drum stick may associate more with a desire to cultivate active nineteenth-century manhood despite the boys' being raised in an overwhelmingly female environment. While the interpretation that might be gleaned from the mugs may be one of middle-class aspirations and upward mobility despite a childhood lived in the brothel, the mugs may also have served to create a child-centered experience in a space that was decidedly adult oriented.

Despite there being a dearth of historical information about the children in residence at 27/29 Endicott Street, through a combination of historical and archaeological methods, we can begin to ask questions about the lives of brothel children. How were they socialized within or alongside Victorian, middle-class ideals? Despite the various interpretations we can make from these artifacts, we cannot ignore the possibility suggested by Yamin's research that the provider of these objects to the children at the site was trying to allow the child using them to be a child. In an environment that was often a reality of not just sexual acts but also violence, disease, and substance abuse (Hill 1993:316), a mother may have been trying to preserve certain elements of innocence in her child through play.

Review Copy

7

Using Racial Stereotypes as a Business Strategy

Ida Dorsey in Minneapolis

PENNY A. PETERSEN

From her first appearance in Minneapolis to her death three decades later, African American madam Ida Dorsey seized public attention and commanded the patronage of a wealthy clientele by creating a narrative for herself and her business. Dorsey crafted her public persona by turning racial stereotypes to her advantage, tempting elite white men into what was seen as perilous forms of vice with black women. She allowed reporters access to her bordello, and in exchange, they obligingly wrote lurid newspaper stories supplying her with just the type of publicity she craved. Dorsey could insult police officers with impunity. She attracted the obsessive attention of a crusading Baptist minister, who could not stay away from her bordello, despite the derisive publicity his visits generated. Dorsey not only had anonymous benefactors; she had a well-known liaison with a member of a prominent family. She made herself and her business appear alluring and forbidden through her physical appearance, choice of staff, language, personal behavior, and decor.

Born in Kentucky in the 1860s, Dorsey made her way to St. Paul by 1885 (R. L. Polk and Company 1885:310). She apparently operated a brothel there under the name of May or Mary Johnson, as she paid a fine to the municipal court in March of 1886 (Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota [MHS], 21 March 1886: Saint Paul Municipal Court Docket 16630; St. Paul Daily Globe [SPDG], 23 March 1886:2). Shortly thereafter, someone or something caused Dorsey to move to Minneapolis. She

arrived in the city at a propitious moment. As of 1880 the city was the flour milling capital of the world, a title it would retain until 1930. It had thriving sawmilling and warehousing industries and these businesses in turn generated others such as furniture factories, barrel factories, and railroad facilities that transported both people and goods in and out of the city. All this activity generated a great level of wealth. With the move, Dorsey swapped her business model from that of a “tough place” servicing “colored soldiers” (Daily Pioneer Press, 22 March 1886:7) to one cultivating clients who had the disposable income and leisure to patronize high-end bordellos.

Her entry into the city’s commercial sex trade had a troubled start. Dorsey’s first Minneapolis bordello “opened up in full blast about May 26, though they had done a little something toward paying expenses as early as May 18,” recalled one witness (Minneapolis Tribune [MT], 8 July 1886:5). Dorsey seemed to be using what modern merchandisers would call a “soft opening” to make sure everything was working properly, allowing select clients early access and the privilege of telling their friends about this novel attraction.

Within weeks, the general public learned of Dorsey when a newspaper carried a sensational account (Minneapolis Journal [MJ], 15 June 1886:4) of her operation among several others. The outward appearance of the “shabby weather-beaten frame” house at 125 North Second Street contrasted with the opulence within. A reporter noted the “handsomely carpeted” halls, the mirrors, “costly” wallpapers, and “plush upholstered furniture [that] give an air of richness to the rooms.” More astonishing were the brothel’s inmates: “seven or eight negro girls, ranging in color from coal black to a blonde whiteness, in gaudy dresses which reveal as much as they conceal.” Then, there was the entertainment, which to Minneapolis eyes was not only immoral but illegal: Dorsey’s workers performed the can-can, a dance that had been banned by the chief of police years earlier, but that did not stop Dorsey from providing it to her customers. There was also the “shadow dance,” probably featuring performers miming indecent poses and actions behind an illuminated screen, and “other foul orgies that only an abandoned negress can descend to,” perhaps an allusion to live sex performances. The descriptions alone were scandalous, but there was something even more alluring and troubling about what Dorsey offered. The article got to the heart of it: “There is something so weird, so wild and abandoned in the revels of these dark beauties that the fast men

of the city and others who are becoming so, are drawn in large numbers to the place . . . to gratify an unnatural craving for new and darker forms of vice." Worse yet, "Business men of high social standing have been known to visit the place, securely lock the house against intrusion and give themselves up to a night of revelry." Playing on racial stereotypes, Dorsey was bringing out the worst in citizens who were supposed to be the very best.

Only days after the story appeared, Dorsey's brothel was closed by the police, and she was indicted by a Hennepin County grand jury (SPDG, 26 June 1886:3). Dorsey must have been surprised by the indictment, as she had played by the Minneapolis rules governing the tolerated vices of prostitution and alcohol, though those rules had recently changed under the new administration of the notorious mayor Albert Ames. Under the Ames regime the monthly prostitution fines were collected every other month, thus depriving revenue to the municipal treasury, but madams were required to purchase a liquor license on an installment plan of \$50 a month until they had paid \$500.

Dorsey and her lawyer, John W. Arctander, mounted a lively defense. Dorsey explained that she was only the bookkeeper for "Miss Mollie Johnson," who was the actual proprietor. The "colored porter of the house" testified that Dorsey was "what was commonly known as the 'housekeeper,'" and as he had previously worked in two other bordellos, "his definitions were taken for granted" (MT, 8 July 1886:5). The inmates of the brothel supported this version as well, declaring that "Miss Mollie was the keeper, and that Miss Dorsey had nothing to do with it." The *St. Paul Daily Globe* observed that "just who 'Miss Mollie' is, is not known, but the inmates say she is a big dark woman" who left town after being exposed by the newspaper (SPDG, 8 July 1886:3).

If ownership was murky, the decadence of the operation "was proved to a certainty." Among the 14 witnesses for the prosecution was policeman Mike "Sandy" Kennedy, who "blushed like a girl" when testifying about dancing he had seen: "yees wouldn't be asking an old mon loike me to tell yees wat kind of a dance it is." He then described the "can-can in a lurid and at the same time ludicrous manner, while suppressed laughter sounded through the room" (SPDG, 8 July 1886:3).

The jury found Dorsey guilty, and Judge Austin Young read her sentence. Young declared he could not punish her with a fine, as "it would be a sin on our part to take it." He said, "if you are allowed to go on in the way you have been living [your] life will be a short one and a disgrace

to yourself and your relatives and friends.” Instead, he sentenced her to 90 days of hard labor at Stillwater Penitentiary, where “you will get good treatment and be introduced in the proper modes of life” (SPDG, 9 July 1886:3). Dorsey went directly from the courtroom to prison.

Why did Dorsey merit a prison sentence while other indicted madams, who had been in the business for years, get off with stiff fines? One reason was Dorsey’s defense strategy of insisting she was not proprietor of the brothel. Judge Young’s determination to close down the commercial sex trade and strike a blow at Mayor Ames was also a motivation for Dorsey’s severe punishment.

But there was another reason Dorsey was treated so harshly that stretched back into the city’s past. She was the personification of the siren who could destroy an otherwise incorruptible city. Almost two decades earlier, an anonymous newspaper reporter had conjured this threatening individual based on an unfounded rumor that St. Paul madam Mary E. Robinson intended to move her operation to Minneapolis along with the contagion of tolerated prostitution.

Writing in 1867 for the *Minneapolis Chronicle* (30 April 1867:1), the reporter reflected, “This city is known abroad as a moral, upright city, and its citizens are noted for their honesty, integrity, and enterprise; and many a person has referred with pride to the fact that no house of ‘ill fame’ could flourish here. But if this great evil once gets a foothold in our city there is no knowing at what stage it will stop.” By contrast its rival, St. Paul, had a system of regular monthly fines on madams and “has been so contaminated with its devastating influence, that now the city licenses it as a legitimate business.” Even chaste women would be sullied if this temptress were allowed into the city. The writer urged the readers to visit St. Paul and listen to the comments young men make about women in public and consider if they would like to hear such language here. “You need not argue that the fault is wholly with the young men for what had debased them to such a degree?” The writer answered his own question—the tolerated sex trade—“this crime is destroying the native American population of our country, and that the ‘old puritan stock’ will soon become extinct as a fit punishment for this same social evil.” Ironically, Minneapolis would soon adopt the system of monthly fines for prostitution.

The *Chronicle* article touched on the city’s origin story: most of its citizens believed themselves to be the direct descendants of the Plymouth Colony as well as the bearers of its mission, hence the reference to the

annihilation of the old Puritan stock. By 1857 the founders of Minneapolis began an annual tradition of New England Society dinners commemorating the anniversary of the Pilgrims' landing at Plymouth. Several hundred people crowded into the Cataract Hotel to hear Cyrus Aldrich, president of the society, proclaim that their Puritan forefathers had a calling: "to bear arms against the world, the flesh and the Devil." Aldrich continued, "Their religion was an armor that might well put to flight the powers of darkness. It was not so much a love of God as a resistance of evil" (St. Anthony Evening News, 29 December 1857:1). Often city leaders would frame their policy decisions as a simple choice between virtue or vice. Any compromise with "evil" would degrade the "good," although this equation did not seem to flow in the other direction. Despite a proclaimed belief in the power of education, hard work, and high moral standards, Minneapolis would often feel threatened by outsiders or anyone with different values.

During the time her first Minneapolis brothel was in operation, Dorsey had managed to attract the city's leading citizens as her clients with her "new and darker forms of vice," alluding to the fact that white madams could not employ black sex workers, while Dorsey could provide women in multiple shades (SPDG, 8 February 1889:3). Based on the popular prejudices of the day, Dorsey could also be viewed as introducing an alien culture to the city. One newspaper headline avowed "the mixing of Black and White blood" produces "a race criminal and licentious." The article continued that while the "old South" had the "most upright women among the upper classes that any semi-tropical people ever maintained . . . the restraint imposed on the upper class caused much less to be imposed on the lower." This resulted in men who "are more manful and less manly in a southern climate." The writer observed, "The negroes, as a class, were lewd in the extreme when emancipated," and before being enslaved "the negro in his savage state has savage morals." (MJ, 28 July 1881:2). While there is no evidence that Dorsey was aware of either newspaper, she had intuited the city's underlying weaknesses in a way that other madams had not. Instead of directing their wealth into worthy commercial and civic endeavors, Dorsey's clients would divert their wealth to her temptations. Her clients might come to prefer African American women and take up vices of the American South. Despite claims of moral and civic superiority, Minneapolis' elite seemed to be no match for a young black woman who was upending racial and gender norms. Her arrival had been

anticipated and feared for many years, and now she must be cast out before evil became entrenched.

Dorsey returned to Minneapolis in late September after serving 76 days of her prison sentence, having earned a reduction for good behavior. Stillwater Penitentiary records describe her as a mulatto, 22 years old, 5 ft, 4 in tall, a nondrinker but a user of tobacco, and married (MHS, 1854–1902: Stillwater State Prison Convict Registers Vol. D:636). She was soon back in business with a new bordello at 119 North Second Street, leasing the house from madam Carrie Moore, who had operated there until the police closed her brothel (MT, 16 December 1886:5).

Within a few months, Dorsey was again under indictment, as Judge Young's campaign against vice had not ceased. The *Globe* carried a long article in which Young spoke his mind on several topics. He declared that criminal laws "unless properly executed" were "worse than useless." As for houses of prostitution, he asserted that "laws were not made to regulate them, but to suppress them altogether" (SPDG, 8 December 1886:5). Dorsey made her court appearance along with several other madams. They each posted \$500 bonds and were told to return to court at a later date. A reporter noted a large audience in the courtroom that included "saloon keepers, business men, men of leisure and specimens of the 'genuine tough.'" He commented that the madams "attracted considerable attention" as they "were dressed in the height of fashion, and all but one or two treated the whole matter as a big joke, to be smiled at and dismissed" (SPDG, 12 December 1886:5). The writer also noted the madam's "solid men" supplied the cash for their bonds, suggesting these madams were well connected. In the end, none of the madams was sent to prison; instead they had to change their pleas to guilty, submit to a scolding by Judge Young for supporting Mayor Ames, and pay heavy fines of \$350 apiece, which would go into the district court coffers (MT, 21 December 1886:5; MT, 30 December 1886:3).

By the summer of 1887, Dorsey and her sister Roberta Burkes, who had joined her in the business, relocated to the First Street District as evidenced by a lawsuit filed against Dorsey by "Marie Hertogs, fashionable milliner" for the "expensive goods furnished to the negro inmates of her bagnio, at 116 Second Avenue South" (MT, 20 August 1887:5). The move was an indication of Dorsey's escalating success, as South First Street between Hennepin and Third Avenues South had been the choice location for prosperous madams as early as 1878, when madam Sarah Carnahan

began purchasing property there. In 1882, when madam Nettie Conley decided to trade her business model from rowdy lumberjacks to lumber barons and other leading men, she signaled the change by acquiring a house at 205 South First Street. She then hired John Bradstreet, who would in time become a leading Midwest tastemaker, to furnish and decorate the bordello for her new class of clients (Hennepin County Recorder's Office, Government Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota [HCRO], 25 June 1884, Hennepin County Mortgage Book 115:358).

As she became more secure professionally, Dorsey appeared to be openly contemptuous of the law. She crafted a public persona of wickedness, with the knowledge that she was fairly well protected by a different sector of the same system that oppressed her. In turn this gave her patrons an opportunity to privately participate in transgressive behavior without consequences. Dorsey offered her clients a break from their public roles as sober, industrious, and law-abiding citizens in an opulent setting that many found irresistible.

In one instance Dorsey managed to expose the shortcomings of the police and the law itself when police captain Peter McKernan and a few associates found themselves being entertained in Dorsey's brothel well after midnight. There was no hint that the men were there on official business as a newspaperman witnessed the outlandish scenes that unfolded. Dorsey may or may not have been inebriated as she performed the can-can "and otherwise disported herself in a wild bacchanalian way." She taunted the captain with disparaging remarks about the police commission, questioning "the ability of the policemen to find anything but their way home after dark," goading McKernan into ill-considered action. The reporter opined, "With the usual intelligence characteristic of the police force every woman in the house, with the exception of the profane and impious Ida, was arrested, the latter 'escaping.'" The writer speculated that the women would likely be charged with "contempt of the police commission and Capt. McKernan" (SPDG, 22 August 1887:3). When Dorsey appeared in court to bail out her staff, the performance of racial stereotypes continued. She recalled that two of her workers had sore feet, so she had taken over dancing "to entertain the policemen who called." Dorsey explained, "it's all because we are colored" (SPDG, 23 August 1887:3) before the exasperated judge silenced her. Her workers paid \$10 fines for being in a disorderly house, while Dorsey paid \$50 for running a house of prostitution.

The sub-headline in the second *Globe* article neatly summed up the contradictions: “Ida Dorsey Fined for Entertaining the Police.” The police had broad discretionary powers, even if caught in compromising situations. The episode also revealed that Dorsey had powerful protectors and even police captains had to honor this rule, allowing her to “escape.” Judge Young may have been permitted to send Dorsey to prison once, but that would never happen again. She might be charged substantial fines, probably paid by her backers, but she would not return to prison.

Less than a year after the Captain McKernan skirmish, Dorsey was under attack from different quarters. Dorsey had a group of affluent white backers, but she was unpopular with two groups within the African American community of Minneapolis. The *Tribune* reported that the “moral and church-going element of colored people of the city” were circulating a petition asking the police to shut down her brothel for two reasons: it reflected poorly on their community and Dorsey reputedly brought innocent young girls from the South to work in her bordello “without knowing its character” (MT, 13 June 1888:5). Another segment of the black community, young sporting men, also signed the petition to protest Dorsey’s policy of limiting her clients to whites, making her services expensive and exclusive. Jack Napoleon Morris, an African American gambler, was charged with threatening to kill Dorsey as she refused him admittance to her bordello. Morris admitted to making “some threats regarding her personal safety,” but only if the police commission did not shut down Dorsey’s operation (MT, 23 June 1888:6). After a brief examination, the municipal court dismissed the charge (SPDG, 23 June 1888:3).

About the same time, the district court issued a bench warrant for Dorsey, but the police could not find her until several weeks later. She was brought into court and “notwithstanding this was her second offense she escaped with a fine of \$350, on the promise that she would leave the town and quit the business” (MT, 22 June 1888:5). A month later, Dorsey remained in the city, open for business, and in trouble. Her brothel was raided by police, netting “eleven colored women and nine young men, all pretty well known about town” (SPDG, 16 July 1888:3). The *Western Appeal*, an African American newspaper, had a different slant on the story, noting that while Dorsey and her sister Roberta paid out \$650 for the incident, “the equally depraved [white] men put up \$25 each. The Dorseys ‘kick’ because they are pulled and white women are not.” The newspaper noted that “discrimination is odious,” but this instance was different as

“the good Colored citizens of Minneapolis are only too happy that it is made in this case” (Western Appeal, 21 July 1888:1).

There is support to the charge that Dorsey got her workers from the South judging by what her inmates told various census takers (MHS, Minnesota State Census [MSC] 1895, Hennepin County, Minneapolis:79, 4; USFC 1900, Hennepin County, Minneapolis, Enumeration District 65, Sheets 8B, 9B). By 1895 four of the six prostitutes living in Dorsey’s bordello were born in Kentucky and the fifth in Alabama. Only Cora Taylor said she was from Iowa. Five years later, Dorsey had 12 “boarders” including Taylor, who this time gave her birthplace as Indiana, as did Daisy Johnson. Five others were born in Kentucky, while the remainder were natives of Maryland, Missouri, Virginia, Texas, and Montana. These women may have found their way into Dorsey’s brothel by chance, but more likely she sought them out.

When Dorsey arrived in the city, the African American community of Minneapolis was very small—as of 1880 the entire county had only 476 residents of color. By 1885 Minneapolis had a population of 129,201, which included 667 black residents, but only 272 of these were female (MSC 1885). Moreover, Dorsey would have faced serious consequences had she attempted to recruit locally. More likely, Dorsey was seeking a particular kind of woman whose appearance and manner would enable her to act out the role of a promiscuous wanton with little regard for propriety—the type of mixed-race women described by one newspaper as “magnificent specimens—tall, lithe, and luxurious” yet “a race of unclean women.” Virtue is impossible for such women, the writer concluded, because “her very hereditary tendencies are against her” as amalgamation lightens the skin color but increases “the blackness of moral character” (MJ, 28 July 1881:2).

Many madams recruited new inmates from time to time because bordello prostitutes were a mobile group, moving to another house or city if a better offer beckoned. In 1891 local papers described two procuresses, “decked with diamonds” Kittie Raymond of Moorhead, Minnesota, who had previously run a brothel in Fargo, North Dakota, and Celia Wentworth, a prostitute who had recently worked in a bordello at 201 South First Street. Raymond had located three recruits in Cleveland but had to abandon them for some unstated reason. From there she and Wentworth tried to lure “beautiful young girls” from Minneapolis brothels but had no luck (SPDG, 16 September 1891:6). Finally, the pair trolled the Jumbo Saloon, however, just as they found a woman who met their requirements,

the pair were arrested (MT, 16 September 1891:5) The cases were dismissed because, according to a reporter, “the statute provides that it is only a crime to procure girls who have hitherto led pure lives. The class of which the pair was said to have been proselyting would hardly meet that important specification” (MJ, 16 September 1891:6).

Wentworth was said to be serving as Raymond’s local guide in the city, but she was also seeking staff of her own because she soon opened a brothel in the First Street District (SPDG, 20 November 1891:3). Likely, she was learning the fine points of running a house of prostitution from Raymond. Normally, madams were competitors, but they did collaborate at times.

Doubtless, Dorsey had gone on earlier recruiting expeditions, but in 1894 she was jailed in Indianapolis on a procuring charge. She had been visiting family members in Kentucky, as well as traveling in the area to recruit potential workers. As the story unfolded in several newspaper accounts, Dorsey was described as being “richly dressed and adorned with a number of diamonds” (Indianapolis Journal, 9 September 1894:6). Some details of the story intimated that the women clearly understood the deal they were being offered—Dorsey “told the girls, with whom she had made contracts, what was expected of them.” Even the *Minneapolis Tribune* conceded that Dorsey “told them exactly what she wanted with them and several agreed to go” (MT, 9 September 1894:7). As young women of color living in the South, they may well have been “ruined” already by the aggressive attentions of white men, but without the incentives that Dorsey offered. Dorsey glided out of this difficulty as she telegraphed for bail money and quickly received \$1,000 (Indianapolis Journal, 11 September 1894:8).

Rich businessmen were not the only individuals enticed to Dorsey’s establishment. Reverend Gulian L. Morrill, who was often known by his odd nickname “Go Lightly” Morrill, decided to take his fight against sin to its assumed source while gathering material for his sermons at Calvary Baptist Church where he was pastor. In June of 1890, a newspaper noted that Morrill garnered his largest audience in a long time when he preached on the subject of vice in Minneapolis, which he had “personally investigated” (SPDG, 23 June 1890:3).

A few days later, the *Globe* carried an account of how Morrill and two companions had conducted this research while accompanied by a reporter. The trio first visited a Main Street bordello operated by Lou Davis.

There, Morrill along with the others drank beer, though he was a professed teetotaler. The reporter stated they paid a dollar for a bottle “which is sold elsewhere for 25 cents.” Morrill himself drew the attention of one inmate, who petted him, “it is believed, [as] he was never petted before.” The group then crossed the river to another brothel at 220 South First Street, where more beer was consumed. Then it was across the street to Dorsey’s enterprise described as “of sable hue, both exterior and interior.” Although the men expected to be turned away, they found instead a welcome. Soon, Morrill was playing the piano, “and twinkling feet kept time to its music. Revelry reigned. Pleasure was the watchword. The ceiling seemed several times on the point of being kicked off” (SPDG, 27 June 1890:3). Morrill would return to the red-light districts and exhibit a particular interest in Dorsey.

The piano-playing incident at Dorsey’s bordello stuck with the preacher for several years. When Morrill made another incursion to the red-light district, the reporter observed that Morrill and several church members “sauntered down First Street, but did not go inside and play any pianos this time” (MT, 25 August 1891:5). When Morrill was on trial for criminal libel, the charge arising from his inflammatory statements, the prosecutor said that Morrill’s pride steered him to make libelous statements—“the same pride that led him to play the piano for the dusky denizens of Ida Dorsey’s bagnio” (SPDG, 3 September 1891:3).

Morrill’s research junkets inspired others. Later that summer a group of Women’s Christian Temperance Union members toured a few of the “gilded palaces of sin” in the First Street District, ostensibly to enlist converts. The newspaper account of the visit offers a brief glimpse into Dorsey’s front parlor. The reformers “sat about and looked foolish while the dusky damsels” who lived there “chewed gum, stared and talked in an unintelligible jargon” (SPDG, 10 August 1890:1). Possibly Dorsey and her crew were communicating among themselves in a language that the visitors would never learn or perhaps they were playing to stereotypes that made them seem even more mysterious. In other instances, Dorsey used non-standard English, but its meaning was clear to most. Claiming to quote her, a newspaper noted, “Ida plainly says, ‘Ah doan bothah mah self with no city administration, Ah goes hiah up’” (Twin City Reporter, 20 April 1917:2), managing in a few words to convey Dorsey’s “ignorant” speech, yet drawing attention to her influence with the elites that controlled the city.

When it suited her purposes, Dorsey could shift to standard English, as seen in her 1914 testimony during the graft trial of St. Paul's Chief of Police Martin Flanagan. An attorney compared the state's witnesses, including Dorsey, to trapped rats observing "they had been caught and they had to squeal" (MT, 5 February 1914:1). Forced to navigate between betraying her co-conspirators and honoring her deal with the prosecutor, Dorsey succeeded in her choice of words, in the judgment of a reporter who called her "an unwilling and practically useless witness for the state" (MJ, 11 February 1914:1–2) Dorsey related her story simply: "I told [Flanagan] who I was and if he wanted any references he could call Minneapolis and he would find I had always run a good place." She admitted paying \$3,000 to operate in St. Paul but claimed she had no idea it would be going to the police chief. When questioned by the prosecutor if she was a "dummy" for paying a bribe, Dorsey replied, "Yes; I considered myself such afterwards" (St. Paul Daily News, 11 February 1914:1, 10).

About the time Morrill conducted his investigative missions, Dorsey and other madams were scheming to create a new red-light locality, as the First Street District was starting to show signs of decline. The 1880s had been good for a small group of successful madams and they now had the means to acquire their own real estate. While some madams, such as Mary France and Nettie Conley, owned bordellos on First Street, many more were renters. Jennie Jones was the first madam to take steps to abandon First Street in August of 1890, when the circuitous process of transferring real estate from the very respectable Henry T. Welles to the notorious Jones began (HCRO, 25 July 1895: Hennepin County Miscellaneous Book [HCMB] 67:219; HCRO, 31 July 1895, HCMB 67:227–228) Less than a year later, Jones would start construction of her brothel across the river at 25 Main Street Northeast, characterized as "the costliest and most notorious resort of its kind in the northwest" (Minneapolis Development Review Office, Minneapolis, Minnesota [MDRO], 28 April 1891: Minneapolis Building Permit [MBP] A2356; MJ, 15 December 1905:7).

Dorsey was the first to begin erecting her own brothel in what would become the Eleventh Avenue District. Like Jennie Jones' move, Dorsey's relocation plans were shrouded in secrecy, starting with the transfer of real estate at 212 Eleventh Avenue South, on November 25, 1890, from Andrew C. and Louise Haugen to Carolina Anderson (HCRO, 25 November 1890: Hennepin County Deeds Book [HCDB] 325:325). In December Anderson pulled a permit to erect a three-story brick-and-stone "apartment

building” that would cost more than \$12,000 (MDRO, 16 December 1890: MBP A2214). Neither the Haugens nor Anderson had any known connection to the commercial sex trade, nonetheless they were acting on behalf of Dorsey (HCRO, 10 October 1891: Hennepin County Lien Book [HCLB] 5:575).

Gradually it dawned that policy changes were afoot for the red-light areas. In January of 1891, the *Minneapolis Tribune* carried a story announcing that the First Street District would disappear as the Northern Pacific Railroad, the apparent landlord of houses on the east side of First Street (riverside), would no longer accept rent payments, while the owners on opposite side, often madams, would be shut down by the authorities. The reporter speculated that the “priestesses of vice” would soon relocate to other quarters—perhaps across the river or to some other location (MT, 24 January 1891:5). Presently, more information about these developments dribbled out to the public via the newspapers. In February a newspaper announced that an otherwise obscure First Street madam, Hattie Cole, had two contracts for deeds totaling \$136,000 on property at Tenth Avenue and Second Street South, where a “large brick Scandinavian hotel” stood (MJ, 7 February 1891:6). Tellingly, Cole’s monthly payments would only be \$150 to each owner for ten years, at which time the remaining balance of \$100,000 would be due. The *Tribune*’s account noted, this “does not amount to much more than a high rent” (MT, 8 February 1891:7). Without a down payment, Cole could abandon the venture if the authorities were unable to sell the public on the idea of a new sex district.

Interestingly, newspapers made no mention of Dorsey or the new building rising on Eleventh Avenue, indicating that she was well insulated from public scrutiny. Clearly, the level of secrecy and planning needed to successfully create a new red-light area required the coordination of city officials, madams, and the local press. Over the years there were rumors of an informal madams’ self-help association that allowed aid and information to flow among its members. Madams would warn others of impending raids, offer shelter to those running from summons servers, and lend money to one another. The creation of the Eleventh Avenue District is likely the most visible manifestation of this covert organization. Another expression may be the abrupt appearance of the Minneapolis Theatrical Union, another unofficial organization, which sponsored the city’s first French Ball in January 1891, described by a newspaper as “a great affair for the elite of First Street and other similar retreats” (MT, 21 January

1891:5). The timing of the inaugural French Ball just prior to the unveiling of the newest red-light area strongly suggests it was a victory lap for those celebrating the successful negotiation for the new district. French Balls provided madams an advertising venue for the particular types of women and services they offered and sanctioned slumming opportunities for the respectable, who were both horrified and enthralled by these events.

The arrangement for the new sex quarter was likely in place by November of 1890, when Democrat Philip B. Winston was elected Minneapolis mayor, the office formerly held by Republican E. C. Babb, though Winston did not take office until early January. The change of administration would make it difficult to determine who had authorized the new district if the neighborhood erupted in protest, which it did after the announcement of Cole's move (MJ, 9 February 1891:6) Despite large public rallies and apparent efforts to stop this development by of "some of the most influential men in that portion of the city" (SPDG, 8 February 1891:10, 3), the madams prevailed in this round. At least one of those men leading the fight against the new district had direct ties to the madams—former Sixth Ward alderman Jacob Stoft was one of the incorporators of the Simonson Brothers Manufacturing Company, which supplied building materials for Dorsey's new bordello (HCRO, 10 October 1891: HCLB 5:575).

Only five years after her entry into the city's sex trade, Dorsey moved from renter to owner of an architect-designed building that announced her rise in the world. Even before Dorsey's new place was complete, other First Street madams were making the move to the new district. For example, Mabel Baker bought the lot at 1019 Second Street and soon built a bordello costing in excess of \$13,000 there (MDRO, 30 June 1891: MBP A2480).

The man believed to be Dorsey's most famous conquest was only nine years old at the time she opened her new brothel, but by the early years of the twentieth century, Carleton C. Pillsbury was called Dorsey's husband in some quarters (Twin City Reporter, 18 August 1916:3). Even Dorsey hinted that this might be true: when she provided information for her brother Moses' death certificate, she identified herself as "Mrs. Ida Pillsbury" (MHS, Minnesota State Death Certificate [MSDC] 20744, 1 October 1916).

Pillsbury fit the depiction of "old puritan stock" threatened by the treacherous prostitute described in the *Chronicle* article. He was the only surviving son of Frederick and Alice Pillsbury. His uncle Charles was one

of the founders of the Pillsbury Flour Company, and his great-uncle was Governor John S. Pillsbury. Despite his industrious ancestors, Carleton Pillsbury did not seem to devote much time to work, rather occupied himself racing automobiles and throwing dinner parties for his friends (MT, 22 April 1905:21, 31 December 1903:11). Pillsbury also appeared to be intrigued by popular portrayals of African Americans. He acted in amateur theatricals as part of the all-male Roosevelt Club. In one musical he appeared in costume and tights in the blackface role of Robinson Crusoe's "man Friday," singing "two negro melodies of the sonorous, syncopated type for which the Southland is famous" (MT, 22 January 1905:12). He also founded the C. C. Pillsbury Company, which published sheet music with titles such as "De Cleanin' Man: A Blackville Satire" and "Floating Along, A Kaffir Idyll" (Minnesota Secretary of State, 4 March 1905, C. C. Pillsbury Co. File No. 7457). The term "Kaffir" is now regarded as an ethnic slur to describe black people in South Africa. Dorsey's use of racial stereotypes may have piqued or amplified Pillsbury's interest, and he would likely have had a chance to hear ragtime music at her bordello.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that Pillsbury was in Dorsey's orbit by the time he came into his fortune at age 21. Dorsey began to acquire more real estate, beginning with a house she purchased for her mother and other family members at 2720 Second Avenue South in 1904 (HCRO, 30 June 1904: HCDB 581:283, Document No. 389793). Two years later, Dorsey made the final payment on her brothel (HCRO, 7 June 1906: HCDB 604:447) and in 1907 purchased another lot on Second Avenue South and at 1216 Marquette Avenue South (HCRO, 11 October 1907: HCDB 627:320, Document No. 47620; [Marquette Avenue South property] HCRO, 16 April 1907: HCDB 705:88, Document No. 586623, recorded April 17, 1911). Dorsey owned these properties under different identities: Mary I. Callahand and Ida M. Callahand. The name apparently refers to Dorsey's birth father, John Callahand, who was listed on her death certificate and was probably white (MHS, MSDC 24601, 18 June 1918).

Minneapolis ended its system of tolerated prostitution in 1910, but a report noted a year later that even though the police made "a vigorous attack upon public prostitution wherever found," the sex trade continued to flourish (Report of the Vice Commission of Minneapolis, 1911:27).

Dorsey's public persona was only one of her identities: she had another

one as the de facto head of her family. A newspaper account of the final days of George Burkes, her stepfather who lived in Lexington, Kentucky, offers a glimpse of her devotion to kin. Dorsey and her sister Roberta “did not [a]llow him to suffer for anything that was in the reach of money.” The story noted that his widow would move to Minneapolis (*The Appeal*, 20 August 1892:20). At least one of Marie Turner Burkes’ sons, Moses, had already made the move. By 1890 he was working as a porter and lived at the rear of 207 Second Avenue South (Minneapolis Directory Company 1890:273). By 1895 the rest of Dorsey’s family, Maria, 47, George, 19, James, 16, Nebraska, 11, and Alvah, Roberta’s 3-year-old daughter, resided at 1119 Washington Avenue South, a short distance from Dorsey’s bordello, while Moses remained in the First Street red-light area (MSC 1895).

Within a few years of their relocation, the Burkes family appeared to be prospering: the adult sons living with Maria Burkes (USFC 1900; Minneapolis Directory Company 1900:274) were steadily employed, while Nebraska attended Washington School, where he graduated from the eighth grade in 1902 (MJ, 9 June 1902:7). In 1900 Moses and his wife, Mary Myrick Burkes, purchased a house near Lake Harriet with streetcar service to downtown where Burkes worked as a janitor (HCRO, 11 June 1900: HCDB 525:371). The couple lived on the property for the next dozen years.

James H. Burke (in some sources Burkes) worked as a musician in his early career, likely in Dorsey’s bordello (Minneapolis Directory Company 1896:244), but by 1899 became an elevator operator for the S. E. Olson Company, a department store. Burke changed jobs over the years but remained in the retail trade.

Like his brother Moses, James married and became a property owner. He and his wife purchased a duplex at 2929 Fifth Avenue South in 1927 (HCRO, 24 June 1927: HCDB 1115:622). When James died in 1943, his obituary noted that he was the beloved husband of Mrs. Jewell Burke and that he was a longtime employee of Warner Hardware Company (MT, 10 December 1943:15).

Dorsey’s remaining brothers, George and Nebraska, died of tuberculosis while in their twenties (Hennepin County Government Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota [HCGC], 2 September 1900: Hennepin County Death Certificate 678; MHS, MSDC 17423, 10 September 1912). George worked as a porter, while Nebraska was a musician. Their mother, Marie,

passed away in 1907 (MHS, MSDC 56–1239, 5 August 1907). All three were buried in the family plot at Lakewood Cemetery, the burial ground of the city's wealthy. Dorsey provided for her family in life and in death.

Even if not physically present, Dorsey was the head of her family. In the 1900 federal census, Dorsey was enumerated at her bordello, while her family resided several blocks away. In this count Marie, the nominal head of household, was described as being born in December of 1842 and the mother of 11 children, five of whom were alive. Eight-year-old Alvah's listed relationship to the head of the household is not that of granddaughter as would be expected but instead as "niece" (USFC 1900, ED 54, Sheet 8A). Roberta Burkes, her mother, had succumbed to cancer in 1898. Over the years, Dorsey and Alvah's relationship would grow even closer. In 1918, when Dorsey was dying, Alvah returned to Minneapolis despite being wanted by the law for failing to serve a ninety-day sentence on a prostitution conviction. Alvah was apprehended at the hospital, but her devotion to Dorsey inspired the judge to permit her to serve her sentence in the city workhouse and shorten her term for humanitarian reasons (MJ, 20 March 1918:18). Dorsey left the bulk of her estate to Alvah, naming her as "my daughter" in her will (Records Center, HCGC, 14 February 1918, Hennepin County Probate Record No. 20733, Mary Callahand [Ida M. Dorsey] will).

Dorsey was one of the creators of a neighborhood that was owned and controlled by women. The first to be erected, her Eleventh Avenue bordello is now the last standing symbol of the city's era of tolerated prostitution.

Confronted with racism, Dorsey's masterful reading of Minneapolis' cultural underpinnings allowed her to exploit racial stereotypes to her advantage. Her careful cultivation of a depraved and lawless public identity enabled her to accumulate wealth and power. It provided opportunities for her family to have respectable and prosperous lives well into the twentieth century.

Review Copy

8

Melvina Massey

Fargo's Most Famous Madam

ANGELA J. SMITH

A May 4, 1911, obituary in the *Fargo* (North Dakota) *Forum* declared, “Aged Negress Is Dead,” and points to a complex intersection of race, gender, and sexuality on the edge of the northern Great Plains between 1885 and 1911 (FF, 4 May 1911). The deceased woman, Melvina Massey, gained notoriety because she owned and operated the Crystal Palace, a brothel that was successful, though illegal, in the heart of Fargo’s red-light district for two decades. According to the obituary, Massey was 73 years old and was a “well-known character in Fargo.” Her name frequently appeared in the *Fargo Forum* and other newspapers in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota, as well as in public records, most often in conjunction with legal matters precipitated by her numerous arrests. Given the time and place, it is striking that the newspaper of record would document the death of one black woman so prominently. Census records for 1910 show that blacks made up less than one-tenth of 1% of the North Dakota population—617 individuals, and only 99 of them living in Fargo (United States Bureau of the Census, Statistics for North Dakota, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910). Yet Massey, as the proprietor of the Crystal Palace, the brothel built to her specifications on land she owned, established a business that gave her money and power despite the exceptional limitations for a black woman in the Fargo, North Dakota sex trade. Who was this woman, where did she come from, and how did she arrive in Fargo in the late nineteenth century? The answers to these questions reveal an African American woman who navigated pre-Civil War Virginia through the war and Reconstruction and arrived in the 1880s on the edge of the

northern Great Plains, where she established herself as a successful and savvy businesswoman before her death. She navigated the intense social, cultural, political, and economic changes that occurred over the course of her life and left behind a rich legacy of her presence in newspaper, court, and land records.

In the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, sex workers were often transient and unidentifiable; some went by different names to avoid shaming their families. They left few biographical traces for historians to discover. This fact is precisely why Melvina Massey is important. Primary sources contain detailed information about her that makes it possible to frame an interpretation of her life. Since the 1970s, scholars have written broadly about the sex trade during this period. The focus of much of the research has been on gender, labor, and Progressive Era reform in urban centers like New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. However, leading historians of the sex trade have noted that there are regional and racial research gaps. In *I've Got to Make My Livin'*, Cynthia Blair (2010) argues that race has been largely overlooked in historical sex work studies and explores the topic in Chicago. In a historiographical essay in the *American Historical Review*, "Prostitutes in History," Timothy J. Gilfoyle (1999) made a call for more empirical investigations of the historical sex trade, the role of property ownership, and profiles of individuals who can give voice to voiceless people. This chapter explores both of these areas through Melvina Massey. It is a detailed study of one African American woman from Loudoun County, Virginia, who was active in the sex trade of Fargo, North Dakota, between 1891 and 1911.

Discovering Melvina Massey

The name Melvina Massey came to light in an introduction to museum studies course at North Dakota State University in 2013. As a public historian, my research topics often spring from local history research in the classroom, and madam Massey is no exception. Early in the spring semester, students were assigned research topic ideas for an exhibit titled "Taboo Fargo/Moorhead" that would open in May at the Hjemkomst Center in Moorhead, Minnesota, a local history museum. Students began working through late nineteenth-century primary source material housed in the Institute for Regional Studies, part of the NDSU Archives.

While perusing district court cases, Massey's name appeared again and again in arrest records. The students, intrigued, conducted more research and found Massey's life in Fargo slowly revealed in a variety of sources. Through census records, they discovered that she was a madam who ran what was listed as a "house of ill fame." Records also disclosed that she was black and was born in Virginia before the Civil War. In the probate record, the students discovered her will, which contained a wealth of additional information about her property and relationships. Historical newspaper searches revealed that she had been arrested numerous times and sent to the state penitentiary for a year, not for solicitation or prostitution, but for selling alcohol illegally in her brothel. The students found solid proof that by the time she died, Massey had lived among the predominantly white, mostly European settlers of Fargo for at least 20 years. While this research was only a portion of the exhibit, it captured my imagination and that of the students. By the end of the semester, they were on a dedicated quest to dig even deeper and uncover more data. The enthusiasm for the exhibit led to the next collaborative project in the fall 2013 digital history class; research from the spring exhibit provided most of the source material for a historical documentary about Massey. The students compiled the research, wrote the script, and helped produce *Fargo's Most Notable Madam*, a film about madam Massey, for the Fargo History Project website (Smith et al. 2013). Since 2013 research on Massey has continued, both as part of my research agenda and in a collaboration with historical archaeologist and coeditor Kristen Fellows.¹

The Life of Melvina Massey

Fargo, which began as a transcontinental railroad town in 1871, is off the beaten path of contemporary sex trade research in the United States. By analyzing primary sources about Massey's life in Fargo and the historical patterns that may have led her there, it is possible to construct a narrative about this black brothel owner and add her to the list of significant studies about sex workers in the United States. Though we do not have a first-person account of her feelings and motivations, there is evidence to interpret her life beginning with a profile of a pre-Civil War Loudoun County, Virginia, where she was born, likely around 1838, to the post-Civil War world in which she moved west, to her frequent and well-documented notoriety in Fargo.

While little is known about Melvina Massey's life before she moved to Fargo in the 1880s, there are known facts that provide a framework for thinking about her early life. The first is that, according to multiple sources, she was born in Loudoun County, Virginia (USFC 1900, North Dakota, Cass, Fargo, Ward 1, Enumeration District 0030:Page 6A; USFC 1910, ED 0038:8B; State Historical Society of North Dakota Archive [SHSND], 1901: Corrections and Rehabilitation, State Penitentiary, #30366 [CRSP] No. 854, Melvina Massey Penitentiary Record).² Loudoun County is in the northeast corner of Virginia. In the eighteenth century, it was a diverse wilderness that included timbered mountains and numerous rivers that cut through the valleys and provided rich bottomland for farming. By the early nineteenth century, the county had become home to large plantations with a large number of slaves due to economic growth and the demand for the labor-intensive planting and harvesting of first tobacco and then wheat. Some historians have argued that because of the long history of slavery in Virginia, the culture of slave ownership was distinctive from the rest of the country (Baptist 2016; Stevenson 1997; Wolf et al. 2012). Slavery was first introduced in the colony in small numbers during the seventeenth century, and those numbers did not increase significantly until the slave trade picked up in the early nineteenth century. Because Virginia slaves were frequently craftsmen—carpenters, blacksmiths, stonemasons—they were routinely hired out and given more freedom of movement than field and domestic workers; those freedoms were uncommon in the production driven cotton market farther south (Stevenson 1997; Wolf et al. 2012).

It is likely that Massey and her family were slaves. Statistical evidence and antebellum freedman record research point to this conclusion. In 1860, just a year before the Civil War began, census records show that Loudoun County's population of 21,774 included 15,021 whites, 5,501 slaves and 1,252 "free colored." Thirty-three of the county's 670 slaveholders owned 1,066 slaves. The majority of slaveholders held fewer than 10 slaves—124 slave owners owned just 1 (USFC, Statistics for Virginia, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860). The Massey name does not appear in any of the "free colored" lists, though it is possible that the family could have changed their name after the Civil War. However, according to Leon Litwack, a Reconstruction-era scholar, this was unlikely. Litwack (1980) argues that the post-emancipation name choices reflected a sense of historical identity and family consciousness for former slaves. The fact

that Melvina Massey used her family name rather than her married name, Gray, once she arrived in Fargo suggests that the name was important to her and was tied to her identity. Though it is likely that Massey was born a slave, her life would not have been significantly better had she been born free. After Nat Turner's Revolt in 1831, the state of Virginia passed restrictive laws for free African Americans (Wolf et al. 2012). Regardless of whether she was slave or free before the war, she would have lived in a world where she faced restricted rights and little power in antebellum Virginia.

Though Massey gave conflicting information about her age to census takers in 1900 and 1910, her obituary stated that she was 73 in 1911, which would make her birth year around 1838 (FF, 4 May 1911; Stevenson 1997; Wolf et al. 2012).³ The discrepancies in census records suggest that Massey may have deliberately provided misinformation. In her 1901 prison record, she noted that her mother died when she was four years old, and she lived with her father until she was 15 (SHSND, 1901:CRSP 854). Her father, Edward Massey, and his family appear in the 1870 and 1880 Falls Church, Virginia, census records. The census taker reported that Edward was born in 1810 (USFC 1880, Virginia, Fairfax County, Falls Church, Enumeration District 37:24).⁴ Edward Massey appears in both census records as a farm laborer. Often, freed slaves would settle near their former homes. They made these decisions because the families were familiar with the people, the physical environment, and the farming practices. The bottomland in that area was productive for grains, which required field workers both before and after the Civil War. Falls Church is just 15 to 20 miles from several of the largest southeastern Loudoun County plantations. This fact reinforces that the Masseys might have been slaves.

In both the 1870 and 1880 Falls Church census records, Henry Massey, Melvina's son, is enumerated in the household. In 1870 he was listed as 13 years old; other records show that he was born April 15, 1859 (City of St. Paul, MN, 14 March 1916: Division of Vital Statistics Henry Gray Death Certificate). In a 1911 affidavit after his mother's death, Henry Massey verified he had grown up in Falls Church, where he resided with Edward Massey, the man he credited with raising him. He explained that his birth surname was Gray, but he had gone by Henry Massey for most of his life. A search for the name "Gray" in the post-Civil War Freedmen's Bureau Records revealed a marriage record of James and Melvina Gray. Slaves could not legally marry, but after the Civil War, the Freedmen's Bureau

issued official marriage licenses to formerly enslaved couples. In the 1867 records from the bureau office in Washington, DC, James Gray's marriage to Melvina Gray is legally sanctioned and notes that they were married in 1852 and had one child. The couple also declared in the record that there was no ceremony, another suggestion that they were probably slaves. This situation was similar to many marriages the bureau recorded after the war. A few entries note a ceremony, and a few more show that couples presented notes from their masters that attested to their marriage. Most, however, had only their word, as Melvina and James Gray did. In every case, once the bureau recorded the marriage, it was legal, and the children that had been born to it—in the Grays' case, Henry—were legitimate.

What was the status of slaves once the Civil War began, and how did it affect black people in Loudoun County? In the summer of 1861, Congress passed the first confiscation act, which gave the Union the right to seize all property used in aid to the rebellion including slaves—though it did not free the slaves—and a year later Congress passed a second confiscation act that freed slaves who had masters in the Confederate Army. Runaway slaves who followed the Union armies migrated into Union territory or risked confiscation from Confederates where they were considered contraband of war because of this legislation. Unfortunately, this status became a legal limbo for former slaves. They were not free, nor were they slaves. Though the Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in the South in 1863, technically they were not free until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment and the abolition of slavery in 1865. After the war began, many former slaves from northern Virginia flooded across the Union line into Washington, DC, and the city overflowed. By 1863 the overcrowding of DC pushed Union officers to create contraband camps at abandoned secessionists properties in northern Virginia. Because the former slaves had no money or food, the army, with the help of charitable organizations, would house and feed the people in the contraband camps. One of the camps, Camp Rucker, was established in the small town of Falls Church, Virginia. This is the town where Edward Massey and his family—which included Melvina Massey's son, Henry—lived when the census was taken in 1870 and 1880. Camp Rucker was established in 1863, and the 86 inhabitants initially lived in tents because housing was unavailable. By 1864, 15 cabins had been erected and a school established by the Quakers. Each of the 16-by-14-foot camp cabins housed at least six people. In August 1865 the blacks of the camp petitioned the government through a

message from their teacher to General Joseph R. Johnson: “We feel it to be very important that we obtain HOMES—owning our shelters, *and the ground*, that we may raise fruit trees, concerning which our children can say—‘*These are ours*’” (Johnson 1865). While no evidence directly connects Melvina Massey and her family to any event in any specific location during this period, the location of a contraband camp and its proximity to the farm of Edward Massey provides some context for understanding the experiences of former slaves in the area and possible pathways for further northern Virginia research.

There are few clues to Massey’s life immediately after the end of the war. There was a Melvina Massey who appeared in the *National Republican*, a black newspaper in Washington, DC, on July 18, 1875. A small item headlined “Breach-of-Promise Suit” was tucked between a divorce case and a letter to the editor titled “A Colored Man’s View of General Forrest and His Bouquet.” The item read: “Melvina Massey has sued Louis P.H. Davis in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, claiming breach of promise of marriage. She claims that he promised her marriage, and she has always been ready to marry him, but he has refused, on demand, to marry her, and has married another.” Davis instead married Henrietta Stewart on July 7, according to the *National Republican*, and Massey filed her breach of promise suit on July 12. In a July 13 article in the *Evening Star*, Massey claimed that she met him in Chicago, and he was a driver for Illinois Senator John A. Logan. In court proceedings, Davis denied making the promise, and the case stretched out for two years. Massey dropped the suit in 1877, though it is unclear if any money changed hands. While there is no direct evidence that connects the Melvina Massey of this suit to the one who moved to Fargo in the 1880s, the fact that she was willing to take legal action suggests that it could be, and no research thus far has uncovered another woman of similar age and name. Archival sources show that Melvina Massey, a Fargo resident by the 1890s, was also willing to initiate and defend legal challenges (*National Republican*, 8 July 1875:4, 13 July 1875:4; ES, 13 July 1875:4).

It is not clear how or why Melvina Massey initially came to Fargo, North Dakota, or if she was in the vice business before she arrived. Historian Catherine Clinton (1999:5) has argued that the number of sex workers increased exponentially after the Civil War. The hundreds of thousands of men who died left behind wives and children, and the number who survived with terrible wounds changed family and social structures

throughout the nation. Widows and the wives of the wounded suddenly had to become breadwinners. Newly freed people were carving places for themselves from nothing in a free market economy. Out of desperation, many of these white women, as well as newly freed female slaves who needed to earn money, turned to the sex trade. With the expansion of train travel after the war, many of these women took advantage of new markets that were opening up in the West. Perhaps Massey traveled to Chicago, St. Louis, or Minneapolis and apprenticed in the field to another madam. In *Minneapolis Madams*, historian Penny Petersen (2013) found evidence that there might have been an informal trade association among madams. She found testimony in a libel trial of Mrs. M. Hertogs that her job was to recruit prostitutes for madams in Minneapolis and said that she frequently traveled to other cities and states along the railroad in this endeavor. Perhaps this is how Massey learned of the opportunity in Fargo.

The town and the role of the railroad are vital factors to understanding the migration of Massey to Fargo in the 1880s. As the nation expanded west with new railroad lines after the Civil War, new industrial cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis–St. Paul emerged. Also, the promise of land had brought many to the territories, and after the first wave of migration, many believed even more new cities would develop on the plains as the transcontinental railroads continued their westward expansion. The Northern Pacific Railroad Company built a bridge over the Red River of the North from Moorhead, Minnesota, in 1871, and Fargo was born. There was excitement because many believed Fargo, located in the newly acquired Dakota Territory, would be the next great American city. Unfortunately, the stock market crash of 1873 put a halt to railroad construction, and nearly ten more years elapsed before the Northern Pacific stretched from Duluth, Minnesota, to Tacoma, Washington. Despite the financial setback, the railroad companies and Fargo's board of trade, a forerunner to the chamber of commerce, advertised nationally and internationally with the goal of bringing settlers to the region to buy their newly platted land. They promised a temperate climate, fertile land, homesteading possibilities, and a place of "climatic cures" (Engelhardt 2007; Schwalm 2009). In the book *Green Pastures and Vast Wheat Fields*, the City of Fargo Board of Trade (1888:5) claimed that the Dakota Territory was not a great American desert, but "the center of the richest and grandest natural pastures, and the vastest and most productive wheat

fields on earth.” By the 1880s Fargo was booming, and the Red River Valley was home to many wheat growing bonanza farms. The bonanza farms were made possible by the evolution of steam-powered engines and the fertile bottomland of the Red River Valley. By the late 1880s, the three railroad lines that ran through Fargo, the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern, and the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul, were necessary partners for the boom. They hauled grain and transported seasonal labor to the region (Engelhardt 2007).

Wherever men traveled alone for business or seasonal work, there was a market for the sex trade. Ample evidence confirms that prostitutes followed the railroad workers as they moved across the country building the Transcontinental Railroad. Given postwar migration from the east and the frontier nature of the Dakota Territory, it is no surprise that a thriving red-light district developed in Fargo during the late nineteenth century. As Fargo grew, vice—drinking, gambling, and prostitution—grew as well. In fact, the sex trade developed alongside other businesses. Most towns along the tracks segregated the brothels from polite society. In Fargo the red-light district was located on bottomland near the river in an area that is today's new city hall entrance. The neighborhood was called “the hollow,” and this is where Melvina Massey purchased a large lot in 1891 for \$200 and eventually built two houses on it (Cass County Courthouse, Fargo, ND [CCC], 2 December 1891: Book 46, Page 232, “Mortgage Deed: C. Hanson Rudd to Melvina Massey”).

In the late nineteenth century, Fargo and Moorhead had two reputations. The towns were rough and tumble with plenty of vice available for seasonal workers and male travelers, but the town's businesses also catered to short-term wealthy visitors who came to take advantage of divorce laws and patronized upscale temporary housing, bars, and brothels. Saloons were among the earliest businesses in the area and quickly popped up on both sides of the Red River of the North. According to historian Carroll Engelhardt (2007), by 1884 there were 12 saloons in Moorhead and 32 in Fargo. After North Dakota voted to outlaw alcohol in 1889, many of the Fargo saloons moved across the river. By 1900 Moorhead had 45 saloons and attracted customers with prostitutes and gambling. Some saloons ran “jag wagons” from their establishments to brothels across the river in Fargo as a service to patrons. Fargo became famous for another attraction in the late nineteenth century. From its earliest days until 1899, Fargo was

known as the “divorce capital of the country.” In 1866 the Dakota Territory legislature passed a law that did not require citizenship or a waiting period to get a divorce. The requirement was modified in 1877 and extended the residency requirement to 90 days before granting a divorce. When South Dakota extended its waiting period in 1893, Fargo went from 27 divorces in 1893 to 148 three years later. Divorce clientele was typically wealthy and came from the eastern United States, Canada, and Europe. They were attracted to the nice hotels and apartments, as well as the theater in Fargo. These people became temporary residents of the area and typically lived alone, and some likely patronized brothels as well as bars on both sides of the river.

Technically, running a house of ill fame in North Dakota was illegal. A law passed by the Dakota Territory legislature in 1887 declared it a misdemeanor to run a bawdy house, house of ill fame, or “any other house or place for a person to visit for unlawful sexual intercourse, or of any other lewd, obscene or indecent purpose” (North Dakota Penal Code § 9639, 1913). However, at some point, Fargo’s city leaders decided to strike a bargain that allowed the madams to run their houses if they paid a monthly fine. This type of bargain was common. Many in public life in the nineteenth century held the Augustinian view: “Remove prostitutes from society, and you will pollute all things with lust; set them among honest matrons, and you will dishonor all things with disgrace and turpitude” (Abramson and Pinkerton 1995).

Melvina Massey appears in the local historical record for the first time in 1891. By this time North Dakota had become a state, and Fargo had become an established town with colleges, churches, schools, and a bustling trade district. In the Fargo City Directory of 1891, she is listed as “Miss Melvina Massey,” and she resided at 118 Third Street North. While this is the only record that listed her at this address, it is situated diagonally across from the lot she went on to purchase the same year from a local businessperson. The next time Massey’s name appears in the historical record is December 1891, when a mortgage deed was drawn up between Massey and C. Hanson Rudd for the property located at “West portion of lot one, block twelve, Keeney and Devitts addition to the city of Fargo.” The terms were “\$100 due Feb. 2, 1892, and \$100 due March 2, 1892; 7% per annum” (CCC 1891:Book 46:232). It was on this lot that she would build two houses for her brothel business and accumulate assets that she would leave to her family when she died 20 years later.

Table 8.1. Fargo city directory listings for Melvina Massey between 1891 and 1910

Year Published	Exact Name	Exact Address
1891	Massey Miss Malvina	118 3d St N
1893	Massey Miss Malvina	Res 123 3rd st Na
1895	Massey Mrs Malvina	Res 217 2nd ave N
1896	Massey Miss Melvina	Res 217 2nd ave N
1899	Massey Miss Melvina	Res 217 2nd ave N
1900	Massey Miss Melvina	Res 217 2nd ave N
1901	Massey Miss Melvina	Res 217 2nd ave N
1902	Massey Mrs Melvina	Res 217 2nd ave N
1904	Massey Mrs Melvina	Res 201 3rd st N
1905	Massey Mrs Melvina	Res 201 3rd st N
1907	Massey Mrs Melvina	Res 201 3rd st N
1910	Massey Melvina	R 201 3rd st N

^a The city changed street numbering between 1893 and 1895. The 123 Third Street North address is the same as the 201 Third Street address.

In 1892 Massey's newly built brothel burned to the ground. An article in the *St. Paul Daily Globe* (23 March 1892) reported:

Madam Massey's coon dive in the "Hollow" was burned at an early hour this morning. A colored man named Will Williams was smothered to death, and the body badly charred by the fire before it could be removed. All the other inmates escaped, but most of their clothing and personal effects were destroyed. Williams apparently made an effort to escape but was too stupefied by liquor and smoke to succeed.

By using "coon dive," the article identifies race as a construct when describing Massey and her brothel. This phrase also suggests that Massey's establishment was identified, according to Cynthia Blair. She argues that the word "coon" is descriptive of black men looking for sexual entertainment (Blair 2010). The next word, "dive," suggests that Massey's first brothel was a low-end establishment. Though it is not clear whether this phrase was simply a pejorative phrase or if it was intended as a description of the brothel. We do know from the Sanborn maps that there were several deep and narrow "female boarding" buildings in Fargo's red-light district. The size and shape of the buildings suggest that they might have

been “cribs,” which generally consisted of an inexpensive wood building subdivided into small rooms for use by prostitutes (Blair 2010). Melvina Massey’s first address, 118 Third Street North according to the 1891 Fargo City Directory, fits this description. This building appears in the 1892 Sanborn map but disappears in the 1896 Sanborn map. Perhaps it was torn down or even burned in the Fargo fire of June 1893. This fire destroyed most of the buildings on Broadway between today’s Main Street and Fifth Avenue in the business district, two blocks west of the red-light district. By 1896 Massey had built a new house on her property in the Hollow. She did not build directly on the site of the former brothel but to the east of the former house on the same city lot. She was rebuilding right along with the devastated owners of Fargo’s retail stores, banks, hotels, and churches.

Race is a key element to interpreting Melvina Massey. Consider the demographics of Fargo. Immigrants from northern Europe were the largest group to come to the area for employment opportunities in the late nineteenth century. In contrast, the number of blacks in the city had always been small. The 1880 Federal Census enumerates just two men of color living in Fargo, a city of 2,693, one listed as “mulatto” and the other “black.” The 1890 census shows 5,664 people living in Fargo, and 67 of them were “Negro.” By 1900 the population had nearly doubled, but the number of black people dropped to 54. By 1910 there were 99 black residents in a town of 14,331, all of whom were individuals except for a single family with a husband, wife, and six children (USFC 1880–1910). Thus, by her race alone, Melvina Massey would have been a distinct and visual presence in Fargo from her arrival until her death in 1911.

When considering how Massey came to live and work in Fargo, there is some evidence that she was connected to the black community in St. Paul. According to a Ramsey County, Minnesota, marriage license record dated January 16, 1893, less than a year after her brothel burned to the ground, Melvina Massey married a man named Charles Henry in St. Paul, Minnesota (Ramsey County, MN, 16 January 1893, “Marriage License: Charles Henry and Melvina Massey”). The retired minister who signed the certificate was Robert T. Hickman, a well-known former slave and Baptist minister who settled in St. Paul during the Civil War.

In 1863, Hickman escaped slavery with 76 others, including his family, by building a raft and sailing up the Mississippi River. Hickman had crudely constructed the raft without oars or sail, and the band of runaway slaves was later found floating along near Jefferson City, Missouri, by a

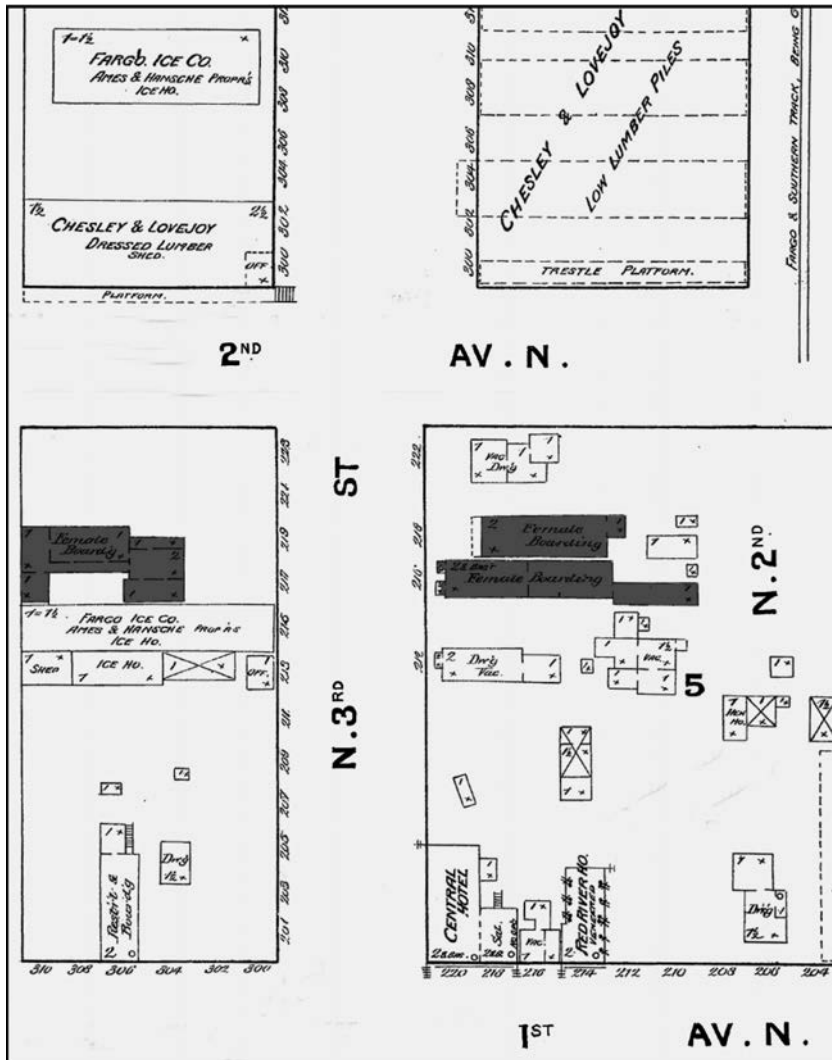


Figure 8.1. Sanborn Fire Insurance map of the red-light district in Fargo, 1884. Note the buildings labeled “Female Boarding Houses.”

steamboat that was headed north to Fort Snelling in Minnesota to resupply US troops fighting in the US Dakota War. In 1863 Minnesota was a free state, and the escaped slaves were able to settle in the St. Paul area and eventually secure jobs because of a labor shortage in the region. Hickman established the Pilgrim Baptist Church in St. Paul on November 15, 1866,

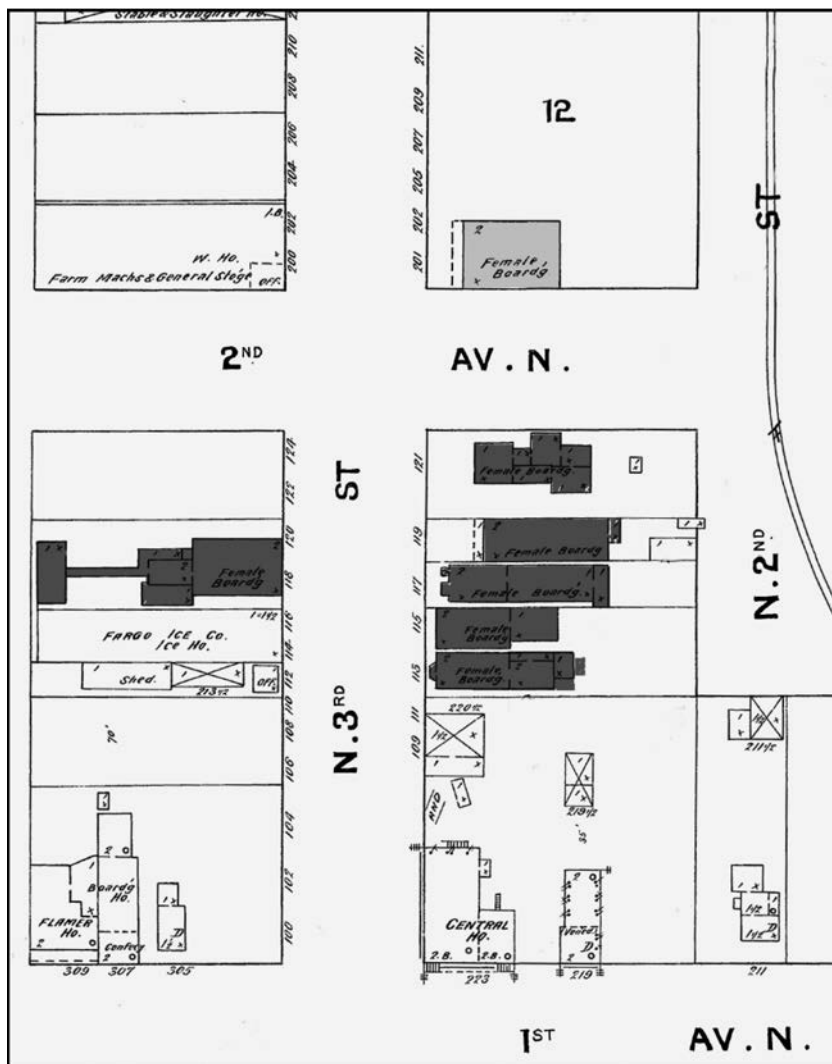


Figure 8.2. Sanborn Fire Insurance map of the red-light district in Fargo, 1892. The lighter gray dwelling labeled “FB” is the first incarnation of Melvina Massey’s Crystal Palace.

and was the minister there until 1886 (BlackPast.org 2015; Green 2008; The Appeal, 17 February 1900).

There were two witnesses recorded on Massey’s 1893 marriage license, John Mann and Mrs. Phil E. Reid. John Mann appeared in several St. Paul census records as a black man who was born in Virginia in 1835, married in 1870, and settled in St. Paul around 1889. The 1910 census indicates

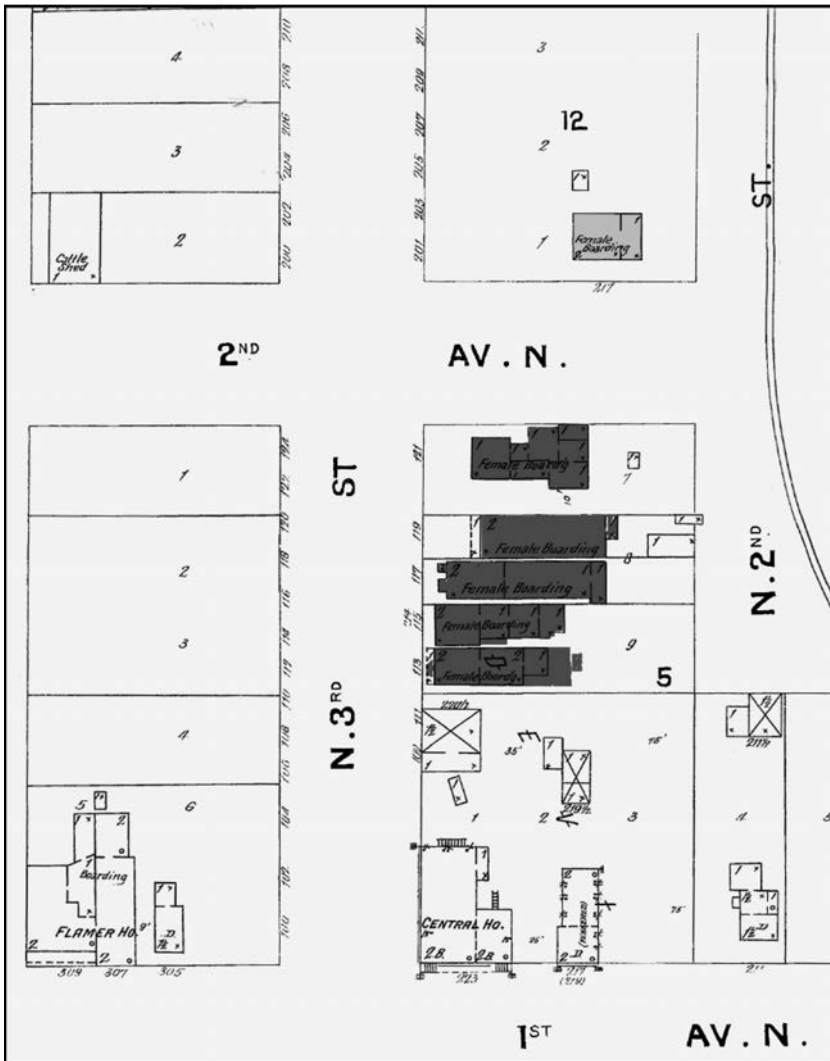


Figure 8.3. Sanborn Fire Insurance map of the red-light district in Fargo, 1896. Notice that the original Crystal Palace is gone, but a new dwelling appeared to the east of the original building.

he was a boarding house inmate with his wife, Leah, and no profession is listed. The other witness, Mrs. Phil E. Reid, was known as Dinkie, according to a St. Paul newspaper. Her husband was a St. Paul bartender, saloon owner, alcohol importer, and Pullman car porter. It seems from this record that Melvina Massey had friends in St. Paul. Portions of John Mann's life parallel Massey's life—perhaps they knew each other before

arriving in Minnesota, or, as Virginians, connected once they arrived in St. Paul. Mrs. Reid was active in Pilgrim Baptist Church in St. Paul; since the church has historically been one of the social outlets of black communities, perhaps this is where Massey met the Reids. Other possibilities are that they could have met in a brothel, saloon, or a train. Certainly, Massey and the minister who married the couple, Robert T. Hickman, would have stories to share with one another about their lives both before and after 1865. Unfortunately, Charles Henry does not appear in any records other than this one with Massey, which raises more questions (The Appeal, 24 May 1902; MSC 1900, Ramsey County, St. Paul, Ward 4, Enumeration District 0083:5B; MSC 1977, Population Census Schedules, 1865–1905).

All Massey's husbands remain a mystery. It is not clear how long her marriage to the man listed in her 1893 marriage record, Charles Henry, lasted or exactly how long she stayed in St. Paul. He is not listed as cohabitating with her in any census record, and the name appears only once in an 1896 Fargo City Directory, where he is listed as a worker in Patrick N. Barnes' Feed Stable at 202 Front Street. It is not clear if this directory entry is the same man. In her 1901 prison intake form, she notes that she is married but does not know her husband's location. She writes that he was "in Chicago, the last I heard." In 1907 she signed her property over to another man she claimed was her husband, a man named Harry Rae. In 1908 she filed suit to get the property back claiming that Rae tricked her into signing the property over. In her will, she left Harry Rae the house on Second Avenue and \$1. She explained her decision:

that the reasons for bequeathing unto my said husband, Harry Rae, the small sum of One (\$1) Dollar, are that I have already well provided for him; that I have given him hundreds and hundreds of dollars, all of which he as carelessly spent without obtaining consideration worth of the sums so spent and that I have also provided for him by making over to him after my death the East Forty-five (45) feet of the West one hundred (100) feet of Lot One (1), Block Twelve (12), Keeney and Devitts' Addition to the City of Fargo. The same being sufficient for him when taking into consideration with the large sums of money that I have paid him, which if he had taken care of same, he would now have been worth several hundred thousand dollars. (North Dakota State University Archives, Fargo, North

Dakota [NDSU], 3 May 1911: Cass County, ND Probate Records Case No. 143–1999, Melvina Massey probate inventory)

A probate suit filed by her son, Henry Massey, against Rae in 1911 reveals she was never legally married to him (NDSU, 12 September 1911: Third Judicial District Court Case, Cass County, ND Divorce and Civil Cases [CC] Case No.310–14473, “Henry Gray vs. H. C. Rae”). Perhaps it was because she was still legally married to Charles Henry. We do know that by September 18, 1893, she was back in Fargo and open for business. The *Fargo Argus* reported Massey was arraigned for keeping a house of ill fame and two women were charged as her employees. The record does not indicate the location of the arrest. The 1896 Sanborn map reveals a new dwelling on her lot. The new house faced Second Avenue rather than Third Street and was built in 1894, according to a court document filed after Massey’s death (NDSU, 1911:CC 310–14473).

Between the fall of 1893 and 1899, Massey appears in the historical record regularly conducting business. She is paying her fines, calling on the police to protect her workers, and reporting the activities of a group of con artists. According to newspaper accounts in November 1895, a threesome from Ashland, Wisconsin, claiming to be Chicago detectives tried to extort the Fargo madams and turn them against one another. For a price, the men promised they would close the other brothels and give the payer a corner on the Fargo market. Madam Massey was their last stop, and according to the newspaper,

Massey, they thought, would be easy picking. . . . They claimed that they were about to have all the houses in the “hollow” closed up and if she would put up \$100 they would let her continue without molesting her and would guarantee her protection. Massey has an eye for business and said when the time came that all the other houses were closed and she was allowed to run, the \$100 would be put up, and not before.

They were soon arrested (FF, 14 November 1895) In 1899 the city made a concerted effort to shut down the brothels in “the Hollow.” A group called the First Ward Improvement League led the drive to establish an ordinance that would allow eviction of those who ran the brothels, but the proprietors declared they would not be driven from their homes (FF, 1 June 1899).

Massey's attention to her fines and taxes meant she could run her brothel without fear of local jail time but serving alcohol in her establishment was another matter. While North Dakota law penalized brothel owners with only a fine, after July of 1890 the sale and distribution of alcohol subjected violators to jail time. Before North Dakota became a state, saloons thrived, but in the conventions leading to the final state constitution in 1889, there were disagreements about the alcohol prohibition. Based in part on religious and cultural practices, a push for prohibition came from Northern European immigrants, Americans who had moved from the East Coast, and those involved in reform movements such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union. On the other hand, Catholic immigrants from Ireland, Italy, and Germany did not want the law embedded in the state constitution. Those who favored prohibition narrowly won a separate referendum on the article, and the first constitution of North Dakota contained an alcohol prohibition clause that went into effect July 1, 1890. In Fargo, saloons closed or moved across the state line into Moorhead, Minnesota, and law enforcement tried to enforce the law with help from reform coalitions throughout the state (Robinson 1966). The penalty for selling intoxicating liquors was strict. After a reported violation, the law required police to gather affidavits of the offense, obtain a warrant and search the property, and "seize all intoxicating liquors and all vessels and bottles containing the same, and arrest the keeper." If convicted, the first offense penalty was a fine of \$200 to \$1,000—the local governments determined the exact amount—and a term of 90 days in the county jail; for subsequent offenses, defendants were sent to the state penitentiary for at least one year and not more than two years. The law also provided that the officers could also seize property (North Dakota et al. 1899).

In January 1898 Massey was arrested on a charge of selling intoxicating beverages in her establishment and was sentenced to 90 days in jail and a \$200 fine. An order of the court also closed her brothel, though it reopened after she finished her jail term. On April 27, 1900, Massey was arrested again on the same charge; on June 26, the court sentenced her to one year in the state penitentiary. She immediately appealed the ruling (FF, 26 June 1900). The North Dakota State Supreme Court upheld the lower court ruling on May 30, 1901, and on June 5, 1901, she surrendered. Newspapers all over the state covered the case and noted that she would

be the only female in the state penitentiary. The *Fargo Forum* (15 June 1901) reported:

The “hollow” in Fargo has been deprived of one of its colored belles by the relentless arm of the prohibition law. Madame Massey was to-day brought into the penitentiary by Sheriff Twichell of Cass County to serve a year for selling intoxicating liquors contrary to law. She has the distinction of being the second person to be sentenced to the penitentiary for that offense and the further distinction of being the only female prisoner in the institution at present. She is not a particularly welcome visitor for the reason that there are not the accommodations for female prisoners that there might be, as they have been “rara aves” in the history of the institution, the last one having been discharged several years ago. The madame is a tall and rather angular female, and her belongings when she arrived today were done up in a little “telescope.” The sheriff placed her in a hack at the depot when the train arrived, a heavy and drizzling rain falling, and took her at once to the penitentiary where she was transferred to the custody of the prison authorities.

She served nine months and was released for good behavior on April 10, 1902. According to the *Fargo Forum* (10 April 1902), “On arrival she was met by a large number of her friends who placed her in a cab and she was driven to her former residence. . . . Mrs. Massey had told her friends that she has come to Fargo to spend her last days.” After her return to Fargo, she was undeterred by the laws for which she had previously been sent to prison. She was back in the brothel business and continued to sell intoxicating liquors.

Efforts to combat the sex trade and illegal sale of alcohol by the citizens and government of Fargo came in waves. Massey experienced the first wave in 1898. In May 1904 another wave arrived when the First Ward Improvement League sought to shut down the district by going after the property owners. Many of the women rented their establishments and eight league members, all men, commenced legal action to restrain renting for the purpose of selling sex. The madams were also named in the suit. In June an order was issued that the madams must leave the hollow. The madams fought the injunction, and the city had a debate. Because the monthly fines charged to the madams contributed so much to the

city coffers, there were concerns about the local economy if Fargo eliminate the red-light district. The *Fargo Forum* (19 May 1904) quotes a “well known city official” who explained:

The commencement of this action confronts the city with a very serious proposition. . . . The money derived by the city from this source constitutes its greatest revenue outside of the general tax, amounting, as it does, to something like \$7,000 annually. And this is but a drop in the bucketful compared with what the landladies and the inmates of these houses spend with the merchants of the city.

The battle over the district continued back and forth for years. In 1910 the city successfully shut down the first of Massey’s establishments, the Crystal Palace at 201 Third Street North, after executing a search warrant and finding alcohol in the house in January. The property was confiscated on July 6, 1910 (NDSU, 6 July 1910:CC 304–14176. “State of North Dakota vs. Melvina Massey and Henry Gray”). Massey’s second property was confiscated for the same reason in March 1911. By this time her health was declining. Massey died on May 3, 1911, at a local hospital (FF, 4 May 1911).

Interpreting Melvina Massey

While in Fargo, Massey existed in a social, economic, racial, and political fringe. She did not inhabit the private sphere of the home that historian Linda Kerber (1988) describes in her work on gender and culture. On the other hand, Massey also did not inhabit the public sphere of men and power in business, banking, and government. Some historians have interpreted prostitution in the nineteenth-century West as a fluid frontier. These women lived on the edge of the spheres in a kind of underworld with fluid constructions and boundaries (Parker 2006; Turner 1935). This fringe status allowed Massey to have power denied to most domestic workers or even average homemakers. She had greater earning capacity. She paid wages to prostitutes who worked for her. She maintained a place for them to work. In Massey’s case, her financial status allowed her to obtain mortgages, to establish credit at a local furniture store, and to purchase furs, jewelry, and chandeliers from other businesses. Historian Cynthia Blair (2010) argues in *I’ve Got to Make My Livin’* that a significant number of African American women saw the sex trade as a logical vocational choice. Take the arguments for morality and even legality out of the

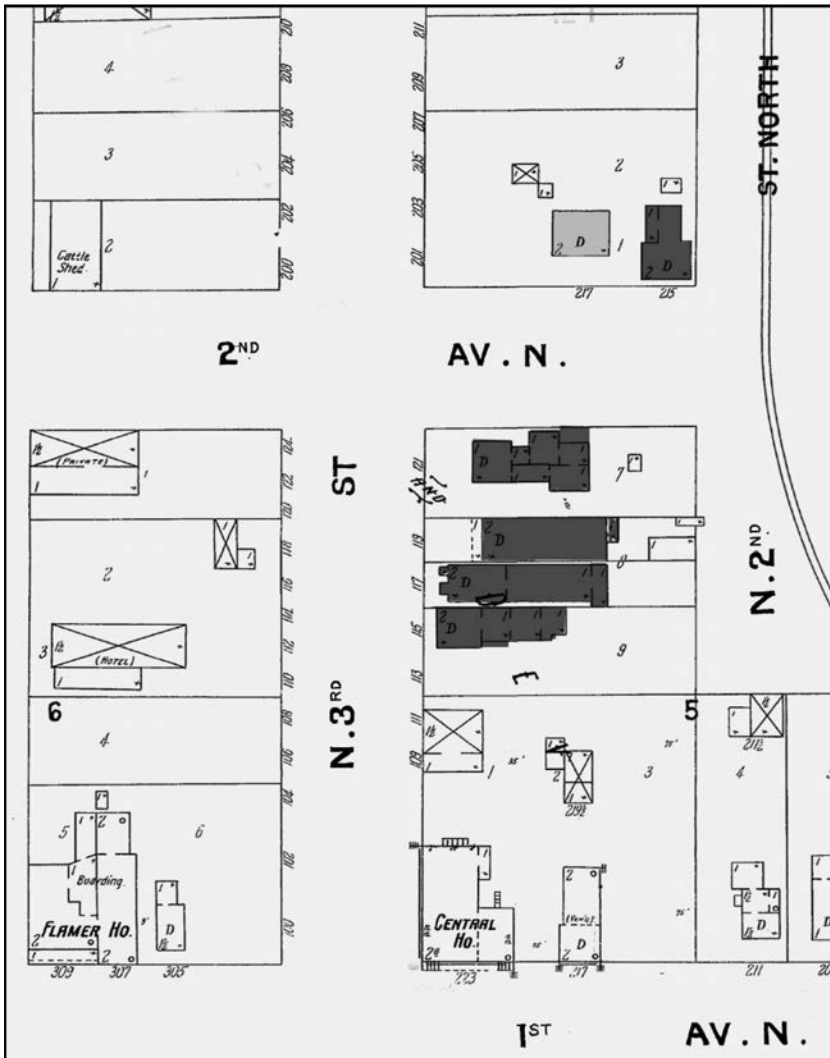


Figure 8.4. Sanborn Fire Insurance map of the red-light district in Fargo, 1901. Note that the dark gray dwellings are still labeled “FB,” and the lighter gray building is owned by Melvina Massey and also labeled “FB.” The Crystal Palace lot is empty.

equation. It made more economic sense to make a living in the sex trade than work as a domestic, which was one of the few available options for black women. There simply would not have been any other opportunity for Massey to attain the secure lifestyle by way of any other pursuit.

There are many mysteries about Melvina Massey, but perhaps the most intriguing is her motivation for leaving her son and extended family in

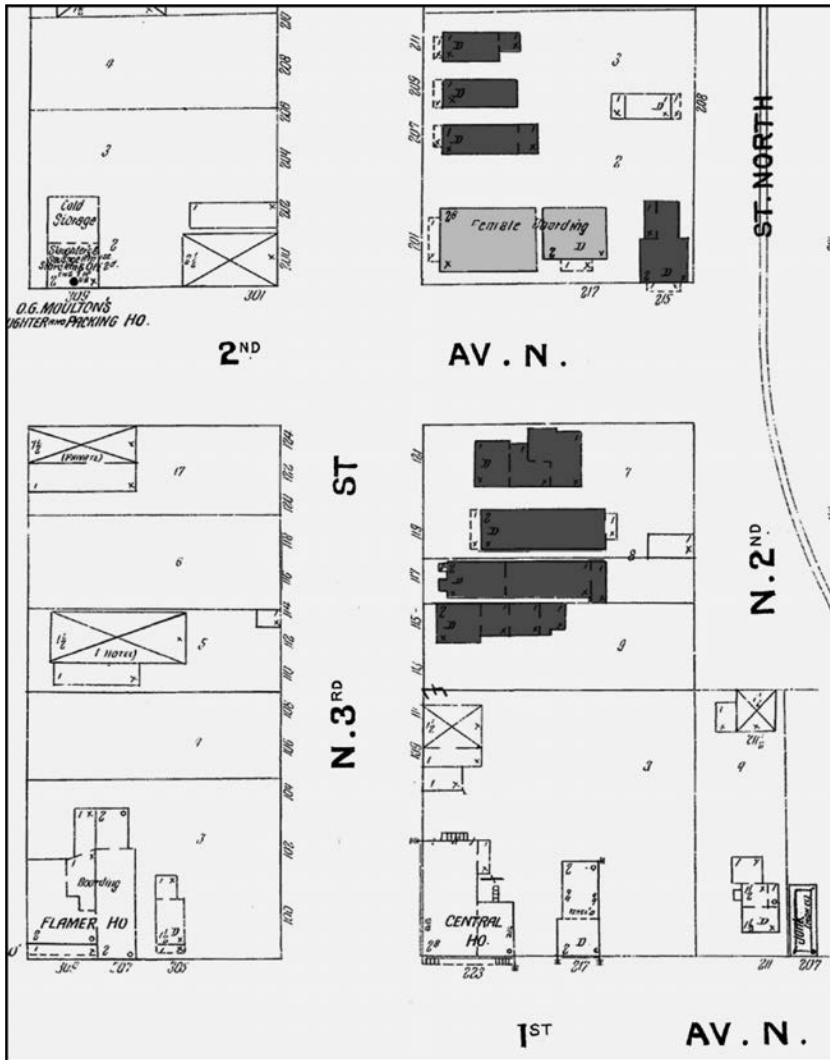


Figure 8.5. Sanborn Fire Insurance map of the red-light district in Fargo, 1905. Notice that the Crystal Palace has reappeared and new female boarding houses have appeared to the north of it.

Virginia and moving to a distant place with a harsh climate. That is precisely the mystery that would call for the most significant historical interpretation based on the fewest facts. This part of her life, however, can be interpreted by considering the tumultuous changes in nineteenth-century America. Indeed, both before and after the Civil War she would have been accustomed to living near significant numbers of African Americans. On

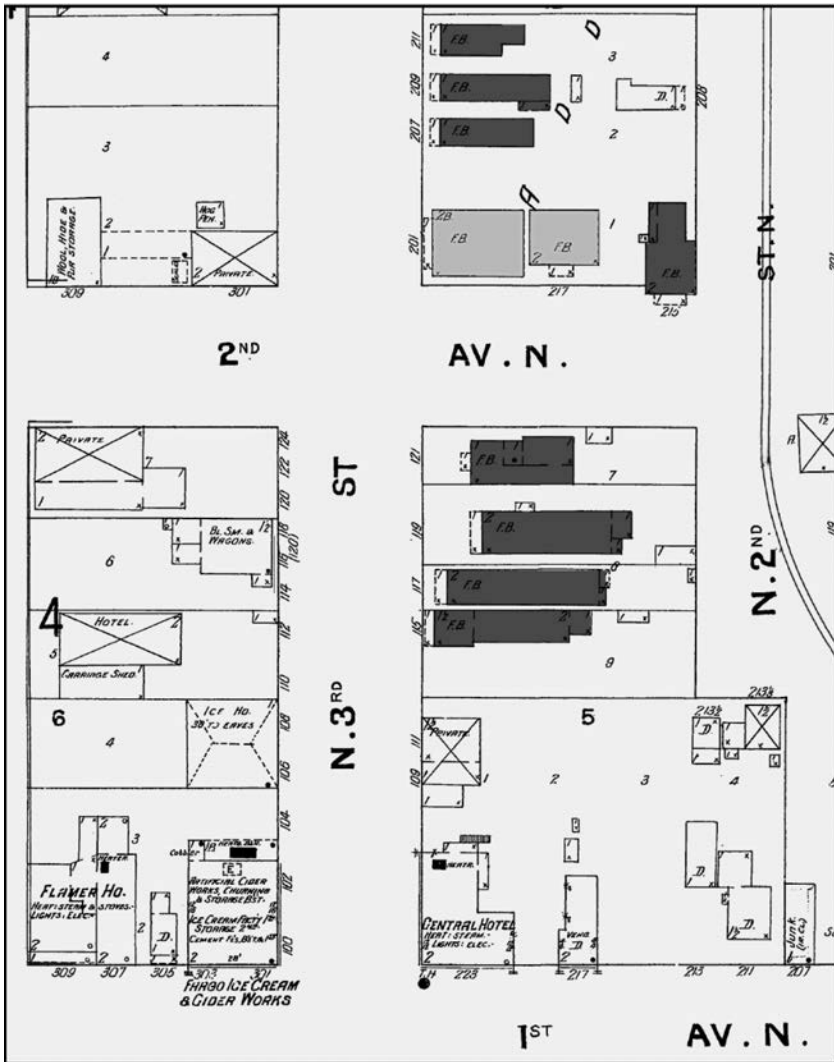


Figure 8.6. Sanborn Fire Insurance map of the red-light district in Fargo, 1910. The dark gray areas are labeled “Female Boarding Houses,” and the light gray building is owned by Melvina Massey and labeled “FB.”

her prison intake form she noted she was a Methodist, so perhaps while in Virginia she spent time in an African Methodist Episcopal Church. The fact that she chose to live in a place with few people of color and far away from her son raises questions the primary sources do not answer.

Speculating about Massey’s identity, beliefs, and motivations is difficult because we have no first-person evidence. We do not know how she felt

about her profession, her family, or her body. Most of what we know is revealed in legal and newspaper records. However, noted historian Darlene Clark Hine (1989) has made a compelling argument that ties African American women's sexualized stereotypes and their sensibility about work and sex to their powerless experiences as slaves—particularly rape. Hine argues that as slaves, these women were valuable to their owners as breeders, while at the same time they were denied power over their work and their bodies. Emancipation changed their value in the marketplace. African American women had few opportunities for work beyond washing clothes and cleaning houses. "I suggest that rape and the threat of rape influenced the development of a culture of dissemblance among black women," Hine (1989:912) writes; "by dissemblance I mean the behavior and attitudes of Black women that created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors." This idea yields two insights into the inner life of Melvina Massey: first, if she responded as Hine suggests, her outward actions masked and protected her inner reality; second, she was willing to use other women's bodies, as well as her own, for her livelihood. The social power dynamics both before and after slavery did not elevate sexuality as intimate or sacred but as a commodity and as work. Perhaps these ideas would also factor into her decision to move far away from family, perhaps in order to not bring shame to them because of her work.

After the Civil War, African Americans focused on racial uplift. Through schools, clubs, churches, and fraternal organizations, formerly enslaved people strove to build a post-slavery society characterized by hard work and respectability. These groups also discouraged vice of all kinds. Melvina Massey's affection for her son was demonstrated in her will and the fact that she left most of her estate to him. In an affidavit recorded after her will was probated, he explained that his grandfather raised him and the family was very poor. He said he had never visited Fargo before his mother's death. Perhaps she chose to relocate far from Virginia to protect her family from judgment and shame because of her chosen profession. Her vocation put her on the edge of society and would have been unacceptable to many.

Research findings have made clear that Massey was indeed a successful agent for herself during her time in Fargo. Records show that several local

attorneys handled some legal matters, both civil and criminal, for her, but she also made shrewd business decisions. In particular, she regularly paid local fines for herself for operating a bawdy house and then went back to the Crystal Palace; she opened for business the same evening. Evidence of the scope of her business can be found in the inventory of her estate: piano, furs, diamond jewelry, electric chandeliers, opera glasses, and 11 mattresses. That inventory is historically significant in that it demonstrates how one woman, half a continent away from the state where she was born—likely into slavery—continued her emancipation by pushing the boundaries of race, gender, and sexuality.

Melvina Massey's story is an important addition to the historical interpretation of sex workers in the United States. Her life also provides an updated framework for considering race and gender across the northern Great Plains. While black madams in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century frequently appear in the historical record, little has been documented about them outside of major urban areas. This study of a successful black madam in a predominantly white northern plains town points to a more flexible social structure in Fargo than previously imagined. It also suggests that sex workers of this period could climb an economic ladder and effectively advocate for their own legal and economic interests. The fact that a middle-aged Melvina Massey migrated from a postwar southern world to Fargo, North Dakota, purchased property, and established a successful business speaks to her flexibility and resiliency. Her ability to negotiate the economic, political and legal landscapes she encountered reveals that she understood power and used it to her advantage.

Acknowledgments

All research is collaborative, and I owe a debt of gratitude to my students and colleagues at North Dakota State University. I particularly want to thank the students in my 2013 introduction to museum studies class, whose research for an exhibit titled *Taboo Fargo/Moorhead* introduced me to Melvina Massey. I would also like to thank the NDSU Archives and in particular Archives Associate John Hallberg, whose local history knowledge helped me find sources and understand the context for the life that Melvina Massey led in Fargo.

Notes

1. For more information about my teaching process and philosophy, see Angela J. Smith, “Angela Smith: Fargo History Project,” *Process: A Blog for American History*, Blog (October 29, 2015), <http://www.processhistory.org/?p=708>; and online profile, <http://dighistory.org/asmith/>. For more information about the Fargo History Project and the film about Melvina Massey, see <http://fargohistory.com> and “Fargo’s Most Notable Madam,” Vimeo, December 8, 2013, <https://vimeo.com/81344815>.

2. In the 1900 and 1910 census records, Massey notes she is from Virginia. In her prison intake form, she writes that she was born in Loudoun County, Virginia. Finally, her son maintains in his affidavit after her death that he and his mother were born in Loudoun County, Virginia.

3. In the 1911 obituary, her age is given as 73. If this is correct, she would have been born in 1837 or 1838, depending on the month. In the 1900 census, she claims to be 45, clearly inaccurate because of her son’s age. His 1859 birth date is not disputed; thus, for the 1900 census to be accurate, she would have given birth when she was 9. Much more likely, she was born in the 1830s and was in her twenties when her son was born, although she was perhaps as young as 14 when she married.

4. The 1870 and 1880 census list him as 70 years old.

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III

ON THE FLIP SIDE

Men and Masculinities

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9

Homosocial Bonding in the Brothel

Feminine Spaces and Masculine Identities

KRISTEN R. FELLOWS

Melvina Massey was a noteworthy woman who held a prominent if somewhat scandalous position in Fargo, North Dakota, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite having likely been born into slavery in antebellum Virginia, Massey was a savvy businessperson who owned and operated her own brothel, known as the Crystal Palace (Smith, Chapter 8, this volume). While Angela Smith's chapter in this volume acquaints readers with Massey and her accomplishments, my research focuses on the space in which Massey exerted her authority and control and the space in which her money was made: the brothel.¹

After Massey's first brothel in Fargo burned down in 1892 (SPDG, 23 March 1892:1), she most likely continued to operate her business out of a different structure while planning the construction of a grander building. By 1903 Massey had built this more distinguished version of the Crystal Palace; building permits from 1899 and 1903 tell us this was a long planned-for project (Fargo City Hall, Fargo, North Dakota [FCH], 18 April 1899 and 17 March 1903: Application for Permit to Build Outside the Fire Limits [BP]). This iteration of the brothel was a relatively upscale place of business, and when Massey passed away in 1911 a room-by-room probate inventory of the house was conducted (North Dakota State University Archives, Fargo, North Dakota [NDSU], 3 May 1911: Cass County, ND Probate Records [PROB] Case No. 143–1999, Melvina Massey probate inventory). The building permits along with the probate inventory allow for a conceptualization of the layout and aesthetics of the Crystal Palace.

While controlled excavations were not possible on this site (more on this later), the depth of data in these documents allows for an examination of the material culture and sociospatial dynamics operating in the Crystal Palace. Although Massey's establishment may not have risen to the grandeur of big city parlor houses, I argue that for Fargo it was an upscale brothel attracting middle- to upper-class clientele and others who aspired to such social status. After establishing the social positioning of the Crystal Palace, I introduce a larger discussion on how the spaces and places of the historic sex trade played into gendered identities, particularly masculine identities. Despite the fact that madams and inmates existed on the fringes of society, their influence on gender norms (both feminine and masculine) is an important topic to explore.

Brothel Hierarchies and Issues of Scale

Much of the historical and archaeological literature points to the hierarchical structure of the historical sex trade; moving from the lower tiers to the upper echelons of the hierarchy, scholars have discussed streetwalking, cribs, rooms in hotels, saloons, public bawdy houses, brothels, and exclusive parlor houses (for more discussion of this tiered system, see Munns 2017). As this chapter is particularly interested in the brothel setting, I focus this discussion on the fact that even within the realm of brothels, bordellos, and parlor houses there were multiple levels of distinction. In his seminal work *City of Eros*, Timothy Gilfoyle (1992) discusses the difference between public bawdy houses and private parlor houses. According to Gilfoyle, public houses would have been open to anyone who could pay the bill and focused on moving men through the building in an efficient manner. At times there were men lined up on the streets waiting to enter these businesses. On the other end of the spectrum, private parlor houses served an exclusive, at times by-invitation-only clientele. Some madams even required letters of recommendation, and "indeed, the very label 'parlor house' reflected an emphasis on replicating the atmosphere, privacy, and physical environment of the middle-class home" (Gilfoyle 1992:164). Rosen (1982:87) refers to these businesses as "expensive five- and ten-dollar parlor houses" where men "relaxed in an atmosphere of exquisite food, wine, and women." Keire (2010:31) reinforces this image of the top-tier brothels when she explains,

The elegant interiors of Basin Street's brothels . . . show that . . . madams sold more than sex. Contemporaries called the very best brothels parlor houses for a reason. The entertainment centered not just in the bedrooms, but also in the front parlor, where prostitutes, overseen by the madam, met and mingled with customers. Sometimes a piano player provided musical accompaniment, giving jazz pianists such as Jelly Roll Morton their start.

While Gilfoyle focuses on the exclusivity of the parlor house and Rosen on the luxury provided within these establishments, Keire's analysis adds an intentional selling of class and an intentional orientation to the business of sex on the part of the madams. Regardless, they all speak to the madams' efforts to create an environment evocative of a middle- to upper-class home.

To date most of the research on brothels has focused on larger cities (archaeological examples include Seifert 1991 and Yamin 2005). Gilfoyle's work in New York City and Keire's comments on parlor houses in New Orleans are just two examples. Rosen (1982) explicitly states that the most expensive parlor houses would have been found in every *city*, the implication is that these upscale joints would be found in *large* cities. But how does the brothel hierarchy change when we consider smaller cities bordering on frontier towns? Does scale matter in our discussions of red-light districts and brothels in particular? The Crystal Palace serves as one such example.

I argue that Melvina Massey's Crystal Palace was an upscale brothel when considered in the context of Fargo, North Dakota. While it was no Everleigh Club (Abbott 2008; Rosen 1982) and would certainly not have been considered among the elite bordellos of larger cities such as New York, Washington, DC, or New Orleans, given the scale of Fargo and its red-light district, it may have been the nicest establishment in town. Scale has not been something historians and archaeologists have discussed in depth. But Massey's brothel and Fargo's red-light district in general necessitate a discussion of such things.

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The Crystal Palace: Structure, Spaces, and Material Culture

At its peak in 1910, the primary red-light district in Fargo was home to 10 brothels, all euphemistically labeled as “Female Boarding” on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, with an eleventh madam operating out of a hotel (Munns 2017:90).² This, of course, differs dramatically from larger cities, many of which had multiple red-light districts with a much higher volume of bordellos. For instance, the 1911 Vice Commission from Chicago reported that in 1910, 192 houses of ill fame were in business, and this does not account for other sites of sex work in the city (Vice Commission of Chicago 1911). Lexington, Kentucky, a city of 40,000 people, had 55 brothels in operation in 1915 (Vice Commission of Lexington 1915). Gilfoyle (1992:31) explains that middling estimates for New York City include 200 brothels by the 1820s and more than 600 by the end of the Civil War. And the Minneapolis Vice Commission (1911:24) reported that “a conservative estimate of the whole number of generally recognized houses of prostitution and assignation, including those operating under the guise of candy stores, placed them at 150.” Carroll Engelhardt (2007) tells us that by the end of the 1890s, Fargo had finally exceeded 8,000 residents, and Moorhead, Minnesota (just across the Red River of the North) had just surpassed 2,500. This alone tells us that the Fargo red-light district would have been drawing from a more limited pool of clients. Of course the railroad and seasonal nature of farming would have meant a substantial influx of potential customers at various points throughout the year (Engelhardt 2007), but even this inflow of young men would not have been enough to sustain a dramatically larger red-light district. Despite the relatively limited number of customers patronizing these brothels, one news report indicated that the madams in Fargo were contributing up to \$7,000 per year in fines to the city (Bismarck Daily Tribune, 14 November 1907:4); there was, in fact, money to be made in sex work in turn-of-the-century Fargo.

Anna Munns’ (2017; see also Chapter 3, this volume) research into the Hollow, Fargo’s red-light district, has shown that Massey’s Crystal Palace was exceptional in relation to the other local bordellos. Evaluating the buildings based on Sanborn maps, the Crystal Palace was one of only two structures to boast of a basement, with a rather large nearby hotel being the other (Munns 2017). We know from building permits on file with the city of Fargo that Massey had originally planned to build the Crystal

Palace in 1899 without a basement (FCH 1899:BP), though it seems as if something fell through and Massey was unable to build at that point in time. A second building permit dating to 1903 described and sketched the same building, with the addition of a basement. The 1903 addition of the basement, while left off of the sketch, led to an increase in the overall price of construction and also in the total number of rooms listed for the building (FCH 1903:BP). Basements are significant in that they not only add functional space to the structure but also represent a significant investment in construction costs, evidenced by the increase in estimated costs listed on the permits themselves (FCH 1899:BP, 1903:BP). Furthermore, the presence of the basement indexed the wealth of the building's owner and the higher-class nature of the establishment. Not all buildings in turn of the century Fargo had basements, likely a result of the additional construction costs (Munns 2017).

Additionally, while the roofing materials used and the presence of a second story were not uncommon in brothels of the Hollow, Massey's structure still would have stood out. The layout, as seen on the Sanborn maps, varied from the long, row-like structures to the south (Sanborn Map Company 1910). Even from the exterior, the Crystal Palace was closer to approximating the middle-class houses found in other areas of Fargo (many of which are still standing). A number of contemporary accounts also speak to the elevated status of the Crystal Palace. News pieces occasionally referred to Massey's "resort" and one even referenced "the Massey mansion in the hollow" (FF, 27 August 1908, 8 March 1910, as transcribed in Newgard et al. 1994:Appendix A 47–48). While the Crystal Palace was certainly not a mansion, an accounting of the furnishings will demonstrate that Massey, like other madams of upscale establishments (Gilfoyle 1992), was trying to replicate the atmosphere of a middle-class Victorian home within her brothel.

Space and Material Culture (in the Documents)

As mentioned earlier, research into Melvina Massey and the Crystal Palace has been a collaborative effort involving myself, Angela Smith (a public historian, see Chapter 8, this volume), and our students at North Dakota State University. In 2014, when I first became involved with this research team, there seemed to be little hope for archaeological investigations of the Crystal Palace—the site was sitting under four feet of fill and a paved parking lot serving Fargo's City Hall and the public library. But

the construction of a new City Hall directly above what had been the red-light district gave hope to the possibility of excavations. After consulting with city planners and the lead architect on the project, we unfortunately were not granted access to the site for digging purposes. Smith and I were able to monitor backhoe excavations, where we identified the foundation of the Crystal Palace, and then, with student help, we recovered a sample of materials from the displaced soil that had been removed by heavy machinery. These materials are currently in the process of being analyzed

ROOM #2 (cont.)	
INVENTORY AND APPRAISEMENT OF THE PROPERTY OF MALVINA RAE BETTER KNOWN AS MALVINA MASSEY	
ROOM #1	
1 Brussels carpet	\$ 25.00
1 iron couch	4.00
16 fancy pillows	10.00
2 pair curtains	2.00
2 animal rugs	1.00
2 fancy albums	1.50
1 four piece gilded parlor set	15.00
1 blanket	.25
1 mahogany desk	12.00
6 fancy plates	.75
6 fancy china ornaments	.25
22 miscellaneous books	1. 00
6 glass tumblers	.25
1 three-way electric chandelier	3. 00
1 shirt-waist set	.25
FURS	
1 marmot fur coat and muff	⊥
1 cooney collar and muff	(
1 beaver neckpiece and muff	(
	\$250.00

Figure 9.1. Page 1 of the probate inventory conducted in 1911 for Melvina Massey's Crystal Palace. (Photo by author.)

and have already been used in multiple classes—archaeology and history students have benefited from hands-on experience with these artifacts. Future research on the Crystal Palace and the surrounding red-light district will come from these materials, despite their less-than-ideal provenience. In the meantime, what was an archaeologist without artifacts to focus on? How could I contribute to this collaborative project? Luckily, the material culture was easily found in the documents.

The 1911 probate inventory mentioned in the introduction is a seven-page document that lists items of value by the room in which they were found (see Figure 9.1). The inventory begins on the first floor and catalogues the appointments for two bedrooms, a front and back parlor, a dance hall, a bathroom, and what seems to be a hybrid dining room–parlor space, all found on this floor. The second floor consists of 11 bedrooms that appear to be fairly standard in size and appointments (see Figures 9.2 and 9.3; NDSU 1911:PROB 143–1999). Finally, the kitchen, additional sleeping space, and storage space were also included. What exactly was located in the basement is unclear, though it seems likely that it would have been used at least in part as functional space. As previously mentioned, while there are no sketches of the basement layout, the addition of this space did increase the official number of rooms in the structure; the 1899 building permit lists a total of 17 rooms, while the 1903 permit lists 21 rooms (an increase of 4 rooms), despite the fact that the sketch of the first and second floors had not changed to represent additional rooms (FCH 1899:BP, 1903:BP). The first and second floors of the building will provide the primary focus of this chapter due to their role in entertaining male patrons.

There are limitations to using the building permits and probate inventory in conducting a sociospatial analysis of this structure. First and foremost, there is currently no way to confirm that the sketches on the permits were accurately followed during construction. Additionally, a good deal of material culture being used on a daily basis at the Crystal Palace was likely not deemed worthy of inclusion in or had been removed prior to the inventory. Personal possessions owned by the other women living and working in the establishment would also have been omitted. Thus, these documents will not necessarily provide insights into the personal lives and aesthetics of these other women. This is obviously a point of departure from other archaeological analyses of brothels (e.g., Costello 2003;

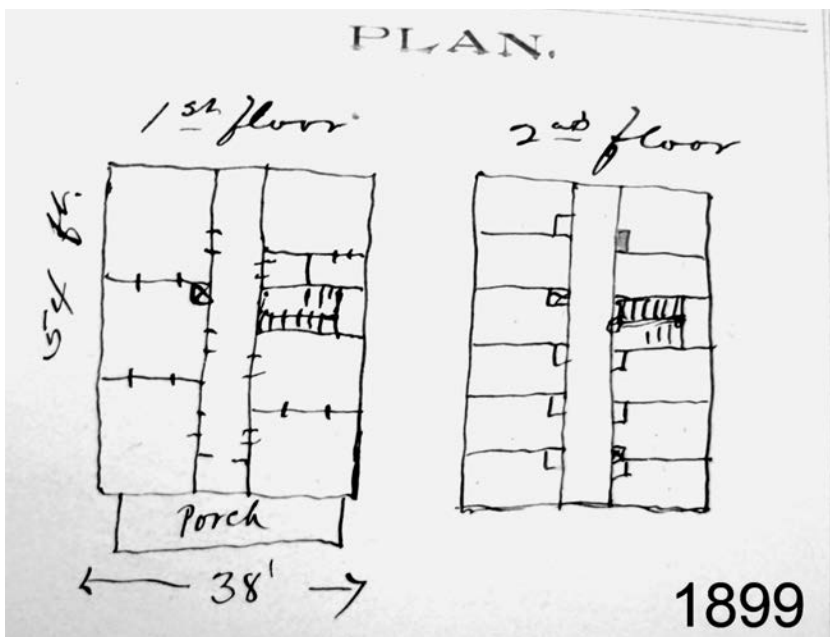


Figure 9.2. Sketch of the Crystal Palace floorplan from the 1899 building permit registered with the City of Fargo. (Photo by author.)

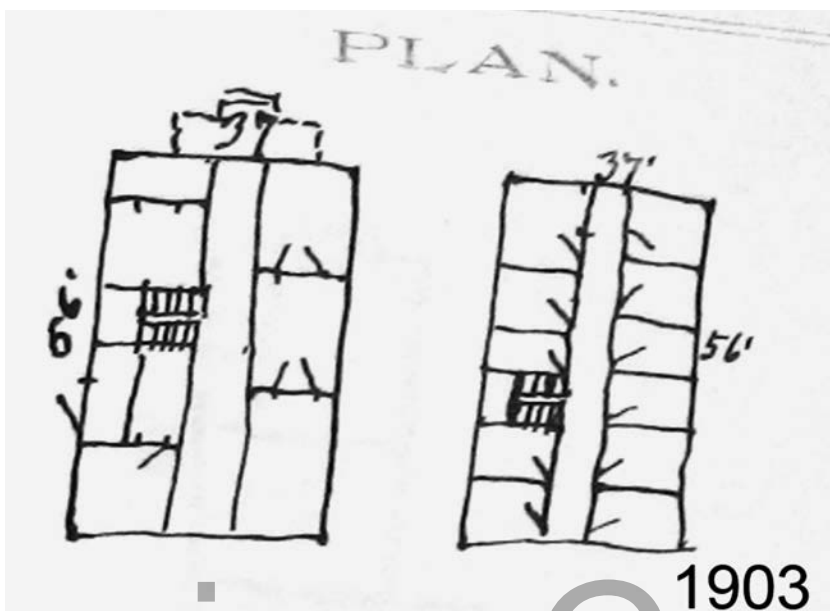


Figure 9.3. Sketch of the Crystal Palace floorplan from the 1903 building permit registered with the City of Fargo. (Photo by author.)

Yamin 2005). In spite of the lack of controlled excavations, the probate inventory and building permits from the Crystal Palace offer a unique look into the material culture and places being created and utilized within Fargo's historical sex trade.

An examination of the spaces on the first floor of the Crystal Palace indicate that these rooms were designed for the entertainment of the male clients frequenting this brothel. This is in no way surprising given what is already known about brothels in other cities (e.g., Gilfoyle 1992; Keire 2010; Rosen 1982). The front and back parlors are nicely appointed spaces for the gathering and mingling of patrons and employees. Both rooms contained "parlor sets" worth a relatively significant amount of money; the back parlor in particular also contained additional seating that would allow for people to sit and stay a while. Interestingly, each room also contained at least one item that was notably expensive—the front parlor hosted a \$200 piano (US \$5,444 in 2018) and the back parlor contained a \$65 carpet (\$1,769.30 in 2018).³ The presence of these pricier, and perhaps fancier items may have elevated the overall feel of the rooms, thus subtly contributing to an atmosphere that spoke to a middle- to upper-class clientele or those aspiring to those social classes. When comparing these two rooms, it is curious that the back parlor contains two cuspidors (or spittoons), but the front parlor does not contain any. Of course these are objects that are easily movable. Nonetheless, the presence of the cuspidors may speak to a difference between intentions for the two parlors, while also considering the fact that the back parlor had more seating. The back parlor could have served to greet and screen male guests, while the front parlor may have allowed men who had already gained admittance to spend time socializing with the women and one another, and perhaps consume various comestibles. Regardless, both spaces were designed to mimic Victorian-era homes and make the male patrons feel at home yet central to the house's goings-on (Gilfoyle 1992; Keire 2010; Wilkie 2010).

A hybridized dining room–parlor space was listed as "Room #1" on the probate inventory (NDSU 1911:PROB 143–1999). The material culture present in this room clearly indicates that it was a space for mingling, snacking, and perhaps most importantly, drinking. This room contained an iron couch cushioned with "fancy pillows," on which patrons could sit; a "center table" and other furniture which provided surfaces to serve food-stuffs and beverages; and glass tumblers, plates, and even a punch bowl that allowed for the consumption of such goods. Room 1 also contained

a parlor set and interestingly, Massey's furs (including a coat, a couple of muffs, and a neckpiece). Although the furs were of middling quality (Susan Curtis, personal communication 15 May 2019), is it possible that in Fargo the presence of any fur would have helped to create the middle-class Victorian home aesthetic that Massey's Crystal Palace was attempting to emulate?

As previous studies have shown (e.g., Costello 2003; Gilfoyle 1992; Rosen 1982; Seifert and Balicki 2005; Yamin 2005), consuming exotic or expensive food and drinking champagne as well as other alcoholic beverages was a common pastime within higher-end brothels. In many instances we have evidence that men visiting high-class brothels were obligated to buy alcohol, often an expensive bottle of champagne (e.g., Gilfoyle 1992; Petersen 2013), but sometimes beer was the primary alcoholic beverage being offered (Costello 2003; Vice Commission of Chicago 1911; Vice Commission of Lexington 1915). The Crystal Palace may have had similar policies despite the fact that North Dakota was at this time a dry state (Engelhardt 2007). Moreover, evidence indicates that beer may have been the chief drink being served in the Crystal Palace (NDSU 1905:CC 246–12179). And elsewhere in the inventory we see the presence of an ice cream maker and multiple ice boxes, speaking to the more lavish types of food and drink available at the brothel as well as the need to keep the beer cold.⁴ Given the amount and worth of the furniture in Room 1, it seems to have been a well-appointed, larger space that would have provided comestibles, particularly alcohol, for the patrons of the Crystal Palace in a setting that would have been familiar, comfortable, and removed from the more general public as well as the law of the land.

Another first-floor room of note is the bedroom of Melvina Massey herself. Although this was likely a primarily private space in the house, it was also one of the most expensively furnished rooms. One item that gives this space away as Madam Massey's private sanctuary is the "small safe," which she would have presumably used to secure her valuable jewelry (like her \$75 [\$2,041.50 in 2018] diamond earrings) and the cash brought in by a night's business. This room contained a variety of other material culture, some of which might have been displayed, such as the framed pictures, and some of which served utilitarian purposes, such as the sewing machine. Speaking to the status of the person occupying this space, the bedroom furniture present in this room, including the bed frame, box spring, mattress, commode, dressing table, and wardrobe, was valued at

\$46 (\$1,252.12 in 2018) total; as we will soon see, this stood in stark contrast to the other bedrooms in the house.⁵ The expense of the furnishings suggests that Massey did not scrimp on personal comforts. And while this was likely not a space in which patrons were regularly entertained, it was also not a space kept entirely separate from her business (e.g., the safe).

One of the most intriguing rooms in the building is the dance hall. Although this room was relatively sparsely furnished, it obviously speaks to the entertaining that was taking place on the first floor of the Crystal Palace. Massey was not the first brothel owner to devote a public space purely to the visual and above-the-sheets physical entertainment of her patrons; women at other brothels reportedly put on all sorts of shows for their clients (e.g., Petersen 2013). Al Rose (1974:112) even includes a picture of “Hilma Burt’s Mirror Ballroom” in his tome on the red-light district in New Orleans. And Vice Commission reports from other cities mention explicit shows and claim that descriptions of such shows were “too vile to print” (e.g., Chicago Report 1911:77). Massey’s Dance Hall would not have lived up to Burt’s Mirror Ballroom, but it did contain a piano, a large 5-foot-by-5-foot mirror, 18 wire soda-fountain chairs, an electric chandelier, and an expensive electric fan. With the exception of the piano, the furnishings in this room, primarily the wire soda-fountain chairs, would have been relatively movable and easy to rearrange into new and different configurations. The items in the room and the space that they would leave available for movement speak to the potential performances put on by the women working in the brothel, as well as the relatively intimate contact that could occur between customer and employee as they danced together in this more public space. Tellingly, the electric fan was one of the most expensive items in the room. While making the space more physically comfortable during the activity taking place within it, it also would have pointed to Massey’s wealth and the modern nature of her brothel. The dance hall was most definitely a room used to entertain patrons while also sending subtle messages of the class of brothel in which they found themselves.

The probate inventory moved through each individual room on the first floor, labeling the room and then listing all of the items of value within the space. It should be clear that the Crystal Palace replicated the middle- to upper-class ideal of the feminine home or domestic space (Gilfoyle 1992; Keire 2010; Wilkie 2010; see Munns, Chapter 3, this volume for a brief discussion on Victorian gender roles and associated material culture).

While not every room on the first floor has been described, hopefully the relative wealth and comfort which characterized these public spaces has been demonstrated. Standing in stark contrast, the rooms of the second floor do not get such individualized treatment.

As the inventory shifts upstairs, we first see the listing of items for the “Upper Hall,” and then all other rooms are combined under the heading “Rooms 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18.” As you can see in Figure 9.4, “11 carpets, 11 chairs, 11 dressers” and so on are listed with a combined value for each category giving a sense of the standardization of the 11 second-floor rooms.⁶ We can also determine that the standard bedroom furniture in each of these rooms—the dresser, commode, bed frame, and mattress—had a combined average worth of \$11.90 (\$323.92 in 2018). In fact, the total worth of all items present (furniture and other decorative and functional items) in each room averages out to \$16.50 (\$449.13 in 2018) per room. This is dramatically different from Massey’s room on the first floor, where the furniture and furnishings were valued at \$185.50 (\$5,049.31 in 2018). Of course, the standardization of the upstairs rooms as represented by the probate inventory does not account for any items the women may have kept in their rooms that would have added a personal touch. Still, the contrast between the rooms on the first and second floors is telling. The downstairs spaces were designed for public socializing and the standardized rooms upstairs primarily provided space for getting down to the business of the brothel. This might also indicate that Massey, unlike the truly wealthy madams of big city brothels (e.g., the Everleigh Club in Chicago or Mahogany Hall and the Arlington in New Orleans [Rosen 1982]), had to make choices on where to focus her spending power; obviously the first-floor rooms took precedence.

While the accoutrements of the Crystal Palace may not have held a flame to the parlor houses of major cities, the material culture as laid out in the probate inventory indicates that Massey’s brothel was no dive. Given the size of Fargo and its red-light district, it seems even more probable that this was one of the nicer establishments in town. Of course, a comparable inventory would be useful in making this determination, but we have not been able to find any similar, room-by-room inventories to date. With that said, that Massey owned the property, had the capital to build and furnish the structure, and had the means to successfully navigate the system of fines regulating the red-light district all point to the profits accrued by her business (see also Smith, Chapter 8, this volume).

UPPER HALL	
1 running carpet strip	\$5.00
1 electric drop light	7.00
1 running stair strip	
1 bird cage	5.00
4 jars	5.00
ROOMS 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 17 and 18.	
11 carpets	\$ 18.50
11 chairs	4.00
11 dressers	60.00
11 commodes	28.00
11 beds	40.00
11 mattresses	6.00
11 spreads	9.00
11 jars and pitchers	3. 00
11 pillows	3. 00
5 pair of lace curtains	4.00
11 slop jars	4.00
11 drop lights	4.00
4 rugs	2.00
BASEMENT	
1 wardrobe	\$ 3.00
2 commodes	3.00
2 dressing tables	10.00
miscellaneous bed linen	5.00
2 carpets	2.00
2 bed springs	1.00

Figure 9.4. The probate inventory for the upstairs rooms of the Crystal Palace. (Photo by author.)

Fargo may not have been able to support an Everleigh club, but the Crystal Palace likely served as one of the more upscale brothels in town. Having established the Crystal Palace as a relatively upmarket establishment, I now turn the discussion to the importance of these parlor houses for re-inforcing gendered identities, in particular hegemonic masculinities.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Homosocial Bonding

Within historical archaeology, studies on historic sex work have largely focused on the women running and working in brothels. Much of this work has stemmed from feminist scholarship and a desire to not only bring women into historic accounts but also grant them the agency they had long been denied (e.g., Seifert 1991). Such efforts should not only be applauded but should continue. And yet, in order to gain a more holistic view of gender in the Victorian era, we need to also consider the role of masculinity in such sites and social relations (see Voss 2008 for a call to increase work into broader approaches to gender). In particular, I am interested in how homosocial bonding was encouraged and enabled in the spaces of historic sex work and how this, in turn, played in to hegemonic masculinities.

With her groundbreaking work *Between Men*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2016[1985]) brought the idea of *homosocial bonding* into the discussion on gender within the humanities and social sciences. Importantly, “homosocial” references social ties and bonds formed between same-sex individuals, which in the case of male homosociality often also lies in opposition to “homosexual” (Sedgwick 2016[1985]). Predictably, the dominant mode of masculinity this plays into is also juxtaposed and often defined in opposition to femininity (Bird 1996; Connell 2000; Sedgwick 2016[1985]).

Having been taken up within masculinity studies, homosocial bonding has been argued to reinforce hegemonic heterosexual normative masculinity (e.g., Bird 1996; Flood 2008).⁷ As Flood (2008:341) has stated, “men’s lives are said to be highly organized by relations *between men*. Men’s practice of gender has been theorized as a homosocial enactment, in which the performance of manhood is in front of, and granted by, other men.” Hegemonic masculinity sets up social relations that allow for the dominance over and control of women, but also other men (Bird 1996; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Thus, homosocial bonding allows men to publicly perform their masculinity while also having it affirmed

by their compatriots; of course, a man's gendered practices are in essence being policed by other men simultaneous to his policing of them. And while a dominant masculinity may provide an ideal for men to attempt to emulate, there is still a range of lived gendered identities. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:838) tell us, "hegemonic masculinities can be constructed that do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual men. Yet these models do, in various ways, express widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires. . . . Furthermore, they articulate loosely with the practical constitution of masculinities as ways of living in everyday local circumstances." While hegemonic masculinities may not be lived reality for most, they do provide a framework for gendered interactions, including homosocial bonding, which in turn reinforces dominant gender ideologies.

As Sharon Bird (1996) has pointed out, the sexual objectification of women is central to hegemonic masculinity. Sexual objectification can come in multiple forms, including physical and visual consumption of the female body. Sedgwick (2016[1985]) also argued that the objectification of women plays an important role in homosocial practices; for her, women could play a functional role in solidifying relationships between men. Modern examples have shown that female bodies are material sites of male homosocial bonding in group sex acts (when the intercourse taking place is entirely heterosexual) as well as during the visual consumption of the female form in places like strip clubs or exotic sex tourism destinations (e.g., Flood 2008; Gregory 2007). Simply put, men often bond over their objectification of a female body. I would argue that Victorian brothels may have been a precursor to these modern-day spaces of homosocial bonding. Indeed, the consumption of the female body, both physically (taking place upstairs) and visually (taking place on the first floor), was central to the business of the nineteenth- to twentieth-century parlor house.

Obviously, the homosocial bonding that helps to (re)create this dominant gender identity is only one piece of the complex social relations working to establish gender norms. Brothels were also (and still are) primarily places of heterosocial interactions (interactions between non-same-sex individuals). Moreover, women are not passive objects in these gendered practices. As both Petersen and Smith (Chapters 7 and 8, this volume) have shown, the women running historic brothels certainly capitalized on their gender, and the performance of it, to help create an atmosphere in which their male clients would feel comfortable and be willing

to spend significant amounts of money (see also Abbott 2008; Gilfoyle 1992; Rosen 1982). It is likely that Melvina Massey consciously played into gender roles to enable the success of her business. The manner in which women in brothels interacted with their male clientele both reinforced hegemonic masculinity while simultaneously challenged traditional gender roles, especially in the case of madam-owners of brothels. Much of the archaeological and historical literature has illustrated the agency expressed by the women involved in the historic sex trade, but my aim is to begin a discussion of how brothel spaces *also* played into homosocial bonding and thus hegemonic masculinities.

A Place for “Boisterous Talking, Singing, Shouting, Dancing or Music”

When we consider the space and material culture of the Crystal Palace within the framework of homosocial bonding and hegemonic masculinity, we can begin to develop some insights into how such spaces helped to reinforce dominant gender norms while simultaneously functioning as sites operating on the fringe of society. A few more pieces of evidence will help to solidify the Crystal Palace as a place of social interaction (not specifically involving sex acts) happening between men and women, but also, and importantly, between men and other men.

While the material culture presented in the probate inventory indicates that the first-floor rooms (as opposed to the upstairs rooms) in the Crystal Palace were largely used for public entertainment purposes, other sources verify that activities other than sex were taking place within the brothel. Melvina Massey, along with other madams in Fargo’s red-light district, had to somewhat frequently navigate the legal system for issues relating both to prostitution and selling alcohol (Munns 2017 and Chapter 3, this volume).⁸ At a minimum, the court records indicate that men were also drinking in these establishments. Additionally, a handful of other Fargo residents who mostly lived or operated businesses near the red-light district seemed to be on a quest to rid the area of all the women who kept houses of ill fame. The legal actions pursued by these men resulted in a wealth of documentation, such as court transcripts of witness testimony and lists of “Interrogatories to be answered by Melvina Massey” created by the prosecution (e.g., Demurrer from Melvina Massey, 26 May 1904, from Andrew Johnson et al. v. Melvina Massey and Ruby Harper, NDSU 1904:CC 958–11666). When examined in conjunction with the probate

inventory from the Crystal Palace, these records point to the extremely animated nature of evenings spent at this brothel.

In one list of interrogatories from 1904, question 6 inquired, “was there any loud boisterous talking, singing, shouting, dancing or music indulged in or carried on in said houses [the Crystal Palace], by any persons whomsoever?” Despite Massey’s handwritten answer, “None whatever, to my knowledge,” evenings in the brothel were most definitely lively and loud (NDSU 1904:CC 985–11666). The presence of not one but two pianos in the probate inventory and the fact that Massey employed a piano player (NDSU 1905:CC 246–12179, *State of North Dakota vs. Melvina Massey*) means that at a minimum music would have been “indulged in.” As others have shown, music and brothels often went hand in hand (Keire 2010; Rose 1974). Having a piano in a front room as well as in the dance hall indicates that music was important to Massey, or at least she viewed it as important to her business.

The question quoted above is a result of complaints that had been made against Massey as well as other brothel owners in the area. Andrew Johnson’s affidavit from this case states, “dancing, singing, loud laughter and music has every night during the past week been kept up all night until the early hours of the morning” (NDSU 1904:CC 958–11666). While it is often assumed that men patronized brothels for the primary purpose of sexual intercourse, this evidence points to the more general social aspects of the entertaining that went on in such spaces. During a visit to these businesses patrons would have interacted with people beyond the inmate meeting their carnal needs upstairs. This broader social function of the upscale brothel has been touched on by other scholars (e.g., Rose 1974; Rosen 1982), though not necessarily in regards to the role it played in broader gendered social relations.

In testimony given in another case, a witness acknowledged that he had spent significant time in the Crystal Palace, around five hours. He stated that he had purchased four bottles of beer at \$1 apiece and mentioned the presence of Massey as well as a piano player (NDSU 1905:CC 246–12179). In 1905 Sheriff Hunt served a search warrant at the Crystal Palace and discovered “eleven bottles of beer and parts of two cases of malt cream and one case of empty ‘Schlitz bottles’” (NDSU 1905:CC 246–12179). Interestingly, this case came after Massey’s stint in the State Penitentiary for selling alcohol. While she continued to deny selling alcohol, it seems obvious that the state had a solid case against her. Alcohol clearly played

a central role in Massey's business, and in contrast to high-end brothels in larger cities, she may have been selling more beer than champagne (Gilfoyle 1992; see Costello 2003 for an example of a West Coast brothel where beer was also a popular alcoholic beverage).

Finally, although there is no definitive proof that gambling took place at the Crystal Palace, it remains a distinct possibility. In 1893 one newspaper article hints at this as it reports: "Late Saturday night all of the gambling houses were raided and closed by the police. Madame Massey's house was also pulled and seven men and three inmates, all colored jailed. 'Tis said there will be no more gambling in Fargo under the present administration" (Bismarck Weekly Tribune, 22 September 1893:5). While the article does not explicitly state that Massey's establishment was raided due to gambling, it is curious that it was included in this targeted police action. And given the opening and closing lines of the report that bookend the mention of Massey's brothel, gambling was most definitely the focus of this piece. It is important to mention that this news item predates the construction of the Crystal Palace currently under discussion; this iteration of Massey's brothel came in between her brothel that burned down in 1892 (SPDG, 23 March 1892:1) and the final version of the Crystal Palace constructed in 1903 (FCH 1903:BP). Moreover, there is reason to believe that the racial makeup of Madam Massey's clientele and employees changed over time (NDSU 1908:CC 950–13227, *Taylor Crum v. Melvina Massey*); that discussion, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter. Regardless, we at least know that Massey may have tolerated men gambling within her establishment.

The idea of a "bawdy" house brings to mind not only scandalous sex acts but also loud, raucous behavior fueled by alcohol. Based on the documentary record, it appears that the Crystal Palace was a true house of ill fame or even a "resort" to which men could escape. A hired musician to play the multiple pianos in the brothel (one in a parlor and one in the dance hall), the selling of alcohol, and the potential for gambling all indicate that male patrons were engaging in more than just sex at the Crystal Palace; this was no public house (Gilfoyle 1992). Importantly, much of the activity would lend itself to homosocial bonding between the men.

Review Copy

Conclusions and Discussion

In her exploration of the homosocial spaces created by men in the nineteenth century, Laurie Wilkie (2010:34) writes, “Away from the restrictions of the female-dominated household, men created spaces where they could spend time together.” While the focus of her research was fraternal orders, she sees a clear connection between fraternities and brothels. Men “also gathered in brothels, where those willing and able to buy a night of entertainment could enjoy an inversion of the Victorian home, where men, not women, were the center of the household” (Wilkie 2010:34). In large part, this chapter provides a case study that illustrates this very point. Controlled by Melvina Massey and designed to more or less emulate a respectable Victorian house, the Crystal Palace functioned to make the male clients feel comfortable but also central to this home-like space. The sociospatial dynamics of the brothel played into and perpetuated hegemonic masculinity as the Victorian domestic order was inverted; as the men became the focal point of the “house,” their position as the dominant gender was reinforced. I argue that the homosocial bonding taking place between male patrons in a space meant to replicate the Victorian house helped to further this buttressing of hegemonic masculinity. Of course, it is important to acknowledge that this space, which played into hegemonic heteronormative gender roles, was created and controlled by a black woman in turn-of-the-century Fargo, North Dakota.

The Crystal Palace would not have been among the top echelons of brothels in a larger city, and yet within the context of Fargo, it was a relatively high-end establishment. To start, Massey was a fixture in the Hollow during the peak of Fargo’s historic sex industry, and she never failed to pay her monthly fines (Munns 2017; Smith, Chapter 8, this volume). Tellingly, she was also able to finance the building and furnishing of the Crystal Palace. The structure itself speaks to the status of Massey’s business as we consider the presence of the costly basement. Moreover the size and layout of the structure was more in line with middle-class houses found elsewhere in the city than with the other houses of ill fame in the Hollow (Munns 2017; Sanborn Map Company 1910). An external assessment of the structure and knowledge of the goings-on inside led to an at least occasional reference to Massey’s “resort” or “mansion” in the local papers (Newgard et al. 1994). Finally, the wealth and comfort represented by the furnishings in the first floor rooms indicate that Massey designed

her brothel to mimic respectable Victorian homes. Such appointments encouraged patrons to spend time in the building buying beer, socializing, and at some point enjoying the services offered in the upstairs rooms. Massey was obviously familiar with how private parlor houses presented and operated and sought to recreate this business design in Fargo. Although we do not have a full accounting of her life, it is likely that she had big city experience in the sex industry prior to her move to North Dakota (Smith, Chapter 8, this volume). Given the size of the city; the size, layout, and worth of the building; and the accoutrements of the first floor spaces, it is likely that Massey's bordello was Fargo's version of the private parlor house.

Contextualizing the Crystal Palace in time and place allows us to view it as a relatively upscale brothel, yet it would be inaccurate to group it with well-known, top-tier brothels of the larger cities (as explored and discussed by Abbott 2008; Gilfoyle 1992; Keire 2010; Rose 1974; and Rosen 1982 among others). Because of her city's smaller size, Massey would not have had access to a deep pool of wealthy clients. It would have been extremely unlikely that her resort could have functioned in a highly exclusive manner. In fact, it is entirely likely that many of her patrons were aspiring to the middle-class status her brothel emulated (especially when we consider the seasonal influx of agricultural workers [Engelhardt 2007]). The standardization and smaller size (and thus larger number) of the upstairs rooms also points to the efficiency of the public (rather than private) brothel as described by Gilfoyle (1992); the end goal was to move men through these upstairs spaces in a timely manner and thus maximize nightly income. It is important to remember, however, that these upstairs rooms existed in the same building as the more finely furnished first floor spaces presented by Massey. And so, while the Crystal Palace would not live up to the expectations of the elite brothels in places like New York or Washington, DC, in terms of design and business model, it would have existed somewhere in between the private and public houses of these larger cities. To be clear, I am not advocating for further differentiation and labeling of brothels; there is no need to further complicate the hierarchy. However, as research expands beyond the metropolises, we do need to consider and explicitly discuss the local context and the scale of the sex industry under study (see Wood 2005).

Differences between the upstairs and first floor spaces are indicative of Massey's approach to her business, an approach that aligns with Keire's

(2010:31) assessment that “madams sold more than sex.” Madams also sold an experience for their male clientele. Through the materials she purchased to furnish the rooms in her brothel, she created a clear distinction between the two floors; rooms were designed in a manner that differentiated between public and private entertaining of the male clientele within the brothel. The first-floor spaces were designed to keep men in the building spending money and played on and played up dominant gender norms. On the other hand, the bare-bones standardization of the rooms upstairs speaks to the fact that these spaces were meant to be inhabited by the male clientele for a relatively brief period of time; or rather, the intimate sexual exchanges taking place would not necessarily lead to a great deal of postcoital cuddling or socializing in those spaces. One-on-one, individual time spent with the women may have cost more money than the drinks for sale in the more public spaces downstairs.⁹ Or perhaps the drinks represented higher profit margins and volume in sales for Massey than the sex work (Costello 2003 speaks to the role of alcohol in maximizing profits for brothel madams). As court documents have shown, we know of at least one gentleman who spent five hours at the Crystal Palace, having purchased four beers over that course of time (NDSU 1905:CC 246–12179). And so the downstairs spaces worked to keep men in the house, while the bedrooms upstairs were designed to move men through these more intimate spaces in a more fast-paced manner (again, this points to the situation of the Crystal Palace as somewhere in between the private and public houses of larger cities). Interestingly, a closer examination of the material culture in the first-floor rooms can provide insight into the sorts of social interactions taking place in these spaces and how they could have played into Victorian-era gender relations.

The first floor spaces of the Crystal Palace were designed with a variety of functions in mind. These rooms were meant to help the clients find a match to their physical desires as embodied by the sex workers but also to keep them comfortable and entertained while they socialized with one another. Room 1, the hybrid parlor–dining space, would have provided the men with foods to fill their bellies and alcoholic drinks to loosen their inhibitions and open their wallets. Given the fact that North Dakota was a dry state at the time (Engelhardt 2007), the illegality of drinking alcohol may have taken on a more daring aspect and contributed to a sense of masculine behavior taking place within the brothel. If these men were merely seeking out a cold beer, they could have easily crossed the river

into Moorhead, where alcohol was sold legally in a number of saloons (Engelhardt 2007). Most historical and archaeological research has indicated the importance of both food and alcohol to the upper echelons of houses of ill fame (e.g., Costello 2003; Gilfoyle 1992; Rosen 1982; Seifert and Balicki 2005; Yamin 2005). The comfortable furnishings of Room 1 and the food available would have helped to put middle- and upper-class men at ease (and awe those aspiring to such social standing); in a way, these customers would have felt at home in such a room. The more domestic, feminine space would have been one component of the performance of gender on display (and for sale) in the brothel and, playing into typical gender norms, would have contributed to the sense of masculinity enjoyed by the male patrons. Of course, as Wilkie (2010) has pointed out, the brothel's feminine appointments belied the inverted centrality of the men in these spaces. Men, who were not necessarily the focal point of domesticity at home, became so in the brothel.

The back parlor, which boasted more seating options and cuspidors for the men's comfort, may have been a more masculine space when compared to Room 1. This room may have provided patrons with a room in which to sit and converse with each other and could have even been a site for the men to engage in business deals or competitive activities like gambling or dinking games. Whether before or after ascending to the upstairs with one of the working women, the patrons of the Crystal Palace would have had places within the building to congregate and engage in behaviors that would have reinforced their own masculinity. As a discussion of the dance hall will show, the men were not limiting their time in brothels to the upstairs physical exchange that defined the primary purpose of such businesses.

The dance hall and the material culture found there represent a break with the traditional Victorian-era home, as the room provided some opportunities for men to engage with both women and other men in unique ways. With seats that could be easily moved and arranged in the manner of a theater or pushed to the edges of the room to allow more space for movement; a large mirror that would, in effect, multiply the number of bodies to look at and would allow for exposure of multiple angles of a body; as well as the electric light and fan which would illuminate the bodies and increase the movement of lighter-weight materials and flowing locks of hair, this space was meant for the public (within the brothel) display of these working women and the men watching and interacting

with them. Although the mirror and electric fan and light were likely purchased to display the status of the brothel and the wealth of the madam, their effects may have gone beyond these intentions. Unlike other rooms that were more typical of Victorian-era middle-class homes, this room provided a novel occasion for the male clients to socialize with each other and the working women, while also watching and commenting on the female bodies and interactions taking place before them.

Other sources have shown that the women in some resorts would at times engage in explicit performances in the brothel's dance hall. We also know that these spaces provided a venue for men to dance, often in a suggestive (or even explicit) manner, with inmates (CVC 1911; Petersen 2013; Rose 1974). And so it should be safe to assume that similar activities would have taken place within the dance hall of the Crystal Palace. Legal documentation and news reports presented earlier in the chapter also indicate the likelihood of such activities, as nights at the Crystal Palace were described as being lively and boisterous in nature (NDSU 1904:CC 985–11666). Importantly, the contact taking place between the patrons and inmates in the dance hall (as opposed to the contact taking place upstairs) was happening in front of other men. In many respects, the presence of the dance hall speaks to opportunities in the brothel to police others' masculinity, but also the chance for homosocial bonding to occur over the visual consumption of female bodies (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Flood 2008; Gregory 2007). The dance hall enabled the men patronizing the Crystal Palace to participate in taboo activities that simultaneously spoke to their virility, spending power, and overarching sense of masculinity (for similar analyses of modern-day homosocial bonding see Flood 2008 and Gregory 2007). Sex acts that affirmed one's prowess would have taken place privately, but dancing with women in front of other men, becoming aroused, and arousing the women would have acted as public displays of manliness. While the private activities upstairs reinforced an individual's masculinity, the publicly performed visual and physical (above-the-clothes) consumption of the female body worked to reinforce hegemonic masculinity, the dominant, publicly performed aspects of manhood.

Having compared the public and private spaces that make up the Crystal Palace, it seems likely that the gendered social relations and performance of masculinity that feed into modern homosocial bonding are related to what was taking place within Victorian brothels. And so, while

historical brothels have typically been a source of data for the construction of feminine gender identities within history and archaeology, I argue that these were also spaces directly feeding into Victorian notions of masculinity, thus setting the stage for modern gendered relations. As Sharon Bird (1996:120) has argued, “Through male homosocial heterosexual interactions, hegemonic masculinity is maintained as the norm to which men are held accountable despite individual conceptualizations of masculinity that depart from that norm” (see also Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The brothel allowed for a semipublic performance of hegemonic masculinity away from polite society; one might even say that individual men were able to engage in a form of masculinity that differed from what they normally enacted and that was more akin to hegemonic masculinity, given the hypersexualized and fantastical nature of the setting. Through the private and public physical and visual consumption of the female body, as well as the potential for competitive interactions (e.g., gambling) taking place within the brothel, men were able to establish their manliness while simultaneously monitoring that of their peers. As others have previously pointed out, hegemonic masculinity is important not just for the control of other women, but also other men (Bird 1996; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The social dynamics of the Crystal Palace should provide a starting point to a deeper discussion of how historic sex work has affected dominant gender norms, despite its existence on the fringes of society.

Notwithstanding the less-than-ideal archaeological situation we faced when the Crystal Palace was unearthed in fall 2016, it should be clear that the probate inventory has provided unique insights into the material realities of this brothel. Although it is not clear why the inventory was carried out in such a detailed manner (was it because Massey’s son and heir lived in Virginia and had never been to Fargo? or perhaps it was because the sheriff’s office was still pursuing legal matters against Massey’s estate connected to the sale of alcohol?), my research has clearly benefited from the analysis of this document. In addition to the inventory and the building permits, other documentary sources have helped to confirm that Massey’s brothel was no mere public house, but, for Fargo, it was a relatively high-end house of ill fame. This brothel, like other parlor houses, was designed to mimic respectable feminine domestic spaces while also allowing the men to engage in forms of homosociality that may not have

been considered proper in polite society (see also Wilkie 2010). Overall, the space of the brothel allowed for the affirmation and reinforcement of a hegemonic masculinity via homosocial bonding that would be carried with these men into their everyday lives.

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Notes

1. Ideally, readers will have read Smith's Chapter 8 prior to this one. Together, they represent pieces of a larger collaboration centered on Melvina Massey and Fargo's historic red light district. See also Munns, Chapter 3, this volume.

2. There is evidence that a secondary red-light district existed along Front Street near downtown Fargo.

3. All conversions in this chapter are based on an inflation rate provided by the Inflation Calculator at <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/>. As of May 28, 2019, \$1.00 in 1911 (to which the probate dates) equated with \$27.22 in 2018. The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Inflation Calculator only goes back as far as 1913: https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm. According to this calculator, \$1.00 in 1913 equated to \$25.57 in 2018.

4. Interestingly, the Chicago Vice Commission Report (1911:77) mentions police failing to find beer in the ice box of a particular brothel, but that "as a matter of fact the beer was kept in the flush box in the toilet room." Beer is also frequently mentioned in the Vice Commission Report from Lexington, KY (1915).

5. Although "commode" references a toilet in today's parlance, a search of any Sears Roebuck catalog of this era reveals that a commode was at that time a small stand with a wash basin and perhaps a bar for a towel (e.g., Amory 1993).

6. Please note that the inventory lists Rooms 7–18, which would be 12 rooms total; however, the 11 dressers, etc., as well as the sketches on the building permits all indicate that there were, in fact, only 11 rooms on the second floor.

7. Recent academic and even public attention has been given to non-normative genders and sexualities, which is an interesting and exciting turn. And while there were most definitely individuals living in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who did not identify with either of the dominant genders, such lived experiences are beyond the reach and scope of this research. This work specifically focuses on how spaces

of sex work played into the development of hegemonic masculinities within the American West.

8. In fact, although Massey paid regular fines for running a brothel (see Chapters 3 and 8, this volume), selling alcohol in a dry state was the offense that led to her yearlong imprisonment in the state penitentiary (Bismarck Daily Tribune, 26 June 1900:1).

9. Rosen (1982) references \$5 and \$10 houses, which was likely not the case for the Crystal Palace, though it may have cost more than the middling \$1–\$2 houses she also mentions. Interestingly, one interview included in the Bridgeport Vice Commission Report (Report and Recommendations of the Bridgeport Vice Commission, Bridgeport, Connecticut, 1916:36) comments on a woman working out of a furnished room soliciting at a rate of \$3.

Review Copy

10

The Enterprising Career of Tom Savage in Los Angeles' Red-Light District, 1870–1909

ANNEMARIE KOOISTRA

In the grand jury investigation, corruption trials, and newspaper coverage leading to the recall of the mayor of Los Angeles and an end to the era of “tacit acceptance” of the city’s regulated red-light district in 1909, Tom Savage played a starring role (Kendall 1906; Mowry 1963[1951]; Shumsky 1986). Prizefighter, politician, saloon owner, and brothel operator, Savage was an integral member of the red-light district’s male subculture. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Savage capitalized on political and business alliances to emerge as a leader among a growing group of men formalizing the business of prostitution, investing in prostitution that catered to the “masses” rather than the “classes.” In doing so, Savage was a pioneer in the kinds of practices that would persist in the vice business well into the twentieth century (Gilfoyle 1992; Keire 2010; Rosen 1982).

Historians writing about nineteenth-century prostitution in US cities note the importance of operating in proximity to a transient male customer base, but many do not emphasize the degree to which the working-class male subculture in cities’ red-light districts created an advantage for men in the business of prostitution. Nicknames for some red-light districts reflect the masculinized nature of these zones—names like “Guy Town” in Austin, Texas, or Davenport, Iowa’s “Buck Town” (Humphrey 1983; Wood 2005). While newer studies of prostitution show more awareness of the context of this masculinized culture (Blaire 2010; Gilfoyle 1992; Keire 2010; Long 2004), the best studies of this male subculture still tend to push the role of prostitution to the periphery. Instead, authors writing

about nineteenth-century, working-class urban male subcultures paint a picture of a raucous, often violent, male fraternity in which women played minor roles at best (Chudacoff 1999; Gilfoyle 2007; Gorn 1986; Stott 2009). A discussion of Tom Savage offers some insight into the relationship between this male subculture and the business of prostitution, a business profiting from the existence of the male subculture while also dependent on it.

Historians who write about prostitution note that the business transformed by the early twentieth century with the rise of male-dominated vice syndicates that displaced women from the upper echelons of the business (Gilfoyle 1992; Keire 2010; Rosen 1982). Los Angeles conforms to that pattern. Newspaper accounts from the nineteenth century reported on the arrests of women appearing to run parlor houses and brothels, and memoirs about prostitution in Los Angeles in the nineteenth century recalled the importance of madams like Cora Phillips and Pearl Morton. By the 1920s, however, Los Angeles newspapers expressed alarm about vice syndicates controlling prostitution and the city's other illicit business. In such syndicates men now apparently controlled the top tiers of the business hierarchy. And yet the existence of men such as Tom Savage suggests that this trend had its roots in the nineteenth century, when Savage and other male entrepreneurs competed with still prominent madams.

In nineteenth-century Los Angeles, female entrepreneurs in the business of prostitution had a monopoly on parlor houses—businesses that catered to a higher-paying clientele. Male entrepreneurs, by contrast, were active in the types of prostitution that attracted a more typical working-class clientele. Such entrepreneurs closely resemble the “professional jolly fellows” historian Richard Stott (2009) finds in the “sporting fraternity” of nineteenth-century cities like New York and San Francisco. Such men, he says, combined their rowdy lifestyle with a venue by which to earn a living, often operating saloons in conjunction with forays into political careers. While these men sometimes relied on women as important business associates, as men they actively courted and profited from the male fraternity that many historians have identified as a significant component of America's nineteenth-century urban red-light districts.

Like the “professional jolly fellow” Stott (2009) describes, Tom Savage rose to fame in the red-light district of Los Angeles because of his connections to the masculinized working-class subculture that revered the “manly art” of prizefighting, an activity that scholar Elliott Gorn (1986)

has claimed was at the heart of urban, male, working-class culture in American cities in the nineteenth century. After Savage moved to Los Angeles from San Francisco at the age of 19, for example, news of his pugilistic pursuits appeared regularly in the local newspapers (California Superior Court, Los Angeles County, California [CSC], 1909: Reporter's Transcript, California v. Broadhead [Broadhead]; Los Angeles Herald [LAH], 1 August 1889, 20 August 1889, 21 August 1889, 26 August 1889, 12 October 1889, 1 November 1889, 13 August 1891, 18 September 1891, 23 October 1891, 4 December 1891; Los Angeles Times [LAT], 21 August 1889, 24 August 1889, 11 October 1889, 4 December 1891). Likewise, a description of Los Angeles' prizefighting scene in the 1880s noted that the crowd in attendance consisted of a majority of "sporting men, saloonkeepers, gamblers, and others" (Splitter 1961:49), a description in keeping with the characterization of the working-class male subculture of other cities.

Like the "jolly fellows" in other cities, Savage's pugilistic skills—both inside and outside of the ring—helped him form the kinds of alliances that would contribute to his rise to political power in the Eighth Ward, the home of the city's red-light district (CSC 1909: Broadhead; Carr 1935; LAH, 1 May 1890, 24 July 1897; LAT, 20 August 1896, 17 February 1905). Savage was both a peer and student of men like the Manning brothers, who one local historian described as saloon owners and key political "players" in Los Angeles at the end of the nineteenth century. Such men served as a model of how to combine the "sporting" lifestyle with the ability to make a living (Cohn and Chisholm 1934; LAH, 1 August 1889, 12 October 1889). Savage also routinely appears in the company of other political jolly fellows in newspaper stories, such as the one covering a baseball game between competing saloons in the district—notable for its kegs of beer and the inability of its players to round all of the bases because of their disheveled state (LAH, 9 August 1892).

In Los Angeles these connections helped Savage become prominent in the city's Democratic party, earning him the reputation of a political boss. Already by 1892 (just five years after his arrival), Savage was active in the politics of the Eighth Ward as a Democratic delegate. Newspaper stories about his role suggest that at first he played a role typical of "sports" in other cities, namely "providing muscle" to ensure a favorable outcome to his associates (Stott 2009). The *Times* noted his presence, along with that of Joe Manning, in what it called "the army of Democratic ward strikers, macs, hobos and loafers" who had been engaging in "fraud, corruption

and low-down measures” during the election (LAH, 20 September 1892, 21 October 1892; LAT, 20 July 1892). In 1894 Savage managed to acquire a two-year term to the Los Angeles City Council, and in the 1898 and 1900 election years, Savage again served as a delegate for the Democratic Party in various capacities (LAH, 18 October 1898; LAT, 5 December 1894, 15 October 1898, 21 September 1900). By 1900 the *Times* had begun to identify Savage as “boss of ‘De Ate’” who had the power to place his “heelers” on the committees of his choice (LAT, 24 August 1900). From 1901 to 1906, Savage continued his rise to power in the Eighth Ward. In the 1902 election year, for example, the *Times* noted that Savage was serving as the “chair” of Eighth Ward delegates in Democratic conventions, and in 1904 the *Times* claimed that during the Democratic caucuses Savage had acted as the “ring master of a circus” (LAT, 12 November 1902, 29 October 1902, 1 May 1904; Viehe 1988). The *Times* also quoted Savage in 1904 as claiming that the Eighth Ward was “his ward” (LAT, 6 August 1904).

In Los Angeles elite representatives of the male working-class subculture such as Tom Savage used the appeal and support of their fraternity to gain political power, but many also saw economic advantages not only in the trades of drinking, gambling, and fighting but also in the business of prostitution.

Elliott Gorn (1986) has identified the saloon as the heart of the working-class masculine subculture of American cities in the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly then, Tom Savage located his base of operations in a saloon called the Bouquet Saloon at the corner of Commercial and Los Angeles Streets in the red-light district. Even before Savage acquired the lease, the Bouquet Saloon was one of the favored meeting places for the power brokers of the ward. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, for example, the Democratic ward convention had in 1894 used rooms adjoining the saloon as the location for its meeting (LAT, 15 March 1894). Savage took over the lease of the saloon by 1897 and continued to use it as the base of his political and economic operations for the next decade (LAT, 6 August 1904).

Although Savage’s Bouquet Saloon seems to have been a fairly exclusive male preserve, much in the way historians such as Chudacoff, Gorn, and Stott describe other working-saloons, Savage’s saloon was also physically tied to his other major business in the ward: prostitution. In this respect, Savage represents a convergence of two somewhat different subcultures. While some nineteenth-century working-class saloons “provided an

all-male environment of amiable sociability,” going so far as to ban women entirely, by the end of the nineteenth century, prostitution in saloons was “becoming more prevalent” (Chudacoff 1999; Gilfoyle 1992). Savage observed the possibility for profit in the combination of saloons and prostitution in the example of his mentor and friend Joe Manning. Manning not only managed several saloons, including one in the city’s crib district, but he also at one time had been married to Cora Phillips, a well-known Los Angeles madam in the 1870s (Cohn and Chisholm 1934; LAH, 1 August 1889, 12 October 1889, 10 February 1904). After Phillips’ death, Manning filed in court to obtain her estate and rented out her parlor house to other women who continued to operate it as a place of prostitution. Enterprising sporting men in other cities also benefited from collaborations with prominent madams. In New Orleans, for example, “sporting man” Tom Anderson opened a saloon “just around the corner” from the madam Josie Arlington’s brothel. Both parties, notes Alecia Long (2004:156), “used their association with each other, to full advantage, making substantial amounts of money in the process.”

When Savage took over the lease of the Bouquet Saloon in 1897, therefore, he likely did so with an eye toward an investment in prostitution as well as in the saloon business. Savage not only acquired the lease of the saloon, but he also gained control of two adjoining rooming houses known as the Arlington and Belmont. Together the Arlington and the Belmont contained nearly 70 small rooms located above the ground floor, each of which could be rented to prostitutes at exorbitant prices (CSC 1909: Broadhead; CSC 1909: Oswald).

Throughout the late nineteenth century, the city administration of Los Angeles resembled that of many other American cities in favoring the regulation rather than eradication of technically illegal businesses such as prostitution (Dykstra 1968; Goldman 1981; Hobson 1987; Keire 2010; Long 2004; Pivar 1973; Rosen 1982; Shumsky 1986). The policy of “tacit acceptance” encouraged prostitution within the confines of the red-light district, but city officials frowned upon more blatant displays of sexual commerce there. The best locations for prostitution, therefore, tended to be far from single-family homes and in buildings where sexual exchanges could occur far from street view (on second or third floors or at the back of the building).

The buildings on the corner of Commercial and Los Angeles met all these conditions. Most of the small rooms were located above ground-floor

level, and there were no single-family homes in the immediate area of the rooming houses. Instead, the area appears to have contained mostly businesses and rooming houses, with the rooming houses catering to a transient population. Finally, the rooming houses in which Savage invested certainly could not claim respectability. Prior to Savage's administration of the buildings, for example, the Arlington rooming house had been the site of several untimely deaths, the residence of men who consorted with prostitutes, the home of women who received male visitors or even lived with various men, and the location from which a man had fired deadly shots into an ex-chief of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAH, 26 March 1887, 19 January 1888, 23 August 1888, 6 October 1889, 15 May 1891).

While Joe Manning's partnership with Cora Phillips may have provided some inspiration for Savage's foray into the business of prostitution, Tom Savage's enterprise more closely resembles Manning's possible investments in crib prostitution on Alameda Street rather than his partnership with madams like Phillips who operated brothels and parlor houses. "Crib prostitution" tended to refer to women working out of buildings, sometimes constructed specifically for the purpose of prostitution, featuring rows of narrow rooms consisting of a door, window, and room for a bed and wash basin (Long 2004; Lou 1982). In contrast to women working out of madam-controlled brothels and parlor houses, women working in cribs had a lower-paying clientele, saw a higher volume of customers, and worked under conditions that tended to be more squalid and unsanitary (Barnhart 1986; Foster 1990; Keire 2010; Rosen 1982). This form of prostitution thus catered to the masses rather than the classes. Crib prostitution also tended to be more racially and ethnically diverse, both in the kinds of women and men trying to profit but also in terms of clientele.

In Los Angeles, cribs could be found as far east as Alameda Street and as far west as Broadway Street, although the great majority of them were concentrated on Alameda Street as well as in the heart of Chinatown on Los Angeles Street, formerly Calle de los Negros, sometimes called "Negro Alley." Historians such as Benson Tong have discussed the oppressive nature of prostitution for Chinese women, and these conditions were certainly part of cribs in Los Angeles' Chinatown as early as the 1860s. The situation of Chinese prostitutes in Los Angeles and throughout the West Coast shows the profession of prostitution at its worst. Chinese prostitutes experienced the least amount of autonomy, enjoyed the fewest benefits,

and operated in some of the worst working conditions. As in other West Coast cities, Chinese tongs—powerful secret organizations of men—controlled Chinese prostitutes in Los Angeles, and nearly all of the women working for the tongs had become prostitutes in America against their will (LAT, 6 July 1891, 30 August 1891; Lou 1982; Rosen 1982; Tong 1994). Chinese prostitutes became even more enmeshed in tong control if they acquired opium habits or gambling debts (Ciani 1991; Lou 1982). Because of tong control, Chinese prostitutes had less autonomy compared to non-Chinese counterparts. They were also essentially segregated from other cribs operating in the area (Lou 1982; Newmark and Newmark 1984; Robinson 1964). An 1882 editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* commented on the separation of Chinese prostitutes at the north end of Los Angeles Street and their “Caucasian sisters” at the south end of the street (LAT, 4 May 1882).

Newspaper accounts of the cribs outside of tong control suggest that women working in them did not face the same kind of enslavement as Chinese women. Yet reporters still depicted the crib district as rife with drug abuse, physical violence, and suicide, due in large part to the prominent roles men—particularly pimps—played within the district. Already in the 1880s, the *Los Angeles Times*’ coverage of the crib district said as much or more about the “notorious pimps” and the “vile masters and lovers” as it did about the “lewd women” (LAT, 25 June 1887, 7 August 1887, 24 August 1891). In 1887 the *Times* mentioned that a woman working in a crib attempted suicide after her “vile master and lover” had “sent word by another girl that he was done with her” (LAT, 20 December 1887). In 1889 the *Times* reported on the murder of Annie le Brun, identified as “an Alameda-street courtesan.” According to the *Times*, Charles Scott, the man who lived with le Brun in an Alameda Street crib, had shot her because she had been attempting to leave him (LAT, 17 May 1889). Tumultuous conditions persisted into the early twentieth century for the crib district. An anonymous report detailing conditions in the Alameda Street cribs for 1902–1904 contains information on multiple brawls, attempted suicides, and one case of murder (Alameda Street Notes, 1902–1904, author’s possession).

As early as the 1880s, such conditions helped convince the city’s reformers that the crib district represented the “abode of the lowest type of the most lewd women” (LAH, 6 September 1888). It is therefore not surprising that during periods of reform, reformers demanded the closure

of the crib district first before going after the parlor houses. In conjunction with a reform effort directed against the city's cribs, the *Los Angeles Times* published a map of "Hell's Half Acre" in 1903 showing hundreds of cribs lining Alameda Street, "Negro Alley," and Ferguson Alley (LAT, 3 December 1903). As the label "Hell's Half Acre" suggests, reformers saw cribs as a worse form of prostitution compared to the city's brothels and parlor houses, and police officers too distinguished cribs from brothels and parlor houses.

Although historians have understandably focused on the women working out of cribs, the extent to which men were involved in this kind of prostitution is noteworthy (Lou 1982; Rosen 1982; Tong 1994). In addition to the pimps who, as historian Cynthia Blair has noted, could play a variety of roles, "ranging from the lover and business partner who provided companionship, protection, and bail money to the abusive controller of one or more prostitutes' labor and earnings," there was also a group of men profiting from prostitution on a larger scale (Blair 2010:166). As many historians have pointed out, madams who ran parlor houses and brothels often did not tolerate the presence of pimps in their establishments (Rosen 1982). Men interested in profiting from prostitution on a larger scale therefore had to do so through another form, and one popular avenue into the business came in the crib district. While Savage did not open cribs in the district, he did embrace the model of appealing to the working-class male clientele through high-volume, lost-cost sexual services; contemporaries uniformly characterized the kind of prostitution taking place in his rooming houses as "crib" prostitution. As the *Times* commented in 1904: "The difference between it [the Arlington rooming house] and the crib district was simply that the Arlington was in one building and the latter in numerous smaller ones" (CSC 1909: Broadhead; LAT, 27 March 1904).

While Chinese tongs appear to have formed at least in part to a racist culture that did not allow Chinese men access to the commercialized leisure open to other working-class men, Tom Savage and others formed an alternative fraternity of sorts reflective of their connections to the larger male working-class subculture. In operating the saloon in close physical conjunction with the rooming houses, Savage joined his masculinized sporting world to one filled with women, but in a form that retained a gendered segregation of sorts. In doing so, Savage diverged from a trend favoring a more conspicuous female presence in the leisure

venues of the male sporting world. Venues like the concert saloons that first emerged in the 1860s, for example, “allowed female performers and waitresses to double as prostitutes, soliciting customers as they worked” (Gilfoyle 1992:225). In these and other “sexually tolerant” saloons, women may have been able to “set the price” and “dictated the place to which they would adjourn” even while “men acted as the privileged patrons and proprietors” (Keire 2016:253). In her study of New Orleans, Alecia Long (2004:86) contends that such places attracted attention precisely because they mixed “potentially incendiary elements . . . perhaps most explosive of all, men and women who flouted the rules of respectability brazenly and in public.”

Los Angeles had its share of such places, but Savage maintained the veneer of separation in his red-light enterprises. Given his political connections, Savage understood that city leaders found prostitution most problematic when flagrant, thus the segregation of the saloon from the business of prostitution seems to have been a strategic choice. Just a few years before Savage gained control of the Bouquet Saloon and adjacent rooming houses, the *Herald* (6 September 1893) carried a story on a move to revoke the liquor licenses of three “notorious” saloons in the city. The police report cited the presence of “prostitutes” and “dissolute” women as a key factor in their “bad reputation” or “disorderly” character. Cited as “a general resort for prostitutes and their panderers, both colored and white,” the New Orleans Saloon caused especial concern for its violation of both gender and racial segregation. The article noted that the owner of the Basket Saloon, located in a portion of the city’s crib district, had recently adopted a policy of not allowing prostitutes in the saloon out of “a desire to comply with the wishes of the officers,” going so far as to install an “electric annunciator” in the saloon that connected to the 33 adjacent cribs. Such a device allowed the “crib” women to “ring up the saloon” when they or their visitors wanted drinks and have them delivered to the crib (LAH, 6 September 1893).

In contrast to such “dives,” Savage’s Bouquet Saloon remained a space for the men of the sporting class despite its connection to the business of prostitution taking place in the adjoining rooming houses. It was at the saloon, for example, where Savage had his office, and in describing the saloon’s clientele, newspapers claimed it served as a hub for red-light politicians and functioned as a haunt for pimps who hoped to secure a room at Savage’s lodging house for their prostitutes (LAT, 6 August 1904,

25 March 1907). Presumably the Bouquet Saloon also attracted working-class patrons who used the services of prostitutes working upstairs.

While Savage's success in the district illustrates the pervasive masculinized culture of red-light enterprises, women were not completely absent from the upper echelons of his business. Although sources are sparse, newspapers mentioned at least two women who appear to have overseen the operation of one of the rooming houses. According to local newspapers in 1897, while George Arbuckle was one of the proprietors of the Bouquet Saloon, his wife ran the lodging house above it (LAH, 18 March 1897). Four years later, however, May Davenport, along with her nephew Charles Stack, had taken over the daily operations of the buildings (LAT, 31 August 1906; CSC 1909: Broadhead). Like "Mrs. Arbuckle" before her, May Davenport's connection to the business was also an intimate one. According to the *Times*, May Davenport was Savage's wife, and she too at one time resided at one of the rooming houses—along with her nephew and Tom Savage (LAT, 1 February 1901).

As to the exact role Davenport played within the enterprise, there is scant information. In 1899 Davenport appeared in a Los Angeles Superior Court record as a defendant in a case involving an unpaid loan of \$1,200. A list of Davenport's "personal property" included in the court documents suggests that she may have owned the furniture and physical assets tied to the 43 rooms at the Arlington. The records also indicate, however, the segregation between Davenport's business and that of the saloon. In a list of assets notable for its uniformity, four rooms stand out. One room—Room 20, with its upholstered furniture and table—may have served as Davenport's personal quarters. Rooms 26 and 27 contained a dining room and kitchen. Room 25, with its desk, six armchairs, and sofa, served as an office. This office also featured a cuspidor and therefore was probably not an exclusively feminine space. Still, its proximity to the other portions of the Arlington rooming house rather than the saloon suggests that this office was separate from the one Savage maintained in the company of his jolly fellows (Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, 1900: Los Angeles Area Court Records, 1850–1910, Los Angeles Superior Court 35825, Writ of Attachment, Lawrence v. Davenport). Davenport's contributions to the business netted her substantial financial benefits. When she died from a drug overdose in 1906, for example, she had \$6,048 in her bank account, and her total estate was worth \$40,000 (LAH, 31 August 1908; LAT, 31 August 1908). It was, therefore, possible to break into and profit from the

higher levels of the kind of business that Savage and his male partners dominated, but women did so by utilizing or forging sexual alliances with more powerful men.

Despite the presence of Mrs. Arbuckle and May Davenport, the great majority of Savage's business associates appear to have been drawn from his working-class male subculture. As Ruth Rosen (1982:87) has pointed out, successful madams exerted some degree of political power, exchanging their silence regarding the identity of customers "for the continued political protection of [their] business." Legally banned from voting, however, madams were effectively left out of the kind of political power maneuvering that worked to Savage's benefit when he branched out into the business of prostitution (Cooney 2005). The political influence of men like Savage, for example, drew from their collegiality with the male sporting class and consequent ability to harness and control their votes in the service of political allies. The quest for such influence not only led Savage to emulate other male entrepreneurs in Los Angeles' red-light district but also to build on and develop his own network of them in the course of launching and running his own business. One such associate was George Arbuckle, who, like Savage, had served as a delegate in 1896 for the Democratic Congressional Convention (LAT, 21 August 1896). Arbuckle had also played third base for Savage's team in the 1892 baseball game, noteworthy more for the kegs of beer than the skill of its players (LAH, 9 August 1892). Other business partners included the brothers Henry and James A. Gorman. Like Savage, Henry Gorman was a member of the Los Angeles Athletic Club, responsible for organizing boxing matches that Savage attended (LAH, 14 March 1897, 19 March 1897; LAT, 21 July 1897). At one time, James Gorman even lived at the Arlington, as did George Arbuckle and Tom Savage (LAH, 18 March 1897; LAT, 18 March 1897, 19 March 1897).

While these business associates tend to appear in the masculinized working-class world of Tom Savage, another business partner (and later rival)—Nicholas "Nick" Oswald—had vast experience in the city's crib district employing women but patronizing and fraternizing with men. According to Harry Carr, reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* (30 August 1908), Oswald's entry into the business of prostitution had come through his work in a saloon located in the crib district: the "old Frenchman who used to run the Pantheon saloon in the Tenderloin gave him a job as a bartender." When the "old Frenchman" retired from the business, Carr

went on to report, he “gave Nick his saloon.” Nick then invested the profits from the saloon in the purchase of the “cheap tenement houses used in the Tenderloin for immoral purposes.” Oswald himself admitted that prior to his partnership with Savage, Oswald had tended bar in the crib district and rented out property there to a woman who ran it as a house of ill fame (CSC 1909: Broadhead).

Despite Oswald’s own considerable experience in the city’s vice industries, Oswald saw in Savage a way to enhance his own political connections in the district. The *Times*, for example, alleged that Oswald understood the importance of “political pull” in the business of prostitution. Thus, the *Times* continued, Oswald “set out to learn politics” and “became an associate of Tom Savage until he thoroughly and phlegmatically mastered the science of controlling votes” (LAT, 30 August 1908). Such collusion was evident in the 1904 Democratic caucuses, when newspaper coverage of the event indicated that Savage and Oswald were working together. While Savage acted as “ring master of a circus,” Oswald was the “genial governor-general of the red light district” (LAT, 1 May 1904). Further coverage of the caucuses reported that Savage was pushing Nick Oswald as one of the party’s delegates (LAT, 3 May 1904, 30 October 1904). Lacking Savage’s pugilistic skills, Oswald nevertheless saw the benefits of participating in the city’s boxing culture too, eventually investing in a 25% interest in the Pacific Athletic Club, which regularly put on boxing exhibitions (CSC 1909: Broadhead).

Historians have discussed the importance of political connections between prominent sporting men like Savage and city officials in several major American cities, but its gender exclusivity bears further examination given the way it helped force women in the business of prostitution to the periphery (Gilfoyle 1992; Keire 2010; Long 2004). While Savage was not the only person profiting from prostitution in the district, his political and social clout helped him stand out as one of the most powerful red-light entrepreneurs. In 1904, when urban reformers protested against the conspicuous sexual exchanges taking place in cribs located along Alameda Street, Savage saw the reformers’ concern about these cribs as an opportunity to use his pull with city officials to increase his own profits from prostitution. In the aftermath of the raids that closed the Alameda Street cribs in 1904, many of the women who had worked there turned up in Savage’s rooming houses (LAT, 2 April 1904).

Savage’s political clout not only allowed him to dominate the crib

business after 1904 but also allowed him to offer women and their pimps working conditions that were relatively free from harassment from law enforcement. Because of Savage's connections, he could offer prostitutes a "protected" venue to ply their trade. The *Times* (25 March 1907) observed that Savage's ability to offer prostitutes "protection" along with the "lack of rooms for painted women" meant that Savage's rooms at the Arlington and Belmont were "naturally in great demand." As a result, "women have paid premiums or bonuses for these rooms, in some instances amounting to \$100 and \$150." Despite one "raid" on Savage's rooming houses in 1904, and periodic raids in 1906 and 1907, Savage testified that the rooming houses continued to operate as houses of prostitution until December 1907 (CSC 1909: Broadhead). As Savage himself was quoted as saying, "yer can't have a metropolis widout some kind of sportin' life" (LAT, 2 April 1904).

While Savage's connections to the "jolly fellowship" helped him become a leading entrepreneur in Los Angeles' red-light district, his savvy business practices also set him apart from his competitors. One innovation in the business of prostitution came in his discernment with regard to property investment and management. Many historians have equated property ownership with economic success in the business of prostitution, particularly for madams (Goldman 1981; Long 2004; Petrik 1987). In Los Angeles both madams such as Cora Philips and male entrepreneurs invested in the purchase of property. Savage, however, showed his business savvy in the recognition that a successful prostitution business had to operate with flexibility. Perhaps the lesson came from Savage's observation of the periodic reforms that had already taken aim at eradicating prostitution from the city. In any case, Savage distanced himself from the reach of reformers by declining to become a property owner—as merely the person who controlled the lease, he could not be held culpable for the character of the buildings or business in the same way as a property owner (CSC 1909: Broadhead). Historian Cynthia Blair (2010) also notes the advantages of renting rather than owning property in the career of madam Vina Fields in Chicago.

Savage also protected himself from the sporadic nature of both reform and law enforcement by taking over property that could be leased as easily to law-abiding citizens as to prostitutes. Timothy Gilfoyle (1992:178) has argued that the growing reform movement of the nineteenth century forced prostitution from the conspicuous brothel into "more secretive

residences in furnished-room houses, tenements, apartments, and hotels.” Unlike a “crib,” a rooming house lacked the explicit connection to sexual commerce, and Savage could operate his business in conformity with the conservative city policy of accommodating less visible forms of prostitution. In addition, taking over the lease of a rooming house also meant a minimal financial investment with maximum profit. Because Savage could simply transform the existing building into a house of prostitution, he did not need to sink money into the construction of a building. Savage, then, while knowingly engaging in an illegal business, took care to protect himself from legal culpability and financial risk.

One final method Savage used in protecting himself was the employment of managers to deal with the details relating to the daily operation of the business. Noting the need for musicians, bouncers, maids, cooks, and janitors, historians have observed that the business of prostitution provided a host of “ancillary jobs” to both men and women in the sporting world economy (Keire 2010). Few historians, however, have commented on the growing infrastructure of property managers, accountants, and real estate agents. Yet Savage appeared to have relied on a fairly sophisticated system of managers in operating his red-light businesses, a model that other entrepreneurs such as Nick Oswald also utilized. Such managers freed him from direct involvement in an illegal business and thus shielded him from the rare legal charges brought against him. A 1907 raid of the red-light district resulted in police arresting Tom Savage and manager Charles Armstrong on warrants “charging them with keeping houses of ill fame” (LAH, 29 March 1907; LAT, 29 March 1907). At the trial, Savage was able to distance himself from the prostitution occurring at the lodging houses by asserting that he had nothing to do with running the houses. He had merely obtained the leases of the buildings and then sublet them to other parties (LAH, 4 June 1907). When the jury failed to convict Savage, the case was dismissed (LAH, 6 June 1907). Charles Davenport could not claim such distance from the business of prostitution, so he refused to testify at the trial on the grounds that his answers would be incriminating (LAT, 5 June 1907). Eventually, Charles Davenport did plead guilty to charges that he was “keeping a house of ill repute” and received a fine of \$200 (LAH, 17 June 1907). Savage’s testimony during the grand jury investigation of the red-light district in 1909 was much the same as it had been in 1907. While Savage could testify candidly that both the Arlington and Belmont rooming houses had functioned as houses of

prostitution, Savage could also say (seemingly in all honesty) that he had not “run” either (CSC 1909: Broadhead; CSC 1909: Oswald). Instead, he had merely “sub-leased” the property (CSC 1909: Oswald).

Several clues indicate how successful Savage's red-light enterprises were during their heyday. In 1902, commenting on the Bouquet Saloon, the *Los Angeles Times* (12 November 1902) proclaimed: “As a dispenser of wet goods, Mr. Savage has few equals, it is said.” In 1905 the *Herald* (3 September 1905) noted that the Bouquet Saloon was “one of the most popular resorts of its kind in the city, and is known by many people far and near.” Even after Savage was no longer raking in prostitution-related profits from his lodging houses, he continued to make money from the saloon at least until 1910, when the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners refused to issue Savage a liquor license for the saloon (LAT, 15 February 1910).

Savage's income from the Arlington and Belmont lodging houses, when they were run as houses of prostitution, was also substantial. In 1904 the *Los Angeles Times* (27 March 1904) estimated that the revenue from the Arlington alone was \$100 per night plus the profits from the sale of liquor on the property. The estimate of Nick Oswald, Savage's one-time business partner, was more conservative. He believed the lodging houses together were generating \$3,000–\$4,000 monthly around 1906 (CSC 1909: Oswald). In either case, the revenue from Savage's prostitution business was considerably higher than typical rooming-house income. A 1905 advertisement in the *Herald* (26 May 1905) touting the sale of rooming house/hotel with a similar number of rooms to the Arlington claimed that the property brought in an average of \$450 per month, a far cry from the \$3,000 per month that the Arlington may have been generating. Clearly, the property at Los Angeles and Commercial was well worth the inflated \$1,250 monthly rent Savage was paying (LAH, 6 June 1907; CSC 1909: Oswald).

Although the perspective of women working at the Arlington or Belmont, to say nothing of Los Angeles' red-light district in general, is rare, women working for Savage also benefited from his well-run, organized, and protected business. Savage's testimony that there were probably somewhere between 55 and 60 women working out of the lodging houses around 1906 confirms that nearly all of the available rooms were being used for prostitution (CSC 1909: Oswald). Although none of the women using the rooms for prostitution testified at the trial, Mrs. Rosalind

Caswell, an undercover female detective, did. She claimed that she was, at first, unable to obtain a room at the Belmont and instead was told that “all the rooms were taken and that there was a long list of girls fairly begging for a chance to get into the house” (LAT, 5 June 1907). Caswell was successful in renting a room only after chatting with a woman who was leaving temporarily and agreed to have Caswell take her place (LAT, 5 June 1907).

As historians have noted, women who did not work in parlor houses potentially faced more challenging working conditions. At the same time, however, such women could move more easily “in and out of the sex economy” and exerted “greater control over their income and hours than women working in brothels” (Blair 2010:70). At Savage’s Belmont rooming house, women rented their rooms by the week at the inflated weekly price of \$18 (LAH, 6 June 1907). According to Caswell, the Belmont was a “dollar house,” meaning women could expect to charge potential clients only \$1 per sexual exchange (LAT, 5 June 1907). Such information confirms that women working in these rooming houses expected to make money only by seeing a high volume of customers.

While women working outside the confines of the brothel may have enjoyed a higher degree of flexibility and autonomy, their success tended to come from their proximity to and alliance with other enterprising men. Many historians have tended to portray pimps in a negative light, but some historians have begun to suggest such men may have played a more complex role in the negotiations occurring around the business of prostitution (Blair 2010; Long 2004). In Los Angeles pimps resembling “abusive controllers” appear with much greater frequency in the cribs of Chinatown and the adjacent “crib district” than they do in Savage’s Belmont and Arlington rooming houses. In Savage’s rooming houses, pimps are ubiquitous but function more as the business partners of the women working upstairs. They played a key role, for example, in securing rooms for the women who worked out of them. In some cases such men would use their economic influence, paying a “bonus,” to obtain a room, but the *Times* (13 March 1907) also claimed there was evidence that certain male clients would use political influence to acquire a room on behalf of a woman.

Such men certainly may have been exploitive, but women seeking to make money through prostitution may have benefited from such relationships by gaining access to a “protected” venue to ply their trade as well

as a steady source of clientele. In addition, the anecdotal evidence in Los Angeles newspapers suggests that while Savage's boarding houses were not tranquil, the majority of physical violence taking place there involved barroom brawls between men. There is no story in either the *Times* or the *Herald* portraying physical violence toward women in the Arlington or Belmont cribs. Such a silence is at least notable, given that newspapers did continue to print stories about violence against women in the Alameda crib district (LAH, 23 May 1900, 23 August 1903).

After nearly a decade of success in the business of prostitution, in 1906 Savage suffered a series of setbacks that would eventually unseat him from his position of power in the city's red-light district in the Eighth Ward. The first setback Savage experienced was the loss of his business associate and common-law wife, May Davenport. Following some kind of argument with Savage, Davenport took 60 grains of morphine in an attempt to commit suicide (LAT, 5 May 1906; LAH, 5 May 1906). Despite the "quick work of surgeons," Davenport died 11 days later (LAH, 16 May 1906). Savage's business partnership with Nick Oswald also ended that year. Neither man explicitly addressed the cause of the dispute that led to the termination of their partnership, but Oswald was furious enough to spend the next several years building a rival red-light empire designed to put Savage out of business (CSC 1909: Broadhead).

Several other factors also contributed to Savage's undoing in the red-light district. Los Angeles newspaper reporter Harry Carr noted, for example, that Savage knew when to use "brute force" and when to use "blarney," but it's possible that Savage's "blarney" may have led former allies to turn on him. In 1907 the *Los Angeles Times* (27 March 1907) insinuated that part of the reason city authorities were no longer tolerating prostitution at the Arlington and Belmont had to do with how Savage had recently "openly boasted of his control of the police and of his ability to give 'protection' to the women who paid him high rental for rooms in his dives in the Arlington and Belmont."

In addition, Los Angeles' red-light district itself was changing in a way that contributed to Savage's loss of power. Carr claimed, for example, "the voting strength of the 'De Ate' has become so reduced by the intrusion of the foreign quarter and the factories that a mere handful of 800 are left to boss" (LAT, 30 August 1908). A declining number of votes in the district had contributed to Savage's loss of prestige, but Carr also noted a new tone in city politics that favored the less bombastic leadership style of Oswald,

who tended to run the ward like a “factory superintendent” rather than the “captain of a pirate crew” (LAT, 30 August 1908).

The final death knell for Savage, however, came in 1909, when, due in part to the growing power of progressive reformers, Los Angeles changed its policy with regard to prostitution—favoring a policy of law enforcement and eradication rather than toleration and regulation. The campaign against prostitution in Los Angeles was part of a large wave of national reform aimed at ameliorating poverty, corruption, crime, disease, and other urban problems. Despite the diversity of reform movements, reformers, and even methods and philosophies of reform, the basis of the movement was a commitment to progress, thus earning it the label of the “progressive movement” (Deverell and Sitton 1994; Mowry 1963[1951]). In Los Angeles the problem of municipal corruption, particularly the link between the red-light district and city officials, appeared to be the crowning issue leading to the recall of Mayor Arthur Harper. Thus, while all purveyors of prostitution—including Pearl Morton and other madams—faced the closure of their operations, men such as Tom Savage and his by-then-rival Nick Oswald tended to be the focus of the city’s investigation of red-light alliances between entrepreneurs and city officials.

While Pearl Morton left the city to run a brothel in San Francisco, Savage remained in Los Angeles. Lacking the connections that had once made him so prosperous, however, Savage continued to decline—economically but also personally. Ousted from any place of significance in the Democratic Party, he appears to have spent the next five years in the vicinity of the saloon and rooming house where he had once lived. Showing up at a meeting of Los Angeles police commissioners in 1910 to settle the question of a liquor license, Savage “appeared pitifully, a wreck of the once splendid physique that made him a terror on the East Side” (LAT, 15 February 1910). Just a few years later, at 47 years old, Savage died from a morphine overdose (LAT, 3 January 1915). The *Herald* (2 January 1915) reported that for the past five years, he had been living “from day to day” and “sought forgetfulness in morphine. He was seen much on the streets, broken, old before his time, and drifting rapidly toward the end.”

Although much of Savage’s life remains unknown, Savage was an innovator and trendsetter in the business of prostitution. He observed existing models of men involved in the business of prostitution and saw the kind of profits flowing into the hands of Chinese tongs as well as other male entrepreneurs in the city’s crib district from prostitution that catered to

a higher volume within a male working-class customer base. Savage also perceived the importance of business diversification, particularly in the connection between saloons and prostitution. Willing and able to rub elbows (or drink or fight) with potential male clients or business partners, Savage claimed a certain ignorance regarding the women working for him as prostitutes. While a madam retained an intimate knowledge of the women she employed in her parlor house, often becoming a “confidante and counselor” as well an exploiter of her employees, Savage left this part of the business in the hands of his managers (Rosen 1982).

Although madams like Pearl Morton continued to run profitable brothels catering to the city's elite to the end of the city's period of tacit acceptance of a regulated red-light district, after 1909 more and more women in the prostitution industry would work for or in collaboration with men like Savage. Female “managers” displaced independent madams at the top of the economic hierarchy of women in the business. In the 1920s and 1930s, for example, at least two women in Los Angeles testified to the lack of independence they experienced in working as part of a larger male-dominated criminal “syndicate” (CSC 1940: Reporter's Transcript, District Court of Appeal, Second District Court, California v. Montgomery and Forrester; Lee 1965). And, as a closer look at the business of Tom Savage indicates, probably a substantial number of women working in the business were already relying on male business associates in the nineteenth century. These associates included pimps who could help them recruit clientele or secure a “position” in a protected venue such as the one Savage controlled, but directly or indirectly, the vast majority of the economic profit from their sexual labor was flowing into the hands of men like Thomas Savage.

Acknowledgments

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Review Copy

“A WEAK MAN can now cure himself”

Brothels as Alternative Venues for Treatment
of “Private Diseases of Men”—and Other Afflictions

MARK S. WARNER

An opening disclaimer: the data I am working with is drawn from the fringes of a very large archaeology project, the Sandpoint Archaeology Project (Weaver et al. 2014). As part of that project we excavated two brothels—excavations that resulted in the recovery of approximately 200,000 artifacts. The scale of the project enabled us to talk at length about many of the common narratives on prostitution, health and hygiene, class, identity, and so on (Warner and Bard 2014; Warner et al. 2014), yet the scale of the project also resulted in the recovery of a few items that could be illustrative of behaviors not commonly discussed in the context of prostitution. Basically, I am working from a very small analytical corner of a huge data assemblage—but it’s a corner that has not received much attention at all in archaeology. Specifically, I intend to explore some of the ancillary reasons men *may* have visited prostitutes. So at the outset I acknowledge a thin data set, yet I put this work forward as an attempt to explore some aspects of life in brothels that archaeologists have not yet really explored.

Context for the Study

The title of this paper is drawn from an 1893 advertisement in a local paper for a cure for impotence (Figure 11.1). There isn’t a specific product named in that particular ad, but the ad right above it—the Evans Chemical Co.’s promise to cure “the Big G” in one to three days—is a product that was found in the Sandpoint excavations. The two ads are selling a



Big G is the acknowledged leading remedy for all the unnatural discharges and private diseases of men. A certain cure for the debilitating weakness peculiar to women.

Cures in 1 to 5 DAYS. Guaranteed not to cause Stricture.

Md only by THE EVANS CHEMICAL CO. in Cincinnati, O. U. S. A.

I prescribe it and feel safe in recommending it to all sufferers.

A. J. STONER, M. D., Decatur, Ga. Sold by Druggists. PRICE \$1.00.

A WEAK MAN

CAN NOW CURE HIMSELF OF THE DEPLORABLE results of early abuse and perfectly restore his vigor and vitality by the great Australian REMEDY—A Physician's Gift to Humanity—which will be sent FREE to those afflicted. The remarkable cures of hopeless cases of Nervous Debility and Private Complaints are everywhere stamping out quackery. Address with stamp, Box 1044, San Francisco, Cal.

Figure 11.1. Newspaper ad from the *Pend d'Oreille News*, April 23, 1893, p. 3.

product to cure venereal disease (the Big G) and impotence. Neither topic has been discussed at length in archaeological circles, but both are central to this discussion. Specifically, I want to use the archaeological data from Sandpoint to explore some of the ancillary reasons that men may visit brothels, arguing that sometimes they were motivated by something a bit more complex than just sex.

Sandpoint, Idaho

Sandpoint is a small town in northern Idaho, about an hour and a half south of the Canadian border. It was settled in 1882 as the Northern Pacific Railroad was being constructed. Sandpoint quickly grew to some prominence in the region, with a population of about 2,900 by 1910. The town's economy during the early decades was primarily based on logging and mining. By the middle of the twentieth century the influence of the two industries had waned significantly. Today Sandpoint is a town of approximately 7,500 whose economy is heavily based on tourism (skiing and summer recreation). The tourism element actually is a significant component to this narrative because highway I-95 runs through Sandpoint. It is the primary north-south route through Idaho, and for decades Sandpoint was a major bottleneck, as the highway was routed through the heart of downtown—sometimes it took more than an hour to get through this small town. In 2002 Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) made the decision to build a byway through the town. The selected route went



Figure 11.2. Sandpoint ca. 1890s. Structures in the project area are on the left side of the image. (Bonner County Historical Society.)

through an area that was part of the earliest settlement of the city (Figure 11.2).

The construction of the byway was also extremely controversial in Sandpoint as local community members had been arguing over this issue for more than 40 years. Given the fact that the byway construction was the source of controversy, ITD went to considerable lengths to do its due diligence on the environmental impacts of the project. From an archaeological perspective, this meant extensive testing and mitigation of an approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile-long corridor. At the time of the field work the area was largely forested but it previously was the city's downtown. The corridor impacted by construction was the former location of the Humbird Lumber Company, a cemetery, a hotel, many small businesses, saloons, two brothels and a Chinese residence/business.

Field work took place sporadically over two years beginning in 2006. Concerns about disrupting tourism and other administrative issues necessitated that field work could only take place during the "shoulder seasons" of spring and fall. The project was originally a CH2M Hill-directed project that eventually became the purview of SWCA Environmental Consultants. Jim Bard (SWCA) and Robert Weaver (Environmental History Company) were the lead principal investigators on the project. I joined the project in 2008 to direct the processing of artifacts recovered and to contribute to the report production. Ultimately, this project became the largest archaeological project in the state of Idaho's history with some 600,000 artifacts recovered from the excavations. As a side note, while the expectation was that there would be a significant prehistoric component

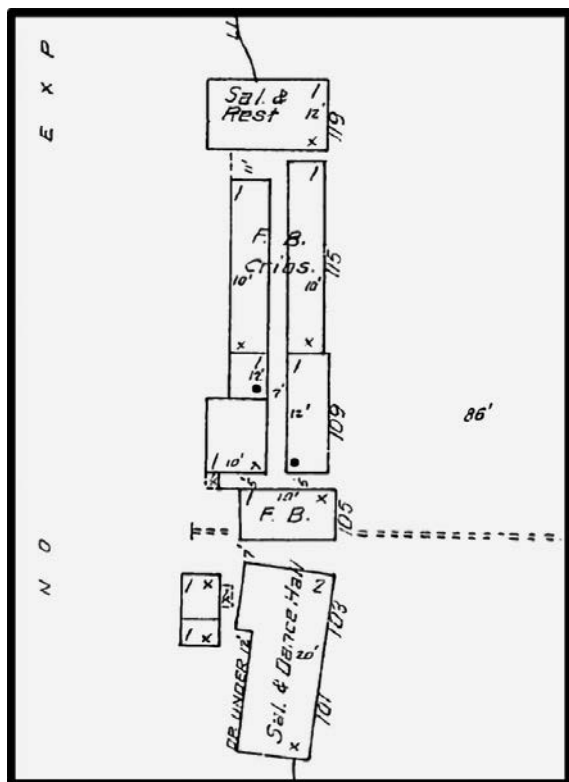
to the project, in fact fewer than 300 artifacts were recovered that were associated with precontact Indian lifeways.

Sandpoint Prostitution

As mentioned, the project excavated two brothels. The brothels were actually a complex of buildings, part of an area labeled by the locals as the “Restricted District.” From what we can gather from our research, the two brothels, located right next to each other, served somewhat differing clienteles (Figures 11.3 and 11.4). The larger of the two brothels was run by Marie Henderson. The clientele was apparently primarily working-class folks, likely the workers from the Humbird mill. Twelve women worked there, and it was apparently a place that survived by hosting a significant number of men.

To understand the reality of western prostitution, it is useful to note some of the complexities of the business. Women could work as prostitutes in a variety of venues, such as hotels, dance halls, and saloons, but there were also places whose primary function was prostitution. Scholars who have studied prostitution have established a fairly well-defined hierarchy (though there is some differentiation of terminology used) of prostitution institutions in the West. The hierarchy is roughly: 1) parlor houses, 2) bordellos, 3) brothels, and 4) cribs (see Agnew 2008:53–77; Butler 1985:xvii–xviii; Goldman 1981:73–96; and Rutter 2005:13–24, among others). The places are broadly differentiated by the amount of amenities available to the clients. At the high end, clients of parlor houses would be able to visit by invitation only and might spend hours there. At the low end were cribs where a client might only visit for a few minutes. In a crib there were no amenities and no pretense of socializing at all—men were discouraged from even removing their work boots prior to having sex (Agnew 2008:72). Working life in a crib might mean a woman would have between 20 and 50 clients during a busy evening (e.g., paydays at the mill) with an average number of customers per night being 25. Despite being identified as a “crib” on the Sanborn map, Henderson’s place would likely have been a brothel, a place that had minimal amenities and some food available for clients—but not a place where clients would be able to linger.

In contrast to Henderson’s establishment was Willa Herman’s bordello. Archaeologically this place had a much richer assemblage. Three women



Left: Figure 11.3. Sanborn map showing Marie Henderson's Brothel ("F.B. Cribs") and Willa Herman's Bordello ("F.B"), 1909. (Warner and Bard 2014:91.)

Below: Figure 11.4. Henderson brothel and Herman bordello ca. 1905.



worked there, along with a cook and a musician. This place evidently catered to a clientele that was considerably better off financially. Clients at Herman's establishment would more likely have been the managers and supervisors at the Humbird mill instead of the mill workers. In visiting Herman's place the client may have had something approximating a parlor house experience; they would have enjoyed some music, had a relaxed drink and possibly even a meal—and then had sex.

There is actually much that could be discussed about how class differences were manifested between these two establishments. The material culture of the two establishments was quite varied, and stemming from what we found through archaeology, there are interesting arguments to be made about class and reproductive control among prostitutes as well as other topics (Warner and Bard 2014). However, among the 100,000-plus artifacts we found at the two establishments were also a few things that provided the impetus to explore some avenues of prostitution that aren't commonly discussed, namely some of the ancillary roles prostitutes may have played in communities such as Sandpoint. Certainly, the primary motivation for many men to visit prostitutes is simply to have some form of sex, but what we found in this project also provides some hints about other possible motivations to visit prostitutes.

In exploring these ancillary roles it is also important to understand the complexity of sexual politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was a time of increasing expectations of temperate behavior and sexual restraint leading to expanded public efforts to regulate and curtail prostitution. Paradoxically, it was a period of increasing anxiety about sex in middle America—at least in part because it wasn't to be talked about (D'Emilio and Freedman 1988:139–167). In that void prostitution became somewhat of a “necessary evil,” providing an outlet for men that hopefully curtailed other failings. One Western scholar reported that “practically speaking, however, prostitution was generally tolerated and was looked upon as a necessary evil that had a crude value to society. Prostitution was considered to be a readily available outlet for men who had no other release for their sexual tensions, thereby hopefully reducing the incidence of rape, molestation and other sex related crimes” (Agnew 2008:16). I hesitate to go so far as talking about prostitutes as healers, but there is historical evidence that men did go to prostitutes for treatments for some key afflictions. Further, the Sandpoint project identified some evidence to suggest that was also happening in Sandpoint.

Put simply, sometimes a trip to Marie Henderson's place or (more likely) Willa Herman's establishment may have been for other purposes than sex. Specifically, those other purposes were raised in the ad presented as figure 11.1—venereal disease and impotence.

Venereal Disease

It is certain that many of the women who worked in the two establishments had some form of venereal disease. By at least one account, 60% to 75% of western prostitutes were infected with some form of venereal disease, and nationwide the estimate was as high as 75% to 90% (Agnew 2008:85; Brandt 1987:31). Sandpoint's working women were almost certainly no exception to this problem. Indeed, Sandpoint was one of many towns in the West where physicians conducted examinations of prostitutes on a monthly basis—or at least this occurred for about a year's time around 1904, as there are records of the physician charging a fee of \$1.00 per month for his services.

I also want to make clear that despite regular physician examinations, it is highly likely that the women living and working in the Sandpoint brothels were probably treating themselves and not simply traveling to the local doctor every month. To be treated for venereal disease by a physician frequently had significant costs, both socially and materially. As a result many prostitutes (and their customers) would commonly turn to the myriad of available patent medicines that claimed to cure venereal diseases (Haller and Haller 1974:263–265). As one journalist reported (on Chicago prostitutes' lives), “the more resourceful prostitutes stocked up on quack doctors' tonics and creams, including a red mouthwash laced with alcohol and morphine” (Abbott 2008:21).

More to the point, we found indicators of women in Sandpoint using such products. Specifically we found at least five (six if you count Lysol) products in the course of our brothel excavations that were intended to treat venereal disease (Table 11.1). At a minimum this indicates that the women of Sandpoint were making some attempts to self-medicate—echoing what was identified in places like Chicago. However, archaeological data adds another interpretive layer to this. In addition to patent medicines we also found a number of syringes (Figure 11.5). The significance of the syringe pictured in figure 11.5 is that it is apparently one specific to men, intended for injections into the urethra of the penis. What was

Table 11.1. Products recovered in Sandpoint brothels associated with treating venereal disease

Product	Location	Cures
Dr. Crossman's specific mixture	Herman	For the cure of gonorrhea, gleet, stricture, etc. and as a preventative of gonorrhea
Evans Chemical Co.	Herman	"Leading remedy for all the unnatural discharges of men. A certain cure for the debilitating weakness peculiar to women"
Lehn & Fink (Lysol)	Herman	Treatment of gonorrhea
Knoxit Globules	Henderson	Treats venereal disease
Knoxit (liquid)	Henderson	Treats venereal disease in men and women
Santal de Midy	Indeterminate	Treats gonorrhea and gleet in 24 hrs.

injected is not known, but we do know that such injections were common treatments for venereal disease. We also know from historical sources that many working women were actively monitoring their clients for signs of venereal disease. According to one account of prostitution, "when it came to the actual act though the routine was standard. . . . I think the girls could diagnose clap better than the doctors at the time. She'd have a way of squeezing it that, if there was anything in there, she'd find it. Then she'd wash it off with a clean washcloth" (Abbott 2008:45; see also Agnew 2008:87 for a similar account).



Figure 11.5.
Complete syringe
typically used for
urethral injections.

To take this a step further, I suggest that on at least some occasions men may have been coming to Sandpoint prostitutes for advice or treatment of venereal disease. Such behavior has been noted in first-person accounts by prostitutes of the time (Washburn 1997:306). It has also been indirectly reported in physician's descriptions of patients they were treating. One account describing a patient's history noted that "he was placed upon anti-syphilitic treatment but soon afterward . . . he married a prostitute, who wanted his money, and who had persuaded him she could cure him" (Hammond 1887:90).

Going to prostitutes for possible treatment makes a considerable amount of sense given the powerful social stigma associated with venereal disease. Brandt's (1987:133) history of venereal disease specifically notes that in their quest to avoid the shame associated with venereal disease "many individuals turned away from orthodox practitioners to quacks and patent medicines promising quick cures." He goes on to highlight a 1930s survey of California men, where a strong majority of respondents offered home remedies or patent medicines as their recommendation for treating venereal diseases as opposed to seeing a physician (a suggestion offered by just 41% of the respondents). Avoiding physicians when it came to urogenital issues was both commonplace and extraordinarily frustrating to medical professionals, a point illustrated in this physician's account from 1916 that describes the aftermath of a man visiting a prostitute a week before his wedding. "And so Mr. X. had intercourse on the 14th. On the 16th he noticed, or thought he noticed, a tickling in the urethra. After a few hours the tickling disappeared. On the 17th he thought it returned. In view of the close approach of the important day he became thoroughly frightened . . . and consulted—a reputable specialist? No; a druggist" (Robinson 1915:75).

While it may seem counterintuitive, I believe that in at least some instances men in Sandpoint did go to brothels for treatment of venereal disease. By going to a brothel they avoided the considerable social stigma of going to the town doctor and potentially avoided substantial medical costs. One 1920s report estimated that 80% of the infected populace could not afford the costs of a full treatment for syphilis (Brandt 1987:131); 40 years earlier the cost of venereal disease treatments in the West was reported at about \$100 (Agnew 2008:88). Simply put, if one suspected he had some form of venereal disease, there was much less to lose by visiting a prostitute—much like trying home remedies for illness before seeing a

doctor today. Men may have visited brothels not necessarily for sex but also for venereal disease treatments.

Impotence

To tackle the issue of male impotence is to really stick my interpretive neck out. Again, it is important to preface this discussion with an acknowledgment of the psychological complexity of the times with regards to men's and women's sexuality. On one hand the ethos of Victorian society muted most discussions about sexuality other than to emphasize the immorality of most any behavior relating to sex. Such dampening of public discourse inevitably led to much private anxiety. This is an area largely unexplored by scholars—with the notable exception of historian Angus McLaren, who published *Impotence: A Cultural History* (2007). While not a topic for genteel discussion, impotency was a niche problem that many in the patent medicine business exploited quite aggressively, and it was a subject that many in the medical community moralized about—and even occasionally attempted to treat. It is the issue of treatment that again brings us back to the women of Sandpoint.

Generally speaking there were two approaches to dealing with male impotence—psychological and clinical. From a psychological perspective, McLaren notes that for many physicians treatment meant doling out remedies aimed at building up confidence more than anything else. This is because impotency was an issue of considerable anxiety among nineteenth-century men. It also was not a topic for public discussion at the time, opening the door to a wide array of proposed solutions (Haller and Haller 1974:229–234). McLaren notes the first extensive discussion of placebos by physicians was in the context of curing “sexual problems.” In addition to placebos, another remedy was to visit a prostitute. McLaren (2007:143–144) reports that “doctors publically agreed that the worried young man should not be advised to reassure himself by experimenting with a prostitute before marrying, but . . . that it was done so generally that one could not censure [doctors] for occasionally proposing it.” In a similar vein Haller and Haller (1974:239) comment that “commercialized sex posed an agreeable alternative to the exacting demands for virginity in prudish nineteenth-century culture.” Ultimately, despite widespread moralizing, there was also begrudging acknowledgment that visiting prostitutes could potentially help some men overcome their anxiety.

On the other hand, there was a significant school of medical and moral thought that attributed impotence to moral failings that in turn led to physical failings. In this context the treatments were not necessarily just “treatments” but also de facto punishment for bad behavior such as masturbation, which many believed led to impotence. Consider the narrative describing some mid- to late nineteenth-century treatments for impotence:

When dealing with case of impotence they attributed to masturbation or venereal diseases, moralizing doctors were not adverse to employing severe therapies . . . , such therapies were partially punitive in nature—the sufferer thereby being taught the need for self control. Doctors began with the scalding and cauterization of the penis and insertion of catheters to irrigate the urethra. One physician describes sticking “explorers” acorn-headed bougies up the urethra in search of blockages. Cauterization consisted of employing a syringe to force into the urethra a painful caustic solution. After experiencing such a scalding another physician’s patients often could not walk for three or four days and rarely asked for a second treatment. A third physician, who employed sounds, astringents, douches and tannin suppositories to excite the prostate via the urethra noted that many patients exhibited “a dread and fear of catheterism[.]” “When they have unfastened their clothes and have stretched themselves on the table the penis is seen gradually to shrink, grow smaller, and to move in a worm-like manner” when the sound was inserted past the prostate they were likely to cry out. Some fainted. (McLaren 2007:145)

The point to this lengthy quotation is that much like the situation with venereal disease the local physician was not necessarily an ally. In fact, impotence may actually have been *more* stigmatized than venereal disease since it could be seen as tangible evidence of failings on the part of the patient through lack of self-discipline or overall weakness. Ultimately, doctors were to be avoided by many men at all costs as the combination of moralizing and extremely painful treatments were no more effective than what could be found through other sources (McLaren 2007:148).

Into this fraught realm step the prostitutes again—and perhaps the neighborhood pharmacist. Over the course of the project we did find

Table 11.2. Patent medicines recovered in Sandpoint that treated impotence

Product	Location	Cures
Dr. Harter's Iron Tonic	Townsite	Dispels low spirits and nervousness. . . . Has a wonderful effect on the reproductive organs
Dr. Liebig's Wonderful German Invigorator	Townsite	Strength to the reproductive organs and cures nervous debility, impaired development in youth, premature decay in old, seminal weakness, gleet
Paine's Celery Compound	Townsite	A reliable medicine for general nervous debility . . . also female complaints
Samaritan Nervine	Indeterminate brothel	Epilepsy, seminal weakness, every form of kidney disease, syphilis, loss of hearing and paralysis

four products that included impotency as one of their cures. Three of these bottles were recovered from the nearby excavations of several businesses—and one was found in association with the brothels (Table 11.2). At this point I acknowledge an interpretive overextension bordering on speculation as the evidence is far from conclusive. A single product found in a brothel that treats “seminal weakness” is hardly compelling. Yet the point I want to emphasize is that it does open the door to somewhat more complex discussions about sexuality in the late nineteenth century.

Historical archaeologists have excavated many brothels throughout the United States (Yamin and Seifert 2019 is the most recent contribution to this genre). While I think this body of work is one of the extraordinary examples of historical archaeology making tangible the lives of those that are all but invisible, I will say that, generally speaking, this work has focused on the daily lives of the women who worked as prostitutes—not the men who went to the brothels. What I wanted to explore in this chapter are some of the broader issues of sexuality that haven’t been addressed in historical archaeology. We often think of brothels as just a place to have sex. When archaeologists expand their lens to discuss other aspects of prostitution they often discuss the lived experiences of working women, highlighting the invisible children of the brothels, and so on, yet what is somewhat overlooked is that the complexity of brothel relationships between worker and client has not been investigated. Certainly, the vast

majority of men patronized brothels for sex, but what may be lost is some of the intentionality behind some of those visits—and what that may say about male sexuality in Victorian America.

Acknowledgments

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Final Thoughts

Points of Intersection and Future Directions

KRISTEN R. FELLOWS AND ANGELA J. SMITH

Historians and historical archaeologists have made significant scholarly contributions to the field of historical sex work since the 1970s. As shown in the literature review in Chapter 1, historians have systematically combed historical records in major cities and pieced together interpretations that have expanded our understanding of the working women who labored, the culture, and the evolution of the sex trade itself; archaeologists have continued with this mode of inquiry but have expanded the conversation by incorporating material culture found in and around former brothel and crib sites into their studies while also integrating anthropological theories into their interpretations. This volume is built on earlier research conducted in both fields with the goal of expanding the frame while making new scholarly connections. All of the chapters complicate and deepen the scholarship. Some of the chapters have placed brothels into larger contexts—their place and role in the creation of the social and physical landscapes, the intersection of the sex trade with Progressive crusades, and the gendered and classed nature of the legal system used to informally regulate the sex trade. Others have focused on the diversity of the lived brothel experience—the presence of children at brothels, the role of race, and the reasons individual biographies mattered within such settings. Finally, other chapters have focused on the men who benefited from patronizing these establishments—the role of political access and the shift to male control of the sex trade and the function of brothels in defining Victorian masculinities and sexualities. The three sections of this volume

demarcate these common themes, but there are points of intersection that transcend these divisions. Taken as a whole, these chapters illustrate that research on historical sex work is at a turning point in the fields of both history and archaeology. The pioneering scholars in these fields have provided a foundation focused largely on broad studies of major cities and mining the historical record (documents and material culture) for details about the daily lives of women living and working in these settings. In this volume, scholars have expanded and recontextualized the picture.

History and historical archaeology tend to be complementary fields that often overlap in terms of subject matter, source materials, and even methodologies. While rare, it is true that historians make use of material culture, and, more commonly, archaeologists incorporate analyses of documents into their research. As the chapters in this volume have shown, the methods for studying such data sources do not differ dramatically between the two fields. In the present era, the types of data and methods used by each discipline seem to be more fluid. And yet, despite the similarities, there are significant points of departure between history and historical archaeology, particularly in the types of questions we ask and our framing of those questions. Typically, historians are drawn to longer frames of time and concerns of causality. Anthropological archaeologists are interested in understanding the relationship between human social relations of the past and those of the present and rely on theoretical frameworks for increasing our understandings of human behaviors. These differences are noteworthy, but we all still seek to broaden understandings of the past for the purpose of contextualizing the present. And so we, as scholars inculcated in different ways of asking and knowing, can benefit from cross-disciplinary discussion. In tying together our discussion on how these chapters overlap and connect with one another, we sometimes use language more common to one field or another. We ask scholars from both disciplines to keep an open mind, appreciate the differences in approach, and join us in our search for how these two complementary fields can better work in tandem.

Innovations

The limitations of the historical record of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sex trade, whether documentary or archaeological, are real and can often leave researchers with questions left unanswered (see

Chapter 1 for a discussion on issues of documentation and the availability of primary sources, or lack thereof). Despite these difficulties, the scholarship in this volume utilizes creative new approaches to the interpretation of available data. New types of sources, such as film, are being tapped. New analytical approaches, like linguistic or material analyses and GIS modeling, have been used to examine more traditional sources. And finally, researchers are taking what some might see as risks in basing interpretations on smaller data sets.

Making use of nontraditional sources, Baggett and Bentley in Chapter 4 look at the incipient film industry to speak to larger contexts of the sex trade and Progressive reform movements. The portrayal of “white slavery” in films analyzed by these authors provides evidence of the moral panic that developed around the coerced and forced prostitution of white women. At the same time, the outrage and censorship of the more documentary-like film discussed in the chapter indicates how quickly the Progressive movement moved away from the crusade of saving women from “white slavery.” These films may have previously been the focus of film studies scholars, but Baggett and Bentley prove the value of such sources to the broader discussion of American popular culture and attitudes about the historical sex trade. By thinking outside of the traditional archive and not relying solely on written documents, Chapter 4 encourages readers to think differently about potential source materials.

For Anna Munns (Chapter 3) the innovation came not in the form of primary data but in her approach to the analysis of the documents. Inspired by anthropological linguistic studies (e.g., Beaudry 1988 and Cipolla 2013), Munns performed a systematic comparison of the language being used in court dockets. This approach allowed her to uncover evidence of the hierarchical nature of the industry, the different relationships these levels of sex workers had with the city (i.e., the police and courts), and even some evidence that points to gendered differences for those convicted of related crimes. Such detailed linguistic analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the politics and structure of the local sex trade and pushes the research beyond simple identifications, enumerations, and lists of who was involved and how much they were fined.

Material culture has traditionally been the domain of archaeologists and has typically come in the form of artifacts recovered during excavations. Breaking with what has been typical, we see two different chapters (Kooistra and Fellows) in this volume make use of material remains as

listed in documents rather than recovered archaeologically. Although not a primary focus of her work on Tom Savage, AnneMarie Kooistra (Chapter 10) uses a list of personal property from a court case to identify multiple rooms within a particular rooming house that would have served as the living spaces for Savage's wife, May Davenport. The contents of these rooms break with the uniformity of the majority of rooms in the building.

Kristen Fellows (Chapter 9), like Kooistra, makes use of material culture as listed in legal documents. Beginning from a room-by-room probate inventory of a brothel in Fargo, North Dakota, she analyzes the building's appointments and demonstrates how issues of scale can complicate our understanding of the brothel hierarchy that was developed based on research in larger cities (e.g., Gilfoyle 1992). Like the rooms of Savage's business in Los Angeles, the rooms in this brothel used for the business of sex were uniform in nature. Yet the first floor spaces were well furnished and designed to entertain clientele, thus setting this brothel apart from rooming houses like that described by Kooistra. In these two cases, the material culture accessed through documentary sources allows for a more nuanced view of different parts of the industry.

The use of geographic information systems (GIS) is perhaps one of the most innovative approaches we see taken in these chapters. While GIS has been used for quite some time in the field of archaeology, it is often used to manipulate spatial data collected on-site. More often than not, this involves a laser transit to collect points throughout the site that are then put into a map to visually represent topographic or manmade features (among others). Jennifer Lupu (Chapter 2) breaks with this traditional methodology by using GIS to recreate and assess sightlines and visibility in historical Washington, DC, where these landscapes have been obscured by modern development. Using modeling technology in conjunction with archival documentary data such as city plans, she is able to access information that is no longer readily available to an archaeologist using a laser transit. Her innovative approach has allowed her to recognize the appearance of a panoptic gaze coming down from the Capitol, but also the hidden spaces of the Hooker's Division that allowed both sex workers and their patrons to operate with some freedom and anonymity. While GIS has been more in the domain of archaeologists, it could be a valuable tool for all scholars of the past. This is a tool that could easily be utilized by historians and archaeologists alike.

Finally, in regard to difficulties presented by the lack of available data,

we see two researchers making use of what some would consider small data sets. While historians can be comfortable drawing on anecdotal evidence found in archival sources, archaeologists often feel the need to back up their interpretations with statistically significant material findings. In Chapter 6, Jade Luiz uses a handful of artifacts and limited documentary evidence to draw attention to the presence of children in brothel spaces. Notwithstanding the limitations of both the archival and archaeological records, by pulling from multiple types of sources and thoroughly contextualizing the documents and artifacts, Luiz is able to offer a cursory examination of motherhood and childhood within the brothel. Like Luiz, Mark Warner (Chapter 11) admittedly relies on a small assemblage of artifacts. Found in the red-light district of Sandpoint, Idaho, these patent medicine bottles and syringes serve as his entry point into a discussion around male sexuality and the role of brothels and inmates in these gender constructs. Placing these artifacts into a larger context through a review of the literature but also through an examination of contemporary advertisements, Warner argues that men may have visited brothels for the purpose of treating venereal diseases. Both Warner and Luiz are aware of the limits of their data sets, and both work to thoroughly contextualize their findings. And yet both make compelling arguments and prove the usefulness of presenting interpretations that may not be grounded in large quantities of data. After all, if we see our writing as being in dialogue with other scholars, why wait until everything is perfect to start the discussion?

These innovations speak to the creativity and ingenuity of the contributors, as well as to the limitations presented by the historical record. The illicit and taboo nature of the historical sex trade has led to an at times purposeful obfuscation of identities, locations, and details of this industry. Larger cities often have a wealth of data by virtue of the size and scope of their red-light districts, and this has allowed for rigorous and thorough studies. But, as we see here, there is still a lot to learn from less traditional methods and sources. The contributors to this volume have made use of relatively novel types of data, have approached data sets in inventive ways, and have been willing to take risks in using smaller data sets.

Gender, Agency, and Power

Gender is perhaps the single biggest theme to run throughout the literature on historical sex work. Much of the discussion has attempted to

reclaim and acknowledge the agency of the women involved in this form of labor.¹ This work has corrected a masculinist history that was long overdue when it began in the 1980s and 1990s. And yet the claim has been made that “anthropology’s study of men and masculinity has yet to attend to the diversity of men’s gender relations” (Blackwood 2006:78); some scholars have specifically extended this critique into a call for researchers to expand the discussion of gender and sexuality within the historical sex trade (e.g., Voss 2008). The research presented in this volume continues to bring gender into the picture and does not deviate from the look for individual and group agency. However, many of the contributors do ask new questions and seek to answer the call to further problematize our notions of gender and sexuality and to deepen our discussions of both agency and that which constrains it.

Kooistra (Chapter 10) offers the very real view that political engagement was limited for women running brothels; their disenfranchisement meant that no matter how politically savvy they were, these women were locked out from the governance of the cities in which they lived and operated. Tom Savage’s story illustrates how politics and sex work intersected and eventually led, in part, to women being pushed out of running brothels in Los Angeles. A lack of access to decision making within the city had real effects for these women. Looking at the informal system of regulation in Fargo, North Dakota, Munns (Chapter 3) has shown that it was set up to primarily target the women rather than the men involved in illegal sex acts. And yet, many of the women frequently managed to simply pay their fines and continue with their work. Keim’s (Chapter 5) research demonstrates how the upper echelons of Boston society physically and culturally constructed the North End as a slum filled with vice and immorality. In doing so, they created a space in which they themselves could engage in depraved behaviors while simultaneously protecting their own neighborhoods, which were areas of rigid Victorian morality. By asking new questions of the regulation and legal and spatial organization of historical sex work, Kooistra, Munns, and Keim have illustrated some of the structural constraints that worked against the agency of the women involved in the trade.

Many of the chapters in this volume (Smith, Chapter 8; Petersen, Chapter 7; Keim, Chapter 5; Munns, Chapter 3) have found evidence for the ways in which these women not only pushed back but also contributed to the economic success of the surrounding communities. A more nuanced

and rich understanding of the past begins to emerge when we consider the tension existing between structure and agency. As others have pointed out (Best 1998; Gilfoyle 1992; Keire 2010), the madams and sex workers of the Victorian era made significant contributions to city coffers through monthly fines; the madams also contributed to the larger economic development of cities as their brothels relied on other businesses for furniture, clothing, food, drinks, and so on. This fact comes through in a more subtle way when we consider Keim's discussion on the various businesses present on Endicott Street in the North End neighborhood of Boston. The pawn shops, secondhand goods stores, grocers, barrooms, saloons, and restaurants would have all likely factored into the local economic network of the brothels and their inmates. While Kooistra (Chapter 10) exposes the lack of political access many madams confronted, in some of these chapters we see evidence of how shrewd madams could be in navigating legal and political systems. Melvina Massey (Smith, Chapter 8) successfully managed monthly fines, multiple court cases, and multiple attempts by reformers to end the red-light district of Fargo. Ida Dorsey (Petersen, Chapter 7) worked through powerful men she affiliated herself with to protect her business and secure her financial success. Moreover, we have learned that both of these women used their racialized gender to their advantage, playing off both gender and racial stereotypes for financial gain. The interplay between the political and economic forces confining madams to the edges of society and their ability to manipulate social relations and the systems themselves is a fruitful avenue for inquiry.

Luiz (Chapter 6) and Keim (Chapter 5) both provided explications of how inmates affected the neighborhoods in which they worked. For Luiz, this task meant exploring the role of children within the urban brothel setting and the role of child farms for inmates. She explains that there is evidence that children in brothels were not only cared for, which went against commonly held beliefs at the time, but "that they were being cared for in ways that aligned, at least tangentially, with middle-class expectations of gentility" (Luiz, Chapter 6). It may be surprising for some to think of sex workers as buying into dominant ideologies of motherhood and childrearing, and yet, Luiz argues for this possibility. For Keim, it was about how the women working in the brothels used sartorial choices to push back on incipient middle-class conceptions of working-class neighborhoods. While much of the earlier research worked to acknowledge the agency of the women living and laboring in brothels, these chapters

illustrate how their agency (and children) spilled onto the streets of the urban landscape and reverberated within their local communities. The question is no longer “How did these women express/embody a sense of agency while engaged in sex work?” Instead, these chapters ask, “How did the gendered agency of these sex workers impact society around them?”

The last section of the volume includes three chapters dedicated to research where men are centrally located. While some might view this as backsliding into a more masculinist history, it should be obvious after reading the chapters that a critical lens of gender renders a different result when exploring past social relations. Understanding how the structure of society influenced the fall of the female-led nature of the sex industry is an important contribution of Kooistra’s (Chapter 10) study of Tom Savage. Fellows (Chapter 9) and Warner (Chapter 11) both push to look beyond the obvious function of the brothel for Victorian-era society. While brothels were often seats of feminine power, especially for the madams who owned the buildings, they still played to normative, hegemonic gender ideologies, in particular a dominant masculinity. Socializing between men and between men and women in these spaces helped to reinforce dominant gender stereotypes, even as madams and their inmates were pushing boundaries and living outside of the realm of “respectable women.”

The performance of gender is yet another point of intersection touched on by many of these chapters.² In Baggett and Bentley’s (Chapter 4) examination of two “white slavery” films, the more normative feminine victim, who is eventually saved, seemed to play better to audiences than did the victim of the more documentary-like film, who was not saved at the end. Playing into traditional feminine stereotypes of victimhood was important for the success of the first film. Keim’s (Chapter 5) examination of clothing and personal adornment exposes how sex workers both played into gender stereotypes while also using inappropriate levels of flashiness to push back against normative gender constructions. Fellows (Chapter 9) argues that madams such as Melvina Massey were playing into heteronormative, hegemonic gender ideologies in order to entice men to spend time and thus money in her brothel. On the flip side, she argues for the possibility that men were also performing a more hegemonic masculinity in order to demonstrate their manhood while also policing that of the other brothel patrons. Similarly, Kooistra’s (Chapter 10) exploration of Tom Savage has shown how his background as a boxer (some might argue that

boxing is the performance of the epitome of violent manliness) aided in the establishment of his political power and thus business success. These chapters show that questions of gender and agency can come into better focus when we ask questions of gendered performativity/embodiment and the social and historical nature of gender constructions.

Finally, in Chapter 11, we see that brothels may have played a function in masculine sexuality that went beyond intercourse. Warner argues that men's sexual health may have been the focus of some business exchanges taking place within the spaces of the sex trade. Rather than go to a doctor who may have administered a more painful treatment and endure the speculation that would come with such a visit, engaging the services of a sex worker would have been more socially acceptable than having a venereal disease and perhaps a less intense form of treatment would have also been available. Warner's interpretation not only speaks to the sexuality and masculinity of the male patrons but also points to the knowledge (and power) of the female inmates being paid to diagnose and treat venereal diseases. Critiquing the assumption that brothels were solely about having sex, these chapters push us to consider more than just the feminine gender within the setting of historical sex work and acknowledge new modes for these women to express their agency.

Cultural Context

Second perhaps only to gender, cultural context is a theme that pops up time and time again in the literature on historical sex work. All of the studies presented in this volume speak to both of these overarching topics, but many of them approach these themes with novel questions in mind. The earliest research on historical sex work largely focused on brothels and the women associated with them, but they also situated this vice work in the context of the cities in which they were located (e.g., Gilfoyle 1992; Rose 1974; Rosen 1982). More recent studies have continued to provide cultural contexts for their work (e.g., Blair 2010; Keire 2010; Petersen 2013), and the research presented in these chapters is no different. Whether looking at how the historical sex trade was constructed and operated or the iterative relationship between sex work and society, these scholars are pushing beyond traditional avenues of inquiry.

Geography and the scale of the city are important features of the cultural context of historical sex work. Chapters in this volume both expand

the scope of work done in larger cities and also begin an exploration of smaller locales. Contributors like Lupu, Keim, and Kooistra (Chapters 2, 5, and 10) help to develop nuance in larger urban centers like Washington, DC, Boston, and Los Angeles. For Lupu and Keim, the question has shifted from how the urban landscape affected the sex workers functioning in these environments to how the sex workers and the larger vice community also impacted the city around them (see the Gender, Agency, and Power section for a more thorough discussion of this). Kooistra's research provides insights into the larger political structures and their role in the shift to a more male-dominated mode of the industry. The state of research in these large urban environments continues to deepen.

Other chapters add a broader cultural context of historical vice by offering case studies from smaller and understudied parts of the country. Warner's (Chapter 11) study from Sandpoint, Idaho, the three chapters centered on Fargo, North Dakota (Munns, Smith, and Fellows, Chapters 3, 8 and 9), and Penny Petersen's work in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Chapter 7) offer a view of the sex trade in the developing West. While Minneapolis was a sizable city, its relative youth and locality separate it from the East Coast cities that have dominated the discussion to date. The established, moneyed families of Minneapolis relied on their Puritan roots and claimed connections to larger East Coast cities as a source of legitimacy and power, and this affected their view of not only the sex trade but also women of color. The particularities of this larger city are important for understanding how Ida Dorsey, a black woman, was able to succeed in this industry in this city. In even smaller western cities created as a result of a new national rail system, town size and local history made an impact on sex work and sex workers. Smaller population densities that were initially skewed toward young men (think mining and bonanza farming) and smaller degrees of concentrated wealth meant differences in historical realities. As Fellows' chapter asks, did "upscale" brothels in these smaller cities compare in exclusivity and material refinement to the parlor houses found in New York and Boston? With a more transient clientele who were less likely to enjoy significant wealth, could these establishments function in such a manner? Probably not, but what does the data from other smaller cities say?

While Petersen and Smith (Chapters 7 and 8) take a biographical approach to two noteworthy madams, they also provide historical insights that help to develop a broader historical context. Cynthia Blair's (2010)

monograph on black sex workers in Chicago was groundbreaking for its focus on the intersection of labor, race, and gender within the historical sex trade. Petersen and Smith continue with this work, albeit on a smaller scale. Ida Dorsey provides a lens through which to explore red-light districts, informal regulation of vice, and how race played into these facets of life in Minneapolis. Operating in Fargo, Melvina Massey's story can offer a similar look into the industry there. Both of these narratives hint at larger trends—the northern movement of black women after the Civil War, the opportunities afforded by sex work for black women in particular (see also Blair 2010), and the informal networks that may have existed between madams that extended beyond regions and state lines.

The biographically based scholarship on Ida Dorsey, Melvina Massey, and Tom Savage represent a confluence of two of the main currents running throughout the chapters in this volume: cultural context and gender. These microhistories present a view and findings that might not be readily available in larger-scale studies. Tracing an individual over the course of their life offers layers that are absent from many studies in the field. Simultaneously, the biographical approach also hints at issues of structure and agency and the role of gender in navigating the social systems of the historical sex trade.

Space and Place

The role of space and place takes an important position in many of the chapters presented. Whether examining sex work arrest patterns using GIS, the biography of a particular madam, or how physical space helped to mediate social relations, much of this research is multidimensional. How do social and built landscapes impact history? How do we ask questions of the role of space and place in such instances? How did the women in this industry move through, occupy, rent, or even own space? The approaches in this volume vary in terms of scale: the individual brothel, the neighborhood, the red-light district, the city, or even movement between states. In some cases we don't see an emphasis being placed on the physical space, but it is there nonetheless, playing an important role in arguments being made. Traditionally, the physical realm has been more of a focus for archaeologists. Yet we hope that some of this work will inspire scholars from both sides of the disciplinary divide to think more about the embodied experiences of historical sex work.

As noted earlier, some of the chapters in this volume expand on work done in larger cities (Chapters 2, 4, 5, 6, and 10), while other chapters offer insight into small cities and understudied areas in the West (Chapters 3, 7, 8, 9, and 11). All of this research demonstrates the importance of the local context in which a study is placed and how there are points of divergence and convergence for the various iterations of the historical sex trade as it flourished in both large urban centers and frontier towns. For Smith (Chapter 8), this meant tracing a narrative that crossed state boundaries (sometimes prior to statehood) to put Melvina Massey into a national context; after all, Massey was a black woman born in northern Virginia, likely into slavery, with potential ties to Washington, DC. Yet she somehow migrated west to open a brothel in Fargo, North Dakota, and also likely spent some time in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Evidence in the census records that both Massey and Ida Dorsey (Petersen, Chapter 7) recruited women from southern states also suggests the importance of movement—through and across state lines—for women involved in the sex trade. Baggett and Bentley's (Chapter 4) work on white slavery films and the Progressive Era anti-vice movements also show that the movement of women for the purposes of sex work was a concern for folks of the time. It also demonstrates how new technologies helped to spread gendered notions to a broader audience that extended beyond a single city or state. The movement of such ideas throughout the national context is illustrated by their chapter. While local context is important, we must also begin to think beyond a single point in time and space when evaluating historical sex work. As the coming commentary will show, movement should be an important theme for future research.

Nonetheless, we should continue to tease apart the nuance of local contexts. In order to fully understand and appreciate how local context affected the sex trade, we need to recognize that the size, religiosity, and stage of development of a city had various implications for local power structures and the establishment (or lack thereof) of a local moral authority, both important influences on the red-light district. Looking at the Hooker's Division in Washington, DC, Lupu's (Chapter 2) use of GIS illustrates how manipulation of sightlines can help to establish a sense of governmental power while simultaneously providing privacy and concealment for extralegal activities. The design and layout of the neighborhood was instrumental in defining the relationship of this red-light district to the rest of the city and its inhabitants. Keim (Chapter 5) also

examines the neighborhood to illustrate how working women living in slums were pushing back against more elite constructions of the classed space in which they lived and worked. Moving through these public areas outside of the brothel in bold clothing offered an opportunity to challenge conceptions of what women should be. Munns' (Chapter 3) research was facilitated by the smaller scale of Fargo's court docket records (at least when compared to a place like New York City). After analyzing all of the documents for Fargo's Second Street red-light district, she found that differences in language coincided, at least to an extent, with places of arrest; this demonstrates how the classed hierarchy of sex workers had differing relationships to the built environment of the red-light district. Considering historical sex work on the local level but moving beyond a single brothel, these studies are contributing to a broader understanding of the cities' past gendered social relations more generally.

Other chapters have looked into the sex industry on a smaller scale—that of rooming houses and brothels. Warner and Fellows (Chapters 11 and 9) present findings that show how the spaces in brothels were not always used solely for sex. In one instance, rooms in the brothels are converted into something of a doctor's office, as the inmates diagnosed and treated venereal diseases. On the other hand, we can see how first-floor spaces of more upscale brothels were areas for socializing in a more general sense. Both of these studies speak to how the spaces of a brothel would have been used in a variety of ways which ultimately played into Victorian norms of gender and sexuality.

The legal relationship women had with the spaces and places of the sex industry are also an important feature of the work presented in this volume. Typically, madams were entirely responsible for running and managing the brothel and its inmates but had to pay rent to male landlords, which cut into their profits (Gilfoyle 1992; Rosen 1982). Smith's and Petersen's chapters illustrate the wealth that some madams were able to accrue when they owned their property and buildings. One avenue for future inquiries would be an evaluation of how madams fared based on ownership versus leasing of these structures. Traditionally, the legal system in the United States has worked to protect land owners, but does this hold for madams? Kooistra's (Chapter 10) work deviates from other studies in that it offers a view of male-controlled sex work and the spaces associated with such labor. In this instance, Tom Savage, located in Los Angeles, leased multiple rooming houses, which seem to have fallen below brothels

but above cribs in terms of structure and prestige. While there is evidence that women managed these properties for him, they remain distinct from parlor houses and brothels. This provides a different type of model for sex work that does not fit into the hierarchy as described in other studies. The rooming house leased by Savage and run by a female manager is neither a true brothel nor a true crib. It is also not merely a room for a woman working entirely independently to rent, and it is definitely not streetwalking. This business model leads to some interesting questions. Was this orientation to volume of customers served per night typical of male-owned sex work establishments? Does this business model reflect on the location (West Coast versus East Coast), the time period (during a shift to male domination of the industry), and/or gendered differences in ownership? Like all of the work in this volume, once we delve into the details we realize just how many unanswered questions remain.

Future Directions

So where do we, scholars of the past concerned with historical sex work, go from here? Peppered throughout the previous sections of this chapter have been nods to potential areas for expansion. Building on the work in this volume, there are some definite paths forward. To start, we can expand on the space and place focus. To do this, scholars should continue their use of innovative tools like GIS, considerations of material culture (recovered archaeologically and through the documentary record), and examinations of the buildings and spaces of the historical sex industry. These tools and approaches are also readily available to and should be used by scholars in both history and archaeology. In fact, we would be interested to see how the disciplines might converge or diverge while implementing such methods. Topically, we are left wondering about the relationship between the ever-expanding western frontier, the railways, and the sex workers who seemed to follow these new paths out West. The movement of women through space and through the social networks of the industry, whether along rail lines or waterways, would be a place to look for new patterns and connections.

Increasing the work done in geographically underrepresented areas is an additional aspect of the space and place theme that should be pursued. The study of sex work in the past has reached a maturity that is encouraging and exciting, but there is still so much more to learn about the history

of this form of labor across the vast United States. Such work would also intersect with topics of cultural context and local power dynamics. Many of the chapters in this volume began to address questions such as, how did local contexts structure and affect the sex trade and women and men involved in it? What was the interplay between the national context and the local scene? But these chapters are really just a starting point. Larger cities on the eastern seaboard represent some of the most significant work in this area (e.g., Gilfoyle 1992; Seifert 1991), but what do we know about smaller cities in the Northeast? The West Coast outside of Los Angeles? The (now) Midwest beyond the confines of Chicago (Blair 2010), Minneapolis (Petersen 2013), and Davenport, Iowa (Wood 2005)? Or cities in the South other than New Orleans (e.g., Keire 2010; Rose 1974)? Interestingly, there are vice reports coming out of smaller cities (e.g., Lexington, KY [Vice Commission of Lexington 1915]), many of which are located along rivers or railroad lines rather than the coast. Such documents point to thriving sex trades in these communities and the relationship between movement and sex work and thus indicate areas ready for further study. Research in smaller locales may represent doable projects for master's (or undergraduate) students; it could also lend itself to larger comparative projects. We should not let the likelihood of smaller data sets discourage a look at smaller cities but rather take advantage of these opportunities. Ideally, scholars will also create new ways of sharing data sets for analysis (more on this below).

While some (e.g., Gilfoyle 1992) have traced the economic impact of sex-related businesses on the local community, this is one aspect of the industry that could be more thoroughly researched at both the local and regional level. Brothels may have socially existed beyond the confines of polite society, but economically speaking, they were well integrated into their neighborhoods and cities. And this economic integration extended beyond the monthly fines required by the informal regulation of the trade. Brothels required furnishings for the buildings and food and drinks for their inmates and clientele and relied on municipal services (e.g., water and sewer) like any other home. Laundry services, a doctor's medical care, maintenance work, and legal work are just a few examples of other businesses that would likely be connected to the historical sex trade. In fact, we even see madams occasionally making charitable contributions, perhaps to help cultivate more friendly feelings toward their presence in a neighborhood (e.g., Massey donated to help extend a water line to a

nearby church, Smith, Chapter 8). In the ever-growing capitalist society of the United States, capital is directly tied to power dynamics. If we are trying to better understand the tensions at play between the agency of the women involved in the trade and the societal structures working to keep them on the fringes of society, we need to better understand how money moved in and around the industry.

In the three chapters taking a microhistorical/biographical approach (Kooistra, Chapter 10; Petersen, Chapter 7; Smith, Chapter 8) we see the importance of networks (economic, political, and social) within the industry. Whether it was the political networks that Tom Savage was plugged into (Chapter 10) or the social networks that allowed for the procurement of new employees from southern states (Chapters 7 and 8), the relationship of those in the sex trade to one another as well as to folks adjacent to it is something to be further explored. Luiz (Chapter 6) also speaks to this in regards to the child farms to which some of the inmates were connected. Moreover, Petersen's research in Minneapolis (this volume and 2013) points to networks of madams and those tangentially related to the red-light district that enabled land sales, spread information about new districts forming, and even trained inmates into managerial roles. Did madams have informal support or mentorship systems? What sort of role did landlords take when renting to brothel madams? What sort of networks enabled madams like Massey and Dorsey to communicate with and hire women from across state lines for their brothels? While the various issues surrounding available primary sources remain an obstacle for addressing these concerns, there are potential avenues for asking such questions. One such path will require scholars to consider their own role in the often solitary endeavor of producing historical knowledge and push beyond traditional comfort zones.

Many of the directions research could go in bring with them issues of scale (too much work for one scholar or too large of a geographical scope), lack of depth in the primary sources, and small data sets. If we are willing to adjust (to a degree) how we approach research in general, some of these issues can be overcome. Conventionally, scholars in both historical archaeology and history are engaged in solo projects largely due to the structure of academic employment. This leads to research that has a smaller scope (and is thus doable while on the tenure track) or that is conducted over the course of an entire career, coming out in bits and pieces with an occasional synthetic opus. But why not combine

and pool resources and sources, collaborate on projects, and enable larger projects that look across geographical barriers for relevant patterns and discrepancies?

While we do not have a ready solution for how to carry out such feats, there are existing models in other related academic realms. For instance, the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (daacs.org) is currently working to provide access to the raw data from archaeological sites of slavery throughout the United States and Caribbean. Data concerning excavation techniques and catalogues of artifacts have been uploaded to this database and are publicly accessible for comparative research. If nothing else, this database serves as a warehouse for the raw data of archaeological research. Scholars wanting to know where work has been done or the types of finds recovered from a region have only to look to DAACS to find answers. Perhaps just as important as the database itself, this endeavor has led to countless conversations among historical archaeologists working on such sites; papers and workshops at conferences, trainings for consortium members and their graduate students, and public outreach activities have been sites for these discussions. While we know that some scholars might have the knee-jerk reaction of “someone might steal my data and publish on it before I do,” to be blunt, we need to start moving beyond the colonial nature of academic research and let go of the notions of data ownership. We typically think of our scholarship as being in “discussion” with past and future scholars, but perhaps we need to reframe this as collaboration. We cite those who come before us and hope that those who come after build on what we put out into the world.

Another model to take away from archaeological endeavors comes in the form of crowdsourcing. In 2017 there was a lot of talk around the launch of GlobalXplorer (globalxplorer.org), a website that allows anyone to help identify archaeological sites via satellite imagery. Touted as a way to help protect cultural heritage and at times referred to as “space archaeology,” this model both aids scholars in distributing the workload and helps to engage the public in archaeological research in a novel manner. Other crowdsourcing initiatives are also already in place. For instance, at the MicroPasts website (crowdsourced.micropasts.org), interested parties can help transcribe site catalogue cards from Montpelier, engage in video-tagging for sites of the Roman Empire, or translate German-language newspapers associated with a prisoner-of-war camp, among

other projects. How can we translate some of these endeavors to research on historical sex work? If nothing else, can we start with a directory of scholars working on these topics, where they have conducted research, and what types of sources or data they have found? It is time to think beyond the single city or brothel or project and allow for larger patterns and deeper understandings to emerge through technology or direct collaboration. For instance, tracking the relationship between sex work and railroad towns is larger than any one individual but could be realized through both direct collaboration as well as the establishment of a crowd-sourced or scholar-sourced database.

A smaller-scale approach to thinking beyond the individual project comes in the way of collaborative research. In this area, we do have personal experience from which to speak; in fact, the three chapters in this volume centered on Fargo, North Dakota, stem from a cross-disciplinary research effort (Angela Smith is a public historian, Kristen Fellows is a historical archaeologist, and Anna Munns received her master's degree in anthropology while working with us both on this larger endeavor). Collaborative projects will be idiosyncratic and take on their own forms and dynamics given the individuals involved. But part of why we advocate for interdisciplinary research teams is that the discourse involved in each phase of a project can strengthen and deepen interpretations. Historians and archaeologists can and do approach the same data sets with different types of questions and different frameworks in mind. This is illustrated in the three solo-authored chapters mentioned above. While we plan co-authored publications in the future, these chapters represent our own individual interests coming out of the larger study. While we are each solely responsible for our individual chapters, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the influence we had on each other's work. As any former graduate student knows, questions asked of your thinking and writing force you to better develop your arguments and can also lead to new sources of information or new framings for your findings. Two (or three or four . . .) heads are better than one.

This volume emerged from an interdisciplinary collaboration between a historian and an anthropological archaeologist. Though the two fields are guided by different questions, methodologies, and central objectives—one a social science and the other a humanities discipline—the topic of historical sex work demonstrates the common spaces and the

complementary nature between the disciplinary approaches. We believe in the value of collaborating in our own work and decided to invite scholars from the two disciplines to address the topic of historical sex work in the United States. Our goal was to look at new research in the field and explore points of intersection between anthropology and history. This volume demonstrates the value of anthropologists and historians working together to deepen and complicate our understanding of the past and its meanings. It also serves as a road map for future scholars of historical sex work.

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Notes

1. Over the last 20 years historians have veered away from using the term "agency." Anthropological archaeologists, however, have found this to be a useful concept. For archaeologists, agency is related to but not necessarily synonymous with power (some might talk about agency and power in terms of degrees). There is a nuanced relationship between the two. Individuals and communities can exert their agency in ways that push back on the structural constraints of a given society, but this does not mean that they enjoy dominant or hegemonic power (or the power to contain others' agency). The differences between how these two fields understand and implement this concept could (and should) be the subject of a more thorough and sustained discussion that is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this chapter. However, for a discussion of the issues historians have had with the term "agency," see Walter Johnson (2003). For an understanding of how agency has been used in archaeology, Oliver J. T. Harris and Craig N. Cipolla (2017) provide a good starting point; they present a book on theory that is perhaps more accessible for graduate students and those less familiar with anthropological theory. John Robb (2010) offers a more in-depth look at how agency has been used in archaeology. Finally, see Yamin and Seifert's (2019) recent book that explicitly deals with agency in the context of archaeological studies of historical sex work.

2. Judith Butler's (1988, 1990) performance-based theory of gender identity has been influential within anthropological archaeology. This approach calls for a recognition

that gender is not only a sociohistorical construct but that it is constantly being created through its performance. Butler (1988:520) tells us that gender is “a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.” See Harris and Cipolla (2017) for a succinct discussion of Butler and performativity in relation to archaeological theory.

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