PROSTITUTION AND POWER IN PROGRESSIVE-ERA TEXAS: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE INFLUENCE OF MADAMS IN FORT WORTH AND SAN ANTONIO, 1877-1920

by

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INTRODUCTION

"Women engaged in their legitimate business in a quiet and orderly manner."[1] The San Antonio city attorney, Frank H. Wash, spoke these words about Beatrice Benedict, the owner of several houses of prostitution, or brothels, in San Antonio's red-light district in September 1901. Benedict had been arrested for disorderly conduct under a new law that barred "women of lewd character [from] loitering upon the streets."[2] After Benedict's arrest, City Attorney Wash dismissed the case because, even though she was an active participant in the sexual economy, she was not a vagrant, or one of the women who brazenly walked the street selling her body, the real target of the law. Instead, she owned and managed a first-class brothel, also known as a parlor house—a "legitimate business" in the eyes of City Attorney Wash, and a belief held by many local officials in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The idea that a house of prostitution was a "legitimate business" applied to more than just Beatrice Benedict's brothel. Within red-light districts throughout the United States, women ran many types of brothels, from cheap dives to sumptuous parlor houses. In the post-Civil War era, the sex trade expanded across the United States due to population growth and the urbanization boom. The fifty-year period from the 1870s through World War I witnessed both the expansion and decline of red-light districts in the United States.[3] Women took advantage of this growth to establish brothels. These women, known as madams, understood that a brothel was a business and they worked hard to make them as profitable as possible in order to make a living.

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[1]"The Order Is Unlawful," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 20, 1901.
[2]"The Scarlet Woman Order Will Be Tested." *San Antonio Express*, September 19, 1901; "The Order Is Unlawful," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 20, 1901.
[3]Mark Thomas Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 3; Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: Norton, 1992), 199.

While vice districts appeared all over the United States, Texas was home to some of the largest west of the Mississippi. The red-light districts in Fort Worth and San Antonio are two prime examples. Both cities contained large, thriving vice districts anchored by houses of prostitution, including first-class brothels or parlor houses. The women who owned and managed the top-tier houses of prostitution in these two cities are the subject of this dissertation, which seeks to follow their stories, focusing on their role as business owners. Furthermore, it argues that these "elite" madams, the ones who ran parlor houses, wielded a significant amount of economic power, civic power, and industry power.

This dissertation reconstructs the lives and careers of the madams of San Antonio and Fort Worth's red-light districts between 1877 and 1920. It details what it took to become an elite madam, explaining how a parlor house came into existence and what it needed to be successful and profitable. It highlights how madams curated relationships with politicians, law enforcement officers, and businessmen as a way to protect and expand their businesses. Furthermore, it analyzes and explains the social system of the sex trade, stressing the ambiguous nature of the relations between prostitutes and madams. Throughout it all, this project emphasizes the entrepreneurial and commercial characteristics of the madams. By focusing on the women who ran houses of prostitution as businesswomen, this dissertation makes a significant intervention in the historiographies of gender and entrepreneurship and prostitution.

Women have always been economic actors. They have worked, both as skilled and unskilled laborers, and run businesses for as long as men have. It has only been in the past forty years, however, that historians have focused on women and work in a significant way. Labor history included women before business history did, with works like Thomas Dublin's *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860*,

published in 1981. In the late 1990s, historian Joan Scott called for business history to begin incorporating women and gender with her article "Conceptualizing Gender in American Business History." At the same time, two historians published works doing just what Scott had asked. Wendy Gamber, in 1997, wrote *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930*, which was one of the first discussions of women as entrepreneurs and business owners who contributed to the economy. A year later, Angel Kwolek-Folland released *Incorporating Women: A History of Women and Business in the United States*, a sprawling general history of women and business. Both monographs, and Scott's article, built a foundation for later historians to build on. Over the last twenty years, historians have written books and articles in much greater numbers, focusing on various aspects of gender and business—from small business owners in San Francisco in the 1860s to women selling each other Tupperware in the 1950s.[4]

The addition of gender to the historiography of business and entrepreneurship argues that women have always owned and managed businesses in the United States, from the colonial period to the present. Women contributed to the economy and the larger marketplace just as men

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[4]For example:
Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Joan Scott, "Conceptualizing Gender in American Business History," *The Business History Review* 72 (1998): 242-249; Wendy Gamber, *The Female Economy: The Millinery and Dressmaking Trades, 1860-1930* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1997); Angel Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating Women: A History of Women & Business in the United States* (New York: Palgrave, 1998); Jennifer Aston, "Female Business Ownership in Birmingham 1849-1901," *Midland History* 37, no. 2 (2012): 187-206; Edith Sparks, *Capital Intentions: Female Proprietors in San Francisco, 1850-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Christina E. Bax, "Entrepreneur Brownie Wise: Selling Tupperware to America's Women in the 1950s," *Journal of Women's History* 22 (Summer 2010): 171-80; Susan M. Yohn, "The Primacy of Place, Collaborations, and Alliances: Mapping Women's Businesses in Nineteenth-Century Brooklyn," *Journal of Urban History* 36 (July 2010): 411-28; Melissa S. Fisher, *Wall Street Women* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Tiffany Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Sarah A. Gordon, *"Make It Yourself": Home Sewing, Gender, and Culture, 1890-1930* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2009); Lynn Hudson, *The Making of "Mammy Pleasant": A Black Entrepreneur in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

did. Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor illustrates that fact in her book, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America*, where she demonstrates that women in the eighteenth century took part in economic exchanges and ran their own businesses, arguing that these women took advantage of the rise of capitalism. Historians have shown that throughout the nineteenth century, women sold goods, washed and mended clothing, offered lodging, and made hats, among other things. Far from being excluded from the sphere of business, women played an active part in it.[5]

The historiography of gender and business, then, has become a robust and growing field. One area, though, where the academic literature has a large gap is prostitution.[6] The business of selling sex has very rarely been included within the larger field of business history. Some historians have examined prostitution within the lens of labor, like Cynthia Blair. Blair's *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* argues that black women used prostitution to achieve some sort of financial independence in a time where they were excluded from most job opportunities. Most of the works published on prostitution, however, offer only a cursory discussion of brothel keeping as a business and madams as entrepreneurs. Angel Kwolek-Folland's *Incorporating Women*, one of the earliest histories of women and business, gave a general overview of the sex trade in the context of business—one of

[5]Ellen Hartigan O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

[6]While the study of prostitution in the US is a small but growing field, its non-academic counterpart is quite robust. Over the past sixty years, authors have written many popular, local histories of prostitution, typically in the form of anecdotes, vignettes, or legends. They are rarely sourced or cited but maintain popularity as more are published every year.
Some examples include Ronald Dean Miller, *Shady Ladies of the West* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1964); Caroline Bancroft, *Six Racy Madams of Colorado* (Boulder: Johnson Publishing, 1965); Donald D. Toms, *Tenderloin Tales: Prostitution, Gambling, and Opium on the Gold Belt of the Northern Black Hills* (Pierre, SD: State Publishing Company, 1997); Jan MacKell, *Brothels, Bordellos, and Bad Girls: Prostitution in Colorado, 1860-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004); Lael Morgan, *Wanton West: Madams, Money, Murder, and the Wild Women of Montana's Frontier* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2011).

the only monographs to do so. This dissertation aims to fill the gap in the historiography of business and gender with a detailed examination and analysis of madams as businesswomen. By considering prostitution as a business and investigating the choices madams and prostitutes made as entrepreneurs, this project intervenes in the literature in a significant way.

While historians of business and gender have generally excluded prostitution from their analyses, historians of the sex trade have interlaced the two subjects. Ruth Rosen's *The Lost Sisterhood*, one of the earliest monographs published, stressed that brothels were a place of business, "a means of earning a decent livelihood."[7] Rosen detailed how a house of prostitution worked and what a madam's role could be within it. The works that followed continued in this vein, highlighting the ways that brothels functioned as businesses as part of the narrative or analysis. Some, like Emily Epstein Landau's *Spectacular Wickedness*, focused on a specific madam as Landau spent a portion of her book on Lulu White, an infamous madam, and her brothel in Storyville, New Orleans' red-light district. Others examined an entire vice district. Penny A. Petersen wrote about the madams in Minneapolis, highlighting how they functioned as businesswomen within the city. This dissertation builds from these works, revealing how the madams in Fort Worth and San Antonio were entrepreneurs fixated on making their brothels as successful as possible. It makes an intervention in this historiography with its geographical focus of two Texas cities. Historians of prostitution have, for the most part, neglected Texas in their analysis of the sex trade. This work, then, will add significantly to the literature by examining two of the largest red-light districts in Texas.[8] Furthermore, by highlighting the economic

[7]Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900*-1918 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 90.
[8]Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013); Penny A. Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams: The Lost History of Prostitution on the Riverfront* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

importance of the vice districts to both San Antonio and Fort Worth, this dissertation places prostitution alongside cattle, railroads, the military, and other industries that helped the development of both cities into large, urban centers.

Another important area where this dissertation intervenes is in the discussion of the social system within a red-light district. Historians have analyzed and debated the relationship between the women of the vice districts in the larger historiography, starting with Ruth Rosen's *The Lost Sisterhood* and Anne M. Butler's *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery*, both published in the early 1980s. Rosen, who examined prostitution in urban areas around the US in the early twentieth century, argued that working in the sex trade led women to form close relationships with each other, a "continuous bonding," essentially.[9] Butler, in her study of prostitution in the post-Civil War American West, maintained that the opposite was true. She claimed that, because of the inherent competition, working in prostitution "undermined the possibilities for sound, lasting friendship among the women."[10] These contradictory arguments, made in two foundational historiographical works, have led historians of prostitution to parse this question in the literature that has followed in the last three decades. For example, Penny A. Petersen, in her 2013 monograph *Minneapolis Madams*, claims that "madams both exploited and protected their" employees, acting at times as their "best friend," seemingly arguing both sides of the issue.[11] Kazuhiro Oharazeki reiterated Petersen's analysis in *Japanese Prostitutes in the North American West* when he wrote "relations among prostitutes were rarely harmonious," while "at the same

[9]Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 104.
[10]Anne M. Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 42.
[11]Penny A. Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams: The Lost History of Prostitution on the Riverfront* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 36-37.

time, cooperation was sometimes necessary in times of hardship."[12] Like those studies, this dissertation aims to provide some analysis into this inquiry.

While scholars have written about the relationships among the many women who lived and worked in the red-light district, they have spent less time on the social classes found within prostitution. Nearly every monograph on the sex trade offers a brief outline of the hierarchy found within most vice districts, but most do not delve much deeper than that. Ruth Rosen's *The Lost Sisterhood*, again, was one of the first to present the basic societal framework of most red-light districts: parlor houses, one-dollar houses, and fifty-cent houses, which were typically cribs, one-room shacks where prostitutes plied their trade. The works that followed Rosen's have repeated this structure, simply applying it to the specific red-light district being discussed. The majority of monographs, like Rosen's, fail to ask deeper questions about the social structure of prostitution and how it affected the women involved on a daily basis. Many works, such as Cynthia Blair's *I've Got to Make My Livin'*, analyze issues of class as it intersects with prostitution, mainly focusing on the ways these women used the sex trade to support or better their economic situation. Still, the societal hierarchy within prostitution remains ignored, for the most part. This dissertation aims to rectify that by concentrating on this class system and its role in the lives of prostitutes and madams.[13]

Finally, an examination of the red-light districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio both confirms and complicates the historiography of the decline of vice in the United States. Historians have written extensively about the Progressive Era and its many reform movements. Starting in the 1980s, they began to concentrate on the various anti-vice reform campaigns

[12]Kazuhiro Oharazeki, *Japanese Prostitutes in the North American West, 1887-1920* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 131-132.
[13]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 86; Blair, *I've Got to Make My Livin'*.

happening in the United States during the early twentieth century. A considerable amount of the focus in these works has been on the white, middle-class women who made up much of the leadership and membership of these reform movements. Studies like Barbara Meil Hobson's *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* and Mary E. Odem's *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920* examine how these female reformers believed that prostitution needed to be significantly reformed in the United States and lobbied for changes to be made. While some reformers leaned towards regulation of sex districts, the majority saw eradication as the only answer. At its core, these reform movements sought control over those working in the sex trade. The crusades to better the nation and its people through the legislation of morality had many supporters in Texas. Every major red-light district in the state found itself the target of reformers. This dissertation complicates the historiography of anti-vice reform by exploring why it worked in certain cities, like Fort Worth, and not others, including San Antonio.

The women negatively affected by the anti-prostitution efforts have received much less attention than those who lobbied for it. While the removal of red-light districts has been detailed and analyzed in many works, the story of what happened to the real women who worked in the sex trade has received less attention. Madams and prostitutes had carved out a space where they could live and work—an area where, at least in Fort Worth and San Antonio, they had nearly total control of themselves and their businesses. The anti-vice crusades played a significant role in bringing an end to the existence of these spaces. This work contributes to the historiography of anti-vice reform and prostitution by focusing on both sides of the conflict.

At its core, this dissertation acts as a work of recovery while also offering a significant intervention in the historiography of gender and business. It focuses on a population of women

who have been mostly forgotten in the annals of history. Their legacy has, for the most part, been in salacious tales and legends meant to entertain and titillate. This project, then, reconstructs the lives of the women working within the red-light districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio while highlighting their roles as business owners. It also details the divergent paths each district, and the madams within it, took in the first few decades of the twentieth century until World War I which brought an end to Fort Worth's vice district. The red-light district in San Antonio, conversely, remained in existence until the 1940s.

Vice districts in the United States, for the most part, expanded and declined in the same general timeline. In the post-Civil War era across the United States, prostitution grew in response to a population boom stemming from "the influx of immigrants into northern cities and astonishing growth of western towns."[14] Red-light districts appeared all over the country in the 1870s and 1880s, from small mining communities in Montana to railroad towns in Texas. Vice districts peaked in size, popularity, and infamy in the 1890s and 1900s, like Storyville, the red-light district in New Orleans. The rise of Progressive Era anti-vice reform movements in the 1910s began affecting red-light districts negatively, leading to many of them being shut down. The vice districts that survived the reformers found their end, for the most part, in the First World War as the US Department of War demanded the eradication of many red-light districts. Fort Worth's vice district followed this timeline very closely, while San Antonio's red-light district managed to escape the fate of so many others.

Prostitution was rampant within Texas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as "each of Texas' eight largest cities developed at least one vice district encompassing

[14]Amy S. Balderach, "A Different Kind of Reservation: Waco's Red-Light District Revisited, 1880-1920" (Master's thesis, Baylor University, 2005), 5.

several city blocks."[15] These included Austin's "Guy Town," El Paso's Utah Street reservation, Fort Worth's Hell's Half-Acre, and San Antonio's red-light district, which did not have a name but was often referred to as "the District." Many smaller towns, like Denison and Palestine, also had thriving vice districts. Texas in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, experienced an immense economic growth due to the cattle drives, the expansion of the railroads across the state, the discovery of oil, and other various industries, which all employed men. The ample number of available customers allowed prostitution to flourish throughout the state for nearly four decades, and even longer in some cities. Both Fort Worth and San Antonio benefited from the economic boom of the late nineteenth century and the rise of prostitution within their borders.

The reconstruction of the red-light district, and the lives of the women within it, requires many different sources. Prostitution was illegal in the state of Texas and, because of that, the women who worked in the sex trade often had fluid identities as a way of protecting themselves and their careers. Many adopted pseudonyms and changed them, as well as their backstories, when it suited them. Furthermore, the majority of the women who worked as madams or prostitutes did not leave any record of their existence. There are no diaries, letters, or ledger books left behind by the madams of Fort Worth and San Antonio. This project, then, cannot depend on the traditional sources but employs a variety of diverse sources to piece together the narrative.

Newspapers are one of the most important resources used in this dissertation. The regular printing of crime columns that reported the daily arrests by police and the goings-on of the criminal courts provide plenty of evidence of the sex trade. Generally, these columns

[15]David C. Humphrey, "Prostitution in Texas: From the 1830s to the 1910s" *East Texas Historical Journal* 33, no. 1 (1995), 27.

included names and sometimes, if the report concerned a madam, even addresses. Furthermore, newspapers often published articles recounting the many salacious activities of the red-light district, including fights, arson, burglaries, and murders. The elite madams were subjects of many articles that had little to do with the fact that they worked in the sex trade. This dissertation employs newspapers from both San Antonio and Fort Worth—including the *Fort Worth Democrat*, the *Fort Worth Record*, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, the *San Antonio Light*, and the *San Antonio Express*—as well as papers from other Texas cities, like Dallas. Still, while the newspapers are a valuable resource, they present the stories of prostitutes and madams through a biased lens, as the editors and journalists chose what details to share and how to share them. The articles require rhetorical analysis to read against the grain.

Municipal documents and local records provide vital information about these women and their lives. The Bexar County Criminal Court Minutes, San Antonio District Court Case Files and Criminal Dockets, Fort Worth Mayor's Dockets, and Tarrant County Criminal Docket and Court Minutes contain the names of women indicted for keeping houses of prostitution. They also explain whether the women were found guilty, what their punishment was, and if they appealed the verdict—giving a window into what dealing with the legal system looked like for elite madams. City ordinances and council minutes offer important context for how city leaders viewed the sex trade and how madams interacted with the official government bodies. Municipal and county records, including probate, tax, and property, play a significant role in this dissertation as they show just how much wealth these women had. Local, non-governmental records, which include city directories and maps, are good resources for the spatial recreation of the two red-light districts, as well as confirming which houses were used as brothels.

Alongside local and county records, state and federal records help to complete the narrative. The State of Texas court system heard many cases involving both madams and prostitutes. Specifically, the Texas Court of Appeals was instrumental in assisting women in the sex trade in certain cases. The US Census is one of the most valuable sources used by this project as it contains significant information regarding madams, their brothels, and their employees. Another important resource in this dissertation is the Stone Report. This report, made for the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, came from Frank Stone, an immigrant inspector, who traveled through Texas in 1909 and 1910, visiting all the major red-light districts. He wrote detailed reports and correspondence during his trip, recounting his interviews with madams and visits to brothels in both Fort Worth and San Antonio. His report provides vital information about the interworking of the vice districts and the madams who lived and worked in them.

Within all of the extant sources, though, there are silences surrounding certain topics within the red-light district. The intimate relations between prostitutes and their customers that happened behind closed doors, and their price tags, are one specific silent area. There is no existing evidence that explains what services the parlor houses in San Antonio and Fort Worth offered or what was charged for each act. Furthermore, the personal relationships of the women within the red-light districts are another unknown. They did not leave behind letters written to one another or journals describing their friends, lovers, or enemies, which means this dissertation makes educated conjecture using the sources that are available to attempt to recreate as much of a picture of life in the vice district as possible.

I organized this dissertation thematically, focusing on the different powers wielded by the elite madams of San Antonio and Fort Worth: economic, civic, and industry. While writing my master's thesis on the red-light district in Fort Worth, I realized how many of these women had

money and influence, and how they affected and assisted the development of the city. I selected the three categories as the analytical framework because together they arguably make up the factors needed to run a successful business and be an effective business owner. Economic power, in this dissertation, refers both to having personal wealth and using that wealth, and the business that helped create it, to benefit the city's economic status as a whole. Civic and industry power stem directly from the economic power. Madams who earned little money would have neither political capital nor prominent status within the sex trade. Civic power was the ability to take up space within the civic sphere and use the tools within it to protect oneself and one's business. Fighting new laws that might harm the sex trade or using the newspaper to protect their reputation are prime examples of the types of civic power that elite madams wielded. Finally, industry power meant having the most control of and within the social system of the red-light district, which elite madams used, for the most part, to better themselves but would, when needed, care for the women within the district as well.

Chapters One through Three focus on each of these powers—economic, civic, and industry—within the red-light districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio. Each chapter details how elite madams gained those powers and the different ways that they used them. Furthermore, the chapters compare the two populations of madams when appropriate and analyze and discuss the change over time in each red-light district. Chapter Four lays out the national decline of red-light districts in the first two decades of the twentieth century and how that national movement affected Fort Worth and San Antonio's vice districts, and their population of madams. Finally, this dissertation concludes by discussing what happened to the sex trade in Texas as the twentieth century progressed while also analyzing what it meant that this population of women wielded economic, civic, and industry power.

Before beginning an analysis of the sex trade in Fort Worth and San Antonio, an examination of language is necessary, as well as some clarification on the choice of terms used. Newspapers and other contemporary sources often used a variety of nicknames when discussing the women who worked in vice districts, including soiled dove, demimonde, cyprian, bawd, floozy, and nymph du pavé, to name a few. For women working in the sex trade, their employment became their identity and they were branded with these names. There were times when newspapers simply used the nicknames instead of the women's actual names. Thus, this work will use only the term *prostitute* when referring to the women working in the sex trade. In the current lexicon, the common title applied to women involved in prostitution is *sex worker*. That term, however, connotes more than simply selling sex as these women were doing in this work. It includes erotic masseuses, phone sex operators, and cam girls. Thus, for this project, when discussing the women who lived and worked within the red-light districts, the label *prostitute* will be employed.

The madams running houses of prostitution in the vice districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio were business owners in every possible way. As the example of Beatrice Benedict illustrates, city officials saw them as that as well. They used their successful businesses to gain economic, civic, and industry power. By telling their story, this dissertation deepens and complicates the narrative of gender and entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER ONE: ECONOMIC POWER

Introduction

The clock struck eight one Saturday evening in September 1885 and Claude Duval's work had just begun. Duval ran one of the more infamous houses of prostitution within San Antonio's red-light district, a two-story mansion at the northwest corner of South San Saba and Monterey known as the 101. Duval's large and elegant brothel presumably attracted patrons willing to spend a generous amount of money for their evenings of companionship. Potential customers would have been welcomed in by a porter, who also acted as security, to the parlor, where Duval held court alongside her employees. The men would have been offered drinks—beer, wine, or liquor—and the women of the house would begin to work: conversing, dancing, and flirting until the customer made his choice of companion. Duval's role was as a facilitator—connecting clients with a date that would suit them and smoothing over any bumps that might crop up in a room full of men, women, and alcohol. Once a man had selected his "date," he would pay Duval for his evening of activities and then head to a bedroom. Duval's night concluded when the last man left the brothel, which could be late into the night. Her work never truly ended, though, as she balanced various moving parts daily in order to run her successful business.[1]

Saturday night in Claude Duval's brothel typifies what most elite madams did on a regular basis to ensure their businesses ran smoothly. Outside of their responsibilities during the

[1]While there are sources to back up much of the action in this paragraph, there are three areas where little is known: how much each sexual activity cost, how the money exchanged hands, and what actually happened between customers and prostitutes when they retired to a bedroom.
Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1885-1886, 126, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "City Local News," *San Antonio Daily Light*, July 29, 1889; David Bowser, *West of the Creek: Murder, Mayhem, and Vice in Old San Antonio* (San Antonio, TX: Maverick Publishing Co., 2003), 29, 34.

evenings, madams worked consistently to maintain the status and popularity of their brothels. They were entrepreneurs, and the sex trade was their business. The women who ran high-class houses of prostitution within San Antonio and Fort Worth's red-light districts, and elsewhere in the nation, worked, for the most part, with the same business model. Claude Duval in San Antonio played a role and had responsibilities similar to those of Mary Porter or Mabel Thompson in Fort Worth. For madams, the mechanisms and needs of a brothel were essentially the same regardless of city. Claude Duval understood that in order to be successful, her house of prostitution needed to look a particular way and employ a specific type of woman. Her brothel had to offer certain amenities to the male patrons, including total discretion and privacy, while she had to court political protection to ensure it stayed open. Elite houses of prostitution in both San Antonio and Fort Worth required all of these elements in order to be profitable, and the responsibility of maintaining those elements fell solely on the madam. Thus, the madam became the determining factor for a brothel's success.

This chapter examines the madam's role as business owner within the red-light districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio from 1877 to the First World War, looking at all aspects regarding the ownership and management of a successful house of prostitution. It details how a madam established a brothel and how she ran it. It also discusses the different ways a madam kept her business going—highlighting how she attracted customers and managed her own staff and household. The question of a madam's race and her career longevity factors into this examination of their success or failure as business owners. This chapter evaluates the economic power wielded by the madams of both cities, showing how important the sex trade was to the economy of Fort Worth and San Antonio. Focusing on madams as business owners and entrepreneurs offers new analysis on a little-discussed topic.

The Rise of Prostitution in San Antonio and Fort Worth

The cities of Fort Worth and San Antonio have very different beginnings, but by the late nineteenth century both ended up with large, thriving red-light districts. San Antonio, as it exists today, resulted from the merging of two separate, but adjacent, colonial settlements in New Spain in the early 1700s. First, after the Spanish Crown ordered more people to inhabit northern New Spain, Martin de Alarcón, the governor of Spanish Texas, founded Presidio San Antonio de Béxar, a military fort, on the west side of the San Antonio River in May 1718. The fort and the immediate surrounding area became known as the Plaza de Armas, or the Military Plaza. Martin also brought a small group of settlers with him, who settled around the presidio, forming the Villa de Béxar. Second, in March 1731, a group of families from the Canary Islands—chosen and sent by the Spanish Crown to further populate the area—arrived and established their community east of the presidio, closer to the San Antonio River. They named their settlement San Fernando de Béxar and built their homes around the Plaza de las Islas, or the Main Plaza. Over time, these two separate communities merged into one town, San Antonio, which the government of New Spain named the capital of Spanish Texas in 1773. It became a city of significance, playing an important role in the 1836 Texas Revolution as two battles were fought there, and growing into the largest city in Texas with over eight thousand residents by 1860. After the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, San Antonio flourished as a livestock, distribution, commercial, and military center serving the entire Southwest region.[2]

[2]Raúl A. Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 17-18; Green Peyton, *San Antonio: City in the Sun* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1946), 72; Albert Curtis, *Fabulous San Antonio* (San Antonio, TX: Naylor Co., 1955), 83-84; Jesús F. de la Teja, *San Antonio de Béxar: A Community on New Spain's Northern Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 7-11, 34.

While San Antonio began as a Spanish colonial settlement, Fort Worth started as a military encampment for the US Army. On June 6, 1849, Major Ripley Arnold, of the United States Army, founded a fort on the south side of the Trinity River, naming it Camp Worth. By the end of that year, the US War Department changed the name to Fort Worth. Over the next few years, pioneers began settling there; and by September 1853, the army officially left the fort, allowing settlers to take possession of the area. Fort Worth grew very slowly until the 1870s when it became "the major stop on the cattle trail."[3] In 1873, it was incorporated into a city and three years later the Texas and Pacific railroad came to Fort Worth. The cattle industry and the railroad combined to grow Fort Worth into a city, and, by 1880, it had over six thousand residents and was expanding rail services that would make Fort Worth the railroad center of Texas.[4] Fort Worth and San Antonio, then, had very different origins, but, by the end of the nineteenth century, were cities with growing populations and expanding industries. One of those industries was prostitution.

As an industry within Texas and the United States as whole, prostitution has been a constant. In the mid-nineteenth century, prostitutes began to move into the trans-Mississippi West in large numbers. The combination of the California Gold Rush, cattle drives, and the expansion of military forts meant there were dozens of settlements where the “inhabitants were seventy, eighty, and even ninety percent males.”[5] Wherever these towns, forts, or camps popped up, prostitutes quickly followed, often as the first women there. Red-light districts typically came later, after enough women had arrived to populate multiple cribs and brothels. The post-Civil

[3]Oliver Knight, *Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 10, 51.
[4]Knight, *Fort Worth*, 25, 85; Leonard Sanders, *How Fort Worth Became the Texasmost City* (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1973), 18-19; Harold Rich, *Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 14.
[5]Elliot West, “Scarlet West: The Oldest Profession in the Trans-Mississippi West” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1981), 18.

War population boom west of the Mississippi translated into an expansion of prostitution and vice districts within most cities. The terminology "red-light district" most likely originated in the American West, with some historians citing Dodge City, Kansas, one of the most well-known cattle towns, as the originator.[6] If a town, city, or settlement in the West had a significant male population, whether they were cowboys, soldiers, or miners, it would also have plenty of women working in the sex trade. San Antonio and Fort Worth followed this pattern.[7]

Prostitution existed in both cities before the 1880s. In San Antonio, city officials expelled nine prostitutes from the city in 1817, one of the earliest recorded instances of the sex trade there. This expulsion seemed to have had little effect as prostitution was fully embedded in San

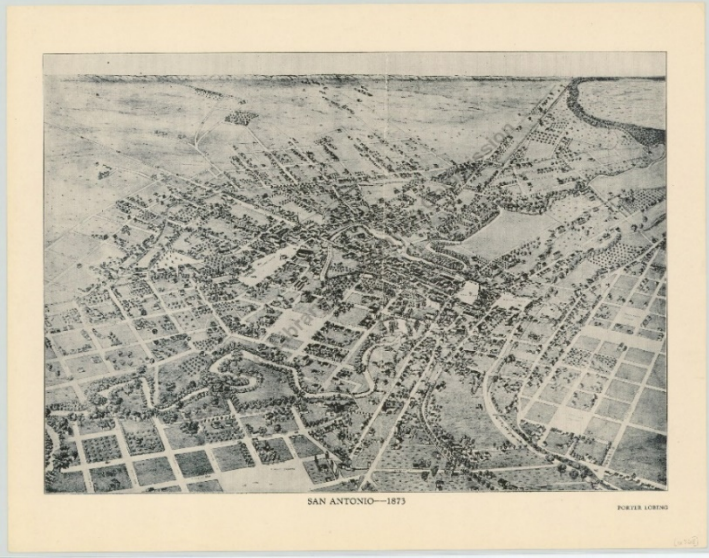

Figure 1: Bird's Eye View of San Antonio, 1873

[6]Paul Iselin Wellman, *The Trampling Herd: The Story of the Cattle Range in America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1939), 195.
[7]Anne M. Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 9; Bernard J. Wilson and Zaellotius A. Wilson, "From Maiden Lane to Gay Alley: Prostitutes and Prostitution in Tucson, 1880-1912" *Journal of Arizona History* 55, no. 2 (Summer 2014), 167; Jan MacKell, *Red Light Women of the Rocky Mountains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), 23; Cy Martin, *Whiskey and Wild Women: An Amusing Account of the Saloons and Bawds of the Old West* (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1974), 17; Amy S. Balderach, "A Different Kind of Reservation: Waco's Red-Light District Revisited, 1880-1920" (Master's thesis, Baylor University, 2005), 5-7.

Antonio by the time of the Civil War.[8] The Main and Military Plazas, and the adjacent streets like Houston and Commerce, contained saloons, gambling parlors, and houses of prostitution.[9] After the Civil War ended, the population of San Antonio, and the vice industry, grew rapidly. In 1860, San Antonio's population was 8,235, which expanded to 12,256 ten years later. By 1880, over 20,000 people lived in the city.[10] During those same two decades, new saloons and brothels emerged throughout the city. For example, the San Antonio City Directory listed 62 saloons in 1877 and 156 in 1887.[11] While it is more difficult to ascertain the growth of prostitution, since the city directory did not include brothels, a sample of newspaper articles from the 1870s and 1880s shows that the number of articles written about prostitutes or madams nearly quadrupled from the 1870s to the 1880s.[12] By 1880, the majority of the brothels could be found near the Main and Military Plazas with some located west of the San Pedro Creek. San

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[8][Map on Page] Augustus Koch. *Bird's Eye View of the City of San Antonio Bexar County Texas*, 1873. Lithograph (hand-colored), 23.2 x 28.5 in. Published by J. J. Stoner, Madison, Wis. Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Texas Bird's-Eye Views, Amon Carter Museum, http://www.birdseyeviews.org/zoom.php?city=San%20Antonio&year=1873&extra_info=;
Humphrey, "Prostitution in Texas," 27; Melissa Gohlke, "The Evolution of Vice Activity in San Antonio, 1885-1975" (Master's thesis, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1997), 11-12, 17.

[9]Teresa Thomas Perrin, "Crime and Order in San Antonio during the Civil War and Reconstruction," (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 15, 30; Gohlke, "The Evolution of Vice Activity," 12-13.

[10]Perrin, "Crime and Order in San Antonio," 69.

[11]*Mooney and Morrison's Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1877-1878*, 221-222; *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1887-1888*, 387-389, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

[12][Map on Page] D. D. Morse (active 1870s). *Fort Worth, Tarrant Co. Texas*, 1876. Toned lithograph, 14.4 x 19 in. Published by Chas. Shober & Co. Props. Chicago Lith.Co. Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Will F. Collins, Texas Bird's-Eye Views, Amon Carter Museum, http://www.birdseyeviews.org/zoom.php?city=Fort%20Worth&year=1876&extra_info=;
For example: "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Daily Express*, September 9, 1875; "Court Items," *San Antonio Express*, August 12, 1876; "Suicide," *San Antonio Express*, September 7, 1876; "Sad to Chronicle," *San Antonio Express*, November 21, 1876;"A Disgraceful Outrage," *San Antonio Daily Express*, August 5, 1877; "Died at Her Own Hands," *San Antonio Daily Express*, April 26, 1879; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, April 11, 1883; "District Court," *San Antonio Light*, January 31, 1884; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, May 16, 1884; "Cavilling Commissioners," *San Antonio Light*, June 13, 1884; "Rays of Light," *San Antonio Light*, July 16, 1884; "An Elopement," *San Antonio Light*, September 10, 1884; "Killed By a Blow," *San Antonio Light*, September 23, 1884; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, January 26, 1885; "Fast Driving," *San Antonio Light,* March 11, 1885; "Enforcing the Law," *San Antonio Light*, March 30, 1885; "Too Much Noise," *San Antonio Light*, July 30, 1885; "Rays of Light," *San Antonio Daily Light*, October 25, 1886; "More Squaw Fighters," *San Antonio Daily Light*, November 19, 1886; "Murderous Assault," *San Antonio Daily Express*, June 19, 1887; "She Feels

Antonio did not, at this point, have a true red-light district as the brothels were not situated in one central location, but there was still a considerable presence of vice within the city.

In Fort Worth, although there are not many extant records of the settlement's early days, prostitutes have presumably been around since the beginning because of its foundation as a military camp with an overwhelmingly male population. Thus, prostitutes would have had a healthy customer base, which would soon expand. As the cattle drives began to use Fort Worth as an important stopping point, cowboys arrived regularly looking for alcohol and entertainment. They expected to spend their money—hard-earned from herding hundreds of cattle—at saloons, gambling parlors, and brothels, and Fort Worth supplied all of those in the form of the red-light district, Hell's Half-Acre.[13] In the early 1870s, Fort Worth was not much more than its 2019 downtown grid. Businesses, government buildings, and residences were all located within the

Figure 1.1: Bird's Eye View of Fort Worth, 1876

Aggrieved," *San Antonio Daily Light*, November 8, 1887; "Cut in the Neck," *San Antonio Daily Light*, March 27, 1888; "Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, May 25, 1888; "Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, October 23, 1889; "Eliza Blocker pleaded," *San Antonio Daily Light,* December 9, 1889; "City Local News," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 11, 1889.

[13]Knight, *Fort Worth*, 59-61; Sanders, *How Fort Worth Became the Texasmost City*, 33; Ann Arnold, *Gamblers & Gangsters: Fort Worth's Jacksboro Highway in the 1940s & 1950s* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1998), 1-3.

rectangle, moving south from the Trinity River to Twelfth Street and east from Burnet Street to Pecan Street. The red-light district settled into the sparsely populated south end of downtown, where it would remain for the next four decades.

During the 1880s, the sex trade increased dramatically in both cities. One important reason for that is the expansion of the potential customer base. From 1880 to 1890, Fort Worth and San Antonio's population grew significantly. San Antonio expanded from 20,550 people to 37,623 over that decade, nearly doubling in size, while Fort Worth boomed, going from only 6,663 residents in 1880 to 23,076 in 1890.[14] Railroads, cattle drives, and military forts meant that both cities contained a substantial customer base for brothels and all other vice found in a red-light district. The other important factor in the growth of prostitution in the late nineteenth century was, arguably, the presence of the madam. In the last few decades of the 1800s, many cities west of the Mississippi experienced population booms and the sex trade expanded to supply the rising demand, which included the centralization of prostitution into one area—a red-light district.[15] In some towns, like Fort Worth, the vice district came into existence organically, while others, like San Antonio, had a district with boundaries created by government officials in some capacity. Furthermore, this expansion of the sexual economy, and growth in customer base, allowed women to create "a permanent and professional class of prostitutes."[16] The combination of a more consistent population of prostitutes and the concentration of vice into red-light districts changed how prostitution functioned. Essentially, it professionalized prostitution.

The early iterations of prostitution, which included streetwalking and working out of saloons, transitioned in the latter decades of the nineteenth century to brothel-based prostitution

[14]"Texas Almanac: City Population History from 1850-2000," *Texas Almanac*, Texas State Historical Association, accessed December 31, 2018, https://texasalmanac.com/sites/default/files/images/CityPopHist%20web.pdf.
[15]Balderach, "A Different Kind of Reservation," 5; Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club*, 21.
[16]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 70.

within a red-light district. A brothel, or house of prostitution, in its most basic form was a place men visited in order to have sexual activity of some type with a prostitute. It was managed by a woman, typically, known as a madam. Brothels have existed in the world nearly as long as prostitution has. They became a significant aspect of the red-light district, though, in response to the growing numbers of customers and of prostitutes. Brothels, and the madams who ran them, could, in a way, control the lewd activity within the district as they kept it relatively contained. Furthermore, they offered a relatively safer and more secure place for prostitutes to ply their trade with a constant stream of customers, thanks to the madams' advertising. And finally, they offered an economic value to the city where they were located. None of this would have been possible, though, without the presence of a madam as she controlled the brothel and the prostitutes within it. Madams and the brothels they ran became a significant factor in the expansion of red-light districts in Fort Worth and San Antonio in the late nineteenth century.[17]

The Madam and The Brothel

The first prostitutes who worked in either city would not have been employed in a brothel but presumably made their living working in a saloon or streetwalking. As red-light districts began sprouting up in cities in the 1870s and 1880s, brothels became a significant part of their existence as the majority of prostitutes within a district lived and worked in a house of prostitution.[18] For example, although there are records of prostitution in the 1810s in San Antonio, it was not until the 1860s that brothels began to exist commonly within the city. The *San Antonio Express* newspaper published multiple articles in the late 1860s reporting on the

[17]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 70, 87; Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club*, 21, 27.
[18]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 86

houses of prostitution in San Antonio. Brothels populated Fort Worth's south downtown in the early 1870s—a fact consistently discussed by the *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*. By the 1880s, brothels were commonplace in both cities, tolerated by the local government, law enforcement, and many residents.[19] For the next four decades, women in San Antonio and Fort Worth owned and managed these houses of prostitution. Working as a madam was profitable and they took advantage of it. Many of them used their successful businesses to gain immense wealth, property, and connections with powerful men. The question, then, is who were the women running these businesses and how did they do it so effectively?

Starting in the late 1870s and moving forward to the First World War, madams appeared in waves, almost generational in nature. Before diving into an analysis of the brothel and the madam, there must be a general understanding of the cast of characters and the timeline. The first generation of madams focused on in this work played a significant role in the expansion of the sex trade in post-Reconstruction Texas. In Fort Worth, they were the ones responsible for the establishment and growth of the red-light district. In San Antonio, these madams opened the first real parlor houses, the top tier of brothels, within the city's sex trade. Thus, the women owning and running houses of prostitution from the late 1870s into the 1880s were quite important to the sexual economy of both cities.

In the early days, Fort Worth only had a few madams within its boundaries. Lee Summers, Rosa Marks, and Mattie Johnson were three of the most prominent. They each ran a

[19]"Mayor's Court—April 23," *San Antonio Express*, April 25, 1868; "Mayor's Court, December 7," *San Antonio Express*, December 9, 1867; "Mayor's Court—December 11," *San Antonio Express*, December 12, 1867; "Mayor's Court," *San Antonio Express*, January 17, 1868; "Mayor's Court," *San Antonio Express*, March 13, 1868; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat,* December 7, 1876; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, November 24, 1877; "Wide Open Town" *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, November 29, 1878; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, February 28, 1879; Rich, *Fort Worth*, 9; Humphrey, "Prostitution in Texas," 27; Gohlke, "The Evolution of Vice Activity in San Antonio," 16.

brothel with anywhere from five to twelve employees living and working there. As some of the earliest houses of prostitution in Fort Worth, they were scattered throughout downtown. This generation of women crafted relationships with local officials and established how the brothel system would work in Fort Worth. In San Antonio, the same era of madams played a similar but more expansive role. Prostitution had existed in this city for decades. The late 1870s, however, witnessed significant growth in brothel-based prostitution. The women running houses of prostitution in this era—including Claude Duval, Ignacia Cortez, Blanche Dearwood, Fannie Kelly, Lydia Pettit, and Sallie Brewer—shifted the sex trade into a more expensive, higher quality tier as the majority of the aforementioned women were opening parlor houses, the highest class of brothel.[20]

Fort Worth's next generation of madams soon followed in the footsteps of their colleagues to the south by opening top-tier houses of prostitution in the 1880s and 1890s. Mary Porter, Maud L. Brown, Josie Belmont, Jessie Reeves, Gracie Lane, Lizette Duval, and Dolly Love were some of the most prominent members of this generation. Their brothels became the center of Hell's Half-Acre and they were responsible for taking the red-light district to the apex of its existence. In San Antonio, madams during the 1880s and 1890s, including Sadie Ray, Maggie Reed, Ione Palmer, Lou Lamont, Carrie Anderson, Emelia Garza, Lillie Gibson, Elizabeth Gordon, and Emma Bishop, continued to open and manage top-tier brothels and began

[20]*C.D. Morrison & Co.'s General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, for 1878-1879,* 78, 116, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; 1880 U.S. Census, Tarrant County, Texas, population schedule, Fort Worth, p. 17A, dwelling 87, family 87, Mrs. M. L. Johnson; p. 14D, dwelling 113, family 121, Rosa Marks; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 January 2019); "District Court Cases," *The Evening Light*, February 7, 1883; *Bexar County, TX County Court Criminal Minutes, 1876-1881*, (April 9, 1878), Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 204, Texas State Archives, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, Texas; *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1877-1878*, 158, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

consolidating in one area of the city, creating a true red-light district. It was during these two decades that the sex trade in San Antonio became well-known.[21]

From the 1870s to the 1910s, the brothel as a business—what it looked like, how it was run, and the role of the madam within it—remained consistent. A brothel, at its base level, required four things: a dwelling of some type, a madam, prostitutes, and customers. The madam, though, was arguably the most important variable of the four as the success or failure of a brothel generally depended on her abilities. The question, then, is why would a woman in the late nineteenth century choose a brothel, an illegal business, to own and run? Money and familiarity were two of the major reasons. Although it existed in an illicit sphere, a brothel could be incredibly profitable if run well. A significant number of madams who owned successful houses of prostitution had once been prostitutes, making the transition from employee to employer and benefitting from having worked in the very place they were now managing. Furthermore, participating in the sex trade, at times, stained women with a certain reputation, harming any other prospects they might have had. Remaining part of the sexual economy, then, gave some women the ability to become successful, and wealthy, business owners. This chapter focuses on the top tier of these madams—those who owned and operated parlor houses in Fort Worth and San Antonio—how they got there, and how they stayed there.

Property ownership, and the ability to buy and sell real estate, was an important part of being a madam of a first-class brothel. The majority of the elite madams in San Antonio and Fort Worth owned their houses of prostitution, which separated them from the lower-level madams,

[21]"Court Notes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 6, 1885; "Localettes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, January 9, 1885; "County Court," *Dallas Morning News*, November 12, 1885; "Sad and Terrible Tragedy," *Dallas Morning News*, March 13, 1888; "Proceedings of the Courts," *Fort Worth Gazette*, April 10, 1895; "Life a Burden," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, April 8, 1897; "Foolish Girls," *San Antonio Daily Light*, August 31, 1886; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, April 7, 1887; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*¸ June 19, 1894; "Cavilling Commissioners," *San Antonio Light*, June 13, 1884; "City Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 14, 1891.

who generally rented their houses of prostitution. The women running parlor house did not, for the most part, begin their careers at that stage. Most had to move up the ranks to get there. Several women in both cities moved from prostitute to madam to elite madam. San Antonio madam Sadie Ray represents a clear example of this progression. In 1885, Ray worked as a prostitute in Blanche Dearwood's brothel, Fort Allen. Two years later, she was running her own mid-level brothel at 316 S. Concho. In the summer of 1888, Ray purchased a large, two-story frame brothel which she ran as a parlor house for the next seven years before retiring from sex work. Quite a few other madams owned their parlor houses. Some bought from retiring or relocating madams. Elizabeth Gordon, a prominent San Antonio madam in the 1880s, got her start buying Lydia Petit's East Street brothel, which she eventually sold to Sadie Ray. Another example is Mary L. Burns, who called herself Claude Duval, who bought her large two-story mansion from Mary A. Palmer, also known as Blanche Dearwood, in 1879. Madams also purchased property from people not involved in the sexual economy, which they then turned into brothels. Ignacia Cortez and Sallie Brewer, both well-known San Antonio madams, did this. In Fort Worth, lack of access to real estate records makes it difficult to ascertain from whom the women of Hell's Half-Acre purchased their brothels. What is clear is that several of the more prominent madams—including Mary Porter, Dolly Love, Mabel Thompson, and Mildred Clifton—bought their houses of prostitution. For madams, owning the brothels that they managed gave them complete control—over the property, the running of the business, and the profits. They were not beholden to a landlord in any way. It allowed them to have total ownership of their business and also complete responsibility for its maintenance.[22]

[22]*Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1885-1886*, 260; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1887-1888*, 274; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1888-1889*, 308, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA:

Brothels varied greatly in appearance and size. They could be the second floor of a saloon, a ramshackle building with beds divided by curtains, or a hotel. Parlor houses, though, generally resembled one another—typically large and beautiful residences, with multiple bedrooms and a large foyer, or receiving area. Many of these brothels had a previous life as another type of building. Madams often modified them until they fit exactly what they needed. In 1890 and 1891, Sadie Ray made multiple modifications to her brothel at 215 S. East Street in San Antonio, which she had purchased two years earlier from a retiring madam. As this building had previously existed as a brothel, Ray had a solid foundation, but she did have changes in mind that would elevate her own business to the top level. First, she built a $1,400 dwelling that could have been servants' quarters or the back addition of the brothel, which included a second floor. The next year, Ray added a gallery, or corridor, to her brothel, possibly to connect it to other additions she made that were not recorded. The Sanborn Map Company published Fire Insurance

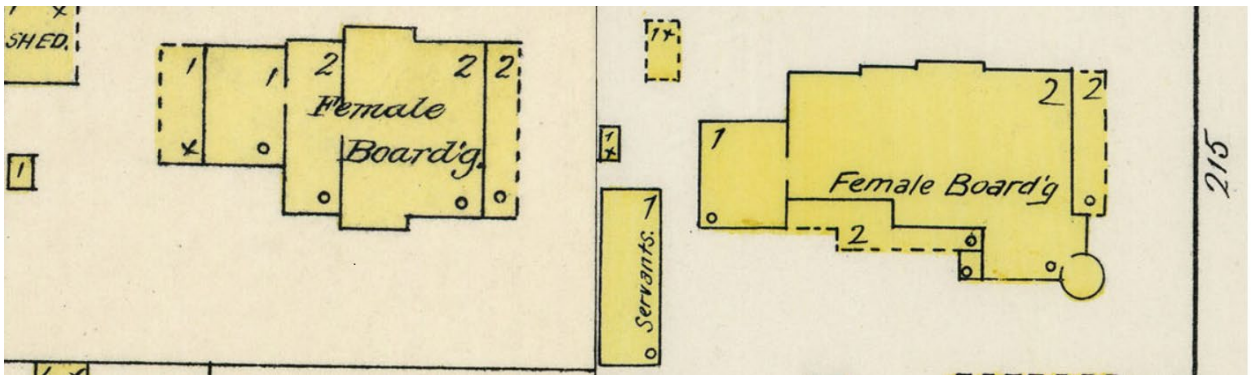

Figure 1.2: Comparison of Ray's brothel from 1888 (left) to 1892 (right)

Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; Deed of Sale, Ernestine Gordon to M.W. Robinson (Sadie Ray), June 18, 1888, Deed Book, Vol. 35, p. 483; Deed of Sale, Mary A. Palmer (Blanche Dearwood) to Mary L. Burns (Claude Duval), May 19, 1879, Deed Book, Vol. 12, p. 325; Deed of Sale, John D. Smith to Ernestine Gordon, January 12, 1882, Deed Book, Vol. 23, p. 495; Deed of Sale, Harriet Bomby to Ignacia Cortez, August 6, 1875, Deed Book, Vol. 1, p. 459; Deed of Sale, Jesusa Perez to Sallie Brewer, July 9, 1883, Deed Book, Vol. 29, p. 78, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; Tarrant County, Texas, probate case files, estate no. 2667, Mary Porter, Final Report of Administrator of said Estate; estate no. 2247, Rose Etta Fisher (Dolly Love), Inventory and Appraisement of said Estate, 15 April 1903; County Clerk's Office, Fort Worth; "No Raids in Acre, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 6, 1909.

Maps of San Antonio in both 1888 and 1892. By examining their depictions of Ray's brothel in both (Figure 1.2), it is obvious that she made some significant additions to the dwelling, which allowed her to employ more women and make more money. Clearly, Ray's expansion was effective since she, in 1891, housed and managed thirteen women in a brothel that had previously only accommodated between five and seven women. Madams in both Fort Worth and San Antonio did just what Ray did, turning an existing building, through additions or remodeling, into the parlor house they required.[23]

An alternative option for madams was to construct buildings specifically to be parlor houses. By choosing this path, a madam would have control over all the elements of her brothel before it was even built. In 1875, Mary A. Palmer, who would later be known as Blanche Dearwood, purchased a plot of land in San Antonio where she built the infamous parlor house known as Fort Allen (Figure 1.3). It had a hard rock foundation, twelve-foot-high walls, and a tin mansard-style roof as well as room for at least eight women to work and live there. Sallie Brewer, another San Antonio madam, followed in Palmer's footsteps in 1883 when she built a

[23] Deed of Sale, Ernestine Gordon to M.W. Robinson (Sadie Ray), June 18, 1888, Deed Book, Vol. 35, p. 483, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; "Building Permits," *San Antonio Daily Light*, August 26, 1890; "Building Permits," *San Antonio Daily Light*, April 13, 1891; San Antonio, Texas, Sheet 13, 1888; San Antonio, Texas, Sheet 5, 1892, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps." Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas; *Johnson & Chapman's General Directory of the City of San Antonio for the year 1891, together with a Complete Business Directory and General Information*, 110, 131, 180, 192, 194, 249, 253, 302, 304, 315, 332, 368, 405, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database online]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

Figure 1.3: Fort Allen, several years after Palmer sold it

large stone building for $15,000 that would become her brothel, the 110. Having control over the design and construction of a brothel allowed madams to get exactly what they needed in terms of number of bedrooms, size of receiving areas, and extra exits. The clearest examples of this happening are the Dora McNue brothels in San Antonio.[24]

In 1896, Dora McNue purchased an empty lot, number 4, in the 400 block of Matamoras Street for $650, which she paid in cash.[25] In 1905, she purchased the lot next to hers on Matamoras, number 3, from another woman, Julia A. Swart, for $500 in cash. Around that time, she also bought lot number 2 in the same block.[26] McNue was her legal name but most in San

[24]Image: Edward Grandjean, *BCB A80: "106 Elm Street"* ca. 1870s-1910, Edward Grandjean Collection, The Daughters of the Republic of Texas Collection, Texas A&M University-San Antonio Library, San Antonio, Texas. Deed of Sale, William Hoffman to Mary A. Palmer (Blanche Dearwood), September 30, 1875, Deed Book, Vol. 4, p. 276, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; Mechanics Lien, F.J. Beitel and Bros. to Mary A. Palmer (Blanche Dearwood), October 9, 1875, Mechanics Lien Book, Vol. A, p. 35, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; Deed of Sale, Jesusa Perez to Sallie Brewer, July 5, 1883, Deed Book, Vol. 29, p. 78, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; "To Be Rebuilt," *San Antonio Light,* April 27, 1883; "Building Permits," *San Antonio Light*, May 9, 1883.

[25]Deed of Sale, H.B. Adams Estate to Dora McNue, June 18, 1896, Deed Book, Vol. 154, p. 378, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas.

[26]Deed of Sale, Julia A. Swart to Dora McNue, March 14, 1905, Deed Book, Vol. 247, p. 206, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; Dora McNue Property Collection, San Antonio Municipal Archive, San Antonio,

Antonio knew her as Hattie Baxter, a prostitute turned madam.[27] She got her start in Carrie Anderson's brothel in 1885 then moved to Blanche Dearwood's Fort Allen in 1888 where she worked for a few years before striking out on her own.[28] She presumably rented the first few brothels she managed, at 309 N. East and 216 Matamoras, while she built her own at 410 Matamoras, on lot number 4.[29] McNue moved into her new brothel in 1902, staying there for four years.[30] In 1906, she purchased the house of prostitution at 216 S. Concho, which cost $3500 that she paid in cash, and a houseful of furniture from fellow madam Grace Graham for $1500, also in cash.[31] She rented out 410 Matamoras to another madam, Belle St. Clair, where it became known as the Silver Slipper.[32] Over the next two decades, McNue purchased lots all over the city. She also continued to build on her two Matamoras lots until she had two large brothels— a 3,048-square-foot one-story at 416 Matamoras and a 4,863-square-foot two-story at

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Texas; Joseph H. Labadie, "An Archeological and Historical Assessment of the Vista Verde South Project, San Antonio, Texas" *Archaeological Survey Report*, no. 156 (1987), Center for Archaeological Research, University of Texas at San Antonio, 18, 39.

[27]Release of Paving Lien, Uvalde Rock Asphalt Co. to Dora McNew, December 7, 1929, Deed Book, Vol. 1153, p. 589, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; "Fire at a Bagnio," *San Antonio Light*, November 10, 1885; "Robbed Piano Box," *San Antonio Daily Light*, May 8, 1906; *The Blue Book for Visitors, Tourists, and Those Seeking a Good Time While in San Antonio, Texas* (San Antonio: Straight Steer Publishing Co., 1911-1912), 23.

[28]"Fire at a Bagnio," *San Antonio Light*, November 10, 1885; "City Local News," *San Antonio Daily Light*, July 18, 1889; "Robbed Piano Box," *San Antonio Daily Light*, May 8, 1906; "Woman Shot Was Mistaken For Another," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, February 6, 1911.

[29]*Johnson & Chapman's General Directory of the City of San Antonio for the year 1891, together with a Complete Business Directory and General Information*, 95; *Jules A. Appler's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1901-1902*, 136, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database online]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Building Permits," *San Antonio Sunday Light*, September 1, 1901.

[30]*Jules A. Appler's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1903-1904*, 103, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database online]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "West Side Case," *San Antonio Express*, March 11, 1904.

[31]Deed of Sale, P.H. and Ruth Miller to Dora McNew, January 6, 1906, Deed Book, Vol. 241, p. 600; Bill of Sale, Grace Graham to Dora McNew, April 2, 1906, Bill of Sale Book, Vol. 1, p. 251, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, TX; "Real Estate Transfers," *San Antonio Daily Light*, January 9, 1906.

[32]*Jules A. Appler's General Directory and Blue Book of the City of San Antonio, 1908*, 672; *Jules A. Appler's General Directory and Blue Book of the City of San Antonio, 1909*, 691; *Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1910-11*, 596; *Jules A. Appler's General Directory and Blue Book of the City of San Antonio, 1912*, 999, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database online]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; *The Blue Book for Visitors, Tourists, and Those Seeking a Good Time While in San Antonio, Texas* (San Antonio: Straight Steer Publishing Co., 1911-1912), 23.

420 Matamoras, on lots 2 and 3. By 1920, McNue had settled into her large, beautiful houses of prostitution, where she remained for the next decade.[33]

After McNue's death in 1944, the executor of her estate, L. D. Carter, sold the Matamoras lots to H. Perry Gainey in 1951 and they were eventually turned into apartments.[34] San Antonio's Development Agency, in the mid-1980s, created blueprints of the two brothels as they were still standing, before the city demolished them to make way for highway improvements. These blueprints offer an unprecedented look at parlor houses in San Antonio's red-light district. The smaller of the two, located at 416 Matamoras (Figures 1.4 and 1.5), contained eight rooms, two restrooms, a storage room, and an enclosed porch, which was presumably the main receiving area. At an earlier point in its existence, it had five more rooms but by the time of the survey, they had been removed or severely deteriorated. The house at 416 Matamoras also contained multiple entrances—three in the front and at least two in the back. It was a late Victorian-style cottage with a gable roof and Doric columns. Of the eight rooms, it seems likely that at least five or six were bedrooms. Presumably, one would have been a dining room and one would have been a parlor or sitting area. All of the rooms had at least two windows, and some had as many as four. The front door opened into a hallway that led to the largest room in the house, the enclosed porch. This room had a clerestory, an elevated section of the roof with windows to let in plenty of light, and a large picture window. These architectural accents suggest that the enclosed porch was presumably where the madam received the patrons,

[33]Dora McNue Property Collection, San Antonio Municipal Archive, San Antonio, Texas.
[34]Deed of Sale, L.D. Carter and Dora McNew Estate to H. Perry Gainey, February 19, 1951, Deed Book, Vol. 2975, p. 87, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, TX.

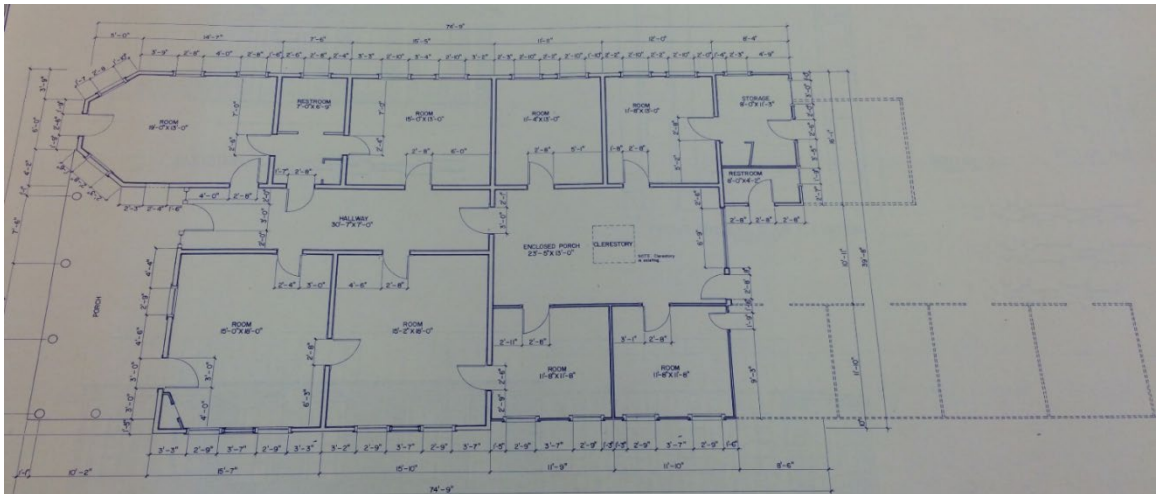

Figure 1.4: Blueprint of 416 Matamoras

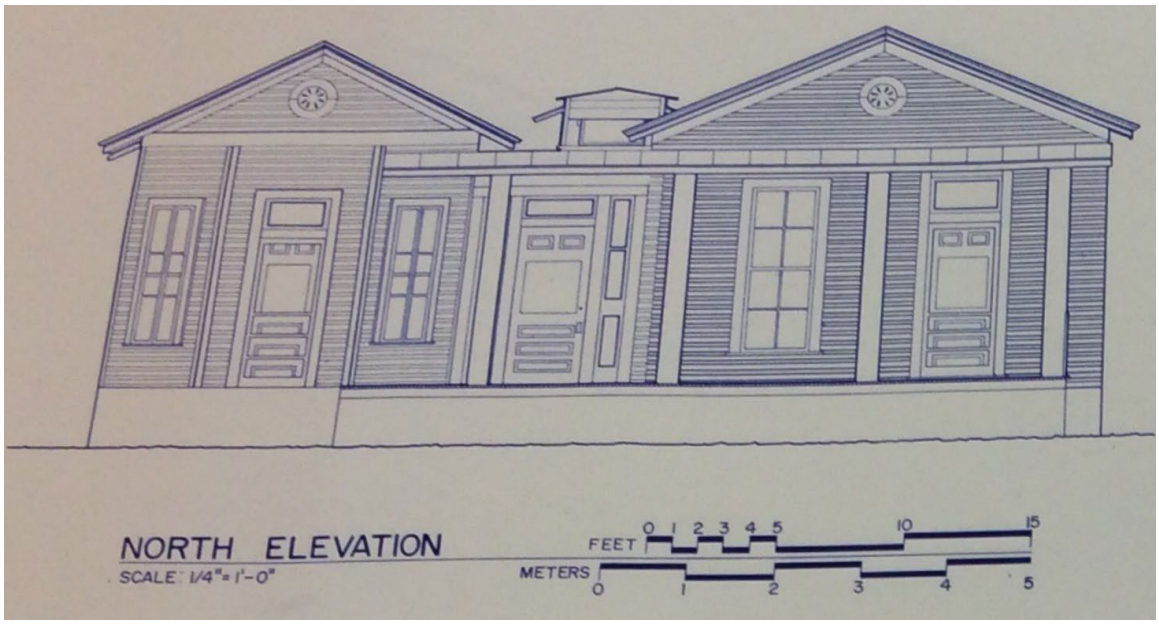

Figure 1.5: Architectural Drawing of 416 Matamoras

where they drank, talked, and danced, before they selected their partner for the evening and retreated into one of the many bedrooms.[35]

Next door, 420 Matamoras (Figures 1.6 and 1.7) was even larger and grander than the neighboring 3,000 square foot brothel. The two-story, nearly 5,000-square-foot structure contained at least sixteen rooms, not including bathrooms and storage spaces. It was a classic revival style structure with wood siding and a brick chimney. The front door, which was framed by decorative glass cutouts, opened into a hallway, which led to an "elaborate reception room."[36] The second floor had nine rooms, presumably all of which were bedrooms. It seems likely that one or two of the rooms on the first floor were also bedrooms. 420 Matamoras also contained three bathrooms—one upstairs and two downstairs. Many of the rooms had their own closets and every room had at least two windows. The second floor also had its own covered porch in the back. All the doorways leading from the hallway into the bedrooms had transoms with stained glass in them. Several of the rooms—most likely the receiving or dancing areas—had beautiful chandeliers. The lot that both brothels sat on was covered with pecan and hackberry trees, creating an almost forest-like feeling. 420 Matamoras and its neighboring brothel epitomized parlor houses with their large reception areas, multiple bedrooms, and many decorative accents like the clerestory. The women who owned and managed houses of prostitution understood that the architectural makeup of the brothel played an important role in its ability to be successful as a parlor house.[37]

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[35]Blueprint of 416 Matamoras, Drawing of North Exterior of 416 Matamoras, Dora McNue Property Collection, San Antonio Municipal Archive, San Antonio, Texas.
[36]"Historic Brothels Hearken to Day when Prostitution was Elegantly 'Acceptable'," *San Antonio Light*, April 12, 1982.
[37]Blueprint of 420 Matamoras, Drawing of North Exterior of 420 Matamoras, Dora McNue Property Collection, San Antonio Municipal Archive, San Antonio, Texas; "Historic Brothels Hearken to Day when Prostitution was Elegantly 'Acceptable'," *San Antonio Light*, April 12, 1982.

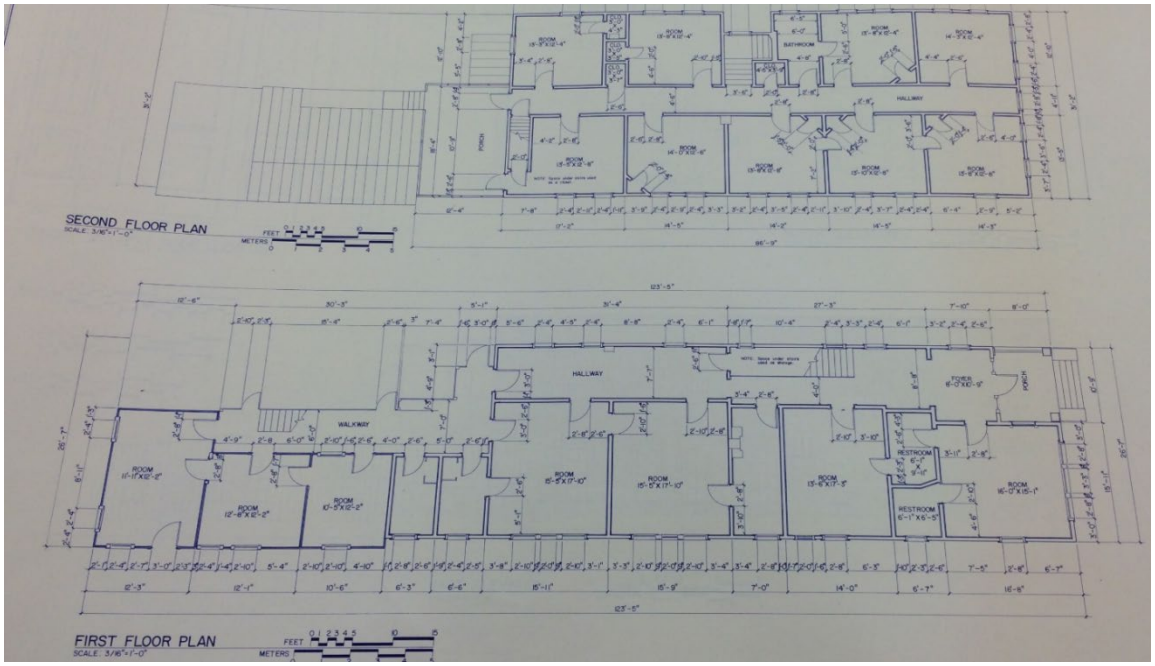

Figure 1.6: Blueprint of 420 Matamoras

Figure 1.7: Architectural Drawing of 420 Matamoras

While the architectural and physical structure had an important role in the characterization of a brothel as a parlor house, what was inside the brothel held equal significance. Parlor houses generally attracted customers from the upper echelon of society—including law enforcement, wealthy businessmen, and politicians. These men were accustomed to a certain way of life which madams attempted to mimic with their parlor houses. They strove to present an opulent, classy, and put-together image, which they achieved partly from the furnishings that filled their brothels. This started from the ground up, literally, as madams in both San Antonio and Fort Worth covered the floors of their parlor houses with lush carpets in a variety of styles and materials, including Brussels, moquette, tapestry, and velvet. They decorated the walls with oil paintings, numerous types of mirrors, and pictures. The windows were covered with curtains made of lace or chenille. In terms of lighting, the large receiving rooms often had elaborate chandeliers while cornices hung throughout the house. For example, Maud Campbell's luxurious East Street brothel, in the early 1900s, had multiple kinds of lighting, including a Newell post light, which were "free-standing upright fixtures commonly mounted on the large starting post at the bottom of a staircase," gas and electric chandeliers, and gas and electric table lamps.[38]

[38]"LIGHTING – What is a Newel Post Light," Hardware Help, House of Antique Hardware, accessed January 26, 2019, https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/book/ed17/part3/ch14/psec207.html; Mortgage, Carrie Anderson and Ione Palmer to Rhodius & Tempsky, March 29, 1883, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 24, p. 574; Agreement for Purchase, Carrie Anderson and Ione Palmer to Erastus Reed, October 25, 1883, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 158; Agreement for Purchase, Emma Bishop to Erastus Reed, June 26, 1882, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 17, p. 605; Agreement for Purchase, Sallie Brewer to Erastus Reed, December 8, 1882, Deed Book, Vol. 28, p. 447; Agreement for Purchase, Sallie Brewer to Rhodius & Tempsky, February 28, 1884; Mortgage, Mary A. Palmer (Blanche Dearwood) to Robert Gary, June 5, 1876, Deed Book, Vol. 4, p. 438; Mortgage, Mary A. Palmer to Rhodius & Tempsky, March 14, 1883, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 24, p. 562; Mortgage, Claude Duval to Peter Burns, June 13, 1878, Deed Book, Vol. 10, p. 125; Release, Lydia Petit to Ernestine Gordon, February 25, 1880, Deed Book, Vol. 14, p. 472; Agreement for Purchase, Lou Lamont to Erastus Reed, January 23, 1884; Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 282; Agreement for Purchase, Amelia Manteufel to Erastus Reed, January 24, 1884, Deed Book, Vol. 28, p. 564; Agreement for Purchase, Dolly Reed to Erastus Reed, February 23, 1884, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 324; Agreement, Erastus Reed to Lydia Petit, May 8, 1878, Deed Book, Vol. 10, p. 70; Agreement for Purchase, between Maggie Reed and Erastus Reed, February 25, 1886, Deed Book, Vol. 49, p. 22; Bill of Sale, C.E.

Madams filled each room in a parlor house with tasteful, elegant furniture, depending on the type of room. In the parlor, or reception room, the furniture might consist of a parlor suite, which typically contained a settee, one or two armchairs, and one or two side chairs, marble-topped tables, chaise lounges, sideboards, and a curio or china cabinet. Many parlor houses also had a space for dancing and drinking, which could be part of the main parlor or a separate room. This area generally had a piano—often an upright—and a bar where piano players played music and bartenders or servants served alcoholic beverages. Madams supplied these rooms with crystal drinkware, silver-plated trays, and ice buckets. After drinking, dancing, and flirting in the parlor, male patrons would retire to the bedroom of their chosen paramour for the evening. The bedrooms within parlor houses were filled with the same level of elegance as the rest of the house. Many bedrooms had a bedroom set, which included wooden bedsteads made up of walnut, cherry, ash, or mahogany, washstands with marble tops, dressing cases, bureaus or wardrobes, bedroom carpets, chairs, side tables, chamber crockery, mattresses made of woven wire and cotton, springs, and feather pillows and bolsters. They also contained decorative accents like paintings, mirrors, and sculptures.[39]

Hicks (Sadie Ray) to Maud Campbell, February 8, 1895. March 13, 1895, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; "Expensive Portieres Burn," *San Antonio Daily Express*, October 15, 1910; "A Bold Robbery," *San Antonio Daily Light*, October 20, 1893; "The Insane Woman," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 10, 1891; "Fort Worth Budget," *Dallas Morning News,* January 1, 1887; "Localettes," *Fort Worth Gazette*, April 9, 1891; "Affairs at Fort Worth," *Dallas Morning News*, November 3, 1885; Tarrant County, Texas, probate case files, estate no. 2247, Rose Etta Fisher (Dolly Love), Inventory and Appraisement of said Estate, 15 April 1903; County Clerk's Office, Fort Worth.

[39]Mortgage, Carrie Anderson and Ione Palmer to Rhodius & Tempsky, March 29, 1883, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 24, p. 574; Agreement for Purchase, Carrie Anderson and Ione Palmer to Erastus Reed, October 25, 1883, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 158; Agreement for Purchase, Emma Bishop to Erastus Reed, June 26, 1882, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 17, p. 605; Agreement for Purchase, Sallie Brewer to Erastus Reed, December 8, 1882, Deed Book, Vol. 28, p. 447; Agreement for Purchase, Sallie Brewer to Rhodius & Tempsky, February 28, 1884; Mortgage, Mary A. Palmer (Blanche Dearwood) to Robert Gary, June 5, 1876, Deed Book, Vol. 4, p. 438; Mortgage, Mary A. Palmer to Rhodius & Tempsky, March 14, 1883, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 24, p. 562; Mortgage, Claude Duval to Peter Burns, June 13, 1878, Deed Book, Vol. 10, p. 125; Release, Lydia Petit to Ernestine Gordon, February 25, 1880, Deed Book, Vol. 14, p. 472; Agreement for Purchase, Lou Lamont to Erastus Reed, January 23, 1884; Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 282; Agreement for Purchase, Amelia Manteufel to Erastus Reed, January 24, 1884, Deed Book,

The beautiful furnishings, lush fabrics, and luxurious accessories helped to define a brothel as a parlor house. How were madams able to fill their parlor houses before they had even opened? The answer is simple: credit. During this era, when women ran businesses on their own, they depended on credit, which was difficult to get as "inexperienced women were rarely judged good risks for credit."[40] Local suppliers would extend credit only to "female proprietors with whom they had established relationships," which meant that trust was vital to female entrepreneurs getting credit.[41] In San Antonio, Erastus Reed, F. J. Beitel, and Rhodius & Tempsky were vendors who regularly offered credit to madams for things like furnishings, remodeling, and pianos. Reed owned a home furnishings company that provided essentially everything that the parlor houses of Carrie Anderson, Claude Duval, Emma Bishop, Maggie Reed, Lydia Petit, Ione Palmer, Amelia Manteufel, Lou Lamont, Sallie Brewer, and Dolly Love needed. For all these madams, Reed entered into payment agreements with them. They gave Reed down payments for the furnishings and then begin monthly payments for the rest of the balance. Beitel was a lumber dealer who extended credit to madams, like Blanche Dearwood, so they could build or remodel their brothels. He also acted as a trustee for several madams when they purchased their houses of prostitution. Udo Rhodius and Eugene Tempsky owned a musical instruments store and sold pianos on credit to multiple madams, including Ione Palmer and Sallie

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Vol. 28, p. 564; Agreement for Purchase, Dolly Reed to Erastus Reed, February 23, 1884, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 324; Agreement, Erastus Reed to Lydia Petit, May 8, 1878, Deed Book, Vol. 10, p. 70; Agreement for Purchase, between Maggie Reed and Erastus Reed, February 25, 1886, Deed Book, Vol. 49, p. 22; Bill of Sale, C.E. Hicks (Sadie Ray) to Maud Campbell, February 8, 1895. March 13, 1895, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; "Expensive Portieres Burn," *San Antonio Daily Express*, October 15, 1910; "A Bold Robbery," *San Antonio Daily Light*, October 20, 1893; "The Insane Woman," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 10, 1891; "Fort Worth Budget," *Dallas Morning News,* January 1, 1887; "Localettes," *Fort Worth Gazette*, April 9, 1891; "Affairs at Fort Worth," *Dallas Morning News*, November 3, 1885; Tarrant County, Texas, probate case files, estate no. 2247, Rose Etta Fisher (Dolly Love), Inventory and Appraisement of said Estate, 15 April 1903; County Clerk's Office, Fort Worth.

[40]Susan Ingalls Lewis, *Unexceptional Women: Female Proprietors in Mid-Nineteenth Century Albany, New York, 1830-1855* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2009), 60.

[41]Lewis, *Unexceptional Women*, 78.

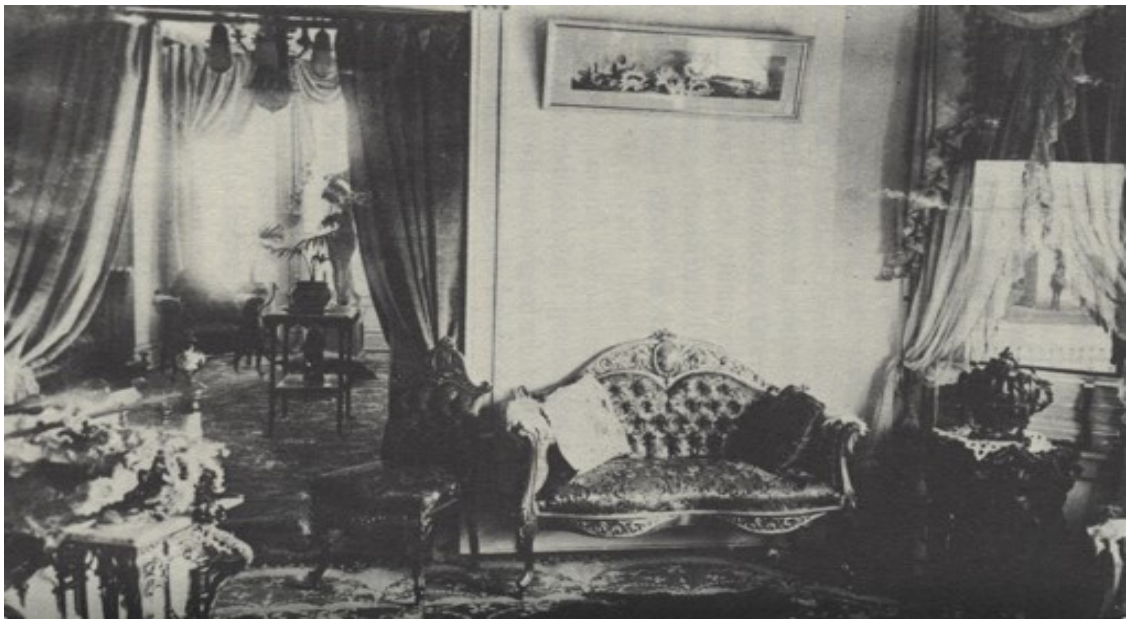

Figure 1.8: The Parlor of El Paso Madam Tillie Howard

Brewer. The ability to obtain credit to establish or expand their brothels highlights how these men viewed madams as legitimate business owners. It also illustrates that Beitel, Reed, and Rhodius & Tempsky trusted these women since they were willing to risk their profits if the businesses failed. Finally, it shows how profitable parlor houses could be since these businessmen allowed thousands of dollars in credit to be extended to madams for a business that was technically illegal because they knew the money would be paid back and, for the most part, it was.[42]

While many sources describe the items within specific parlor houses, there are no extant photographs of any of the interiors in San Antonio and Fort Worth; but photos do exist of parlor

[42]Mortgage, Carrie Anderson and Ione Palmer to Rhodius & Tempsky, March 29, 1883, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 24, p. 574; Agreement for Purchase, Carrie Anderson and Ione Palmer to Erastus Reed, October 25, 1883, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 158; Agreement for Purchase, Emma Bishop to Erastus Reed, June 26, 1882, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 17, p. 605; Agreement for Purchase, Sallie Brewer to Erastus Reed, December 8, 1882, Deed Book, Vol. 28, p. 447; Agreement for Purchase, Sallie Brewer to Rhodius & Tempsky, February 28, 1884, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 321; Agreement for Purchase, Lou Lamont to Erastus Reed, January 23, 1884; Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 282; Agreement for Purchase, Amelia Manteufel to Erastus Reed, January 24, 1884, Deed Book, Vol. 28, p. 564; Agreement for Purchase, Dolly Reed to Erastus Reed, February 23, 1884, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 324; Agreement, Erastus Reed to Lydia Petit, May 8, 1878, Deed Book, Vol. 10, p. 70; Agreement for Purchase, between Maggie Reed and Erastus Reed, February 25, 1886, Deed Book, Vol. 49, p. 22, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas.

houses elsewhere and offer at least a general idea of how top-tier brothels in those two cities would have looked. The first photograph (Figure 1.8), of El Paso madam Tillie Howard's parlor, shows the decadence and finery of a parlor house, with beautiful furniture and luxurious fabrics. It also has intricate lamps, patterned rugs, and paintings. The second photograph (Figure 1.9) offers a different parlor, this one in Louisville, Kentucky's madam Belle Brezing's opulent

Figure 1.9: The Parlor of Louisville Madam Belle Brezing

brothel. Her receiving room had multiple mirrors, lush draperies, a marble-topped table, and furniture made from animal horns and leopard skin given to Brezing by an admirer. The third, and final photograph (Figure 1.10), shows the bedroom of one of Brazing's prostitutes. The bedroom contained a large, carved, dark wooden bedstead with a chaise lounge at the foot of it.

Figure 1.10: A Prostitute's Bedroom in Brezing's Parlor House

The woman who lived in this room had a dresser and a wardrobe that matched her bedstead as well as many decorative touches including a painting and some small figurines.[43]

While the parlor and bedroom were the only rooms that the male patrons saw, the rest of the house was also elegantly furnished. Many parlor houses had formal dining rooms where the madam and her employees gathered for meals. They had large dining room tables, chairs, and sideboards as well as place settings in silver or porcelain. There also might be secondary sitting rooms for the women to relax in outside of business hours, which looked similar to the primary parlor. Madams who ran parlor houses understood the importance of the appearance of their

[43]Figure 1.8: H. Gordon Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club: The Story of Prostitution in El Paso* (El Paso, TX: Mangan Books, 1983), 122; Figure 10: "One of the downstairs parlors, 1890," 59 Megowan St. Belle Brezing's third and most famous bordello, 1889-1917, Box 1, Item 8, Belle Brezing Photographic Collection, Special Collections, University of Kentucky; Buddy Thompson, *Madam Belle Brezing* (Lexington, KY: Buggy Whip Press, 1983), 65, 68.

businesses. [44] They also knew that their investment needed to be protected and many had their houses and furnishings insured. For example, when San Antonio madam Sallie Brewer's large brothel burned down, she was able to rebuild because she had thought ahead and insured it. Instead of losing everything and having to start over with nothing, her insurance agents, Messrs. W. A. Bonynge and William B. Smith, awarded her $10,000, which she reinvested into a new brothel.[45] Other madams, like Maud Campbell and Gracie Lane, also insured their brothels and possessions.[46] As business owners, they did not want to suffer any severe losses that might force them to shutter their houses of prostitution.

While a beautiful and well-furnished brothel, stocked with liquor, was certainly a draw for the male customers of San Antonio and Fort Worth's red-light districts, the men patronized parlor houses for one reason: the women. Both vice districts contained various classes of prostitutes, from the young and inexperienced at one extreme to the older and hardened at the other. The women who lived and worked in parlor houses sat right in the middle of the spectrum. They were generally the most attractive and well-trained women in the red-light districts. The madams who ran parlor houses typically charged male patrons from five to ten dollars for a

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[44]Figure 11: "One of the "girl's rooms," 1890," 59 Megowan St. Belle Brezing's third and most famous bordello, 1889-1917, Box 1, Item 10, Belle Brezing Photographic Collection, Special Collections, University of Kentucky. Agreement for Purchase, Sallie Brewer to Erastus Reed, December 8, 1882, Deed Book, Vol. 28, p. 447; Mortgage, Claude Duval to Peter Burns, June 13, 1878, Deed Book, Vol. 10, p. 125; Agreement for Purchase, Lou Lamont to Erastus Reed, January 23, 1884; Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 282; Agreement for Purchase, Amelia Manteufel to Erastus Reed, January 24, 1884, Deed Book, Vol. 28, p. 564; Agreement for Purchase, Dolly Reed to Erastus Reed, February 23, 1884, Deed of Trust Book, Vol. 30, p. 324; Agreement, Erastus Reed to Lydia Petit, May 8, 1878, Deed Book, Vol. 10, p. 70; Agreement for Purchase, between Maggie Reed and Erastus Reed, February 25, 1886, Deed Book, Vol. 49, p. 22; Bill of Sale, C.E. Hicks (Sadie Ray) to Maud Campbell, February 8, 1895. March 13, 1895, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; Tarrant County, Texas, probate case files, estate no. 2247, Rose Etta Fisher (Dolly Love), Inventory and Appraisement of said Estate, 15 April 1903; County Clerk's Office, Fort Worth.

[45]"Reduced to Ashes," *San Antonio Evening Light*, February 26, 1883; "To Be Rebuilt," *San Antonio Light*, April 27, 1883; "Building Permits," *San Antonio Light*, May 9, 1883.

[46]"Fire Damages Lee Hotel," *San Antonio Light*, July 19, 1917; "Three Lives Lost in Flames," *Dallas Morning News*, October 28, 1898; "Fire," *Daily Hesperian*, January 11, 1895.

"date," with special requests costing much more. In order to set prices at a rate five to ten times higher than the lesser brothels, madams knew they needed to provide the best of the best in terms of prostitutes. The women who worked in parlor houses would be skilled at dancing, flirting, conversing, and, obviously, sex; and many of them gained those skills by working at other brothels. Examining the ages of the prostitutes working in the high-class brothels underscores the fact that it would not have been their first job since the majority of prostitutes entered the sex trade at the age of eighteen, and for many it was much younger.[47] In Fort Worth at the turn of the century, the average age of the women working in the brothels of Dolly Love, Mary Porter, Pearl Beebe, and Mabel Thompson was twenty-two years old.[48] Twenty-two was also the average age of the women employed in the parlor houses of Sallie Brewer, Ignacia Cortez, and Blanche Dearwood in the 1880s, as well as those in Mildred Clifton and Beatrice Benedict's brothels in 1900.[49] The women working in Fort Worth and San Antonio's parlor houses, then, had most likely been a part of the sex trade for a few years, gaining the experience they needed.

No madam in either city left behind any records, so it is unknown exactly how they hired the women in their brothels. Presumably, though, they recruited them somehow from the brothels in their own city and from elsewhere. In terms of incentives, madams presumably offered lower percentages of wages taken, allowing prostitutes to make more money, or the best

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[47]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 144-45; Kneeland, George J., *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City* (New York: Century Co., 1913), 245.

[48]1900 United States Census, Tarrant County, Texas, population schedule, Fort Worth, Ward 3, p. 146B, dwelling 23, family 26, Dolly Wilson; p. 141A, dwelling 2, family 2, Mary Porter; p. 141B, dwelling 36, family 35, Pearl Beebe; p. 141A, dwelling 4, family 4, Mabel Thompson; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 January 2018).

[49]1880 United States Census, Bexar County, Texas, population schedule, San Antonio, p. 13A, dwelling 291, family 289, Sally Brewer; p. 122A, dwelling 72, family 78, Blanche Dearwood; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 January 2018); 1900 United States Census, Bexar County, Texas, population schedule, San Antonio, p. 7B, dwelling 107, family 102, Mildred Clifton; p. 8A, dwelling 119, family 114, J.B. Brady (Beatrice Benedict's real name); p. 22A, dwelling 383, family 422, Maud Campbell; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 10 September 2018).

accommodations within their brothel. They might have even given potential employees some level of career security, promising them a job for a certain amount of time. One of the more important skills a madam had was the ability to select "inmates who could not only satisfy the customers but get along with other workers as well."[50] It is possible that when madams retired or moved, they helped the women in their own brothels find somewhere else to live and work. There was also most likely a social network of madams, especially considering the rate at which they relocated and started new houses of prostitute in different cities. Thus, madams may have sent prostitutes from one city to another to aid a madam or to assist the prostitute. At the more well-known parlor houses, prostitutes with the requisite skills may have proactively sought out employment there. Prostitutes could also have worked as recruiters or references for other women wanting to work in a top-tier brothel. Regardless of the method, the top-tier brothels remained fully staffed throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[51]

Once they had the building, the furnishings, and the employees, madams could open their parlor houses for business. A successful, well-known house of prostitution depended almost entirely on the madam's ability to run it, as it required constant management of many moving parts. Taking care of and controlling the women who lived and worked in their brothels was the madams' foundational responsibility. The parlor houses in Fort Worth and San Antonio had anywhere from four to fourteen women working and living inside them. Madams had to keep the peace between their employees as jealous spats could break out very easily, for these women not only cohabited but also actively competed for male patrons. Fights erupted over other issues

[50]Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 38.
[51]Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution*, 6-7; Sally Stanford, *The Lady of the House: The Autobiography of Sally Stanford* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), 53; Pauline Tabor, *Pauline's* (Louisville, KY: Touchstone Publishing Co., 1971), 60.

simply because of the tension inherent in living with co-workers. For example, on March 20, 1884, the prostitutes in Carrie Anderson's brothel had a "general row" that resulted in broken glasses and the police being called.[52] Two years later, Dixie Thornton, one of Elizabeth Gordon's employees, went "on the war-path" and struck one of her fellow prostitutes. She was arrested and fined.[53] If fights like this happened regularly, a brothel's reputation would suffer and, most likely, stop attracting the type of client madams wanted in their parlor houses as politicians, law enforcement, or wealthy businessmen would not want to be caught in the crossfire of a fight that could attract the police.

Harmony, then, among employees was vital to the productive running of a house of prostitution and madams acted as "caretaker, confidant, and counselor for" their employees, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. It could be a very maternal role. Madams worked hard to smooth over squabbles or arguments to ensure they did not blow up into brawls. They also became excellent judges of character, figuring out which women could become problems, and which worked well together.[54] Madams created a congenial atmosphere within the parlor house as a way to set the tone. They and their employees generally took meals together where they gossiped about the happenings in the red-light district and told salacious or hilarious stories about their patrons. Madams encouraged this behavior as it typically led to a harmonious household. Still, if fights and jealousies persisted, madams held the trump card as they could easily terminate the employment of the women causing trouble.

Furthermore, a house of prostitution was a business, and madams had to control and exploit the prostitutes who worked for them to a certain degree to be as profitable as possible.

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[52]"Murmuring Doves," *San Antonio Daily Light*, March 20, 1884.
[53]"Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, October 30, 1886.
[54]Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 38; Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution*, 6-7; Stanford, *The Lady of the House*, 75-76; Tabor, *Pauline's*, 100.

Madams took a significant cut of their employees' wages, from 40 to 70 percent, typically. Although methods varied, madams generally took up payment before the customer had his "date." Prostitutes in parlor houses rarely handled the money until the madams gave them their cut for the evening. Thus, madams had near total control over their employees' income. They were able to do so because prostitutes knew the benefits offered by living and working in a brothel, which included security and a consistent customer base—neither of which were guaranteed for a prostitute working on her own. Madams, then, had the leverage to demand a portion of their wages, set expectations for behavior, and punish those who refused to comply. The ability to walk the line between caring and controlling, then, was a vital aspect of being a successful madam.[55]

A brothel needed more than just prostitutes to run effectively and typically had an entire staff employed there. At a minimum, a madam would have a cook, a servant, and a porter working in her parlor house. A porter had many roles within a brothel. Usually the only male employee within the brothel, he was the doorman, who welcomed in the male patrons, and the security, who barred entry to the unwanted and removed the troublemakers. He could also serve drinks, run errands, and help take care of the house.[56] Many madams, like Fort Worth's Mary Porter, had multiple servants. These would have been full-time employees, and some were live-in help. The cook provided several meals a day for both the madam and the prostitutes living in the brothel. The servants would have been accountable for the general upkeep of the parlor house, ensuring that it looked its best every night. Some of these servants were chambermaids who were wholly responsible for keeping the bedrooms clean and presentable, including tasks

[55]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 87-88; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 37; Josie Washburn, *The Underworld Sewer* (Omaha: Washburn Publishing Co., 1909), 28; Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club*, 180-82; Tabor, *Pauline's*, 60.
[56]Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution*, 6.

that were specific to a house of prostitution like changing out bed linens multiple times a night and switching out the water in the washstand—which a prostitute used to clean herself and her client—regularly. Madams employed musicians, like piano or fiddle players, to play in the evenings for their customers. There were also other kinds of hired help. For example, San Antonio madam Maud Campbell had both a coachman to drive her around and a gardener for her landscaping, in addition to the typical staff. Parlor houses needed this staff in order to run smoothly.[57]

Madams, then, had to find and hire good employees. One way that they sought out help was through the newspaper, using want ads. Carrie Anderson, for example, used the newspaper to find a cook and two porters in San Antonio during the 1880s. The language she utilized illustrates the quality of employee she wanted, as a top-tier brothel demanded the best: a "first class cook," and a "thoroughly experienced" and "No. 1" porter (Figure 1.11). Furthermore, the want ads illustrate that the staff of a parlor house may not have received any stigma for working

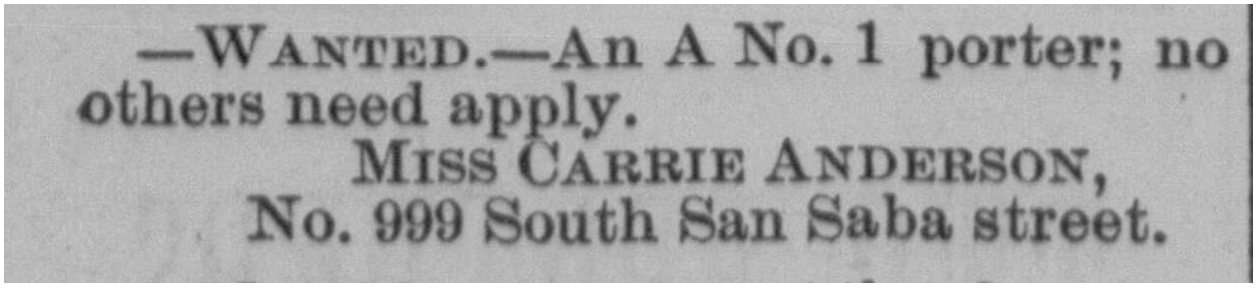
—WANTED.—An A No. 1 porter; no others need apply.
MISS CARRIE ANDERSON,
No. 999 South San Saba street.

Figure 1.11: Anderson's Want Ad, June 6, 1888

[57]"Wanted," *San Antonio Daily Light*, June 6, 1888; 1900 U.S. Census, Tarrant County, Texas, population schedule, Fort Worth, Ward 3, p. 141A, dwelling 2, family 2, Mary Porter; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 1 February 2018); "Disgraceful Row," *San Antonio Light*, April 27, 1885; "Wanted—First Class Cook," *San Antonio Daily Express*, March 2, 1887; "Wanted," *San Antonio Daily Express*, May 28, 1887; "Wanted," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 27, 1890; "Wanted," *San Antonio Daily Light*, July 27, 1891; "Mills was Fined $60 and Costs," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 2, 1903; 1910 U.S. census, Bexar County, Texas, population schedule, San Antonio, p. 24A, dwelling 316, family 482, Emma Wiley; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com : accessed 2 February 2019); 'Localettes," *Fort Worth Gazette*, April 9, 1891; 1900 United States Census, Bexar County, Texas, population schedule, San Antonio, p. 126B, dwelling 217, family 91, Maud Campbell; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 January 2018).

in a brothel. Clearly, the ads show that madams sought the best of the best with no disclaimer as to where the porter or chambermaid might be working. One reason why the staff would not be tainted for working in a house of prostitution is that they were already considered lower- or working-class. Furthermore, the servants, porter, and cook were typically not white—in fact, the majority were black. Thus, the staff within a brothel presumably would not have been concerned with contaminating their reputation by working there. Madams sought out the highest quality servants, cooks, and porters because it contributed to the image they were attempting to create in their parlor house. Once madams found the appropriate staff members, they needed to manage them daily—making sure that all the tasks had been completed so the parlor house was ready for its evening guests and firing those who were not satisfactory.[58]

With the house of prostitution in order, including its staff and female employees, the madam had complete control over its management. She oversaw the finances and had to balance the income of her brothel with the many necessary expenditures, like mortgage payments, staff wages, top-shelf liquor, house repairs, doctors' visits, and fines. Madams were running a business and, thus, responsible for ensuring that they remained profitable and out of any serious debt. One of the ways that they accomplished this was through advertising—communicating what their parlor houses offered in terms of entertainment for potential male patrons. There were several different methods of marketing houses of prostitution. In the late 1870s, madams in Fort Worth used "drummers," young boys who would hang around the railroad station telling the men getting off the train about various parlor houses, what they offered, and where they could find them. The Fort Worth City Council eventually banned them. The most common way,

[58]"Wanted," *San Antonio Daily Light*, June 6, 1888; "Wanted—First Class Cook," *San Antonio Daily Express*, March 2, 1887; "Wanted," *San Antonio Daily Express*, May 28, 1887; "Wanted," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 27, 1890; "Wanted," *San Antonio Daily Light*, July 27, 1891.

presumably, that madams advertised their businesses was through word-of-mouth. In both San Antonio and Fort Worth, the red-light districts were well-known and if a man were interested in procuring company for the evening, it seems likely that all he would need to do is ask someone, like a bartender, where to go.[59]

One final route for madams to promote their parlor houses was in print. In 1911, someone—it has been posited that it was William Keilman, a saloon owner, whose picture was printed at the end of the pamphlet—published *The Blue Book for Visitors, Tourists, and Those Seeking a Good Time while in San Antonio, Texas*. Modeled on *The Blue Book*, a guide to New Orleans' red-light district known as Storyville which was printed annually for six years by saloon owner Billy Struve, it was filled with advertisements for saloons, restaurants, gambling parlors, and other places for entertainment. Its main purpose, though, seems to be the Directory of Houses and Women, which listed the proprietor, address, and phone number, and was divided into classes: A, parlor houses; B, middle-class brothels; and C, low-class brothels and dives. There were 24 Class A houses, 20 Class B houses, and 62 Class C houses. Seven of the madams

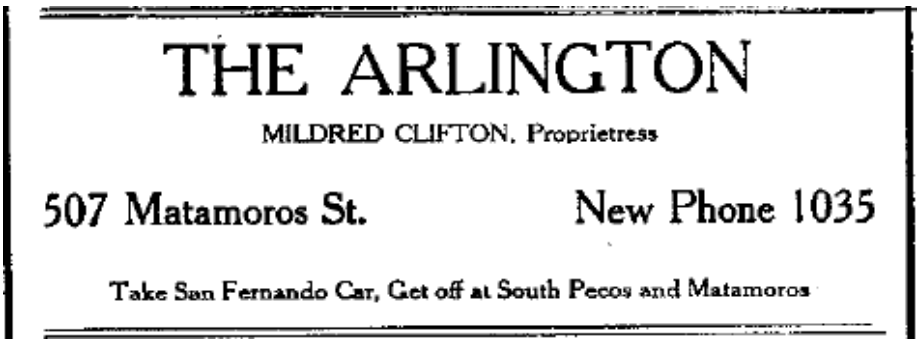

Figure 1.12: Advertisement for Mildred Clifton's Parlor House

[59]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 87; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 37; Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution*, 6-7; Stanford, *The Lady of the House*, viii; Tabor, *Pauline's*, 60; Richard F. Selcer, *Hell's Half-Acre: The Life and Legend of a Red-Light District* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1991), 45; Sam Kindrick, "Wild, Old Town's Red Lights Burned Brightly," *San Antonio Express and News*, September 26, 1965; "The Alamo City," *San Antonio Light*, January 30, 1884.

of the Class A houses had large advertisements throughout the Blue Book. These ads had the name of the proprietor or the brothel front and center in large font. Mildred Clifton chose to prioritize the name of her parlor house, The Arlington, instead of her own name (Figure 1.12) while Lillian Revere did the opposite. These ads also included the address, phone number, and the directions to get there via the streetcar. The *Blue Book* and its directory and advertisements illustrate how popular the red-light district in San Antonio really was as these women who owned businesses in an illegal industry allowed their names and addresses to be published for anyone to see.[60]

If madams successfully advertised their parlor houses, they would have no end of customers wanting to spend the evening, and their money, there. While most madams no longer practiced prostitution themselves, they still had to have excellent interpersonal skills as they were the ones welcoming in the patrons. Madams needed to be able to talk, flirt, and dance with male customers before passing them off to the women with whom they would be spending the evening. Madams had to manage their patrons without them realizing it. A significant aspect of this skill set was the ability to intuit which customers were trouble and, hopefully, handle any problems they might cause. In these situations, they depended on their porter to act as a bouncer, essentially, and help them remove the troublemakers from their brothels. When things escalated too far for it to be dealt with by the porter, madams could call on law enforcement for assistance. The men who visited brothels were not making a simple transaction, like buying supplies at a dry goods store, because of the intersection of sex and money, which caused complications in the form of romantic feelings or extreme jealousy. In early December 1883, a male patron named Ed Shipton entered Sallie Brewer's San Antonio brothel, known as the 110, and asked to see one of

[60] *Blue Book for Visitors.*

the prostitutes there. His request turned into an argument with Brewer, who had most likely refused Shipton, and he drew a pistol claiming that Brewer "must die." She was able to wrestle the gun away from him, saving herself and her employees. Fort Worth madam Mabel Thompson, in July 1903, dealt with a similar situation when S. P. Mills entered her brothel wishing to "kill the thing he loved," a prostitute named Josie. He was armed with a pistol and began taking prostitutes hostage until Thompson stepped in and "coddled and reasoned with Mills until he became mollified and even docile." He gave up his gun and surrendered to the police. Thus, madams needed to have the requisite skills to handle anything that might arise, from a violent altercation to a hostage situation. Because the profitability of a brothel stemmed directly from the number of people who patronized it, customer management became one of the most important responsibilities for madams.[61] It was just one of several skills a madam needed. To successfully run a parlor house, she required "extreme competence in business and political matters as well as managerial, personnel, and communication skills."[62] For a madam with the requisite talents and a strong work ethic, the result, for the most part, was a profitable house of prostitution, and immense personal wealth for herself.

A Madam's Career

Just as a house of prostitution was a business, working as a madam was a job that could turn into a lucrative career. In the late nineteenth century, there were few paths a woman could take if she wanted to own her own business, and all stemmed from the sphere of domesticity. In

[61]"Filling the City Coffers," *San Antonio Light*, December 5, 1883; "Mills Was Fined $60 and Costs," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 2, 1903; "Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, August 1, 1887; "Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 24, 1886; "Rays of Light," *San Antonio Light*, July 13, 1885; "On A Rampage," *San Antonio Light*, November 14, 1884; "A Reeking Red Record," *Dallas Daily Herald*, November 28, 1884.
[62]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 87.

both San Antonio and Fort Worth in the 1880s, female entrepreneurs worked in food, clothing, and boarding. They were dressmakers or ran restaurants. Some had grocery stores while others owned laundries.[63] They all, though, capitalized on work traditionally seen as female and domestic in order to make a living. While women made money by cooking, cleaning, or sewing, madams and prostitutes tapped into a different aspect of the domestic sphere by selling sex. Sexual intercourse between husband and wife works as a foundational piece of domestic life. It consummates the marriage and leads to procreation. Prostitution, however, is sexual intercourse between two unmarried people, paid for by one of the participants, typically the man. It was also illegal in both Fort Worth and San Antonio. By running a business that stemmed from the domestic sphere, madams fit the mold of most other female entrepreneurs. Like other women who ran legal businesses, they had to worry about balancing the books, dealing with customers, and turning a profit. Focusing their business on the illegal selling of sex, however, set madams apart from other female business owners. Madams had to play politics and pay regular fines to ensure their business stayed open. Regardless of whether madams perfectly aligned with other female business owners or not, they still successfully managed and ran profitable houses of prostitution. The existence of the madam, then, complicates the traditional narrative historians have presented regarding female-owned businesses—that "the vast majority were home-based microentrepreneurs." They were not all "justified and shaped by domesticity," but some, like a brothel, subverted the domestic sphere instead.[64]

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[63]*Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1885-1886*, 237-253; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1888-1889*, 257-276; *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1881-1882*, 287-305; *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1883-1884*, 323-346; *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1885-1886*, 339-365; *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1887-1888*, 361-392, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.
[64]Lewis, *Unexceptional Women*, 2; Kwolek-Folland, *Incorporating Women*, 129.

While historians have not always viewed madams through the lens of entrepreneurship, their contemporaries—like the men who extended them credit or the merchants who sold them alcohol—saw them quite clearly as business owners. They had complete control over their parlor houses, including the living and working conditions of their employees, the hiring and firing of employees, and, most importantly, the wages. More specifically, madams decided how much of a percentage they took from their prostitutes' earnings, which was one of their main revenue streams. The other was the sale of alcohol. Every parlor house offered alcohol—beer, wine, and liquor—to their customers, typically at massively inflated prices, like charging two dollars for a pint of beer. Madams expected their employees to encourage their customers to have a few drinks before retiring to the bedroom. Thus, the combination of their share of the prostitutes' earnings and the profits from liquor sales allowed madams to become quite wealthy.[65]

When madams began making excessive amounts of money, they generally invested their money in two specific areas: real estate and jewelry. The first piece of property that most madams purchased was their own brothel. By owning that building, they protected themselves from high rents and landlords who might evict them for running an illegal business. Furthermore, buying property "was a safe place to invest their earning and diversify their holdings." The majority of elite madams owned the parlor houses they ran in Fort Worth and San Antonio—including Mary Porter, Dolly Love, Pearl Beebe, Mildred Clifton, and Mabel Thompson in Fort Worth; and Carrie Anderson, Beatrice Benedict, Sallie Brewer, Ignacia Cortez, Blanche Dearwood, Claude Duval, Lillie Gibson, Ernestine Gordon, Fannie Kelly, Sadie Ray, and Maud Campbell in San Antonio. Many of these women owned other pieces of real estate as well. Maud

[65]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 76; Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution*, 6-8; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 37; Maryjean Wall, *Madam Belle: Sex, Money, and Influence in a Southern Brothel* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 89; Maimie Pinzer, *The Maimie Papers: Letters from an Ex-Prostitute*, ed. Ruth Rosen and Sue Davidson (New York: The Feminist Press, 1997), xxvii; Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club*, 47.

Campbell, for example, bought her first piece of property in February 1895 when Sadie Ray sold Campbell her East Street brothel right in the middle of San Antonio's red-light district. In 1907, Campbell purchased a lot on North Matamoras Street for $3,300. Two years later, she bought two more lots on Matamoras and in 1910, she purchased a lot on Monterey Street. Alongside her real estate purchases, Campbell constantly built additions and new dwellings on those lots, including a gallery, bay windows, and a 12-room dwelling. By 1915, the city of San Antonio assessed Campbell's property holdings to be worth over $22,000, which, adjusting for inflation, is worth over half a million dollars in 2019. In Fort Worth, longtime madam Mary Porter owned multiple pieces of property in the city's downtown. In 1887, Porter purchased three lots on 12th Street for $6,000 and two years later she bought a lot on Calhoun Street. In 1890, she bought three lots for approximately $10,000. When she died in 1905, Porter left behind an estate worth $35,000, nearly $900,000 in 2019 dollars, and her expansive real estate holdings were a large part of that.[66]

Jewelry offered another area where madams invested their wealth. First, gold, silver, and jewels held their value more consistently than things like paper money. They also had multiple

[66]Deed of Sale, Ernestine Gordon to M.W. Robinson (Sadie Ray), June 18, 1888, Deed Book, Vol. 35, p. 483; Deed of Sale, Mary A. Palmer (Blanche Dearwood) to Mary L. Burns (Claude Duval), May 19, 1879, Deed Book, Vol. 12, p. 325; Deed of Sale, John D. Smith to Ernestine Gordon, January 12, 1882, Deed Book, Vol. 23, p. 495; Deed of Sale, Harriet Bomby to Ignacia Cortez, August 6, 1875, Deed Book, Vol. 1, p. 459; Deed of Sale, Jesusa Perez to Sallie Brewer, July 9, 1883, Deed Book, Vol. 29, p. 78; Deed of Sale, Sam Beliner to Beatrice Benedict, May 1, 1902, Deed Book, Vol. 211, p. 39; Deed of Sale, C.E. Hicks to Maud Campbell, March 16, 1895, Deed Book, Vol. 133, p. 420; Deed of Sale, S. Villanueva to Maud Campbell, October 24, 1907, Deed Book, Vol. 276, p. 424; Deed of Sale, N. Zimmerman to Maud Campbell, March 25, 1909, Deed Book, Vol. 288, p. 618; Deed of Sale, J.I. Ryan to Maud Campbell, June 4, 1910, Deed Book, Vol. 338, p. 29, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; Tarrant County, Texas, probate case files, estate no. 2667, Mary Porter, Final Report of Administrator of said Estate; estate no. 2247, Rose Etta Fisher (Dolly Love), Inventory and Appraisement of said Estate, 15 April 1903, County Clerk's Office, Fort Worth; "No Raids in Acre, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 6, 1909; "Courtesan Dead," *San Antonio Light*, September 8, 1884; "Real Estate Transfers," *Dallas Morning News*, February 16, 1899; "Real Estate Transfers," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, December 22, 1887; "Real Estate Transfers," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 11, 1889; "Real Estate Transfers," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, March 9, 1890; "Recorded Transfers," *Fort Worth Weekly Gazette*, August 7, 1890; "Recorded Transfers," *Fort Worth Weekly Gazette*, September 11, 1890.

purposes as "stunning jewels were part of a prosperous madam's business wardrobe as well as an advertisement of her success."[67] They could be easily transported and even used as collateral for loans or credit. The jewelry that madams purchased took various forms. Sallie Brewer, for example, owned a "cluster diamond ring," comprised of ten diamonds while Claude Duval had a gold watch. Beatrice Benedict owned over $3,000 worth of diamond jewelry. Dolly Love possessed a diamond pin, diamond earrings, and a ring worth nearly $1,000. Purchasing jewels or property allowed madams to feel some security regarding their money. They also became markers of a successful career.[68]

Madams with the ability to own property and buy diamond jewelry typically had two things in common: whiteness and career longevity. The majority of women running elite houses of prostitution in Fort Worth and San Antonio were white. These two cities had different racial and ethnic makeups. Fort Worth's population primarily broke down into white and black people. The Hispanic population in the latter decades of the nineteenth century was quite small—14 out of 6,663 residents, for example, according to the 1880 census.[69] The black residents of Fort Worth, conversely, were the largest minority in the city and the county. In San Antonio, the Hispanic population was significantly greater—the second largest ethnic group—creating more of a multi-ethnic and racial environment than in Fort Worth.[70] Thus, black, white, and Hispanic women lived in both cities. And all three groups worked in the sex trade. Why, then, were most elite madams white?

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[67]Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 40.
[68]"Lost," *San Antonio Express*, April 9, 1871; "Local News," *San Antonio Light*, December 19, 1885; "Mrs. Brady's Jewels," *San Antonio Daily Light*, February 5, 1903; Rose Etta Fisher (Dolly Love), Inventory and Appraisement of said Estate, 15 April 1903, County Clerk's Office, Fort Worth.
[69]Carlos Eliseo Cuellar, *Stories from the Barrio: A History of Mexican Fort Worth* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2008), 3.
[70]Kenneth Mason, *African Americans and Race Relations in San Antonio, Texas, 1867-1937* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1998), 25-26.

The answer lies in economic and racial discrimination. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, black Texans were the target of serious discriminatory practices in the realms of politics, business, education, and homeownership, among others. The Hispanic population also found themselves "subject to a different treatment, to a different life, and a lower status than white Texans."[71] Black and Hispanic women had the added difficulties of gender discrimination, as Texas women in this era still had few political or civic rights. The intersection of prejudices made it much harder for these women to buy or rent the kind of property needed for a parlor house. The majority of black prostitutes worked in cribs or dives. Furthermore, racial segregation in the cities, and their red-light districts, affected the few black women who did manage brothels, as "most bawdy houses maintained color separation among their inmates."[72] Black madams, then, had a hard time obtaining white women as employees and had to depend solely on the much smaller population of black women. They also had little access to capital. While many of the white brothel-keepers had lines of credit with furniture dealers and contractors, making it easier for them to construct or fill a parlor house, black madams in San Antonio and Fort Worth did not. Thus, black women who wanted to own and manage brothels were relegated, for the most part, to the dives and middle-class houses of prostitution, dwellings they could afford. Hispanic women had it somewhat easier. While they were subordinate to white people in the racial hierarchy, they were still seen as superior to the black population. Of the existing records, in these two cities, there is only one non-white madam who could be categorized as running a parlor house: Ignacia Cortez in San Antonio. There were also several Hispanic women who ran middle- and lower-class brothels. The color lines blurred for white and

[71]Arnoldo De León, "White Racial Attitudes toward Mexicanos in Texas, 1821-1900" (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 1974), 27.
[72] Humphrey, "Prostitution in Texas," 29; Harris, *Sex Workers, Psychics, and Numbers Runners*, 141, 151. *Inmate* was the common term used to identify a woman who worked as a prostitute in a brothel specifically.

Hispanic women within the sex trade as Cortez had several white women working in her parlor house.[73] Still, white madams remained prominent in the red-light districts of San Antonio and Fort Worth both in terms of wealth and civic power.[74]

Madams who owned successful parlor houses were, more often than not, older than the other women working in the red-light district and had longer careers. On average, madams were older than prostitutes because of the fleeting nature of a prostitute's occupation. For example, in Fort Worth in 1900 Dolly Love was thirty-two years old, Mary Porter was fifty-five, Pearl Beebe was thirty-seven, and Mabel Thompson was thirty-one while the average age of women working in their brothels was twenty-two.[75] In San Antonio, the age breakdown looked similar as madams were older than the women employed in their parlor houses. In the early 1880s, Sallie Brewer was twenty-nine years old, Ignacia Cortez was thirty-three, and Blanche Dearwood was thirty-three while thirty years later Mildred Clifton and Beatrice Benedict were both forty and Maud Campbell was thirty-four. Meanwhile, the average age of their employees hovered around twenty-two.[76] The women who owned and managed brothels could have longer careers because

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[73]"Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, July 27, 1885l "Wanted the Furniture," *San Antonio Daily Light*, February 19, 1886; "Love and Jealousy," *San Antonio Light*, July 14, 1885.

[74]While the intersection of race and prostitution is a relatively understudied topic, historians have, in the last few years, begun to focus on the subject:
Cynthia Blair, *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); LaShawn Harris, *Sex Workers, Psychics, and Number Runners: Black Women in New York City's Underground Economy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017); Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013); Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-vice Activism, 1887-1917* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Pablo Mitchell, *West of Sex: Making Mexican America, 1900-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Kazuhiro Oharazeki, *Japanese Prostitutes in the North American West, 1887-1920* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).

[75]1900 United States Census, Tarrant County, Texas, population schedule, Fort Worth, Ward 3, p. 146B, dwelling 23, family 26, Dolly Wilson; p. 141A, dwelling 2, family 2, Mary Porter; p. 141B, dwelling 36, family 35, Pearl Beebe; p. 141A, dwelling 4, family 4, Mabel Thompson; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 January 2018).

[76]1880 United States Census, Bexar County, Texas, population schedule, San Antonio, p. 13A, dwelling 291, family 289, Sally Brewer; p. 122A, dwelling 72, family 78, Blanche Dearwood; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 January 2018).

their attractiveness and youth were not the most important factor in their success. For elite madams, it was imperative that they offer a luxurious house full of beautiful, skilled, discreet women. Thus, madams could work into old age. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, top-tier brothel proprietors had careers that spanned decades. Mary Porter worked for twenty years and Pearl Beebe worked for fifteen as madams in Fort Worth. In San Antonio, Ignacia Cortez, Claude Duval, Lou Lamont, and Blanche Dearwood owned and managed their brothels for nearly fifteen years while Sallie Brewer stayed in her occupation for three decades.[77] Longevity was an important part of being an elite madam. As they continued to run their parlor houses, these women became wealthier, built up their customer base, and, generally, strengthened their political connections.

The madams who ran first-class brothels also had the ability, after a lengthy career, to retire. They could, unlike many other participants in the sex trade, get out of the industry. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the professionalization of prostitution meant women no longer casually and periodically took part in the sex trade but entered it in a much

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1900 United States Census, Bexar County, Texas, population schedule, San Antonio, p. 7B, dwelling 107, family 102, Mildred Clifton; p. 8A, dwelling 119, family 114, J.B. Brady (Beatrice Benedict's real name); p. 22A, dwelling 383, family 422, Maud Campbell; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 10 September 2018).

[77]"County Court Dots," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 9, 1885; "Fort Worth Local Notes," *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 1905; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1894-1895*, 92, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Is Arrested for Vagrancy," *El Paso Times*, September 1, 1909; Bexar County, TX County Court Criminal Minutes, 1876-1881, (April 9, 1878), Texas State Archives, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 202; "The Courts," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 16, 1890; Bexar County, TX County Court Criminal Minutes, 1876-1881, (October 10, 1879), Texas State Archives, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 530; "The Courts," *San Antonio Daily Light*, January 17, 1893; Bexar County, TX County Court Criminal Minutes, 1876-1881, (July 11, 1876), Texas State Archives, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 8; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, June 20, 1888; Bexar County, TX County Court Criminal Minutes, 1876-1881, (April 9, 1878), Texas State Archives, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 202; *San Antonio City Directory, 1907-1908*, 137, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, July 7, 1884; "Light Rays," *San Antonio Daily Light*, February 15, 1899.

more permanent state. Leaving it became difficult because of the social contamination that came with being a prostitute. Furthermore, life was hard for the women who worked in brothels and on the streets. They turned to drugs and alcohol, which often led to early deaths. Madam Mildred Clifton understood the difficulty of leaving the sex trade when she claimed, "once a girl had entered the life she did not believe it possible to erect a lasting reformation."[78] And yet, the women who owned and ran parlor houses had the ability not only to leave the sex trade but to retire comfortably.

Madams in both Fort Worth and San Antonio chose to retire from the life, with some staying in their city while others moved away. For example, Ernestine Gordon, who also went by the names Elizabeth and Emma, decided to retire to California after working as a madam for over a decade in San Antonio. She owned her parlor house, at 215 S. East Street, so she sold it to Sadie Ray, presumably to cut her final tie to the city and get a significant amount of money, $5,500, before she left.[79] Mary Porter, conversely, decided to stay in Fort Worth, but stop running her brothel. She turned her brothel over to a friend, Nat Kramer, to run and moved to a small house she bought at 800 E. Fifth Street. She lived her remaining years in comfort.[80] Some madams chose to retire from the life in order to "reform" themselves and other women in the industry. Claude Duval, a San Antonio madam whose real name was Mary L. Volino, converted to Christianity after attending a revival in 1895. She ran a large, beautiful parlor house at 223 S.

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[78]"Young Woman Wants Help," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, October 18, 1900.
[79]"District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, May 18, 1886; *Mooney & Morrison's General Directory of the City of San Antonio for 1877-1878*, 108, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; Deed of Sale, Ernestine Gordon to M.W. Robinson (Sadie Ray), June 28, 1888, Deed Book, Vol. 35, p. 483, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, TX; "A real estate transfer," *San Antonio Daily Light*, July 13, 1888.
[80]Tarrant County, Texas, probate case files, estate no. 2667, Mary Porter, Final Report of Administrator of said Estate; estate no. 2247, County Clerk's Office, Fort Worth; "Deaths," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 11, 1905; Richard F. Selcer, *Fort Worth Characters* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2009), 213.

San Saba Street and decided, after becoming a believer, to donate it to the Methodist Church. They immediately turned it into a rescue home for "fallen girls," and Duval became the matron of the house.[81] There were many paths, then, that elite madams could take to retire from the sex trade that others did not have, nearly all of which stemmed directly from their personal wealth. Madams who ran parlor houses managed to have long careers, keeping their illegal businesses open for years before retiring, because of their importance to the economies of Fort Worth and San Antonio.

The Sex Trade and the City

The red-light districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio thrived for over four decades because they provided a necessary service and, more importantly, they had immense profitability for both cities. Vice districts generated greats amount of revenue because they "drew customers with disposable income which could be spent not only on leisure activities but also in other commercial businesses located in and around" the districts.[82] Furthermore, cities benefited from red-light districts financially from the fines and court costs that law-breaking residents regularly paid. The women who owned and managed parlor houses had such long careers, and personal wealth, because their businesses directly benefited the economies of Fort Worth and San Antonio.

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[81]"A Ultima Hora," *El Regidor*, September 7, 1895; "Ye Kicker," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 22, 1895; Mrs. Fambrough, *Reminiscences of Fourteen Months Spent In A Rescue Home in the "Red Light" District of San Antonio, Texas and Else, 1910-11* (Dallas: Smith & Lamar, 1912), 19; 1900 United States Census, Bexar County, Texas, population schedule, San Antonio, p. 129A, dwelling 122, family 148, Mary L. Volino, digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 31 March 2019).

[82]Melissa Gohlke, "The Evolution of Vice Activity in San Antonio, 1885-1975" (Master's thesis, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1997), 1-2.

Prostitution, and the keeping of brothels, was illegal in both cities. On March 1, 1873, Fort Worth was officially incorporated as a city, and the city council immediately passed several ordinances to regulate the sex trade, including the prohibition of public prostitutes, disorderly houses [another term for brothel], and streetwalking. In 1866, the San Antonio city council passed an ordinance concerning vagrancy, defining it as, among other things, "all public prostitutes or such as lead a notorious, or lewd course of life" and setting the punishment as a fine between ten and one hundred dollars.[83] Two years later, the city council expanded the restrictions on the sex trade when they passed an ordinance to suppress houses of prostitution, again making the punishment a fine for those who ran or owned brothels.[84] It seems, then, that on the surface both cities did not want the sex trade within their borders; and yet, they had thriving red-light districts for nearly half a century. The "fees and fines" system helps explain this paradox.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, cities and towns across the United States set up "fees and fines" systems, which acted as unofficial agreements between local governments and the women of red-light districts. Law enforcement regularly arrested and the courts fined prostitutes and madams, which "amounted to indirect operating licenses."[85] Fort Worth and San Antonio's city governments took part in this system, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The regularity of arrests and amount of fine varied but it seemed to be at the very least two to

[83]"An Ordinance Concerning Vagrants," August 6, 1866, *City Council Miscellaneous Ordinances, 1864-1867*, 01-298 - 01-299 (San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio City Clerk's Office).
[84]Ordinance 1244, passed by City Council, March 2, 1868 in "Council Journal of Minutes, City of San Antonio" Book C (Municipal Archives and Records, San Antonio Office of the City Clerk), 642-643.
[85]Joseph W. Snell, *Painted Ladies of the Cowtown Frontier* (Kansas City, MO: Lowell Press, 1965), 5-6.
See also: Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 5; Josie Washburn, *The Underworld Sewer* (Omaha, NE: Washburn Publishing Co., 1909), 28; Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club*, 22-23.

three times a year for the madams and much more often for the prostitutes.[86] In 1894, the grand jury in Fort Worth recognized the unofficial system happening in the Acre, claiming prostitutes were allowed "to plead guilty to a fine, once each month, for the privilege of plying their unlawful and demoralizing vocations," as a de facto license.[87] The *San Antonio Express* described the system in 1868 as "collecting costs from persons arrested and arraigned before the Mayor—which costs go into the pockets of the Mayor and policeman," and stressed that the city government had a "monied interest" in the sex trade.[88] The system of fees and fines, then, brought both cities a consistent revenue while giving them a line of defense, weak though it may be, against those claiming that police did not enforce the law.

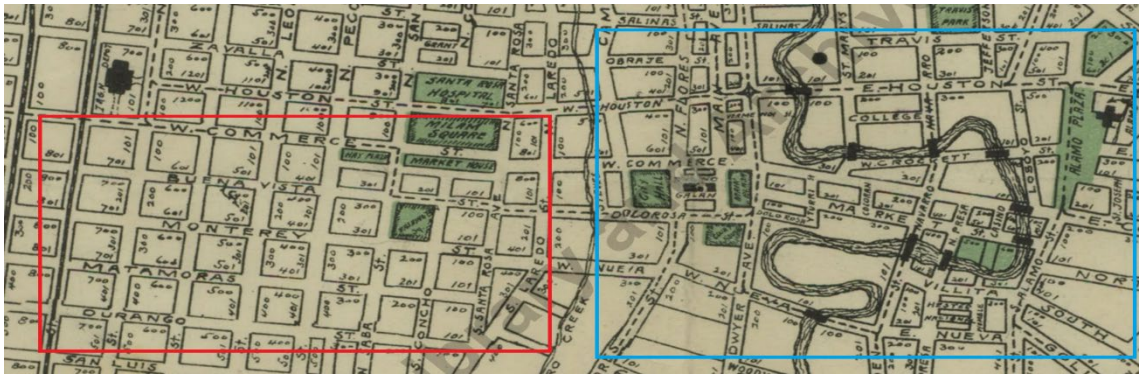
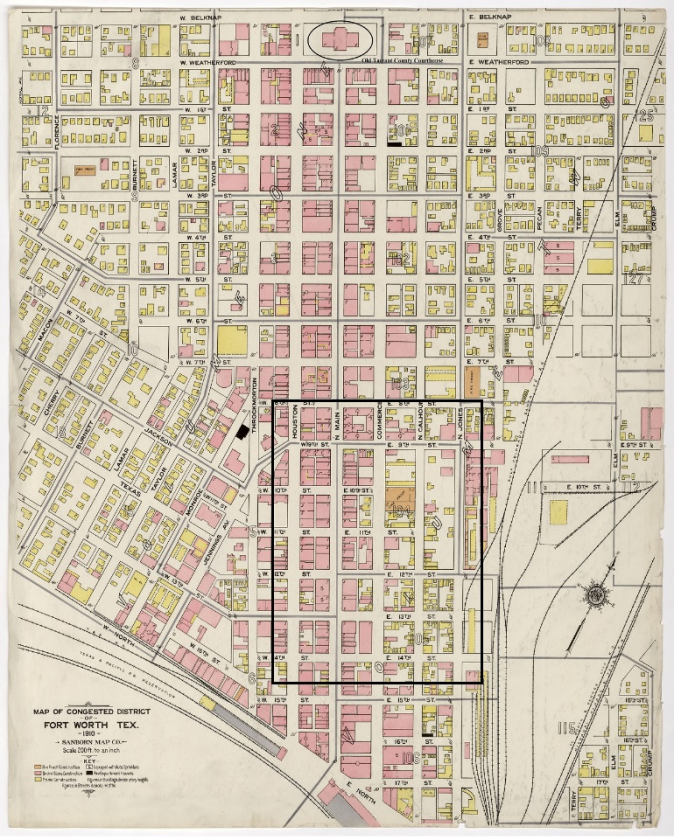


Figure 1.13: Map showing proximity of red-light district (red) to downtown area (blue), 1909

[86]For example: "Cracking A Joint," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 27, 1883; "The City Court," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, May 18, 1897; "There was little doing in the police court this morning," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, September 27, 1900; "This Cleo's Sayings Somewhat Different," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 24, 1903; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, April 5, 1887; "In The Courts," *Dallas Morning News*, February 2, 1904; "Localettes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, April 1, 1887; "District Court Cases, " *The Evening Light*, February 7, 1883; "Collecting the Informal License," *San Antonio Light*, November 3, 1883; "District Court," *San Antonio Light*, June 23, 1885; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, May 18, 1886; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, November 25, 1886; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, April 7, 1887; "Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 27, 1887; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, November 4, 1887; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, June 20, 1888; "Justice Mac's Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, November 11, 1889; "City Local News," *San Antonio Daily Light*, July 19, 1890.
[87]"Grand Jury Makes A Report," *Fort Worth Gazette*, December 2, 1894.
[88]"Fees," *San Antonio Express*, February 6, 1868; "An Old Citizen Speaks His Mind," *San Antonio Daily Express*, September 4, 1875.

While the "fees and fines" system allowed cities to benefit directly from prostitution, the sex trade also led to commercial growth as a whole in both Fort Worth and San Antonio. The red-light district (Figure 1.13) in San Antonio sat west of the San Pedro Creek, a few blocks away from the center of downtown. In Fort Worth, Hell's Half-Acre was located in the south end of downtown (Figure 1.14). The districts' geographic proximity to their city centers was no accident.



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

Figure 1.14: Map showing Hell's Half-Acre (black) in southern end of downtown, 1910

The downtown area acted as the commercial center for both San Antonio and Fort Worth. Being within walking distance made the most economic sense to those living and working in the vice districts. It allowed men to leave their jobs and very easily go spend their money on liquor, gambling, and female company as well as "in other commercial businesses located in and around

the entertainment district."[89] The local government, businesses, and many citizens understood the connection. In Fort Worth in 1879, for example, "a group of 300 citizens publicly sought more enlightened enforcement after a round of increased police activity proved so effective that ranchers and cowhands avoided Fort Worth in favor" of other, more open towns. The local merchants had lost a significant amount of trade when the cattle drives circumvented Fort Worth and complained effectively to have the police back off. Furthermore, in 1903, the Fort Worth City Council, discussing the effectiveness of the police department, stated that they could not ask the police to be strict because of the uproar from local businessmen, who complained, "Are you going to drive all these fellows that have money out of the city—drive 'em to Dallas?"[90] In San Antonio, the publication of *The Blue Book* highlights the commercial power of the red-light district. Advertisements for restaurants, hotels, bowling alleys, taxis, and druggists surrounded those for saloons and houses of prostitution. The businesses that agreed to be in *The Blue Book* saw the merits of marketing themselves alongside the vice industry. In 1917 a San Antonio doctor, writing about the rise in venereal disease, discussed the money-making capabilities of the red-light district there, stating "its commercial value has been highly appraised and jealously guarded."[91]

Throughout the late nineteenth century, the sex trade benefited both Fort Worth and San Antonio economically, which allowed prostitution to thrive in both cities and the women who ran the brothels to become quite wealthy. As the nineteenth century transitioned into the twentieth century, that generation of madams took divergent paths depending on where they

[89]Gohlke, "The Evolution of Vice Activity in San Antonio, 1885-1975," 1-2.
[90]Harold Rich, *Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 10; "Harsh Words Against Police," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 21, 1903.
[91]*Blue Book for Visitors*; M. J. Bliem, "The Venereal Peril in San Antonio and the Army" in *The Medical Annals of Southwest Texas* (June 1917), 8.

lived and worked. After peaking in size and popularity in the 1880s and 1890s, Hell's Half-Acre entered a period of decline in the early twentieth century. The number of madams in Fort Worth dropped in this decade because of several reasons. They dealt with the growing criticism of the sex trade, "vice kings," and a shrinking population of madams as older generations died or moved away. Conversely, in San Antonio, the red-light district's size and reputation expanded even more. The madams of the early 1900s took advantage of the growing population of San Antonio, especially within the military fort, Sam Houston, to further strengthen the existence of the sex trade in the city. They were very successful, managing to keep the red-light district open in San Antonio for three more decades while Fort Worth, because of virulent anti-vice reformers and the US Department of War, eradicated the Acre during the First World War.[92]

The number of houses of prostitution in San Antonio grew significantly over the first few decades of the 1900s. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps noted 14 houses of prostitution in its 1904 edition. In its next publication, eight years later, that number had boomed to 120 brothels and cribs within the district's boundaries. In 1909, the federal government sent an immigration inspector, Frank Stone, as part of a larger investigation of red-light districts, and the number of foreign-born prostitutes in them, across the country. Stone, assigned to Texas, visited both Fort Worth and San Antonio's vice districts. He noted the large number of houses of prostitution in the latter, listing out names and addresses which numbered 76 in total. The final piece that illustrates how much San Antonio's district expanded is *The Blue Book*, published in 1911. Inside this 30-page pamphlet is a list, a directory, of 106 brothels and the names of the women

[92]"In the Courts," *Fort Worth Telegram*, May 3, 1904; "City News," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, April 21, 1901; "Court Rebuked for Remitting Women's Fines," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* November 21, 1910; "I'm Good Indian; Will Not Squeal," *The Houston Post*, September 29, 1912; *Blue Book for Visitors*; "Historic Brothels Hearken to Day when Prostitution was Elegantly 'Acceptable'," *San Antonio Light*, April 12, 1982.

running them. Out of those 106, 24 were designated as Class A, as parlor houses. Together, these disparate sources create a picture of a red-light district on the rise with no hints that it would slow down anytime soon.[93]

The elite madams of this era presumably took advantage of the expanding population and growing military presence within San Antonio to bolster their own wealth. In 1890, the city's population numbered 37,673. By 1920, there were over 160,000 people living there. That massive jump in people meant that the potential customer pool for the vice district had also grown. Military men made up a large portion of that. San Antonio had always been a "military center," starting with the forts built to protect the Spanish missions in the seventeenth century.[94] In the early twentieth century, San Antonio contained several military bases, all focused around the immense Fort Sam Houston. In 1912, six thousand soldiers were posted there.[95] By 1914, it became the "largest army post in the United States," and there were over sixteen thousand troops stationed there two years later.[96] Young, single, male soldiers flooded into the city to populate these bases and, "bereft of the restraining influences of home life and . . . suffer[ing] most from sexual unrest," they needed entertainment during their down times.[97] The red-light district answered this call, offering drinks, card games, and, most importantly, female companionship.

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[93]*San Antonio, Texas*, 1904; *San Antonio, Texas,* 1912; Scale {1:50}, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps," Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas; *List of Houses of Ill-Fame in San Antonio, Texas*, box 111, file 52484/8, US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; *Blue Book for Visitors*, 21.
[94]Cecelia Steinfeldt, *San Antonio Was: Seen Through A Magic Lantern* (San Antonio: San Antonio Museum Association, 1978), 175.
[95]"A Glimpse of Fort Sam Houston," *San Antonio Light*, September 8, 1912.
[96]Federal Writers' Project, *San Antonio: An Authoritative Guide to the City and its Environs* (San Antonio, TX: Clegg Company, 1938), 40; Andrea Gerstle, Thomas C. Kelly, and Cristi Assad, *The Fort Sam Houston Project: An Archeological and Historical Assessment* (San Antonio: Center for Archeological Research, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1978), 318; John Manguso, *Fort Sam Houston* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), 8.
[97]George E.H. Harmon, "Venereal Diseases in the Navy and their Prophylaxis," in *Transactions of the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis* 3 (1910), 130.

Military personnel could even ride the streetcar straight from the base to the red-light district, taking the "Army Post" line to the I&GN car that would drop them right in the middle of the district.[98] By offering a space for young, single men with little to no attachments in San Antonio to blow off steam and satisfy their sexual urges, houses of prostitution kept these men away from the more "respectable" women of the city, while allowing those running the brothels to benefit financially. Economically, then, the first few decades of the twentieth century for the elite madams of San Antonio was a period of growth, which was markedly different from what their colleagues to the north were experiencing.[99] Discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Fort Worth's Hell's Half-Acre, which experienced its peak during the 1880s and 1890s, began to wane in the 1900s in terms of size, popularity, and economic value before finally being eradicated during World War I.

Conclusion

A house of prostitution was a business. A brothel, especially a parlor house, was quite an undertaking. It required a large, well-furnished dwelling, beautiful and talented prostitutes, a trained staff, and, most importantly, a madam in charge of it all. As a business owner, the madam did everything she could to make her brothel as profitable as possible. She advertised and marketed her parlor house, obtained credit to buy things, managed her employees (both prostitutes and staff), balanced the books, and dealt with customers—the good and the bad. Fort

[98]Nic Tengg, *Nic Tengg's Indexed City Map of San Antonio* (San Antonio: Nic Tengg Publishing, 1909), 20-21, qtd. in Melissa Gohlke, "The Evolution of Vice Activity in San Antonio, 1885-1975" (Master's thesis, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1997), 22.

[99]Deed of Sale, Sam Beliner to Beatrice Benedict, May 1, 1902, Deed Book, Vol. 211, p. 39; Deed of Sale, C.E. Hicks to Maud Campbell, March 16, 1895, Deed Book, Vol. 133, p. 420; Deed of Sale, S. Villanueva to Maud Campbell, October 24, 1907, Deed Book, Vol. 276, p. 424; Deed of Sale, N. Zimmerman to Maud Campbell, March 25, 1909, Deed Book, Vol. 288, p. 618; Deed of Sale, J.I. Ryan to Maud Campbell, June 4, 1910, Deed Book, Vol. 338, p. 29, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; "Mrs. Brady's Jewels," *San Antonio Daily Light*, February 5, 1903; "Automobile Accident," *San Antonio Daily Light*, November 11, 1901.

Worth and San Antonio's red-light districts contained dozens of these parlor houses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the women that ran them became, for the most part, quite wealthy. They invested the money they made back into their parlor houses, as well as in real estate and jewelry.

Madams were able to obtain such wealth because of San Antonio and Fort Worth's tolerance of prostitution and red-light districts. The sex trade could exist mostly unfettered because of its economic value. Both madams and prostitutes essentially paid the city a licensing fee through a system of regular fines, which provided a regular revenue stream for the local government. Furthermore, red-light districts also encouraged commercial activity in both cities and even worked as a tourist attraction to bring even more people to either city, where they would spend money at hotels and restaurants. The financial value of the vice districts protected them from eradication, at least for a while.

The economic power that elite madams wielded in both Fort Worth and San Antonio granted them a significant amount of civic power and influence. They used their wealth and the fiscal importance of the sex trade to take up space in the public sphere, utilizing the tools found there to protect and expand their businesses. From legal cases to newspaper articles, the different aspects of the civic sphere assisted madams in both cities in amplifying the profitability of their parlor houses. The women running elite brothels applied their economic power to gain influence in the public sphere and in turn, used their civic power to become even wealthier.

CHAPTER TWO: CIVIC POWER

Introduction

On February 4, 1896, Fort Worth Police Chief J. H. Maddox wrote a letter to the mayor of Fort Worth, B. B. Paddock, and the members of the City Council. In it, he explained his reasons for dropping charges that had been filed against madam Mary Porter. Alderman Winfield S. Essex requested this recounting, wondering why a case against a brothel-keeper was dismissed. Porter had allegedly been harboring a prostitute, Daisy Holmes, who had been ordered by the police to leave the city. When Porter heard that there was a warrant out for her arrest, she immediately reached out to Chief Maddox, claiming her innocence in the matter and asking him to investigate it and clear her name. The police chief did just as she asked, discovered that Porter was telling the truth, and, along with City Attorney Calvin M. Templeton, requested that the judge dismiss the case.[1]

That Mary Porter was able to call on the Fort Worth chief of police to personally look into a case involving her implies that they had some type of pre-existing relationship. Madams within a red-light district regularly forged working relations with law enforcement, city officials, and other important residents as a way to protect their businesses. Prostitution was illegal in both Fort Worth and San Antonio, which meant that madams needed these connections with powerful people to keep their brothels open and thriving. Furthermore, the economic value of their brothels gave madams a healthy amount of civic power—the ability to take up space in the public sphere and use the tools within that space to protect and expand their businesses. This

[1]Letter from J. H. Maddox to Fort Worth City Council, February 4, 1896, Records of the City of Fort Worth, Series I, Mayor and Council Proceedings, 1896, Fort Worth Public Library Archives

ranged from the personal relationships they curated with city officials and law enforcement to lawsuits challenging laws or appealing their arrests.

This chapter examines the civic power possessed by the madams of Fort Worth and San Antonio's red-light districts from 1877 to 1920, detailing the various ways they wielded it. It explains how madams used their economic power—both the commercial value of their brothels and the fines they paid to the city—to gain civic and political influence. It then delves into the different routes the women who owned parlor houses took to exert that power, nearly always as a way to protect or expand their businesses. Furthermore, it traces change over time as madams in Fort Worth began losing their clout during the first few decades of the twentieth century while San Antonio's madams saw no decline, but, for some, an expansion.

Money Leads to Power

In the late nineteenth century, the cities of Fort Worth and San Antonio benefitted economically from the presence of their red-light districts. In both places, the houses of prostitution, variety theaters, saloons, and gambling parlors brought in visitors for over forty years. They were a tourist attraction as male customers came from all over, including "cowboys [who] saved for months . . . to blow it all in one week [and] East Coast businessmen escaping harsh winters on resort tours of the South."[2] The vice districts did not just benefit themselves, though, as non-vice businesses profited from the constant stream of male patrons into San Antonio and Fort Worth. The men who frequented gambling parlors, cock fights, or brothels presumably needed a place to stay and something to eat. Many also visited local business for

[2]Greg Davenport, "The District: Where Vice Was a Virtue" *The Magazine of San Antonio* (March 1978), 50.

new clothing, a saddle, or a haircut and shave.[3] Alongside visitors, male residents of both cities also patronized the red-light district, which meant that the businesses of the two cities, both vice-centric and not, had plenty of customers. Because of the seemingly endless flow of clients, the parlor houses in San Antonio and Fort Worth thrived, allowing the madams who owned them to become wealthy, which financially benefitted both cities in a different way, through the paying of regular fines.

Since the mid-nineteenth century, the governments of Fort Worth and San Antonio prohibited prostitution and the keeping of brothels using city ordinances. The reality, though, was that the sex trade endured and expanded throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Money explained the contradiction inherent in the red-light district's existence. Both Fort Worth's and San Antonio's local governments formed a "fees and fines" system with the women who worked in the sex trade. Introduced in Chapter 1, this arrangement involved the regular arrest and fining of prostitutes and madams. Essentially, this process created "indirect operating licenses" for the women of both red-light districts.[4] Crafting this relationship with city officials and law enforcement was the most important use of madams' civic power. They used their economic status—specifically their wealth—to craft a space for their industry where it would be relatively protected and allowed to thrive.

No existing records lay out exactly how the "fees and fines" system was set up in either city, but it was common practice across the country, especially west of the Mississippi River. In

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[3]Jacqueline Moore, *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier, 1865-1900* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 169.

[4]Joseph W. Snell, *Painted Ladies of the Cowtown Frontier* (Kansas City, MO: Lowell Press, 1965), 5-6.
See also: Penny A. Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams: The Lost History of Prostitution on the Riverfront* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 5; Josie Washburn, *The Underworld Sewer* (Omaha, NE: Washburn Publishing Co., 1909), 28; H. Gordon Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club: The Story of Prostitution in El Paso* (El Paso, TX: Mangan Books, 1983), 22-23.

its earliest incarnations in the 1860s and 1870s, the regular fines essentially paid the salary of whatever law enforcement was in charge. During these decades, this practice was an informal agreement. In the late 1870s and 1880s, though, many cities, like Fort Worth, actually wrote the practice into law. In September 1882, the Fort Worth City Council passed Revised Ordinance No. 50, which ordered that "all moneys paid into the City Treasurer from . . . fines or forfeitures" be set aside to provide the salaries for the city's policemen.[5] In 1883, the mayor of San Antonio, James H. French, described the fines as one of the "sources of revenue for the support of the police force."[6] Whether the city officially sanctioned it or not, the fees and fines system thrived in San Antonio and Fort Worth for over four decades, giving cities plenty of revenue and allowing madams and prostitutes to ply their trade relatively unimpeded. The relationship between the women involved in the sex trade, especially the madams, and the city stemmed from this system.

Every few months, local law enforcement would descend onto the red-light district, making "raids" and arresting the women living and working in the houses of prostitution. While these sometimes were a surprise raid, more often than not madams were either forewarned or simply knew to turn themselves in at a specific time.[7] The regularity of the arrests and fines was common knowledge. In a November 1886 issue of the *San Antonio Daily Light*, the paper reported on the "usual periodical tax of $100."[8] In December 1894, the *Fort Worth Gazette* recounted that "it . . . is a rule with the city administration of Fort Worth to allow prostitutes . . .

[5]Harris & Wear, *Revised Ordinances of the City of Fort Worth, Texas, 1873-1884* (Fort Worth, TX: Williams & Stewart Printers, 1885), 75.
[6]"Chips and Soiled Doves," *San Antonio Light*, December 22. 1883.
[7]; Josie Washburn, *The Underworld Sewer* (Omaha, NE: Washburn Publishing Co., 1909), 28.
[8]"District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, November 25, 1886.

to plead guilty to a fine, once each month, for the privilege of plying their unlawful and demoralizing vocation."[9]

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the regularity shifted depending on what the city might need or who was in charge. In San Antonio, in 1878, the Bexar County Court charged Sallie Brewer seven different times with keeping a house of prostitution while eight years later, she was arrested and fined only three times.[10] In 1880, the Tarrant County sheriff arrested Rosa Marks, a Fort Worth madam with a large, prosperous brothel, six times, and each time she was fined $100 by the Tarrant County Criminal Court.[11] Less than a decade later, in 1888, Jessie Reeves was arrested and fined $100 four times.[12] San Antonio and Fort Worth depended on this consistent revenue in order to run their governments. For example, Fort Worth during the 1890s experienced a deep depression and relied so heavily on the fines that the city government fought a battle with county officials over them. County Attorney John Swayne attempted in 1897 to take over the jurisdiction of city court which would then "collect the appropriate fines as demanded by the county."[13] Fort Worth's city council, seeing the risk to

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[9]"Grand Jury Makes A Report," *Fort Worth Gazette*, December 2, 1894.
[10]Bexar County, TX County Court Criminal Minutes, 1876-1881, (April 9, 1878), Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 202; (July 9, 1878), Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 265; (August 7, 1878), Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 281; (September 11, 1878), Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 297; (October 8, 1878), Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 304B; (November 11, 1878), Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 314; (December 9, 1878), Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 336, Texas State Archives, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, TX.
[11]State of Texas vs. Rosa Marks, April 5, 1880, Case No. 890, p. 86; State of Texas vs. Rosa Marks, May 3, 1880, Case No. 906, p. 102; State of Texas vs. Rosa Marks, June 8, 1880, Case No. 929, p. 116; State of Texas vs. Rosa Marks, August 2, 1880, Case No. 946, p. 137; State of Texas vs. Rosa Marks, September 6, 1880, Case No. 988, p. 149; State of Texas vs. Rosa Marks, November 20, 1880, Case No. 1032, p. 172, Criminal Docket - County Court, Vol. 2 (1879-1881), Tarrant County Criminal Court, Historic Ledgers, Tarrant County Archives.
[12]State of Texas vs. Jessie Reeves, January 20, 1888, Case No. 4681, p. 55; State of Texas vs. Jessie Reeves, May 22, 1888, Case No. 4940, p. 165; State of Texas vs. Jessie Reeves, September 18, 1888, Case No. 5126, p. 239, Criminal Docket – County Court, Vol. 11 (1888), Tarrant County Criminal Court, Historic Ledgers, Tarrant County Archives; State of Texas vs. Jessie Reeves, December 6, 1888, Case No. 5272, p. 38, Criminal Docket – County Court, Vol. 12 (1888-1889), Tarrant County Criminal Court, Historic Ledgers, Tarrant County Archives.
[13]Harold Rich, *Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 85; "The County Attorney," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, July 3, 1897; "Mandamus Issued," *Fort Worth Morning Register*,

their revenue, responded by threatening to dismiss the Fort Worth Police Department from its duties, which would force the county sheriff and his six deputies to try and police the city, an impossible task. Swayne immediately backed down, "denying any financial interest and assuring that municipal court income would continue to go to the city treasurer."[14] The willingness of Fort Worth's city council to fight for control of the revenue from the "fees and fines" system highlights its importance. Furthermore, as madams tended to contribute the most monetarily into the system, their existence became vital as well to the running of the city.[15]

A thriving, growing red-light district in the late nineteenth century provided economically for both Fort Worth and San Antonio, which gave the madams of the two cities the ability to leverage their financial position into civic and political influence. The women who owned and ran parlor houses understood the power that they wielded stemmed from the value of their businesses and the men who were their customers. The men who patronized parlor house had one trait in common: money. A "date" with a prostitute in one of the elite brothels typically cost between five and ten dollars in the late nineteenth century, which translates to roughly $140-280 in the present day.[16] If a patron wanted any kind of special request, the price rose significantly. Thus, the men who frequented parlor houses were of the upper classes, for the most part, or those

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July 23, 1897; B. B. Paddock and John T. Montgomery, *Annual Report of the City of Fort Worth for Fiscal Year Ending March 21, 1898* (Fort Worth, TX: Fort Worth Texas Printing Company, 1898), Texana Collection, Vance Memorial Library, Dallas Baptist University, Dallas, Texas.

[14]Rich, *Fort Worth*, 85; "At the City Hall," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, July 24, 1897; "In the Courts," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, July 27, 1897; "Not Settled Yet," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, August 3, 1897; "That Mandamus Case," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, August 4, 1897.

[15]The fine for "keeping a disorderly house" was generally between $100 and $200, while fines for gambling were typically $25 and fines for selling alcohol without a license were around $20. Vagrants received the smallest fine, often between $5 and $10.
See: Recorder's Court Docket, 1899-1900, City of San Antonio, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX Criminal Docket – County Court, Vol. 12 (1885-1888), Tarrant County Criminal Court, Historic Ledgers, Tarrant County Archives.

[16]"CPI Inflation Calculator," Bureau of Labor Statistics, Databases, Tables & Calculators by Subject. accessed February 28, 2019 http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

who became wealthy from illegal means, like outlaws. For example, in the 1880s, A. F. Truitt, a real estate dealer and "one of the most prominent young men of Fort Worth," patronized Gracie Lane's Fort Worth brothel, located at 1100 Rusk while Sidney Staniforth, a "popular" San Antonio lawyer, frequented Ignacia Cortez's parlor house.[17] A San Antonio publication described the customers of the elite houses of prostitution as "bankers and politicians . . . [and] a lot of the upper crust."[18] As the high cost of companionship was the only real gatekeeper for parlor houses, men who became wealthy illegally were served alongside the high-class male citizens of Fort Worth and San Antonio. Nat Kramer, a professional gambler in Fort Worth, regularly patronized the parlor house of Madam Mary Porter, becoming her friend and benefactor.[19]

Figure 2: "Fort Worth Five Photograph," Butch Cassidy, The Sundance Kid, and the Wild Bunch Gang

[17]"Sad and Terrible Tragedy," *Dallas Morning News*, March 13, 1888; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1888-1889*, 160, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Startling Tragedy," *San Antonio Light*, July 13, 1885; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1885-1886*, 341, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.
[18]Greg Davenport, "The District: Where Vice Was a Virtue" *The Magazine of San Antonio* (March 1978), 50.
[19]Richard F. Selcer, *Fort Worth Characters* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2009), 212-3; "Localettes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 29, 1890; "In The Courts," *Fort Worth Evening Telegram*, January 28, 1905.

The most infamous patrons, however, of the red-light district of either city were Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid, and the rest of the Wild Bunch Gang. While they did visit Hell's Half-Acre, where they took a famous photograph (Figure 2) in 1900, the Wild Bunch preferred San Antonio's red-light district—specifically, the parlor house of Fannie Porter. (Fannie and Mary Porter were not related in any way, except for their choice of career.) Fannie Porter ran a large, elegant thirteen-room parlor house at 503 S. San Saba from 1897 to 1903.[20] At some point during her career as an elite madam, Fannie Porter had her portrait taken (Figure 2.1). It remains one of the only existing photos of a madam in either San Antonio or Fort Worth. In it, Porter stares directly at the camera with a slight smirk on her face and a hand on her hip. Her dress is beautiful and intricate with embroidery, lace, and ruffles. She is wearing jewelry and her hair is pinned back elegantly. If one were to look at this photograph without knowing the subject, they could easily assume that she might be a member of the high society instead of a brothel keeper. Porter's luxurious and discrete parlor house, and the women inside it, attracted the Wild Bunch. In fact, some have even argued that Etta Place, the female companion of the Sundance Kid, worked there. Furthermore, Porter's parlor house offered a safe, private refuge where they could hide.[21] Madams in both Fort Worth and San Antonio understood

Figure 2.1: Madam Fannie Porter, undated

[20]"Arrested a Prowler," *San Antonio Daily Light*, May 29, 1897; *Jules A. Appler's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1901-1902*, 434, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database online]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.
[21]"Logan Was Here," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 18, 1901; Larry Pointer, *In Search of Butch Cassidy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 162; Richard M. Patterson, *Butch Cassidy: A Biography* (Lincoln:

that curating good relationships with their customers could result in the growth of their own power.

Leveraging Male Power for Protection

The elite madams of both cities forged personal connections with the necessary members of the political sphere and law enforcement to help protect themselves and their businesses, whether these men were customers or not. This was common practice in red-light districts across the country as madams understood that they needed to do whatever they could to ensure their survival. Because of the lack of sources, there is no real way to know how these relationships began. Presumably they happened one of two ways: patronizing the parlor houses which built a rapport with the madam or profiting financially from the parlor houses, whether that be as politicians, law enforcement, or businessmen. For some it was probably a combination of the two. However it happened, the relationships between madam and members of the wealthy, male citizenry existed, benefiting both parties. Mary Porter's many connections with the men in Fort Worth offers a prime example.

Porter was a madam in Fort Worth for two decades, arriving in the spring of 1885 from Hot Springs, Arkansas, and running a parlor house until her death in 1905. Throughout her twenty-year career, she fostered relations with many different men within the city who she could call on when she needed. Some, like Police Chief J. H. Maddox, held prominent roles in the city government. Others were well-to-do businessmen or infamous gamblers. One of the most important ways these men assisted Porter was by acting as a surety for her bond when she was

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University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 177; Charles Kelly, *The Outlaw Trails: A History of Butch Cassidy and His Wild Bunch* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 281.

arrested and charged with various offenses, including keeping a disorderly house and vagrancy. Acting as the surety made these men liable if she failed to show up in court or follow through with any required punishments, like a fine. Porter had a variety of men who acted in this role for her, including Ephraim B. Daggett, William H. Ward, Nat Kramer, and Charles E. Graham. Daggett, a wealthy real estate dealer, was a prominent member of Fort Worth society as the son of Captain E. M. Daggett, the "father of Fort Worth," and an alderman for the Third Ward in the late 1880s.[22] William H. Ward owned the "first-class" saloon and restaurant the White Elephant and sat on the city council as the First Ward's alderman in the early 1890s.[23] Charles E. Graham was Ward's right-hand man. He managed the White Elephant for him and the other saloons Ward owned.[24] While Nat Kramer's occupation was as a professional gambler, he also made a name for himself within Fort Worth as a philanthropist, "noted for unique charity."[25] All of these men offered up their own money to assist Mary Porter and some did it multiple times. On the surface, these men were simply acting as her surety but arguably, for a prominent citizen of Fort

[22]City of Fort Worth vs. Madam Porter, October 26, 1887, Case No. 4299, Criminal Minutes, Tarrant County Court, 1886-1892, Tarrant County Historic Ledgers, Tarrant County Archives; Julia Kathryn Garrett, *Fort Worth: A Frontier Triumph* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1996), 165; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1888-1889*, 104, 43, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; Oliver Knight, *Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 269.

[23]City of Fort Worth vs. Madam Porter, October 26, 1887, Case No. 4299, Criminal Minutes, Tarrant County Court, 1886-1892, Tarrant County Historic Ledgers, Tarrant County Archives; Rich, *Fort Worth,* 95; "It Is Paddock," *Fort Worth Gazette*, February 20, 1892; "Old Saratoga" [advertisement], *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 26, 1894; "White Elephant Restaurant" [advertisement], *Fort Worth Gazette*, February 25, 1895; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1888-1889*, 243; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1894-1895*, 47, 331; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1895-1896*, 41, 381, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

[24]State of Texas vs. Madam Porter, February 2, 1894, Case No. 11690, Tarrant County Criminal Court, Tarrant County Clerk's Office; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1894-1895*, 173; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1895-1896*, 187, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

[25]State of Texas vs. Madam Porter, April 17, 1894, Case No. 12627; State of Texas vs. Madam Porter, April 17, 1894, Case No. 12626, Tarrant County Criminal Court, Tarrant County Clerk's Office; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1894-1895*, 215; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1895-1896*, 238, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Philanthropist Dies Suddenly," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 9, 1905; "Death of Nat Kramer," *Dallas Morning News*, August 9, 1905.

Worth like Daggett, publicly aiding a member of the sex trade would seem to be an act of indirect approval. It could even be seen as a message to those who might want the red-light districts eradicated, showing just who they would be going up against. Porter successfully built relationships with men who held positions in the government and influence in the business world and used those connections to protect herself and her industry. Elite madams in both San Antonio and Fort Worth, presumably, replicated Porter's actions, crafting relations with those in power to keep their businesses alive and thriving.

A significant aspect of a madam's civic power rested in her rapport with the law enforcement of her city, a requirement if she wanted to run a successful house of prostitution. The "fees and fines" system did much of the work in this regard because it paid the salaries of the police department and, some of the time, policemen took the fines unofficially, pocketing them for their own use. In Fort Worth, for example, the city council investigated the police in 1895 for visiting brothels and taking fines from the women after a deficit was discovered in the police accounts. There was not enough proof, however, and the case against the department was dismissed.[26] Furthermore, many of the male law enforcement officers patronized the brothels in both red-light districts, and some were even hired as security by madams. The *San Antonio Light*, in 1885, accused members of the police department because of their lack of enforcement of having personal relationships with a prostitute in the red-light district, a sentiment expressed many times over the years by various people.[27] In Fort Worth, the police were so familiar with

[26]"Opened: The Investigation Of Police Accounts," *Fort Worth Gazette*, September 26, 1895; "Pitiless: The Excruciating Police Investigation," *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 2, 1895; "Pending: The Police Investigation Is Hung Up," *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 12, 1895.
[27]"Neglect of Duty," *San Antonio Light*, December 18, 1885; "Capt. Sandoval is Indicted," *San Antonio Gazette*, January 19, 1905; "Chief Gave Orders to Slack Up on Gamblers, Says Mussey," *San Antonio Express*, January 9, 1918; "The Grand Jury," *San Antonio Light*, March 25, 1884.

the women of the Acre that one of the officers, C. M. Johnston, claimed in 1895 to know "the name of every prostitute on his beat."[28] Around that same time, A. E. Baten, a pastor working with Bethel Mission, in his Sunday sermon attacked the lawlessness of the red-light district and specifically cited that policemen allowed lawbreaking to take place and even patronized saloons and brothels. The Fort Worth City Council investigated and decided not to dismiss any of the policemen. Instead, they stressed that it was difficult to legislate morality and that police officers should take care to follow all city ordinances.[29] The Fort Worth City Council recognized the patronizing of brothels by police as a major issue when they passed new regulations in 1885 that stated: "No policemen shall be allowed to enter any bawdy house unless called in or having been sent there by the chief of police."[30] And still, the madams and the police in both cities continued to forge relationships with one another.

Madams maintained this connection with law enforcement so they could call in favors when needed, as Mary Porter did in 1896 when she requested Police Chief Maddox look into charges filed against her. Some madams used this relationship to avoid arrest or paying fines. In the early 1900s, two different members of law enforcement were charged with neglect of duty and failure to arrest. In January 1905, Assistant City Marshal Estevan Sandoval chose not to arrest Madam Belle Cook and the other inhabitants of her house at 206 Bonham Street in San Antonio. Whether this was his first time failing to arrest her or not, Sandoval was charged and

[28]"Pitiless: The Excruciating Police Investigation," *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 2, 1895.
[29]"Rev. Dr. Baten," *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 6, 1893; "In the City: As to Baten," *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 21, 1893; "Baten's Charges," *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 23, 1893; "The Investigation," *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 24, 1893; "The Investigation," *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 25, 1893; "The Committee," *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 26, 1893; "Warm, Well Rather Are Mayor Paddock's Comments On Dr. Baten," *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 27, 1893; "The City Council," *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 29, 1893; "Plain Words," *Fort Worth Gazette*, May 15, 1893.
[30]"Forbidden Fruit," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 8, 1885.

threatened with dismissal if found guilty of dereliction of duty.[31] Six years later, San Antonio Constable John Trainer was indicted for the same reason: not arresting Bonnie Lavine.[32] No existing records explain why these men made the choice that they did but presumably it was not the first time for either man to do so. Madams also might ask for more public assistance, like a pardon or testimony. In December 1913, Bexar County Sheriff John W. Tobin sought a pardon for a madam to protect her from jail. His cited her children as reason for his actions, knowing her imprisonment would leave "her children uncared for."[33] The fate of this unnamed madam and her pardon is unknown. Madams could request lawmen testify for them if they were ever brought to trial. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, in September 1910, reporting on the Fort Worth mayoral race, published an article where one of the candidates, Frank V. Lanham, claimed that in trials against madams, "the only witnesses in the women's defense, besides the women themselves, were and are now, members of the police force."[34] Clearly, madams built relationships with law enforcement. They understood that if they wanted their houses of prostitution to thrive, it was a necessity. These connections they maintained illustrate the ways that madams employed the civic power gained from their economic status as a way to protect their business and themselves.

Taking Up Space in the Civic Sphere

Being a part of the vice industry marked madams and prostitutes as "other." They did not have the ability to be a part of the larger society of Fort Worth and San Antonio but existed at the margins. Elite madams ran successful businesses, which gave them personal wealth, but that did not translate within "respectable" society. The San Antonio Woman's Club or the Fort Worth

[31]"Capt. Sandoval Is Indicted," *San Antonio Gazette*, January 19, 1905.
[32]"Constable Is Exonerated By Jury In Case," *San Antonio Light*, December 16, 1911.
[33]"Sheriff Seeks Pardon," *San Antonio Light*, December 28, 1913.
[34]"Lanham Cites Cases To Prove Charges," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 21, 1910.

branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union would not have extended invitations to join to any of the women who ran brothels. Madams, then, were not allowed to take part in the typical activities of a middle- to upper-class woman. Instead, they "took on the privileges usually limited to males," including "running their businesses, regularly appearing in court, often as criminals, sometimes as the objects of civil lawsuits, sometimes as the originators of those suits," buying and selling real estate, and crafting political relationships.[35] The women who owned and managed parlor houses regularly took up space in the civic sphere in order to further their own ends—generally, protecting their business or bettering their reputation.

The court system became one of the most important spaces for madams to exert their influence in matters concerning their own affairs. As members of an illegal industry, madams were intimately familiar with the courts, at all levels. The Recorder's Court, or Mayor's Court, sat at the lowest level and dealt only with misdemeanors, like fighting, disorderly conduct, or gambling.[36] Madams generally found themselves dealing with this court after being arrested for vagrancy, which was a catch-all term that included prostitution.[37] The district court and the county court dealt with the more serious crimes, which included keeping a disorderly house. Thus, madams spent the most time in the Fort Worth or San Antonio District Court and the Tarrant or Bexar County Court. It was in these courtrooms where the women who ran brothels paid their regular fines and where the few who were charged with more severe crimes, like

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[35]*Jules A. Appler's General Directory and Blue Book of the City of San Antonio, 1907-1908*, 8; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1904-1905*, 49, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; Paula Allen, "Women's Club of Clubs Sought Civic Betterment," *San Antonio Express-News*, May 13, 2017; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 8.
[36]"The Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Daily Express*, October 26, 1874; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, August 10, 1883; "Mayor's Court," *Daily Fort Worth Standard*, September 18, 1877; "Recorder's Court," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat-Advance*, May 19, 1882.
[37]"Recorder's Court," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, November 8, 1883; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, May 28, 1884.

Mildred Clifton, accused of murder in 1904, had their jury trials.[38] The highest level of courts that madams encountered were the Texas Court of Appeals.

At each of these judicial tiers, the women who owned houses of prostitution negotiated with the legal system regarding their illegal businesses. Elite madams commonly employed lawyers to assist them when they went to court, even when charged with keeping a disorderly house—the simplest of cases. They understood that to maintain the existence of their parlor houses, a certain number of these cases would end in a fine, which often meant that they would simply plead guilty, pay their fine, and go on with their business. There were times, though, where madams pled not guilty and forced a trial. On November 3, 1883, well-known San Antonio madam Blanche Dearwood attempted this unsuccessfully as the grand jury knew "this was by no means her first appearance in the same character" and, so, fined her two hundred dollars.[39] She tried again, a few months later, presenting a "vigorous defense;" but, again, the jury knew her as "one of that class who keeps a table d'hote concern for poor clerks with till tappings and married men of promiscuous vows," finding her guilty and fining her three hundred dollars.[40] Elizabeth Gordon, one of Dearwood's colleagues, pled not guilty when she was charged with keeping a house of ill fame in January 1885; and, after allowing the prosecutor to "consume the greater portion of the morning in examining witnesses," changed her plea to guilty. The jury, "being somewhat nettled at being detained, 'all on account of Eliza.'" set her fine at

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[38]"Eight Are Arrested Following Indictment," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 5, 1913; "District Court Cases," *The Evening Light*, February 7, 1883; "The Demi-monde in Court," *San Antonio Light*, April 23, 1883; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, November 4, 1887; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, January 9, 1889; Bexar County, TX *County Court Criminal Minutes, 1876-1881*, (December 9, 1878), Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, Texas State Archives, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin, TX; Tarrant County, Criminal Docket, Vol. 1-25; Tarrant County, Criminal Minutes, Vol. 6-18, A-I, Tarrant County Historic Ledgers, Tarrant County Archives; "In The Courts," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*¸ September 26, 1904; "Mildred Clifton Given Sentence of Four Years," *San Antonio Daily Express*, October 31, 1904.
[39]"Collecting the Informal License," *San Antonio Light*, November 3, 1883.
[40]"Stubborn," *San Antonio Light*, January 7, 1884; "Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, January 23, 1884.

one hundred dollars.[41] Fort Worth madam Mrs. F. P. Brown, in May 1886, claimed innocence of the charges of keeping a disorderly house. The Tarrant County grand jury did not agree, fining her five hundred dollars.[42]

Furthermore, in both Fort Worth and San Antonio, madams who had been convicted of keeping a disorderly house and given a fine as punishment periodically appealed their guilty verdict for unknown reasons. They were not innocent of the charge, so why plead not guilty or fight the judge or jury's decision? The women who owned and ran parlor houses left behind no records of their own, which means that the motivations behind their actions are unknown. Still, examining the context around their choices allows a researcher to make educated guesses. Elite madams understood that in order to manage their businesses in a relatively unimpeded manner they would be required to pay regular fines throughout the year. Presumably, they pleaded not guilty or appealed guilty verdicts as a way to push back against the system because the fines were too numerous or the amount too large. Madams understood the importance of their contributions to the economic health of the city. So it is possible that they appealed their cases to throw their weight around, reminding the local governments of both Fort Worth and San Antonio that they needed the madams' money. Still, the reasons behind madams pleading not guilty or appealing verdicts are, for the most part, unclear.

Madams also used the legal system to challenge laws that they believed might hurt their business. For example, on December 16, 1889, the San Antonio City Council, led by Mayor Bryan Callaghan, passed Ordinance JH-443, which required madams to "apply to the City Clerk

[41]"Woman's Caprice," *San Antonio Light*, January 29, 1885.
[42]State of Texas vs. F.P. Brown, May 28, 1886, Case No. 3730, Criminal Docket, Tarrant County Court, Vol. 7-10, p. 14, Tarrant County Historic Ledgers, Tarrant County Archives; "Bruiser vs. Blackleg," *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 1886; "Court Cullings," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, June 11, 1886.

of the City of San Antonio for a license to keep such house[s]."[43] The license cost five hundred dollars and had to be renewed annually. Furthermore, each woman employed within a house of prostitution needed to purchase a license to work as a prostitute. Both madams and prostitutes would also be required to have regular health examinations by the city physician in order to keep their license. On December 31, Sadie Ray became the first madam to apply and pay for a license for herself and her employees. Others, like Carrie Anderson, quickly fell in line.[44] One madam, though, did not. On January 14, 1890, Emelia Garza was arrested and charged with violating Ordinance JH-443 as she had not purchased a license for her brothel or for her employees. Her lawyer, Leonidas N. Walthall, immediately applied for a writ of habeas corpus. His goal was to "attack the validity of said ordinance, contending (1) that the city was not and is not authorized by its charter to enact it; and (2) that said ordinance is contrary to the general laws of the state, and is therefore void."[45] The Bexar County district judge, W.W. King, denied the writ. Walthall then appealed it up to the higher courts. The Texas Court of Appeals heard Garza's case on February 26, 1890 and agreed with her. The San Antonio City Charter, the appellate court claimed, did not in fact give the city council the power to license houses of prostitution. Furthermore, Ordinance JH-443 was "repugnant to a valid general law of the state."[46] The Texas Court of Appeals ruled in Garza's favor, claiming the new ordinance to be unconstitutional.

Garza's fight against Ordinance JH-443 offers a prime example of madams taking up space in the civic sphere to protect their own interests. This ordinance would have put all of the

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[43]Ordinance JH-443, passed by San Antonio City Council, December 16, 1889, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book H, Entry 443, pg. 557-570, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX; "A Business Session," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 17, 1889.
[44]"City Local News," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 31, 1889; "County Vs. State," *Austin American-Statesmen*, January 3, 1890.
[45]"Emelia Garza has been arrested," *San Antonio Daily Light*, January 14, 1890; "Scales of Justice," *San Antonio Daily Express*, January 19, 1890; *Garza v. State,* J. W., 13 S. W. 779 (Court of Appeals Tex. 1890).
[46]*Garza v. State*, J. W., 13 S. W. 779 (Court of Appeals Tex. 1890); "Unconstitutional," *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 27, 1890.

women of San Antonio's red-light district under the thumb of the local government. Every single woman working in the sex trade would be registered with the government and subject to regular health examinations by the city physician. Before this ordinance was passed, madams and prostitutes had a much more informal relationship with law enforcement and the city council. Presumably, this situation worked well for the women running parlor houses as they had money and influence to throw around when they needed something. The ordinance stripped some of that control away and vested it within the local government. While madams had no way to stop the ordinance from being passed and put into action, they used the power they did have and challenged the law using the legal system. Emelia Garza would not be the only madam to take this path as madams in other Texas cities employed the legal system to protect themselves and their businesses. For example, in Dallas, Madam Maud Shirley sued the city in protest of their fining her after being convicted of keeping a disorderly house while Thelma Denton, a Houston madam, sued the city for their attempts to segregate houses of prostitution.[47] Success rates varied among madams but, clearly, they felt comfortable fighting for themselves in a courtroom.

While the legal system was one of the more common spaces occupied by madams, they also inhabited other areas within the civic sphere. In Fort Worth and San Antonio, citizens regularly presented petitions to the city council for a variety of reasons. Madams did, as well. As residents and business owners, they used existing tools to try to get what they wanted or needed, including lower tax assessments, reimbursements for damages, or additions to their brothels. On June 22, 1885, Sarah "Sallie" Brewer submitted a petition to the San Antonio City Council requesting a reduction in the tax assessment of her property. Brewer clearly believed the city had

[47]*McDonald et al. v. Denton Et al*., 132 S.W. 823 (Court of Civil Appeals Tex. 1910); *Strauss v. State of Texas*, P. J. P, 3381 (Court of Criminal Appeals, Tex. 1915); *Coombs v. State*, J. H., 47 S.W. 163 (Court of Criminal Appeals Tex. 1898); *City of San Antonio v. Schneider*, 37 S.W. 767, (Court of Civil Appeals Tex. 1896).

overvalued her property and wanted it changed so she would not have to pay so much in property taxes. The Committee on Assessments did not agree, and Brewer's petition was denied.[48] Mary Porter had more luck with her petition (Figure 2.2), which she submitted to the Fort Worth City Council on August 11, 1896. Porter's two lots, 15 and 16 in the Daggett Addition, had been assessed at $7500 in 1894. Her petition asked for that assessment to be lowered to $3500 as that, she argued, was the actual value of the lots. The Finance Committee agreed with Porter that the lots had been overvalued and set the new assessment at $5000, lowering the property taxes she would need to pay.[49]

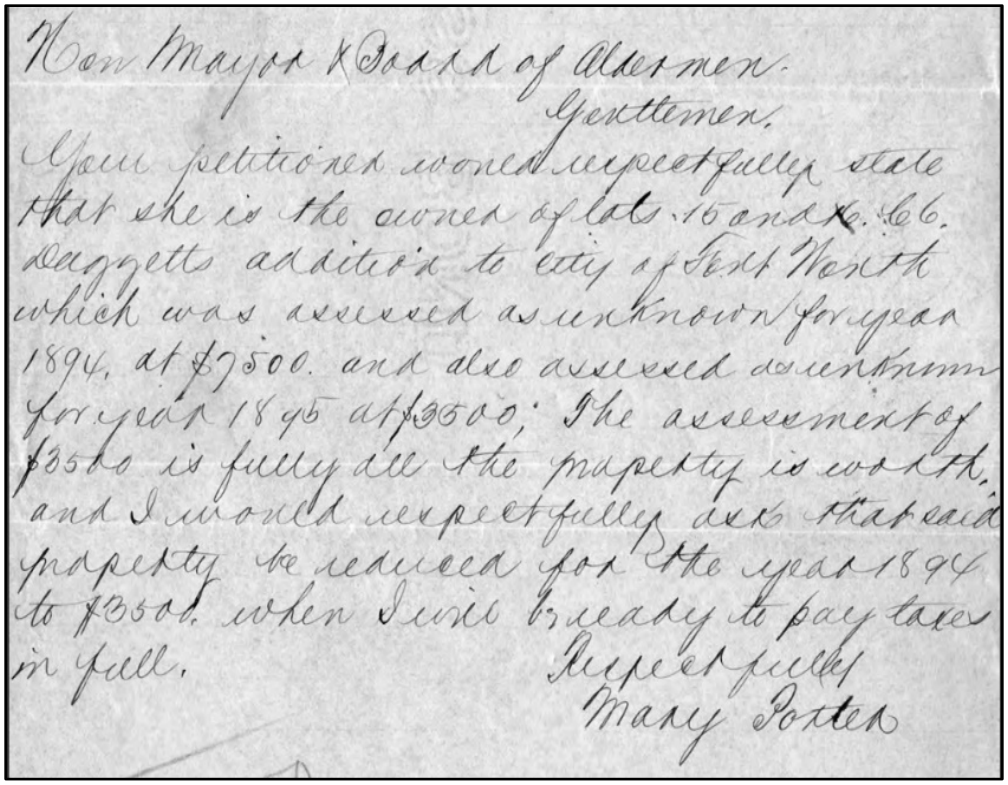
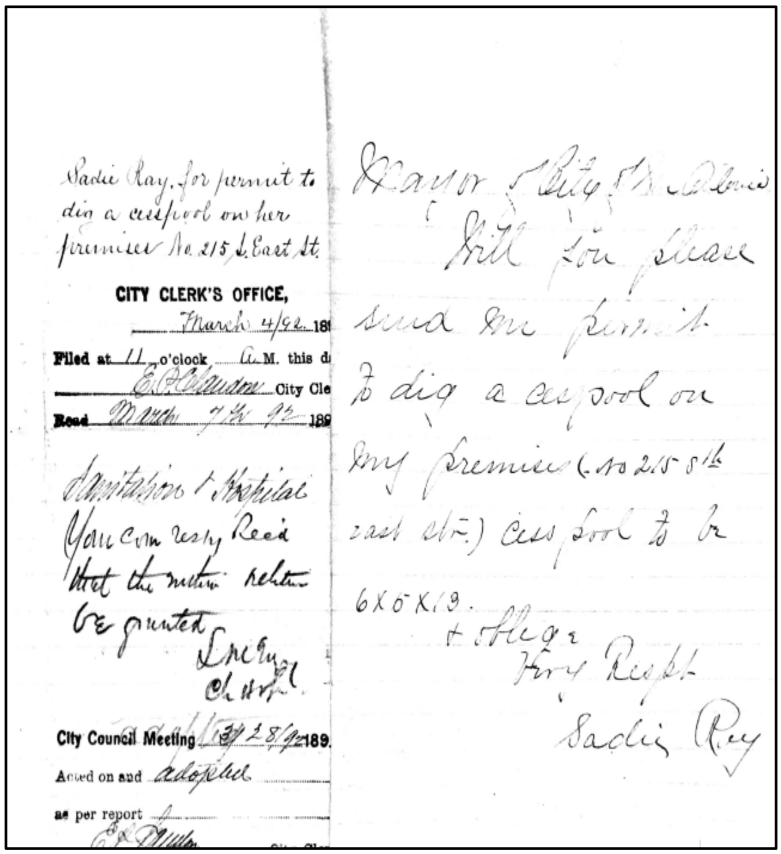

Hon Mayor & Board of Aldermen.
Gentlemen.
Your petitioner would respectfully state that she is the owner of lots 15 and 16. Daggetts addition to city of Fort Worth which was assessed as unknown for year 1894, at $7500. and also assessed as unknown for year 1895 at $3500; The assessment of $3500 is fully all the property is worth, and I would respectfully ask that said property be reduced for the year 1894 to $3500. when I will be ready to pay taxes in full.
Respectfully
Mary Porter

Figure 2.2: Mary Porter's Petition

[48]Meeting of the San Antonio City Council, June 22, 1885, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book F, pg. 429; Meeting of the San Antonio City Council, July 16, 1885, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book F, pg. 450, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX.
[49]Mary Porter to Fort Wort City Council, "Petition," August 11, 1896; Finance Committee to Fort Worth City Council, September 1, 1896; Council Proceedings and Bills Allowed, September 5, 1896, City of Fort Worth Mayor and Council Proceedings, Digital Archives, Fort Worth Public Library, Fort Worth, Texas.

Other madams were as successful as Porter with their own petitions to the local government. Maggie Reed, for example, appealed to the San Antonio City Council for reimbursement after several items of hers were destroyed by the city, which had them burned at the pest house—a "hospital for people suffering from infectious disease."[50] Reed offered no explanation for why her items were there but presumably either she or someone she knew had been sent to the pest house. The Finance Committee agreed, granting her thirty dollars to settle the claim.[51] Sadie Ray and Aggie Smith both petitioned the San Antonio City Council to


Sadie Ray, for permit to dig a cesspool on her premises No. 215 S. East St.

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE,
March 4/92 18
Filed at 11 o'clock A. M. this d
E. P. Claudon City Cle
Read March 7th 92 189

Sanitation & Hospital
Your com resp. Rec'd
that the petition
be granted

City Council Meeting 3/28/92 189
Acted on and adopted
as per report

Mayor & City of S. Antonio
Will you please send me permit to dig a cesspool on my premises (No 215 South east str.) cesspool to be 6 x 6 x 19.
& oblige
Very Respt.
Sadie Ray

Figure 2.3: Sadie Ray's Petition for a Cesspool, March 1892

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50 *Oxford English Dictionary*, "pest-house," accessed March 31, 2019, http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.tcu.edu/view/Entry/141756.

51 Meeting of the San Antonio City Council, March 30, 1891, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book I, pg. 402; Meeting of the San Antonio City Council, April 6, 1891, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book I, pg. 418, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX; "City Council," *San Antonio Daily Light*, April 7, 1891.

construct or add on to their property. In March 1892, Sadie Ray asked for a permit to dig a cesspool (Figure 2.3), which worked essentially as a septic tank, at her house of prostitution, located at 215 S. East Street. Seven months later, Ray requested a "permit to erect a lumber addition" to her East Street brothel. The city council granted both petitions.[52] Two years later, Aggie Smith petitioned for a permit to "erect [a] coal bin or shed" at her 111 Monterey Street brothel. The Fire Committee within the San Antonio City Council approved the permit, with the caveat that the bin or shed be "covered with [a] metal roof."[53] Although the majority of "respectable" society placed a divide between themselves and those who lived and worked in the vice districts, madams dealt with the city council just like every other citizen of San Antonio and Fort Worth. While their choice in employment isolated madams from the non-vice world, they still tapped into the privileges granted to all residents of their city, especially those who owned property. They took up space in the civic sphere when necessary—whether for a new tax assessment or a permit to build an addition—and did not shy away from it simply because of their occupation.

Another area of the civic sphere that madams inhabited was in print. Newspapers were a constant in the lives of Fort Worth and San Antonio residents. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was the only way people could get news in a timely manner, and both

[52]Sadie Ray to San Antonio City Council, "Petition for Cesspool," March 4, 1892; Meeting of the San Antonio City Council, March 7, 1892, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book J, pg. 9; Meeting of the San Antonio City Council, March 28, 1892, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book J, pg. 41, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX; "Council Session," *San Antonio Daily Light*, March 29, 1892; Meeting of the San Antonio City Council, October 3, 1892, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book J, pg. 251; Meeting of the San Antonio City Council, October 10, 1892, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book J, pg. 267, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX.
[53]Meeting of the San Antonio City Council, February 12, 1894, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book K, pg. 313; Meeting of the San Antonio City Council, February 19, 1894, in "Council Journal & Minutes," Book K, pg. 324, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, TX; "Proceedings of the Council," *San Antonio Daily Light*, February 13, 1894; "For an Electric Light Plant," *San Antonio Daily Light*, February 20, 1894.

cities had several newspapers throughout those decades. From the 1870s forward, a newspaper was consistently published in each city and, for most of the fifty-year period, there were multiple newspapers available at the same time. For example, Fort Worth had the *Daily Democrat*, *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, *Fort Worth Morning Register*, *Fort Worth Record*, and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. San Antonio had *The Western Texan*, *The Daily Ledger and Texan*, *San Antonio Light*, and the *San Antonio Express*. The Fort Worth and San Antonio newspapers offered international, national, state, and local news at least five days a week. They also printed regular crime columns and articles concerning the thriving, well-known red-light districts. Thus, madams in both cities were no stranger to newsprint. In fact, newspaper articles often unintentionally spread the message of madams' influence and popularity, which in turn worked as essentially free advertising. Furthermore, the women who ran parlor houses intentionally used newspapers as a tool to protect their business and reputation—again, occupying the civic sphere for their own ends.

For most madams and prostitutes, the only time their names appeared in the paper were in the crime columns, recounting that day's or week's arrests. The elite madams, though, were represented in a variety of articles. Sometimes, they were used as a point of reference. The *San Antonio Light*, in two different pieces, employed Carrie Anderson and her brothel as a geographical orientation. One of them stated: "About 4 o'clock this morning one of Goodrich's men found a rocking chair in the street, opposite Carrie Anderson's."[54] Her large, beautiful house of prostitution was so well-known to the readers of the *Light* that it could be used as a simple reference in a two-sentence story. The other, an article about a policeman being in the

[54]"Light Flashes," *San Antonio Light*, November 8, 1883; "Not On Duty," *San Antonio Light*, August 2, 1884.

wrong place—the vice district—after getting off work, referenced Anderson's brothel to let the readers know exactly where this policeman was and why his location mattered to the story.[55] These examples highlight how newspapers helped madams take up space in the civic sphere. Anderson had no control over either of the articles published by the *Light*, but the newspaper chose her brothel as a reference point for its stories.

While the two articles simply referenced Anderson, other newspaper reports focused solely on certain madams in a mostly non-vice context. On March 21, 1884, the *San Antonio Light* published a short article about a new house being built, describing it as "a fine residence" and an "ornament to the city." The residence the *Light* was referring to was Elizabeth Gordon's brothel at 215 S. East Street. Furthermore, the article calls Gordon an "enterprising citizen . . . with a worthy view to benefit both herself and the city."[56] There are no negative or passive-aggressive statements regarding her occupation within the piece. It is simply a positive recounting of Gordon's brothel being constructed. One of the editors of the *San Antonio Light* like W. Leslie Winter or William Ransome, could have been one of Gordon's customers and wanted to paint her and her new residence in a good light. The description of Gordon as an "enterprising citizen" could support this argument since those who patronized her parlor house presumably wanted to better her reputation while downplaying its illegality.

In April 1910, the *San Antonio Light* focused on another madam, Beatrice Benedict, while trying to discover the reasons behind Durango Street being paved. It had become an issue because several streets in San Antonio needed to be paved and this street had been paved but no one could figure out who had ordered the paving or who was paying for it. In a series of articles,

[55]"Not On Duty," *San Antonio Light*, August 2, 1884.
[56]"A Fine Residence," *San Antonio Light*, March 21, 1884.

the *Light* subtly suggests that it was perhaps Benedict who used either her wealth or her influence to get Durango Street—where her personal residence was—paved. Benedict denied these charges and was quoted multiple times within the stories. In the end, the newspaper was unable to discover the source of the paving.[57] These two articles illustrate how elite madams could take up civic space in a way that did not focus entirely on their careers within the sex trade. In a way, the *Light* was offering a sort of legitimacy to Gordon and Benedict through the two pieces. Both examples highlight the wealth, influence, and economic status of the women—building a beautiful home or getting a road paved—instead of how they made their money. Again, economic power led to civic power.

Along with being the subject of various articles, madams also used the newspaper to their own benefit, typically to protect their own reputation. Elite madams existed in a paradoxical space. They worked and lived within the boundaries of a red-light district, which immediately isolated them from "respectable" society. At the same time, they courted customers from the upper classes who required discretion and privacy if they were to patronize a parlor house. Thus, elite madams had to ensure that their reputations stayed as "respectable" as possible for a woman working in the sex trade. One way that they did that was through newspaper articles and editorials. Madams understood the pervasiveness of newspapers in both Fort Worth and San Antonio as they provided the only real, consistent source of news in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The women who ran parlor houses would have read the newspaper every day—to see what was happening in the city, state, and country, if any prominent men and

[57]"Durango St. Is Paved But Why?" *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, April 25, 1910; "Durango St. "Stub" Paving Cut Hack Fares," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, April 26, 1910; "Will Cost Bit of Case to Open Durango St. Stub," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, April 28, 1910; "Work on Durango St. Not Ordered by City Council," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, April 30, 1910; "Some Sidelights on San Antonio's Financial Deal," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, May 1, 1910.

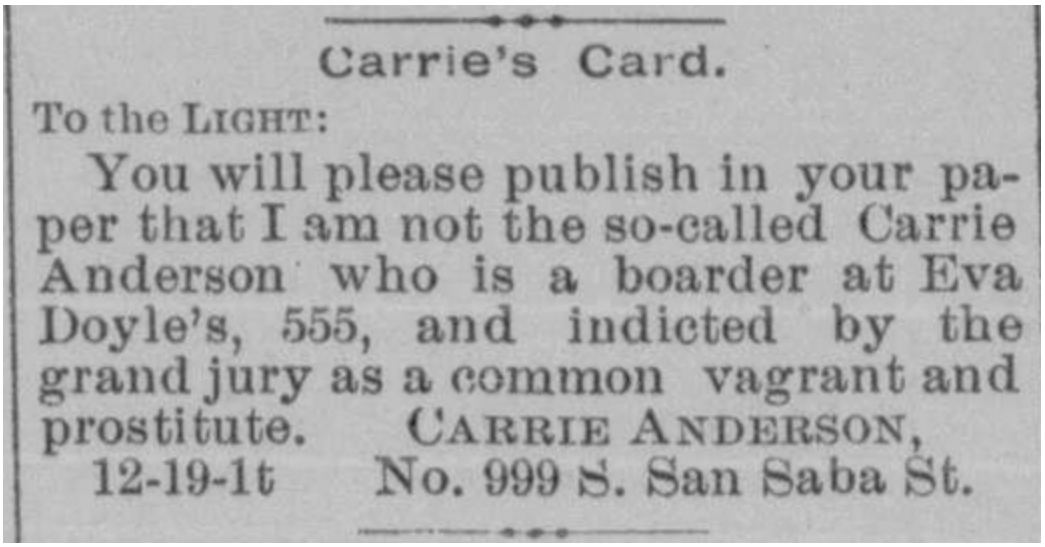
potential customers were visiting the city, and if they had been the subject of any articles. Sometimes, madams took issue with something that had been printed, typically because they believed it to be false and harmful to their reputation. When that happened, madams took it into their own hands, reaching out to the newspaper directly to have them print a correction.

On June 2, 1886, the *San Antonio Daily Light* published its regular column detailing what cases had been heard before the local municipal court. One of those cases involved the infamous madam of Fort Allen, Blanche Dearwood, who had been charged "with the high crime of knocking a cigarette out of [a man's] mouth."[58] Dearwood must have read this report and reached out to the *Light* because two days later the newspaper printed a correction, stating that she knew nothing of the matter and had no part in it.[59] A few months later, in September, she was again accused of something—threatening to do bodily harm—that she had not done, and again had a correction published in the newspaper.[60] Dearwood presumably understood that even though she appeared regularly in the newspaper regarding her arrests and fines for keeping a house of prostitution, showing up in the paper as a common criminal—knocking cigarettes out of mouths and threatening assault—would harm the reputation she had worked hard to create. She was also not the only madam who requested corrections in print.

Starting in 1888, San Antonio madam Carrie Anderson had multiple dealings with newspapers over the publishing of false statements. On May 5, 1888, Anderson, after discovering that she was accused of "causing the indictment by the grand jury of a number of colored women for keeping disorderly houses," requested the *Light* "make [a] denial of the reports . . . [as] she had nothing to with the matter at all."[61] A few years later, in April 1891, she

[58]"Justices' Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, June 2, 1886.
[59]"A Correction," *San Antonio Daily Light*, June 4, 1886.
[60]"A Reporter Switches Off," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 13, 1886.
[61]"A Personal Card," *San Antonio Daily Light*, May 5, 1888.

again had to correct false accusations made against her when she was accused of tricking a "young girl" into her house of prostitution. After hearing of the charges, she called upon the *Light* to explain what had transpired, which was that the "young girl" was really a woman of "about 45 years of age, and ugly," who had insisted on entering her parlor house with two men. Nothing that had been published had actually happened, according to Anderson.[62] In both examples, after being publicly accused of something, Carrie Anderson countered by offering her accounts of what transpired for the newspaper to publish, which they did.



Carrie's Card.

To the LIGHT:

You will please publish in your paper that I am not the so-called Carrie Anderson who is a boarder at Eva Doyle's, 555, and indicted by the grand jury as a common vagrant and prostitute. CARRIE ANDERSON,

12-19-1t No. 999 S. San Saba St.

Figure 2.4: Anderson's request for a clarification, *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 19, 1888

Madams also had to deal with mistaken identity and being blamed publicly for actions perpetrated by women with similar names. In December 1888, a woman named Carrie Anderson was indicted for being "a common vagrant and prostitute."[63] Madam Carrie Anderson presumably saw the indictment in the newspaper and, realizing how it looked, immediately reached out the *Light* to address the issue. The newspaper did as she asked, printing her response

[62]"Lured Into A Den of Vice," *San Antonio Light*, April 13, 1891; "Another Kind of Girl," *San Antonio Light*, April 15, 1891.
[63]"Carrie's Card," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 19, 1888.

(Figure 5): "To the Light, you will please publish in your paper that I am not the so-called Carrie Anderson who is a boarder at Eva Doyle's, and indicted by the grand jury as a common vagrant and prostitute."[64] Anderson was not "a common vagrant and prostitute." She was a businesswoman who understood that her public reputation directly affected her business, and knew she needed to publicly separate herself from this case of mistaken identity. A few years later, Lillie Gibson, a colleague of Anderson's, had to deal with a similar problem. One of the San Antonio newspapers published an article claiming she had been carousing with a soldier when they got into an altercation with others. Gibson saw this account and wrote to the newspaper with the facts. It was not Gibson who had been with the soldier, but a woman named Lillie Herbert. The *San Antonio Daily Light* printed her corrections so everyone would know that Gibson had no involvement with the unseemly fight.[65]

What all of these examples have in common is the idea that elite madams had a reputation that they needed to protect. The women responsible for creating a discreet, private experience within their parlor houses worked hard to curate a decent reputation. If madams behaved in a way that their actions, like threatening bodily harm or being labeled a common prostitute, would be splashed on the pages of the newspaper, their business would suffer. Thus, it became important for these women to safeguard their public image as much as they could. Elite madams had enough influence in the civic sphere to call upon newspapers and have their responses to whatever transpired published for everyone to read. The fact that the newspapers clearly complied with what madams requested exemplifies the power they wielded. They used

[64]"Carrie's Card," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 19, 1888.
[65]"Not Lillie Gibson," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 16, 1891.

the newspaper to protect their reputation and advertise their discretion and influence to potential customers.

Another area within the civic sphere where madams took up space was philanthropy. Their philanthropic acts aided in building their reputations and expanding their influence civically and politically. Madams generally contributed in one of two ways. First, they contributed monetarily to a charity or to someone in need. In 1883, San Antonio madam Carrie Anderson—to help a sick woman with four children who had lost her husband in a railroad accident—raffled off a beautiful, handmade quilt for fifty-four dollars, which she gave to the woman. In the process of reporting on her charitable act, the *San Antonio Evening Light* called out the "ladies' benevolent associations" who had done nothing but call "at the house of the sick woman and ask . . . "How do you feel?"" offering no further aid. Anderson, then, had done more than these "respectable" women.[66] Sadie Ray, in December 1888, sent money to the Bexar County poorhouse so "the paupers . . . will have a good Christmas dinner."[67] Ion (sometimes spelled as Ione) Palmer, though, was clearly one of the most charitable of the San Antonio madams. In 1903, Palmer donated $10 to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas for the Alamo Mission fund. The next year she sent $5.55 to the Protestant Orphans fund, and to Sister Blondin at St. John's for the Catholic orphans.[68] It seems that denominations did not matter to her as long as she could help orphaned children. Palmer also contributed to specific people in need, like

[66]"Raffle for Charity," *San Antonio Evening Light*, March 28, 1883.
[67]"Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 22, 1888.
[68]"Personal Mentions," *San Antonio Daily Light*, May 3, 1904; "Every Little Helps," *San Antonio Daily Light*¸ May 10, 1904.

sending money to a destitute family, paying for the burial of a homeless man, and giving the necessary funds for "a Mexican woman to pay back rent on her house."[69]

Second, madams helped wayward girls or young women get out of their industry. In May 1884, Fort Worth Madam Maud L. Brown worked with Revered Horace Bishop to help out a sixteen-year-old girl named Mamie King who, after being abused by her stepfather, had turned to the sex trade. Brown, after hearing her story, found King's aunt in Virginia. The madam purchased a train ticket, giving it and fifty dollars to King so she could go live there, as Brown was "anxious that the young girl should do right."[70] King departed for Virginia within forty-eight hours, "happy at the prospects of a new and better life, and promised all to be virtuous."[71] In the summer of 1881, San Antonio madam Ignacia Cortez, like Madam Brown, heard a story of a young girl who needed help and immediately leapt into action. In 1878, Maria Renaud, after falling deeply into poverty, allowed another woman, Annie Wallace, to foster her child and provide the care that she could not in her impoverished state. At the time, Wallace was a respectable woman, which made Renaud's decision understandable. By 1881, however, Wallace had fallen down the ladder of respectability and was now working as a prostitute in a San Antonio brothel. When Renaud heard this and realized the "miserable fate which await[ed]" her little girl, she began trying to get her back and reached out to Ignacia Cortez for help. Cortez immediately went and found the child, bringing the little one into her home. She also paid for

[69]"Quick Relief Comes to Destitute Family," *San Antonio Light*, July 21, 1912; "Burial Provided for Taylor's Body," *San Antonio Light*, June 13, 1913; "Money Is Subscribed," *San Antonio Light*, September 23, 1913; "Humane Work Shown," *San Antonio Light*, November 16, 1913; "Billy Gets Tricycle," *San Antonio Light*, November 29, 1916.
[70]"Fort Worth," *Dallas Weekly Herald*, May 22, 1884; "Snatched from Hell," *San Antonio Light*, May 23, 1884
[71]"Fort Worth Facts," *Dallas Herald*, May 25, 1884.

Renaud's passage to San Antonio and allowed her to stay in her home while trying to get her child back.[72]

There may have been other charitable routes that madams took but these two were the ones that were publicized. Why would these women take part in public acts of charity? They were not members of a benevolent association or woman's club because the "respectable" women of Fort Worth and San Antonio would have never allowed it. Presumably there are many reasons why madams chose to part with their money in this way but, arguably, they did it because they wanted to and because it helped their reputation. The examples involving Cortez and Brown illustrate how these madams understood that women should enter the sex trade of their own volition. Renaud's young daughter and Mamie King were saved, in Ignacia Cortez's words, "from the terrible fate which, under [their] existing circumstances, [would have been] inevitable."[73] Thus, they spent their own money to help those girls because they understood it was the right thing to do. Madams also acted philanthropically because it was good for their reputation. It gave them ammunition whenever their character was called into question. For example, when Mabel Palmer, a Fort Worth madam, was arrested and indicted for keeping a disorderly house, her lawyer cited her philanthropy as a reason for leniency, describing her as a "free giver to charitable institutions [who] had done much to alleviate suffering among the city's poor."[74] Publicly giving money or other resources to charity allowed madams to take part in an activity generally relegated to the middle and upper classes of women in Fort Worth and San Antonio. It was another way that they could take up space within the civic sphere. Furthermore,

[72]"Mother's Love," *San Antonio Daily Express*, June 28, 1881; "That Child Case," *San Antonio Daily Express*, June 29, 1881.
[73]"Mother's Love," *San Antonio Daily Express*, June 28, 1881.
[74]"Makes Charitable Plea for Woman, Former Resort Proprietor," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 27, 1918.

as madams had the disposable income to give to charity, philanthropy was an additional connection between economic and civic power.

The women who owned and ran parlor houses inhabited the civic sphere in a variety of ways, but most of those ways were to benefit themselves or their business. Madams used their wealth and economic influence to craft political relationships with their local governments and law enforcement in what would become a beneficial connection for all parties. They utilized the legal system to appeal verdicts and fight laws that would harm their business or profit margins while petitioning the city council for new tax assessments or building permits. The newspaper became free advertisement for their parlor houses through the publishing of articles that stressed the discretion and decorum of elite madams. Finally, madams publicly contributed to charity or assisted those without the means to help themselves—an act that benefited madams too as it helped their public image. "Respectable" society defined the women who took part in the sex trade as "other," isolated because of their choice in occupation. The elite madams, though, because of their economic status asserted themselves within the larger civic sphere. So, while Blanche Dearwood or Carrie Anderson may not have received invitations to join the San Antonio Woman's Club, they had many of the same privileges as the women who did.

As the nineteenth century turned into the twentieth, the ability of madams to inhabit civic spaces in the two cities diverged from one another as Hell's Half-Acre began a steep decline that ended in its eradication while San Antonio's vice district remained relatively untouched. As detailed in Chapter 1, San Antonio's booming population and expanding military presence combined with the relatively out-of-the-way location of the vice district to keep the sex trade thriving throughout the first few decades of the 1900s. Conversely, Fort Worth's vice district waned during that same era, until its eventual shutdown in 1918, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

The significant difference between the madams of the two districts during this time was money. While San Antonio's madams maintained and expanded their economic power in the early 1900s, Fort Worth's madams essentially lost theirs. Economic power is what allowed these women to have civic power. Thus, as the women of Hell's Half-Acre lost their wealth, their political and civic influence disappeared as well.

Elite madams in San Antonio saw no real limiting of their established civic influence in the first few decades of the twentieth century. They continued to inhabit the public sphere in a way that benefited themselves and their interests. Madams maintained and built new relationships with city officials and law enforcement to ensure the survival of their parlor houses. Police officers, for example, continued to protect the women working in the sex trade. In 1917, for example, the San Antonio Police Department openly defied orders to "close every house of prostitution within the limits of the City of San Antonio."[75] They allowed prostitution to continue operating in San Antonio because, presumably, they benefitted from their relationships with madams and their monetary nature. The red-light district remained in existence until the 1940s due, in part, to the connections forged between madams and city officials, based on the economic contributions of the sex trade, alongside other reasons like the location of the red-light district.

Furthermore, the elite madams continued to assert their presence within the civic sphere. They challenged new ordinances—like elite madam Beatrice Benedict fighting "the new order of the police department barring scarlet women from the streets and other public places during daylight" in 1901.[76] The San Antonio Police Department decreed, in September 1901, that

[75]Meeting of the Commissioners of the City of San Antonio, June 4, 1917, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, Texas.
[76]"The Scarlet Woman Order Will Be Tested," *San Antonio Express*, September 19, 1901.

women involved in the sex trade would not be allowed in public during the day. After being arrested because of the new law, Benedict threatened to appeal the verdict. The San Antonio city attorney responded by dismissing the charges and throwing out the new law. He argued that the law was meant for lewd women loitering, not "women engaged upon their legitimate business in a quiet and orderly manner," which is what he claimed Benedict was doing.[77] Benedict owned and ran a house of prostitution, an illegal business; but, because it was a parlor house, contributed economically to the city, and Benedict maintained as "respectable" a reputation as she could, her business was seen as legitimate. Thus, the case was dismissed, and the law was overruled.

The elite madams of San Antonio also continued to behave philanthropically in a public manner. Ione Palmer maintained her acts of charity into the 1910s. In 1910, she gave money to the police matron so the poor and "unfortunate" could have something for Thanksgiving.[78] Two years later, she gave money to "a destitute family . . . dependent on the earnings of a 14-year-old boy."[79] The next year, in 1913, Palmer donated the majority of the money needed to buy a "horse for a crippled boy in town," which she followed up, three years later, by purchasing a tricycle for a different little disabled boy.[80] Palmer was not alone in doing good deeds. Mildred Clifton, a Fort Worth madam who relocated to San Antonio in 1910, saved a girl from unknowingly entering a life of prostitution. Miss Clara English was brought to Clifton's parlor house by Hart West, who had promised to marry her. He told her it was his mother's house but had plans to

[77]"Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 19, 1901; "The Order Is Unlawful," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 20, 1901.
[78]"Donates for Thanksgiving," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, November 18, 1910.
[79]"Quick Relief Comes to Destitute Family," *San Antonio Light*, July 21, 1912.
[80]"Money Is Subscribed." *San Antonio Light*, September 23, 1913; "Billy Gets Tricycle," *San Antonio Light*, November 29, 1916.

leave her there, "selling" her to Clifton for a price. When he and Miss English entered the premises, though, Clifton recognized what was happening and immediately pulled her to a private space to question her. Once Clifton discovered that English wanted no part of the sex trade, she helped her get to a safe place, protected from West.[81] The philanthropic actions of the elite San Antonio madams continued into the 1910s and beyond as having a good reputation was important to their status and business.

One final example that highlights how San Antonio madams continued to inhabit civic space into the 1910s was *The Blue Book for Visitors, Tourists, and Those Seeking a Good Time While in San Antonio, Texas*, a 30-page pamphlet filled with advertisements for a variety of businesses and a directory of houses of prostitution, published in 1911 and discussed in detail in Chapter 1. *The Blue Book* allowed madams to advertise their brothels as if they were a legal business venture, alongside other legitimate businesses. It was another way that the women involved in the sex trade could take up space in the civic sphere. The elite madams of San Antonio maintained their civic influence throughout the 1900s and 1910s, while in Fort Worth the women who ran the parlor houses began to lose theirs.

Detailed in Chapter 4, the 1900s witnessed the rise of vice lords and pimps within Fort Worth's Hell's Half-Acre, which directly affected the civic power of its madams. By the late 1910s, the former group owned the majority of the brothels and cribs while the latter had taken control of many of the prostitutes in the Acre.[82] The loss of property and employees led to the

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[81]"Offers His Fiancee for Sale," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, October 5, 1910; "White Slave Story is Told to the Grand Jury," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, October 6, 1910; "White Slave Indictment Handed Down," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, October 17, 1910; "West to Surrender to the Authorities," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, October 24, 1910.

[82]"Police Order Rents Cut In 'Reservation' Or It Closes," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 2, 1916; "Landlords Agree to Police Demand for Reduced Rent," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 3, 1916; "Court Order to Break Up Acre Sought by Jamieson," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 20, 1917; Frank R. Stone to Commissioner-General

loss of profits for madams, which meant that they no longer wielded economic power as they had. The wealth of elite madams is what allowed them to take up space within the civic sphere. Thus, the loss of economic power led to the loss of civic power. The Acre's madams essentially disappeared from the civic sphere. Their relationships with city officials and law enforcement began to falter and madams could no longer depend on them for protection—especially as the policing shifted from local control to federal and military. While San Antonio's madams continued using the legal system to further their interests, those in Fort Worth clearly did not have the ability to appeal cases or fight new laws. They stopped appearing in newspapers, except for reports of their arrests, and no longer gave publicly to charity. Madams were quickly becoming invisible within the civic sphere. They would disappear from it completely with the advent of the First World War, which brought an end to Hell's Half-Acre.

Conclusion

For the majority of prostitutes and madams, working in the sex trade meant being segregated from the rest of "respectable" society. The women who owned and ran parlor houses, though, used their wealth—their economic power—to take up space within the civic sphere. They did this to have the ability to protect themselves and their business by using the tools within the civic space, including the legal system, political favors, and good publicity. Because of the economic value of parlor houses, and the sex trade in general, to both San Antonio and

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of Immigration, June 7, 1909, box 111, file 52484/8, US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; *Fort Worth, Texas, Sheet 104, Sheet 105,* 1911; Scale {1:50}, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps," Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas; Frank R. Stone to Commissioner-General of Immigration, May 21, 1909, box 111, file 52484/8, US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

[82]"Final Report of Situation at Ft. Worth, Texas with respect to 'white slave' traffic: List of Houses of Ill-Fame in Ft. Worth, Texas," June 7, 1909, box 111, file 52484/8, US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Fort Worth and their customer base, elite madams crafted relationships with city officials, law enforcement, and prominent citizens. They utilized those connections to ensure the survival of their parlor houses. And they were very successful. From the late 1870s to the early 1900s, elite madams tapped into these relations. Mary Porter, for example, had prominent citizens—like Ephraim B. Daggett—act as sureties and called on Police Chief Maddox to investigate charges against her.

Outside of the connections they built, madams also used the tools of the civic sphere to their benefit. They appealed guilty verdicts and fought ordinances with lawsuits, like San Antonio madam Emelia Garza, who sued to have the 1889 law to license brothels overturned. They petitioned the city councils of Fort Worth and San Antonio for things like lower tax assessments and building permits to add on to their houses of prostitution. Newspapers became one of the most important resources that madams had to enact their civic influence. They used newspapers to correct false stories about them or their business and to push good publicity, with articles about their charity work. All of these methods allowed elite madams to inhabit civic spaces, much like the "respectable" population of either city did.

While elite madams wielded a significant amount of economic and civic power, they also held the most influence within their own industry. The women who lived and worked in the red-light district created their own social class system because of their isolation from "respectable" society. It was a female-centered and, for the most part, a female-controlled space. Among the madams and prostitutes employed in the sex trade, the women who owned and ran parlor houses, because of their wealth and political connections, held the highest position within their social hierarchy. Because of their higher position, madams had a contradictory relationship with

prostitutes that was both contentious and caring. Still, they wielded their social power, primarily, to benefit themselves and their business.

CHAPTER THREE: INDUSTRY POWER

Introduction

In early April 1897, Georgia Harris, a prostitute, approached seventeen-year-old Roxy Allen, her friend and fellow prostitute, and asked if Allen could buy some morphine for her. Harris had decided she wanted to "scare somebody by attempting suicide," in order to gain attention. Allen, who had already tried to take her own life multiple times but had yet to be successful, complied with the request. She purchased morphine for Harris and got some for herself as well. Harris went through with her plan, taking the drugs but telling someone to inform her mother, Fort Worth madam Dolly Love, in time to revive her. The plan succeeded—Harris was saved before she perished. Her mother, though, incensed that Allen had purchased the drugs for Harris, made several intimidating threats to her. Not long after that, on April 7, 1897, in a rundown shack on Twelfth Street, Allen ingested several grains of morphine and was dead less than six hours later.

The contrasting behavior of two prominent madams in the Acre in the days before and after Allen's death epitomize the relationship between madams and prostitutes, which was often contradictory and inconsistent. On the one hand, Allen made the fatal decision to kill herself because of the forceful threats made by Dolly Love, who wielded her power by telling Allen that "she would have the law handle her." Allen understood that Love's threats, because of the madam's close relationships with police and city officials, were quite real. She "preferred death to prison," and thus, terrified by Love and what she could do, Allen chose suicide. Conversely, Pearl Beebe's response to Allen's death highlights the caring side of madams. After Allen killed herself, Beebe wired Allen's father in Houston to inform him of his daughter's death. She then

took over all the funeral arrangements, ensuring Allen would have a "decent burial," while incurring all the expenses herself.[1]

The responses of Beebe and Love to the Roxy Allen incident highlight the varying ways that madams and prostitutes treated one another, illustrating how the class and power structure of the sex trade worked. Both madams, because of their thriving businesses and the influence stemming from them, sat atop the sex trade's social hierarchy. Considered elites in the red-light district, they exerted the most power among the women who worked as prostitutes. Madams in the vice districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio employed that influence primarily to better themselves and protect their own interests. Love's reaction to the purchasing of morphine for her daughter exemplifies this self-protection. Still, madams, at times, used their position to take care of the district's women, whether they worked in their own brothel or not, epitomized by Beebe paying for Allen's interment.

This chapter examines the power structure of the sex trade within the red-light districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio from 1877 to the First World War, looking at the ways it positively and negatively affected those who were a part of it. It focuses primarily on the madams in these two vice districts, analyzing how they wielded their substantial power within the prostitution industry and for what purpose. It heavily emphasizes the relationships between prostitutes—those who worked in brothels and those who did not—and madams, since a well-functioning sexual economy depended, for the most part, on the two groups working in harmony. This chapter also delves into how these women became elite madams at the top of the social hierarchy. Thus, the question of employment versus exploitation becomes central to this analysis. Were these elite madams exploiting the women who worked in their parlor houses? Or were

[1]"Life A Burden," *Fort Worth Register*, April 8, 1897; David Casstevens, "Graveyard tour will recall 'soiled doves'," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 26, 2007.

prostitutes simply employees, working to make a living? Furthermore, this chapter highlights the changes that happened within these two districts in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Specifically, it examines the divergence of Fort Worth and San Antonio's red-light districts—focusing on the breakdown of the social structure of the sex trade and the eventual stripping of the madams' influence in Fort Worth while analyzing how the madams in San Antonio were able to maintain their place within the red-light district. These inquiries, and the analyses that follow, work to shed light on the little-discussed internal power dynamics of the sex trade.

The Social Structure of the Red-Light District

Due to their promotion of vice in the forms of prostitution, gambling, and drinking, red-light districts were isolated communities within the cities where they were located. Since the women who lived and worked in red-light districts found themselves excluded from the larger society, they formed their own social system. Within the prostitution industry, women arranged themselves into social classes, much like those outside the vice district, "ranking . . . a group in accordance with the standards of a common value system."[2] For the women of the red-light districts, the common value system centered on the class of men that a prostitute or madam served. At the top of the hierarchy were the women who serviced politicians, businessmen, and other influential men with deep pockets while those whose customer base came from the poor and working-class occupied the lower rungs of the social ladder. This power structure affected prostitutes and madams both positively and negatively although madams were the clear

[2]Ewa Morawska, "The Internal Status Hierarchy in the East European Immigrant Communities of Johnstown, PA, 1890-1930s" *Journal of Social History* 16, No. 1 (Autumn, 1982), 76.

beneficiaries of this system as they wielded the most money and influence in the red-light district.[3]

San Antonio and Fort Worth had different vice districts, but both contained this type of class system in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. The prostitution industry centered around the brothel, which meant the social hierarchy did as well, broken down into three tiers. Parlor houses were the most elite class within a red-light district. Large, beautiful, and well-furnished, these houses employed the most attractive and well-trained women, whose customers were often rich, well-connected men. These were the most expensive brothels to patronize. The vice districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio had several of these types of houses of prostitution, and they acted as the cornerstones of both districts.[4]

The middle-class establishments within the red-light district were the one- and two-dollar brothels. The women who worked in these mid-level brothels typically had fewer skills, less beauty, and more years on them than those employed in the elite houses. They catered to the men who had enough money to avoid the low dives of the district but could not afford the high prices in the parlor houses. Generally, there were more of these middling brothels in a red-light district than fancier parlor houses. Cribs and dives comprised the bottom tier of the class system where the oldest and ugliest women worked. The men who patronized these places derived from the poor or working class since the prostitutes in cribs usually charged fifty cents or less for their

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[3]George J. Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City* (New York: The Century Co., 1913), 107-8; Maimie Pinzer, *The Maimie Papers: Letters from an Ex-Prostitute*, ed. Ruth Rosen and Sue Davidson (New York: The Feminist Press, 1997), xxvi; Penny A. Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams: The Lost History of Prostitution on the Riverfront* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 24-25; Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 86; LaShawn Harris, *Sex Workers, Psychics, and Numbers Runners: Black Women in New York City's Underground Economy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 141.

[4]Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution*, 107-108; Pinzer, *The Maimie Papers*, xxvi; "The Lawless Liquor Traffic and the Infamous Traffic in Girls," *The Purity Journal*, 11, no. 9 (March 1906): 4-6; *The Blue Book for Visitors, Tourists, and Those Seeking a Good Time While in San Antonio, Texas* (San Antonio: Straight Steer Publishing Co., 1911-1912), 21.

services. Streetwalkers—the women who trawled for customers on the streets—were often placed in this bottom category as well since only the most desperate prostitute would turn to streetwalking. The most numerous kinds of brothel found in the district, cribs and dives, required the least amount of financial investment and offered the cheapest services.[5]

The social hierarchy of the red-light district worked quite simply: those in the elite sporting houses generally made more money and wielded more power than those in the middle-class brothels, who then held greater influence than the women in the cribs. Upward mobility within this system was relatively rare and, when it did happen, was generally limited to the madams and a small population of prostitutes for a portion of their career. Women who chose to work as prostitutes typically entered employment in their teens. Young, inexperienced prostitutes found their first jobs, for the most part, in the middling brothels where they learned the skills of their trade. After a few years, some transitioned into working in parlor houses on the basis of their attractiveness and talents. A prostitute remained employed in top-tier brothels for a few years before being replaced. As they continued to work in the sex trade, they aged and declined, forced to find employment in lower-class establishments the longer they remained prostitutes. Eventually, prostitutes ended up in cribs or streetwalking as they could no longer attract customers in the better classes of brothels. Examples of this downward path can be found throughout the vice districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio. Josephine Doyle, described by a San Antonio newspaper as a "poor, old, worn out courtesan," epitomizes this steep decline as an

[5]*Fort Worth, Texas, Sheet 8,* 1885; *Fort Worth, Texas, Sheet 9, Sheet 9*, 1889; *Fort Worth, Texas, Sheet 10, Sheet 18, Sheet 19*, Scale {ca. 1:50}. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps." Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas; "District Court," *San Antonio Light*, June 23, 1885; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, April 7, 1887; "Local Dots," *San Antonio Evening Light*, June 29, 1882; *San Antonio, Texas, Sheet 3, Sheet 5*, 1892; *San Antonio, Texas, Sheet 6, Sheet 7, Sheet 24,* 1896; Scale {1:50}, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps," Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas; "Vice District to be Closed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 5, 1917; Melissa Gohlke, "The Evolution of Vice Activity in San Antonio, 1885-1975" (Master's thesis, University of Texas at San Antonio, 1997), 21.

earlier article highlighted her youth, "fascinating smile . . . and flowing hair."[6] Aging, combined with alcohol use, pushed Doyle into the lowest class of prostitute, brought before the court regularly for public drunkenness and vagrancy.[7] Doyle's fate was common as most of the prostitutes in the vice districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio joined her unless they were able to shift into a higher place in the social hierarchy or they died.

The only real upward mobility for prostitutes occurred if they could make the successful transition into being a madam, which only a small percentage of them did. Generally, the woman who could move up from employee to owner needed to have enough money to buy out the house of whomever she might be replacing or to build and furnish her own. She also required a customer base, which she could purchase from a retiring madam or build from her own patrons she gathered as a prostitute. Mildred Clifton, a well-known madam in Fort Worth, got her start as a prostitute in Lizette Duvall's house at 1201 Rusk before she struck out on her own.[8] In San Antonio, Fort Allen (Figure 1.3 in Chapter 1), the famous brothel run by Blanche Dearwood, employed and trained several prostitutes who became successful madams, including Emma Bishop, Maggie Reed, and Sadie Ray.[9] Middle-class madams sat in the best position to move up

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[6]"Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, November 13, 1884; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, June 9, 1884.
[7]"She Had 'Em," *San Antonio Light*, December 12, 1884; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, January 26, 1885; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, February 2, 1885; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, April 6, 1885; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, April 20, 1885; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 12, 1887.
[8]*Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1892-1893*, 120, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Matters of Interest in Court," *Fort Worth Gazette*, November 6, 1894; "Proceedings of the Courts," *Fort Worth Gazette*, April 10, 1895; 1900 United States Census, Tarrant County, Texas, population schedule, Fort Worth, Ward 3, p. 137A, dwelling 67, family 74, Mildred Clifton; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 January 2018); "City News," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, April 21, 1901.
[9]Photo: Photograph of 106 Elm St., Fort Allen, ca. 1900s, BCB A80, Album 10, Edward Grandjean Collection, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Collection, Texas A&M, San Antonio Special Collections, San Antonio, Texas. Bexar County, TX County Court Criminal Minutes, 1876-1881, (July 11, 1876), Texas State Archives, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Microfilm Reel 1019348, Vol. A, pg. 8; "A Rough Joke," *San Antonio Daily Express*, January 24, 1879; "Stubborn," *San Antonio Light*, January 7, 1884; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1887-1888*, 95; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1885-1886*, 260-261, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com

in the class structure because they brought in consistent income. A successful middle-class brothel proprietor could parlay her profits into a bigger house and better employees, elevating her into the elite realm.

The disparity in forms of socioeconomic mobility exemplifies the class dichotomy between prostitutes and madams. Although the "respectable" world of Fort Worth and San Antonio, located outside of the red-light districts, labeled all these women as "fallen" and "outcasts from decent society," clear differences existed in the internal social hierarchy.[10] The main distinction between madams and prostitutes was that of employer and employee: madams owned, or at least managed, brothels, while prostitutes simply worked there. Prostitutes had the ability and opportunity to make good money, especially those who worked in the parlor houses; but since madams generally took a percentage from every transaction while also selling beer, wine, and liquor, they far out-earned the women working in their businesses. Another key factor in their differing social status was career longevity. If they maintained a good customer base and working relationship with city officials, madams could manage their houses into old age. A prostitute's career, on the other hand, remained limited, since their aging led to working in worse and worse places, until they ended up as low-status streetwalkers. Thus, while madams maintained their higher social position, prostitutes had little alternative but decline.[11]

Operations, Inc., 2011; "City Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 14, 1891; "Rays of Light," *San Antonio Light*, May 6, 1885; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, April 7, 1887; "Foolish Girls," *San Antonio Daily Light*, August 31, 1886; "City Local News," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 31, 1889; "A Fight in Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, December 7, 1893.

[10]'The City: Local Temperance Work," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, March 2, 1887; "A Sad Commentary," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 2, 1886.

[11]Madeleine Blair, *Madeleine: An Autobiography, with an introduction by Judge Ben B. Lindsey* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919), 247; Maryjean Wall, *Madam Belle: Sex, Money, and Influence in a Southern Brothel* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2014), 89; Sally Stanford, *The Lady of the House: The Autobiography of Sally Stanford* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), 83; Harris, *Sex Workers, Psychics, and Numbers Runners*, 141; Oharazeki, *Japanese Prostitutes*, 114-16; Pauline Tabor, *Pauline's* (Louisville, KY: Touchstone Publishing, 1971), 60; H. Gordon Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club: The Story of Prostitution in El Paso* (El Paso: Mangan Books, 1983), 31; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 37; Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 76.

The class system within the red-light districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio fit the larger pattern found in districts nationwide in the late nineteenth century. The two cities contained the different levels of brothels and witnessed both upward and downward mobility.[12] Thus, in both places, the social hierarchy found elsewhere repeated itself. Elite madams wielded a significant amount of "industry" power, which affected their own lives and the lives of the majority of the women working in their red-light districts.

Elite Madams

Before the 1870s, neither Fort Worth nor San Antonio possessed a real red-light district; instead, they had a few women scattered throughout, working in cribs or saloons. As the two cities grew, though, vice did as well, leading to the appearance and expansion of red-light districts in each place. The madams of Fort Worth and San Antonio's red-light districts presumably all strove towards the same end: to own a top-tier, elite brothel. The women who had obtained this status, for the most part, shared many characteristics. Much of what made a madam elite was tied in to her economic and civic power, which have already been discussed in previous chapters. Her social influence within the red-light district, and among her fellow madams and prostitutes, worked as a third important characteristic. Essentially, elite madams became the

[12]"County Court Dots," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 9, 1885; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, April 5, 1887; State of Texas vs. Dollie Love, February 2, 1894, Case No. 9929, Tarrant County Criminal Court, Tarrant County Clerk's Office. "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, November 29, 1878; J. T. Upchurch, "The Lawless Liquor Traffic and the Infamous Traffic in Girls," in *The Purity Journal*, vol. 11, no. 9 (March 1906): 4; "Restricted District Is Closed With Injunction," *Fort Worth Record*, March 21, 1917; *Fort Worth, Texas, Sheet 8,* 1885; *Fort Worth, Texas, Sheet 9, Sheet 9*, 1889; *Fort Worth, Texas, Sheet 10, Sheet 18, Sheet 19*, Scale {ca. 1:50}. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps." Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas; "District Court," *San Antonio Light*, June 23, 1885; "District Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, April 7, 1887; "Local Dots," *San Antonio Evening Light*, June 29, 1882; *San Antonio, Texas, Sheet 3, Sheet 5*, 1892; *San Antonio, Texas, Sheet 6, Sheet 7, Sheet 24,* 1896; Scale {1:50}, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps," Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas.

leaders of their community, a role they used to enhance and secure their position while also, at times, assisting other madams or prostitutes.

Owning and managing high-class parlor houses required madams to have certain skills that they gained, primarily, from experience. The women who eventually ran the top-tier brothels worked towards that goal, for the most part, by laboring as prostitutes in their early days and owning lesser brothels. They needed both the knowledge of all aspects of the sex trade and the income generated from it to open and operate an elite house of prostitution. Whether a brothel succeeded or not "ultimately rested on the central figure of the establishment: the madam," which made the information gained from experience vital to preventing failure.[13]

Many of the women who would become madams got their start by working as prostitutes in someone else's brothel. Their previous employment allowed them to see how successful houses of prostitution functioned. First and foremost, these women acquired the sexual skills and the best ways to deal with customers, as well the expected behavior in the different classes of brothel. In a top-tier house, a prostitute learned "to be an accomplished actress, demonstrating at every instant the customer's irresistibility," able to flirt, converse, and dance with their "dates." They typically had impeccable manners, rarely cursing or making bawdy jokes. These prostitutes also witnessed how madams interacted with their employees, learning the best ways to keep the peace in a brothel full of competition. Working in a house of prostitution also permitted these future madams to understand the business side of the sex trade, from the way madams took a portion of their employees' wages to their ability to forge relationships with city officials. Furthermore, they gained a customer base and a good income, which they could use to start their

[13]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 87.

own brothel. Experience as a prostitute, then, became crucial to later success as an elite madam.[14]

In order to open a top-tier brothel, a madam required money. She needed to be able to build or buy a house, remodel if necessary, furnish it lavishly, stock it with alcohol, staff it with servants, and hire the best class of prostitutes.[15] All of that necessitated a healthy income. Thus, many madams transitioned into the elite by owning mid-tier brothels. Because of the difficulty in moving directly from prostitute to high-class madam, the middle-class establishments acted as a stepping stone. By operating one of these places, they gained invaluable experience and, most importantly, earned a lot of money, which made it possible for them to invest in an elite house of prostitution.

High-class madams possessed business sense and political acumen, both fundamental characteristics for success. They needed to be competent businesswomen who could manage all the moving parts found in a brothel—including balancing income with the various necessary expenditures, hiring and managing the staff, and advertising their wares.[16] At the same time, these madams required political savviness. Prostitution was illegal in San Antonio and Fort Worth, which did not stop it from happening but required those who took part in it to build

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[14]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood,* 91; Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City*, 20; Stanford, *The Lady of the House*, 82; Tabor, *Pauline's,* 51; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 39.

[15]"Bruiser Vs. Blackleg," *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 1886; "Fort Worth Budget," *Dallas Morning News*, January 1, 1887; "Affair at Fort Worth," *Dallas Morning News*, November 3, 1885; Tarrant County, Texas, Probate case files, estate no. 2667, Mary Porter (1905); Probate Court Clerk's Office, Tarrant County; "A Bold Robbery," *San Antonio Daily Light*, October 20, 1893; "Building Permits," *San Antonio Daily Light*, April 13, 1891; "Local News," *San Antonio Light*, December 19, 1885; "Reduced to Ashes," *San Antonio Evening Light*, February 26, 1883; Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 88-89; Josie Washburn, *The Underworld Sewer* (Omaha: Washburn Publishing Co., 1909), 177-178; Wall, *Madam Belle*, 83; Stanford, *The Lady of the House*, 81-82; Tabor, *Pauline's*, 51; David C. Humphrey, "Prostitution and Public Policy in Austin, Texas, 1870-1915" *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (April 1983), 487.

[16]Stanford, *The Lady of the House,* 82; Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 87; Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 42; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 37; Kneeland, *Commercialized Prostitution in New York City*, 48; Washburn, *The Underworld Sewer*, 177; Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club*, 48.

relationships with city officials as protection. As long as elite madams maintained a brothel based on privacy and discretion, they had a built-in level of security from their patrons.[17] Wielding economic and civic power, which have been discussed in detail in earlier chapters, were central, then, to a madam successfully owning and managing an elite brothel. While a madam needed to have most of the aforementioned characteristics in order to successfully run a house of prostitution, she also had to build relationships with other madams and prostitutes in her own brothel and the larger red-light district.

The "Sisterhood"

The social system within the sex trade was, for the most part, female-centered. By choosing to enter the world of prostitution, madams and prostitutes effectively isolated themselves from the rest of their city's society. Many of the people in Fort Worth and San Antonio wanted vice eradicated from their cities. Prostitution spurred anti-vice sentiment because of beliefs concerning women's chastity. A reform publication in the Fort Worth area wrote in 1905 that a woman's purity and virtue were "the greatest boon that God ever gave"; and if a woman were to lose them, she would be "marked" with disgrace and shame.[18] A San Antonio newspaper argued that women's chastity was "the bedrock of good morals and of private and public welfare."[19] Citizens of both places believed that the women who chose to offer up their bodies in exchange for money were the lowest of the low. In 1886, the *San Antonio Daily Light* claimed that prostitutes would "wear the livery of sin all of their lives," finding themselves

[17]Wall, *Madam Belle*, 106; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 8; Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 87; Stanford, *The Lady of the House,* 60; Tabor, *Pauline's*, 56.
[18]"Why Girls Fall," *The Purity Journal* 2, no. 6 (December, 1905): 14; "Laconisms," *The Purity Journal* 2, no. 1 (July, 1905): 11.
[19]"Female Purity and Its Importance to Society," *San Antonio Daily Light*, April 20, 1888.

excluded “from decent society and castaways from God.”[20] Fort Worth newspapers made similar judgments, labeling prostitutes as "immoral," of "doubtful reputation," and “fallen.”[21] Thus, the prostitutes and madams of Fort Worth and San Antonio’s red-light districts, because of their exclusion and isolation, crafted their own societies, where they depended upon each other for nearly everything.

The women who lived and worked in the vice districts developed contradictory relationships that could be both contentious and considerate. The inconsistent nature stemmed from their isolation by and from the rest of the city. The women lived and worked together. They formed all their friendships out of the population of prostitutes and madams because they simply had no other option. Scholars have attempted to analyze whether this was actually a friendship, a “sisterhood,” or a group of women forced together, fighting each other for customers.[22] The question seems to be caretaking versus competition, as outlined in the earlier historiographical discussion. In the vice districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio, the answer to that query is that it was both. The women who worked in the sex trade forged friendships with their competitors, both because they had few other options and because no one else could really understand their experiences. In both cities, the relationships among the women in the vice districts had several similarities and resembled those found in red-light districts all over the country.[23] Within the district, various levels of relationship existed because of the power dynamics located there. Some

[20]“A Sad Commentary,” *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 2, 1886.
[21]"Government: Vice War Most Sweeping Ever Waged In Texas," *Fort Worth Record*, March 3, 1918; "Preliminary Trial," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 26, 1884; “The City: Local Temperance Work," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, March 2, 1887.
[22] Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 104; Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 42; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 36-37; Oharazeki, *Japanese Prostitutes in the North American West*, 131-132;
[23]Karen Abbott, *Sin in the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America’s Soul* (New York: Random House, 2007), 23; Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 45; Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 105, 107; Stanford, *The Lady of the House*, 62-63; Tabor, *Pauline’s*, 119.

had equal footing, like those between madams and madams or prostitutes and prostitutes, while others were inherently uneven, such as those between madams and prostitutes.

Relationships among prostitutes ran the gamut from attempting to murder each other to taking care of one another. Prostitution was a zero-sum occupation. If a male customer entered a brothel and selected one of the women to be his "date," the other women lost out on that income. Thus, an undercurrent of competition and aggression ran through the friendships of prostitutes, based on the economic threat of losing income. Another aspect of the prostitutes' friendship was male affection. Customers often had favorite girls within a brothel and if this changed, it affected the relationship of the prostitutes involved. Thus, "plain old-fashioned . . . jealousy" played a role in the combative nature of their friendships.[24]

One of the ways that this more contentious side of friendship manifested itself was in violence. Arguments over things like hiring a carriage or whose turn it was to buy the drinks quickly turned into physical altercations. On July 6, 1883, Kittie Raymond and Maggie Weaver, two Fort Worth prostitutes, began to argue over the hiring of a carriage for a midnight ride. As the arguing intensified, Weaver pulled a knife and stabbed Raymond's arm, passing "between the large bones of her arm, severing the osous artery."[25] Belle Williams, another member of Fort Worth's sex economy, viciously attacked another prostitute, Lou Bell, in May 1885. Williams nearly cut off Bell's breast, stabbed her twice, and slashed her across the face.[26] Two decades later, in 1914, the brutality continued when Bessie Williams [no relation] found herself in jail with both eyes swollen shut after a "free-for-all fight in Alice Odell's" brothel. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* did not offer a cause in its reporting of the story.[27] The women of San Antonio's

[24]Tabor, *Pauline's*, 119.
[25]"Soiled Doves Engage In A Fight And One Stabs The Other," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 6, 1883.
[26]"War Against Gambling - Sanguinary Slashes," *Dallas Daily Herald*, May 2, 1885.
[27]"Bessie Williams in Again; Fight Causes Capture," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 15, 1914.

vice district settled their disputes in similar, ruthless ways. For example, all of the women working in Minnie Lee's brothel got into a massive fight in March 1883 with six arrested and fined for it. In the early morning hours of September 10, 1890, three inmates of Sadie Ray's brothel—Lottie Baum, Lulu Stanley, and Blanche Oliver—began to drunkenly row with each other. Stanley pulled a small knife but, before she could do anything with it, Baum retrieved her pistol and fired three shots at her and Oliver.[28] None of the women was injured or killed, but they were dragged to jail and charged with assault and attempted murder. Nearly twenty years later, fights were still a common occurrence. Maud King, in October 1908, fought with another woman, Arline Speaks for an unknown reason and after "was covered from head to foot with bruises, limping and sore . . . with her head and one arm bandaged."[29] Both women ended up being fined for their roles in the clash.

While the local newspapers described every salacious detail concerning the fights between prostitutes, the happier, friendlier moments did not make it to newsprint. Women getting along, it seems, did not interest readers. Still, brothel-based prostitution could not function successfully if the women who lived and worked there were not friends. Historian Ruth Rosen argued that this friendship between prostitutes worked as "a certain amount of protection, support, and human validation."[30] Though there are few extant records that detail the happier aspects of life as a prostitute in Texas, the combination of historical studies and published memoirs of madams allow for a general idea of the friendship among prostitutes. Pauline Tabor, a madam in Bowling Green, Kentucky, wrote that prostitutes "tend to 'adopt' each other as a

[28]"A Woman Fight," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 10, 1890; "Not Quite A Tragedy," *San Antonio Daily Express*, September 11, 1890.
[29]"Negress Fined for Her Part in Fierce Fight," *San Antonio Gazette*, October 6, 1908.
[30]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 102.

family," developing "a sense of loyalty and concern for one another's problems."[31] The women in brothels were forced to live with several other women. They all took part in the exact same job so "friendships appear[ed] out of necessity in their common experience."[32] One way that these friendships were formed was through helping new recruits understand the world they entered. Madeleine Blair, a prostitute in Kansas City, wrote that she bonded with her new roommates when they gave her a new name—a widespread practice found in brothels in this era. Generally, though, the typical way that prostitutes befriended one another was with stories about customers—especially if they were humorous—and gossip about their peers and patrons.[33] So, even though the prevailing narrative regarding prostitutes and their interactions with each other presented by newspapers was a violent, contentious one, these women also built friendships based on commonalities in occupation and experience.

Suicide connects the two previously discussed characteristics—violent altercations and supportive friendship. Suicide was a common cause of death of prostitutes within the red-light districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio, as well as nationally. Nebraska prostitute Josie Washburn claimed, "our suicides are many," while Fort Worth prostitute Emmeline Gooden declared, "We die hard."[34] Life in the vice district was hard, especially for prostitutes who aged into worse and worse circumstances and experienced social stigmatization for their occupation. Furthermore, prostitutes found it very difficult to escape the sex trade, as their reputation followed them beyond the industry, if they tried to leave it. Mildred Clifton, a well-known Fort Worth madam, claimed that "once a girl entered the life, [Clifton] did not believe it possible to

[31]Tabor, *Pauline's*, 100.
[32]Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 45.
[33]Blair, *Madeleine*, 62; Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 102-104; Tabor, *Pauline's*, 51; Nell Kimball, *Nell Kimball: Her Life as an American Madam* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1970), 57-58.
[34]Washburn, *The Underworld Sewer*, 231; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 27; Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 68; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, January 13, 1890.

effect a lasting reformation."[35] Thus, prostitutes regularly spiraled into periods of "despondency and despair."[36] A portion of these women responded by imbibing alcohol and using drugs. When that stopped working, some turned to suicide, seeing it as the only way out of a hopeless existence. Others chose suicide after being scorned or abandoned by men, according to contemporary newspaper accounts.[37]

Prostitutes' responses to suicide varied. On one end of the spectrum, some women crafted suicide pacts, deciding to kill themselves together. Presumably, they did this to bolster both their own and their companion's will power to do so and, possibly, to feel less alone as they died. A Fort Worth newspaper highlighted this practice when it wrote, "The suicidal mania appears to have seized these creatures like a contagious disease, and our observation is that one case of self-destruction among them is almost sure to be followed by one or more others." [38] For example, in Fort Worth on December 6, 1888, four prostitutes—Rachel Brown, Emmeline Gooden, Parlee Steel, and Belle Kelso—all attempted suicide at roughly the same time. All four were kept alive by the quick action of Ben Bell, a local policeman, who brought physicians to save their lives.[39] On the opposite end of the spectrum, prostitutes saved the lives of women who tried to kill themselves. Several of San Antonio madam Fanny Kelly's employees did just that on the morning of July 17, 1884. A prostitute name Georgia attempted to kill herself with chloroform. The other women in the brothel found her, called a doctor, and saved her life. The same thing

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[35]"Young Woman Wants Help," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, October 18, 1900.
[36]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 100.
[37]"Localettes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 14, 1890; "Committed Suicide," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, January 19, 1888; "Attempted Suicide," *San Antonio Light*, July 15, 1888; "Attempted Suicide," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 6, 1892; "Fort Worth Local Notes," *Dallas Morning News*, April 17, 1890; "Localettes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, June 15, 1890; "Suicidal Attempt," *San Antonio Daily Light*, October 3, 1888; "All for Love," *San Antonio Light*, December 2, 1885; "Died at Her Own Hands," *San Antonio Daily Express*, April 26, 1879.
[38]"Another Case By Poisoning - Probably Fatal," *The Daily Standard*, November 28, 1876; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 30, 1888; "Life Is A Burden," *Fort Worth Register*, April 8, 1897.
[39]"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, December 6, 1888; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, December 7, 1888.

happened when Nellie Davis overdosed on laudanum in Gracie Lane's Fort Worth brothel. She was discovered unconscious late in the evening of June 13, 1890, but, thanks to the quick actions by those in the house, the doctor revived her.[40] The final act of community a prostitute could take part in was mourning those who successfully ended their lives. On April 26, 1879, Kitty, a prostitute in Blanche Dearwood's brothel, Fort Allen, shot herself in the head after her lover left her. The funeral was "elaborate" and "largely attended by her class."[41] The ways that the women who lived and worked in the red-light districts supported each other in times of crisis, such as trying or succeeding to commit suicide, could be contradictory at times. Still, these instances illustrate the sense of community inherent in the vice districts. These women were all each other had.

In a very similar way to prostitutes forging bonds with one another, madams built a sisterhood with their fellow madams. Relationships among madams were much less contentious than those between prostitutes. The women who owned and managed brothels saw each other as allies, for the most part. They understood that their choices to work in the sex trade meant that they were essentially on their own. The isolating nature of prostitution led to madams' dependence on each other. San Francisco madam Sally Stanford wrote about this relationship, stating that "this [was] probably the most mutually loyal set of females in the world. We got and gave help when we needed. We closed our rank against the foe."[42] The madams in Fort Worth and San Antonio were not very competitive with each other. One reason for this might have been the fact that there were more than enough customers to go around. Both cities had a seemingly

[40]"Attempted Suicide," *San Antonio Light*, July 17, 1884; "Localettes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, June 14, 1890.
[41]"Died at Her Own Hands," *San Antonio Daily Express*, April 26, 1879; "Suicide," *Galveston Daily News*, April 26, 1879; "Last Thursday night…" *Denison Daily News*, April 29, 1879.
[42]Stanford, *The Lady of the House*, 62-63.

endless supply of men searching for female companionship, if only for one night. Instead, they supported one another in various ways, both in life and death.

Madams helped each other out in several different ways but one of the most common was property transfer. Houses of prostitution—especially the elite ones—were typically not constructed like regular houses. They were tailored specifically to the needs of the sex trade: many bedrooms, multiple parlors, and, sometimes, multiple exits (See Figure 3). When madams

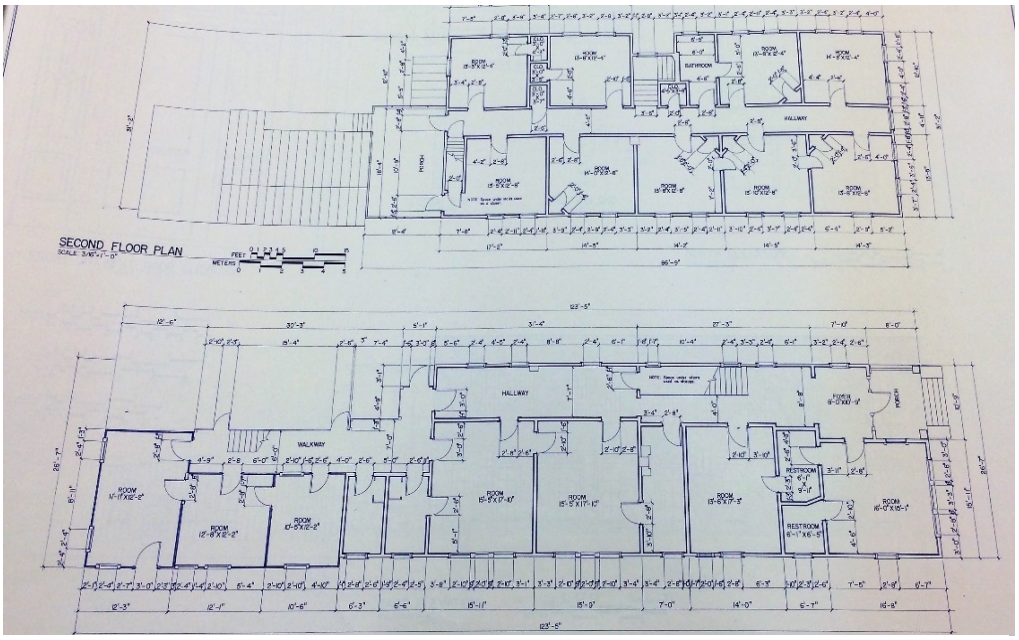

Figure 3: Floorplan of Dora McNue's Brothels, 1910s – San Antonio Municipal Archives

wanted to move to a new place or retire from the business, they would, more often than not, sell their brothels to other madams. In July 1888, for example, San Antonio madam Ernestine Gordon—who went by Elizabeth—decided to leave the sex trade and move to California. She chose to sell her brothel and city lot to Sadie Ray for $5,250, who inhabited it for the next several years before selling it to Maud Campbell in 1895, who ran it for nearly two decades.[43]

[43]"Real Estate Transfers," *San Antonio Daily Light*, July 14, 1888; *Morrison and Fourmy's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1889-1890*, 308; *Jules A. Appler's General Directory of the City of San Antonio, 1892-1893*, 526, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; Bill of Sale, M. W. and C. E. Hicks to Maud Campbell, February 8, 1895, Deed Book, Vol. 133, p. 414-417, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, Texas; "Enjoin Disorderly Houses," *San Antonio Express*, March 21, 1915.

This kind of transfer happened in Fort Worth, as well. For example, the house at 1201 Rusk in the center of the red-light district was Jessie Reeve's home from 1885 to 1889 before Lizette Duval took it over from 1892 to 1895 and then it was Pearl Beebe's from 1901 to 1907 (See Figure 3.1).[44] Madams selling their brothels to other madams helped out both parties. Sadie Ray

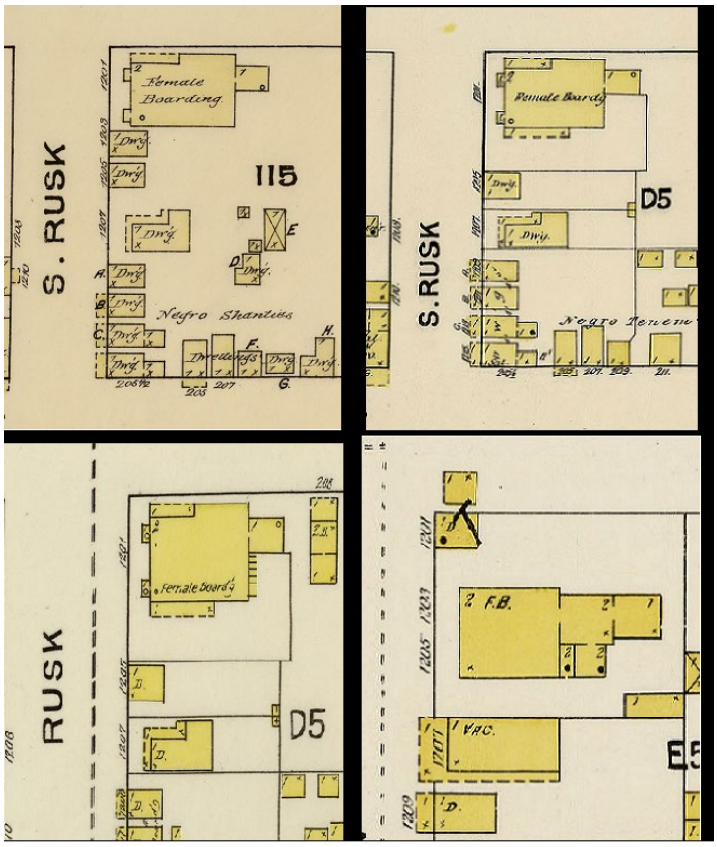

Figure 2.1: 1201 Rusk from 1885 to 1898

had been a prostitute in Fort Allen and, presumably, saw Gordon's large brothel as the best way to move herself into the elite class. Gordon wanted to retire and selling her house of prostitution gave her the funds to do so. Established madams also provided knowledge to newer,

[44]*Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1885-1886*, 191; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1888-1889*, 204; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1894-95*, 146; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1892-93*, 152; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1901-1902*, 63; *Morrison & Fourmy's General Directory of the City of Fort Worth, 1907-1908*, 93, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

inexperienced ones, and some even offered employees that they could afford to lose.[45] They built a community that helped each other succeed—something not found in the relationship between prostitutes.

The death of one of their own represents another way these madams supported each other. As they were a community, the loss of one of their own affected the madams. Emma Bishop was a longtime resident of San Antonio's red-light district. She began her career in the mid-1880s, working as a prostitute in Blanche Dearwood's brothel. Eventually, Bishop became a madam on her own right until she fell ill in the winter of 1893. On February 20, 1893, Bishop died from "dropsey," or edema. Her funeral was "largely attended" as the women from the district came to say their goodbyes.[46] Madams also, at times, took care of the funerals for other madams who died. After Mary Porter, one of Fort Worth's most well-known madams, died from old age on June 10, 1905, Pearl Beebe had her buried in her own funeral lot at Oakwood Cemetery, presumably out of respect for her.[47] Caretaking, then, was an important aspect of the support system that these women built. When faced with social isolation and a lack of care from the outside word, the madams of Fort Worth and San Antonio's red-light districts carved out their own space to care for one another.

Within red-light districts, prostitutes and madams formed relationships with their peers, which had seemingly positive results; but when the two groups mixed, the outcome was much murkier because of the clear power imbalance between the madams and the prostitutes. This disparity ran throughout every interaction between them. As employer and employee, these two

[45]Tabor, *Pauline's*, 51-65.
[46]"Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, February 20, 1893.
[47]"Deaths," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 11, 1905; David Casstevens, "Graveyard Tour Will Recall Soiled Doves," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 26, 2007; Helen McKelvy Markgraf and R.G. Yoder, *Historic Oakwood Cemetery: with Calvary Cemetery & Old Trinity Cemetery of Fort Worth, Texas* (Fort Worth, TX: Fort Worth Genealogical Society, 1994), 194.

groups operated in an awkward space. Socially, prostitutes and madams ran in the same circles because they could not go elsewhere for companionship. But prostitutes always understood that madams held the upper hand—they took portions of their wages and had power over their ability to work. Thus, relations between the two populations of women could be contentious. At the same time, madams might act as caretakers for the women who worked in their brothels. Contradictory seems the best way to characterize the "sisterhood" among these women. Furthermore, to understand how this relationship functioned, it is necessary to analyze the question of employment versus exploitation when it came to the prostitutes.

Presumably, prostitutes saw working in the sex trade as a job—employment and nothing more. It was a way to earn money and, often, offered higher wages than existing occupational opportunities for women in the late nineteenth century.[48] Some of these women saw themselves in comparable positions to department store clerks but instead of selling stockings and skirts, they sold themselves and had the chance to make more money: "clerks, like prostitutes, had to dress nicely and always appear to be composed and pleasant toward customers regardless of how they were being treated."[49] Another important similarity is that neither clerk nor prostitute retained the majority of the profits. That was reserved for the store owners and the madams who took the risk of opening a business and paid the overhead to get it started. Thus, in several categories, being a prostitute resembled being a department store clerk. The major difference between the two is that the prostitute took a significant step past the flirting and niceties to offer her body in exchange for money. Once she and her customer were in the room together, she had to do whatever he required in order to receive payment. Again, the majority of women working as prostitutes chose that occupation and saw it as just that, a job. Brothel-based prostitution was

[48]Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 25; Tabor, *Pauline's*, 52.
[49]Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 39; Washburn, *The Underworld Sewer*, 184.

employment. An argument can be made, however, that this occupation was an exploitative one, with the madams doing much of the exploiting.

Women most likely became elite madams because of the money. Parlor houses, if managed correctly, could bring in a significant income for the proprietor.[50] The main way they did this was by taking a portion of their employees' wages. In the upper-class houses, madams took anywhere from 40 to 70 percent of the money received.[51] Furthermore, many of these brothel proprietors set up systems of credit so that their employees could purchase the clothing and accoutrements, like a dressing case, needed for their jobs. They were required to pay these loans back on installment plans or with interest. The madams in Fort Worth and San Antonio did not leave behind any records of their business practices, which makes it difficult to know the specific details, like the interest rate they charged. The combination of giving up large portions of their wages and needing to pay off their credit meant that some prostitutes fell into and stayed in debt to their employer. It became "a never-ending cycle which enabled the madams to keep the poor girls in a state of semi-bondage."[52]

At times, prostitutes fell into such deep debt that madams seized their personal property—typically their trunk—as payment. The seizing of a prostitute's trunk had serious implications because it contained all their worldly possessions, including their dresses, hats, nightgowns, shoes, cosmetics, and personal items, like family photographs.[53] Their trunk was essentially their whole world. Losing it could seriously harm their future employment prospects. This practice was common in Fort Worth and San Antonio's red-light districts. For example, in

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[50]Tabor, *Pauline's*, 115.
[51]Tabor, *Pauline's*, 60; Stanford, *The Lady of the House*, 83; Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club*, 46.
[52]Frost, *The Gentlemen's Club*, 47; Wall, *Madam Belle*, 89.
[53]*Pearl Miller v. Mollie Adams*, case 3366, Civil Case Records, McLennan County Archives, Waco, Texas; *Loraine Friedman v. Ella Miller*, case 4362, Civil Case Records, McLennan County Archives, Waco, Texas, qtd. in Amy S. Balderach, "A Different Kind of Reservation: Waco's Red-Light District Revisited, 1880-1920" (master's thesis, Baylor University, 2005), 41-43, 45.

1885, San Antonio madam Ione Palmer took the wearing apparel of one of her house's inhabitants, Hazel Woods. The next year, Claude Duval commandeered her employee Mollie Herring's trunks and wardrobe for non-payment of room and board. Maggie Reed followed this trend when she, in the winter of 1887, confiscated the clothing and trunk of Victoria Johnson, a prostitute in her brothel. Ten years later, two madams found themselves the defendants in sequestration, or repossession, suits. Lillie Crews, and her husband R. L. Crews, sued Fannie Porter, a San Antonio madam, for keeping Lillie's trunk. Porter was ordered by Justice Phillip H. Shook to return the trunk, which was worth fifty dollars. The next year, Vesta St. Clair sued Fort Worth madam Pearl Beebe for possession of her property. Beebe lost and paid St. Clair twenty-five dollars as a result.[54] By taking the personal property of their employees, madams took advantage of the power that they had in the relationship to enrich themselves while making it nearly impossible for those prostitutes to find equal employment, forcing them into lesser brothels. So much of a prostitute's ability to earn money was in her presentation, especially for those working in parlor houses. How she dressed and styled her hair and face played an important role in attracting customers, which underlines the direness of madams possessing a prostitute's trunk. The combination of giving up of significant portions of wages and being in constant states of indebtedness supports the argument that brothel-based prostitution was exploitative.

Furthermore, considering its manipulative qualities, the sex trade attracted a significant percentage of women out of desperation. The jobs that existed in the late nineteenth and early

[54]"Suing for Clothes," *San Antonio Light*, May 16, 1885; "Rays of Light," *San Antonio Daily Light*, May 24, 1886; "City News," *San Antonio Daily Express*, June 5, 1886; "Justice Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, January 3, 1887. Also: "Convicted of Burglary," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, October 21, 1899; "Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, October 14, 1898; "Justice Shook's Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, November 22, 1898; "Light Flashes," *San Antonio Daily Light*, October 14, 1898; "Justice Shook's Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, November 22, 1898; "Convicted of Burglary," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, October 21, 1899.

twentieth centuries for women typically paid very low wages, often "a subsistence standard of living." Prostitution, on the other hand, offered wages that were double, triple, or quadruple times the amount they would have received working in department stores or factories. The profitability of the sex trade, though, came at a cost for the women involved. If they had grievances or problems with their workplace, they had no route to address them because it was an illegal occupation and, during this era, unions did not exist for prostitutes. In a brothel, the madam controlled working conditions, wages, and the hiring or firing of employees. Thus, the women that chose to work as a prostitute because of the economic benefit could not risk being let go and would, then, put up with whatever they had to in order to keep their job. At its core, then, prostitution was both exploitation and employment.[55]

The exploitative nature of the madam-prostitute relationship might help explain why it could be so contentious. Newspapers in Fort Worth and San Antonio frequently reported on the various altercations between prostitutes and madams inside the vice districts, with fighting being the most common. Violence and verbal abuse among the higher class of madams and prostitutes represent another area where Fort Worth and San Antonio separated themselves from other red-light districts. Typically, the women who occupied the upper classes among the social hierarchy had "strict rules of decorum."[56] Outside of the brothel, these women tried to avoid drawing attention to themselves, acting as polite and "ladylike" as possible. They also worked hard to ensure that their brothel received no negative attention, especially in the press, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The madams in Fort Worth and San Antonio may have wanted to be well-mannered with a brothel full of courteous and refined prostitutes, but this was not always the case.

[55]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 147-148.
[56]Wall, *Madam Belle*, 89.

Madams and prostitutes routinely started fights with each other. Either side lashed out against the other for any number of reasons. The clashes between the two could be verbal or physical in nature, with a few shifting to actual property damage. Some used aggression and confrontation as a response to gossip and insults. Ione Palmer, for example, started a fight with one of her former employees, Ella Roselle, after hearing that she had "used insulting language about her."[57] Josephine Robinson insulted Lillie Gibson, a San Antonio madam, so severely that she was arrested and fined for insulting language. One of Claude Duval's employees, Ettie Sepher, threatened to set Duval on fire in April 1892. While verbal assault was common, many of the fights between prostitutes and madams led to blood being shed. Sadie Ray got into a "terrible fight" with Helen Harris, who lived and worked in her house. The newspaper failed to report on the source of the fight. It became so vicious that separating the two was nearly impossible and Harris required the attention of the doctor because she was in "a critical condition from the effects of the fight."[58] Dolly Love, a Fort Worth madam, assaulted one of her employees in July 1897 and was arrested and fined for it. San Antonio madam Lou Lamont flew into a rage after a former inhabitant of her brothel, Georgia Pearman, showed up at her house to address some "real or fancied grievance done to her" and, in the process, tore up some lace curtains. Lamont responded by attacking Pearman in a "regular hair pulling picnic."[59] Eva Doyle, a San Antonio madam who had most likely been a Fort Worth prostitute, consistently got into scrums with her own employees. In the fall of 1886, Doyle assaulted Belle White, a prostitute in her brothel. The next summer, prostitute Kitty Wilson verbally abused Doyle so

[57]"Police Court," *San Antonio Light*, January 2, 1885
[58]"A Disgraceful Scene," *San Antonio Daily Light*, August 3, 1892; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, August 5, 1892.
[59]"Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, November 21, 1884; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Light*, April 22, 1885; "The Courts," *San Antonio Daily Light*, April 25, 1892.

severely that she was fined fifteen dollars for using abusive language. And, in February 1890, Nellie Everett, described as a "dizzy daisy of the trans-San Pedro," beat and struck Doyle.[60] The many examples of violence and fighting, both verbal and physical, in both districts underscore the contentiousness inherent in the relationship between prostitutes and madams. Contradiction defined their relations, however, since madams acted as caretakers as well as aggressors.

Within the red-light district, elite madams held the most wealth and influence, and, at times, they used that for the benefit of others. They took care of their employees because they understood that within the red-light district, they could only depend on each other. One example of this is the violence enacted upon them and the response by law enforcement. Within the Acre, male customers routinely roughed up prostitutes and faced lax punishment for doing so. For example, Dan Blair's punishment for beating his wife, madam Mildred Clifton, was a twenty-five-dollar fine while Tom Ray had to pay fifty dollars and spend ten days in jail for beating his wife, madam Dolly Love, on her death bed. S. P. Mills, who took three people hostage in an attempt to murder a prostitute, was fined only sixty dollars.[61] Conversely, men outside the Acre who killed or beat women received severe sentences, including the death penalty or ninety-nine years in prison.[62] Thus, the women of Fort Worth's red-light district recognized that they needed to look after each other. For madams in both cities, this meant acting as gatekeeper for the women of their brothel. They acquired "a sense of suspicion which help[ed] weed out" those who might be dangerous to the residents of their house as well as having skills to deal with

[60]"Justice Crawford's Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 21, 1886; "Justice's Court," *San Antonio Daily Express*, September 21, 1886; "Recorder's Court," *San Antonio Daily Light*, June 27, 1887; "City Local News," *San Antonio Daily Light*, February 28, 1890.
[61]"News Of The Courts," *Dallas Morning News*, May 7, 1902; "Courthouse Notes," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, May 27, 1902; "Buck Cooper Is Now On Trial," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 2, 1903; "Mills Was Fined $60 And Costs," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 2, 1903.
[62]"Gallows Awaits Bud Taylor At Kansas City," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 5, 1903; "Gets Ninety-Nine Years For Assault," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 14, 1902.

precarious situations.[63] Mabel Thompson, for example, talked down a patron who attempted to take her and her employees hostage while Sallie Brewer protected her brothel from a gunman by wrestling the gun away from him. Most madams also hired security for their parlor houses, in the form of porters who acted as doormen.[64] They worked to keep those types of men out of their establishments to protect their employees and their business.

Their intermittent care for the women in the vice districts came in many forms and madams extended it to more than just their own employees. Blanche Dearwood owned a cemetery plot in the City Cemetery in San Antonio. In January 1884, Lily Howard, a prostitute in Fanny Kelly's brothel, died suddenly. Dearwood offered up half of her plot so that Howard could be buried and placed a large headstone (Figure 3.2) memorializing her.[65] Pearl Beebe did the same for several prostitutes in Fort Worth's red-light district. Roxy Allen, whose story was recounted at the beginning of this chapter, was buried in Beebe's plot. Beebe also provided a space for Laura Wallace, who committed suicide by ingesting a large amount of carbolic acid after a fight with her lover. She'd tried twice before but was finally successful this third time and Beebe interred her alongside Allen. Beebe's philanthropy, however, was not limited to burials. After Laura Jackson, a young prostitute in her brothel, committed suicide, Beebe took in and cared for her one-year-old child.[66] Death was a uniting force in the red-light district and when women died, whether by their own hand, or not, prostitutes and madams united to bury them,

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[63]Pauline Tabor, *Pauline's*, 91.
[64]"Mills Was Fined $60 and Costs," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 2, 1903; "Filling the City Coffers," *San Antonio Light*, December 5, 1883; "Wanted," *San Antonio Daily Express*, May 28, 1887; "Negro Porter Held on Federal Charge," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 23, 1919.
[65]"Light Flashes," *San Antonio Light*, January 5, 1884; "Lillie Howard," 4 January 1884, City Cemetery #1, San Antonio, Texas, Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012; Lavonne Bradfield, "San Antonio City Cemetery Section B," *Cemeteries of Texas*, June 23, 2009, http://www.cemeteres-of-tx.com/Etx/Bexar/Cemetery/City1/Sec%20B.htm.
[66]"Life A Burden," *Fort Worth Register*, April 8, 1897; "Third Trial Succeeds," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 1, 1904; "Graveyard Tour Will Recall 'Soiled Doves'," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 26, 2007; "Woman of Town Takes Acid and Dies," *Fort Wort Star-Telegram*, May 2, 1904.

Figure 3.2: Howard's Headstone

giving them proper funerals and acting as their surrogate family. So, even though the relationship between madams and prostitutes could be very contentious, these same madams became caretakers when needed.

The contradictory interactions between prostitutes and madams also worked to reinforce the position and power of madams. Madams took care of prostitutes for many reasons. They knew that the larger society, which included the city government, would not step in and help them. Madams, then, became the safety net for prostitutes. Caretaking was not a wholly selfless act, however, as these interactions benefitted them in different ways. In the winter of 1885, Hattie Dellmor, a prostitute in Carrie Anderson's San Antonio brothel, decided that "she was tired of living" after her lover spurned her. She purchased morphine and attempted to take her own life twice but was saved when Anderson stopped her the first time and then summoned a doctor the second time. By preventing Dellmor from killing herself, Anderson showed the other prostitutes in the red-light district her compassion, care, and respect for the women of her house

while helping herself by not having to replace an employee.[67] Pearl Beebe sent the same message to the women of Fort Worth's vice district with the different ways she cared for them: paying for funerals, taking in their children, and burying them in her own plot. While caretaking represented one way for madams to reinforce their position within society, the more contentious interactions between madams and prostitutes accomplished the same goal. Madams acted aggressively in a variety of ways including keeping a prostitute's possessions away from her, starting a fight, or engaging in verbal abuse. While the women who lived and worked in the brothels could respond to these actions by suing the madams for their property or fighting back, they understood that it was a risk to do so since madams wielded so much control over their ability to work. Thus, being assertive, and even hostile, as a madam could actually help support their position in the social system of the red-light district. The contradictory relationships between these two groups of women would change, both positively and negatively, as the nineteenth century came to an end and the twentieth century began.

The Twentieth Century Brings Change

As the twentieth century arrived, the red-light districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio were dealing with significant and very different changes. Throughout the 1890s, the women of San Antonio's sex trade had shifted back and forth from illegal to legal status, depending on which mayor was in office. On July 20, 1891, Mayor Bryan Callaghan and the City Council passed Ordinance No. 726, which licensed and regulated prostitution within the red-light district. After Callaghan left office in 1893 to be a Bexar County judge, his successor, George Paschal, repealed the ordinance, making prostitution illegal again. Callaghan retook office in 1897 and

[67]"All for Love," *San Antonio Light*, December 2, 1885.

brought his clear tolerance for vice with him. He lost his re-election bid in 1899 to Marshall Hicks, who ran on a progressive platform. Six months after his election, Mayor Hicks and the City Council revised the city charter. One of those revisions removed any legal status that madams, prostitutes, or brothels held in the city. Thus, the women who worked in the sex trade had to constantly negotiate and renegotiate with those in charge to maintain their business with as little interference as possible. They went from paying regular fines as de facto licenses to actually purchasing licenses and then back to paying regular fines, all to placate city officials and keep them from eradicating the red-light district.[68]

Even though the city decided, finally, to remove the legalized status from the sex trade, the red-light district remained in existence and, over time, grew even larger. In the 1900s and

Figure 3.3: Keilman's Beauty Saloon

[68]Ordinance JI-726, passed by City Council, July 20, 1891 in "Council Journal Book," Book I, No. 726, page 571 (San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, Texas); Ordinance OB-46, passed by City Council, June 22, 1893 in "Ordinance Book," Book B, No. 46, page 102 (San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, Texas); "Consolidated Returns of an Election held on the 13th day of February A.D. 1893," 68-69; "Consolidated Returns of an Election held on the 8th day of February A.D. 1897," 102-103; "Consolidated Returns of an Election held on the 1st day of February A.D. 1899," 108-9, *City of San Antonio Election Results Book 1*, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, Texas); Randall Lionel Waller, "The Callaghan Machine and San Antonio Politics, 1885-1912," (master's thesis, Texas Tech University, 1973), 95, 103-4.

1910s, houses of prostitution increased exponentially.[69] Thus, the "sisterhood" grew even larger as more and more women were owning and managing houses of prostitution in the twentieth century. San Antonio's vice district thrived during the early twentieth century. It became an even more popular place for men to seek out entertainment than it had been in the late nineteenth century. In 1911, an anonymous person—thought by scholars to be William Keilman, the owner of the Beauty Saloon (Figure 3.3) — published a guide to the red-light district called *The Blue Book*. The public nature of this guidebook conveys the pervasiveness of prostitution and the influence held by madams. They took part in an illegal industry and published their names and addresses confirming that fact. Clearly, madams and prostitutes in San Antonio did not fear much response from law enforcement. Furthermore, as discussed in earlier chapters, the women who worked in San Antonio's sex trade, presumably, felt very confident about maintaining an illegal business with no interference because they understood how necessary prostitution had become to the city because of its economic value and the growing military presence, among other things.

While San Antonio's vice district experienced a period of expansion during the first two decades of the early twentieth century, the red-light district in Fort Worth had a much less optimistic path. While the 1880s and 1890s had been a time of expansion for both madams and prostitutes, it shifted into a waning period during the 1900s and 1910s, discussed in detail in Chapter 4. The residents of Hell's Half-Acre were not strangers to death but in the first five years of the twentieth century, they lost two of the more prominent madams in the district: Dolly Love and Mary Porter. Love owned a brothel in Dallas in the 1880s and early 1890s before moving to

[69]Photo: Photograph of 401 S. Concho, ca. 1900s, SR A8, Album 9: North Flores, Santa Rosa, San Pedro Springs, Edward Grandjean Collection, Daughters of the Republic of Texas Collection, Texas A&M, San Antonio Special Collections, San Antonio, Texas; *San Antonio, Texas*, 1904; *San Antonio, Texas,* 1912; Scale {1:50}, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps," Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas.

Fort Worth where she began running a large parlor house at Twelfth and Calhoun Streets, which employed seven women. She died in the fall of 1902. Mary Porter had one of the longest careers of any madam in the Acre, as her house of prostitution remained in business nearly twenty years. She passed away in 1905 at the age of seventy-five. Not long after the deaths of two vital members of their community, two madams—Pearl Beebe and Mildred Clifton—left Fort Worth. Beebe moved to El Paso in 1908 to run a brothel there while Clifton was sent to prison in Huntsville after being convicted of manslaughter in 1905 for shooting a male patron, Ab Patterson, after an argument. Clifton proclaimed her innocence throughout the trial. Both Clifton and Beebe were known for taking care of the women in the Acre—especially Beebe, who often took it upon herself to oversee and pay for funerals of prostitutes who died. The loss of these four wealthy and influential madams foreshadowed what was to come in the next fifteen years when the "sisterhood" would come to an end.[70]

Discussed more in Chapter 4, the number of pimps, or men who offer protection to prostitutes in exchange for monetary gain and sexual relationships, expanded greatly in the twentieth century in the Acre. The shift in control over the sex trade within the Acre resulted in primarily negative consequences for the prostitutes. While madams could be abusive and mean towards their female employees, they still offered the "semiprotected environment of a brothel," the ability to take care of the Acre's prostitutes, and the community of women who worked within the district.[71] All of that disappeared as pimps assumed the dominant position within the sex trade since their "protection" of the prostitutes came at a steep cost for the women. The

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[70]"Deaths," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 11, 1905; "Fort Worth Local Notes," *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 1905; "Wife Beater is Punished," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 8, 1903; "Is Arrested for Vagrancy," *El Paso Times*, September 1, 1890; *Worley's Directory of El Paso, Texas, 1910*, 130, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Mildred Clifton Taken to Prison," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 30, 1905; "City News," *San Antonio Light & Gazette*, March 2, 1910.
[71]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 32.

"brutal and exploitative" relationship between a pimp and a prostitute generally offered only one real benefit for the prostitute: protection from customers or police.[72] Conversely, the pimp gained a source of income, a sexual relationship, and near total power over the prostitute. Once part of a community, prostitutes now existed in a much more isolated sphere, one where they really had only one person to depend on: their pimp.[73] The rise in pimps led to a breakdown of the Acre's social structure—the "sisterhood" was no more.

Conclusion

In the last few decades of the nineteenth century, as red-light districts expanded all over the United States, the women who worked in the sex trade forged their own social and class system. In Fort Worth and San Antonio, the hierarchy placed parlor houses at the top, one- and two-dollar brothels in the middle, and fifty-cent houses and cribs at the lowest level with a distinct class dichotomy between madams and prostitutes. The women who owned and managed the houses occupied a higher-class position than the women who worked in them. The madams of the elite parlor houses sat at the very top of the social hierarchy, where they earned the most money and wielded the most civic and industry power. Several characteristics were necessary for madams to move into the elite realm. These include experience in the sex trade, ability to purchase or lease property, possession of a potential customer base, and a large income. The women that could obtain all the requirements had the chance to work in a position where they would make a great amount of money. The large income, though, came, in part, from the exploitative nature of prostitution.

[72]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 108.
[73]Stanford, *The Lady of the House*, 54, 82; Petersen, *Minneapolis Madams*, 37; Washburn, *The Underworld Sewer*, 180-182.

At its core, the sex trade exploited prostitutes while, at the same time, offering employment that generally paid better than most other jobs available for women. Furthermore, it created an environment where these women depended on each other for nearly everything. Equal parts competition and caretaking, the relationships between the women of the red-light districts were contradictory at best. Prostitutes and madams fought each other viciously and also assisted in times of greatest need. Death, especially, united these women. They understood that they only had each other and, when necessary, they could rely on one another. The interactions between madams and prostitutes held significance because they reinforced a madam's power. By taking care of prostitutes when they most needed, madams conveyed through their compassion that they respected the prostitutes who held lower social positions. Madams also showed their strength and assertiveness in these interactions. The combination of caretaking and combativeness consolidated and reinforced their power. In the late nineteenth century, the women of Fort Worth and San Antonio's vice districts crafted a society where they had jobs, friends, and social support. This would not last forever.

As the twentieth century began, the path that both Fort Worth and San Antonio's red-light districts had been on split and they diverted from one another. The vice district in San Antonio thrived in the 1900s and 1910s, increasing in size, infamy, and importance to the city. Conversely, Fort Worth's Hell's Half-Acre declined, due to the rise of vice lords, pimps, and anti-prostitution sentiment. Thus, while San Antonio's population of elite madams expanded, and their wealth grew as well, the number of madams—and their economic power—in the Acre lessened. The waning of the Acre paralleled the national movement to rid cities of red-light districts. As the twentieth century marched onward, the Progressive Era and the First World War would change the way prostitution functioned in the United States. A major casualty of that transformation would be brothel-based prostitution, and the madams who owned and managed

them. As the sex trade increased and expanded during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, it would decline and disappear by the third decade of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE DECLINE

Introduction

On Tuesday, March 20, 1917, Police Commissioner Hugh Jamieson entered the Fort Worth District Court to file petitions of injunction against two men, Charles Rotsky and Max Smith. He believed they were "vice kings, who own or control the greater part of the property" within the red-light district and wanted to stop them from renting out their property to prostitutes and madams. In the last few years, Rotsky and Smith had obtained most of the brothels and cribs within the vice district. According to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Rotsky owned two rooming houses and more than forty cribs while Smith owned several rooming houses and over sixty cribs. These two men possessed more than 75 percent of the property used specifically for prostitution in Fort Worth. Furthermore, they "charge[d] such exorbitant prices" that the women who lived and worked in Hell's Half-Acre could no longer profit from their job. Jamieson, who had previously supported the segregated vice district, now believed this system was wholly exploitative and offered no benefits to the women involved, and he wanted it gone. That afternoon, Judge R. E. L. Roy agreed with Jamieson and issued those injunctions, effectively closing the Acre, if only for a brief time.[1]

Jamieson's account of what the red-light district looked like in 1917 conveys how much the district changed in the first two decades of the twentieth century. During the Acre's apex, in the 1880s and 1890s, vice kings were not a dominant feature. The madams, for the most part, owned their brothels or leased them directly from the owners, and these "middlemen" did not really affect the lives of the women who lived and worked in the district during this time.[2]

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[1]"Vice District To Be Closed, March 19 Set for Beginning," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 5, 1917; "Court Order to Break Up 'Acre" Sought By Jamieson," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 20, 1917; "Restricted District Is Closed with Injunction," *Fort Worth Record*, March 21, 1917; "Tyra Says Bonds Will Be Posted Monday," *Fort Worth Record*, March 25, 1917;

[2]"Police Order Rents Cut in Reservation or It Closes," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 2, 1916.

Within thirty years of the peak of the red-light district, though, a significant power shift took place, from the madams to the small population of male vice kings. By 1919, the red-light district in Fort Worth was gone.

The exposure of the vice kings by Jamieson illustrates the decline of the Acre's madams and their influence within the sex trade. In the late nineteenth century, the women who owned and managed the houses of prostitution in Fort Worth's vice district wielded a substantial amount of economic, civic, and industry power. Many of them owned property, had powerful clients, including politicians and law enforcement, and sat atop their social hierarchy. And yet, clearly, that power waned significantly from the 1880s and 1890s to the 1910s, as a few men were able to take over the red-light district. The Acre's madams lost their economic status, which strongly affected their ability to wield any civic power. The removal of these twin supports meant that madams could not sustain the influence they once held within the prostitution industry. Thus, the weakening of the red-light districts led to the diminution of madams themselves.

The decline of Fort Worth's Hell's Half-Acre fits the larger timeline of prostitution in the United States. Prostitution found itself under attack in the early twentieth century due to the anti-prostitution Progressive Era reform movements that swept the nation. Cities all over the US began shutting down their vice districts after considerable amounts of lobbying from various reform groups. The districts that made it through that barrage found their end when the US entered the First World War. The combination of the Progressive Era reform campaigns and World War I led to the closing of nearly all red-light districts in the United States. As Fort Worth's vice district began to decline into non-existence during the first two decades of the twentieth century, San Antonio's district expanded. It remained until the Second World War.

This chapter examines the divergence of these two red-light districts during the first two decades of the twentieth century, parsing out why one closed while the other persisted for several

more decades. Both the reformers—and the movements they began—of the Progressive Era and the US Department of War played important roles in the eradication of Fort Worth's vice district. They also strongly threatened, but did not eliminate, the existence of San Antonio's sex trade. This chapter, then, details the rise of anti-prostitution sentiment in the United States and its effectiveness, especially once the US entered World War I. Furthermore, it focuses on the breakdown of the economic, civic, and industry power held by the madams in Fort Worth while analyzing how the madams in San Antonio were able to maintain their place within the red-light district. Finally, this chapter explains the transition that the sex trade made as a result of the decline and removal of red-light districts. Prostitution moved from brothel-based, and female-controlled, to streetwalking- and pimp-based, which was controlled by men. This significant shift meant that the social system crafted by prostitutes and madams was effectively destroyed.

Progressive Reform Fights Prostitution

While madams and prostitutes in San Antonio saw their vice district expanding and the women of Fort Worth's Hell's Half-Acre witnessed the decline of theirs, more disruptions and complications headed their way as anti-vice movements exploded across the United States. In both cities, criticism of the red-light districts from residents was ever-present. The *San Antonio Ledger* in 1867 complained about the "low down, lazy, lousy, contemptible" prostitutes who had been trying to sell their services on Soledad Street, arguing that "they should be made to behave themselves."[3] In 1877, only four years after Fort Worth's incorporation as a city, one of the newspapers, the *Daily Democrat*, called for the closing of the district, which was in its earliest incarnation.[4] The disapproval of public prostitution in both cities only grew stronger over time

[3]"Solidad street," *San Antonio Ledger*, March 23, 1867.
[4]"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, January 16, 1877. Also: "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, February 5, 1877.

until it snowballed into the anti-vice reform movements that boomed at the turn of the century and significantly affected the sex trade.

The push to eradicate urban prostitution was one of several reform movements that came out of the Progressive Era, which spanned from the 1890s to the 1920s. The Progressive Era campaigns focused heavily on the prohibition of alcohol, support for women's suffrage, the removal of corrupt political machines, and efforts to ensure purity in foodstuffs and drugs. Progressives believed that all of these movements would result in a better, more modern nation. Dealing with the spread of urban vice, then, became a vital part of the larger crusade. The methods for controlling vice within cities changed throughout the era, moving from regulation to total removal.

In the 1890s, a significant number of social reformers thought that regulating and controlling prostitution, liquor, and gambling offered the best solution to the problem of urban vice. While there were always those who saw eradication as the only answer, the anti-vice campaign leaned heavily on regulation in the last decade of the nineteenth century. It did so because many reformers believed that "the demand for drinking, gambling, and prostitution would not disappear"; but, if the city could control and restrict the vice, it "would satisfy the demand for disreputable pleasure without reinforcing the negative impact laissez-faire leisure had on urban neighborhoods."[5] In a way, the "regulationists," as they were known, had the most common sense regarding vice. They understood that illicit activities would always exist, no matter what they did, and regulating them would at least keep them contained.

[5]Mara L. Keire, *For Business and Pleasure: Red-Light Districts and Regulation of Vice in the United States, 1890-1933* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 8.

The regulationist movement came to both Fort Worth and San Antonio in the late nineteenth century. In San Antonio, brothels were scattered all over and the *San Antonio Light* published an article calling for the city government to "confine the public houses to one part of the city, [and] license them."[6] In the 1890s, the city did just that when they required all houses of prostitution to be located west of the San Pedro Creek between the streets of San Luis and Buena Vista in a regulated red-light district. This area remained the vice district for the next forty years. Fort Worth's vice district, conversely, never received recognition as such from the city government even though regulationists advocated for one for years. In an 1890 letter to the *Daily Gazette*, a coalition of businessmen argued for the change in locality, asking for a reservation on the outskirts of town so Fort Worth's business center could be protected from the vice district.[7] City Councilman George E. Neis proposed this plan at a city council meeting in September 1890 but the other council members tabled the issue.[8] Five years later, District Judge S. P. Greene pushed for a reservation when he implored the courts to remove the sex trade "from public view" into a district.[9] This too was unsuccessful. While the calls for a reservation lasted for another ten years, the city never chose to take that step. Fort Worth's red-light district, in the southern end of downtown, remained unofficial and highly visible until its removal.

Regulationists represented only part of the anti-vice movement. Those who believed in total eradication of urban vice composed the other faction. Controlling and regulating prostitution was not enough. Removal was the only solution. Much of the anti-vice rhetoric in the twentieth century combined "the knowledge that prostitution was not just a moral threat . . .

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[6]"Logic," *San Antonio Light*, December 18, 1883.
[7]"A Question of Locality," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 1, 1890.
[8]"A Hefty Job," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 24, 1890.
[9]"Greene," *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 15, 1895.

but also a health threat."[10] The social purity movement of the 1870s and 1880s argued for the repression of prostitution based on its immorality. The goal was the purification of society through the imposition of social controls, and the elimination of prostitution was an important step in the process. In the early years of the Progressive Era, activists continued using these earlier methods of reform, much of it revolving around "rescuing" prostitutes from the sex trade. They did this by founding rescue homes and missionizing inside the vice districts. They believed if they could get women to leave the sex trade, reform themselves, and find legal employment, the women would be examples for others to follow. Eventually, the reformers could save all of the women who worked in the vice districts.

Reformers in both Fort Worth and San Antonio focused on the problem of prostitution by enacting these exact methods. In Fort Worth, Delia Collins constructed one of the first rescue homes in 1891 to aid the Acre's female population: the Rescue Home for Fallen Women at 912 S. Main Street. Collins, a member of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, had become "increasingly concerned with the plight of prostitutes and unwed women" after working in the Acre with the Bethel Mission, a church relief effort focused on helping women and children in Fort Worth. The goal of her Rescue Home was to "save young girls from the pitfalls into which folly has led them," using "moral influences and virtuous examples."[11] The other significant rescue home for "fallen women" was the Berachah Home, founded in 1903. Located outside of the city limits in Arlington, the Berachah Home was started by Reverend J. T. Upchurch, a reformer in the Nazarene Church. Upchurch had worked in the Dallas slums and red-light district

[10]Allan M. Brandt, *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States since 1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 32.
[11]Ruth Karbach, "Duchesses with Hearts Of Love And Brains Of Fire," in *Grace & Gumption: Stories of Fort Worth Women*, ed. Katie Sherrod (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2007), 36; [Quotation] "No Charitable Institution," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 8, 1903.

before deciding to open his own rescue home.[12] Still, while these rescue homes did help women who wanted to escape the sex trade, former prostitutes were a minority inside the homes. They made up only 25 percent of the Fallen Women's home and even fewer lived in the Berachah Home.[13] San Antonio also had a Rescue Home for women, which was used to help rehabilitate former prostitutes. Located at 223 S. San Saba Street, the Rescue Home had once been a house of prostitution. The madam who owned it, Claude Duval, converted to Christianity, stopped working as a madam, and donated her house to the Methodist Church to become a rescue home in 1895. Like the two that serviced Fort Worth's female population, the Methodist Rescue Home could only offer limited aid. It could house twelve women, and not all of them were former prostitutes.[14] Furthermore, in both cities, many women who worked as prostitutes liked their jobs and the money they made. They had no desire to leave. Thus, in the larger effort to eradicate prostitution, rescue homes were mostly ineffective.

Reformers also went into the red-light districts to talk to the prostitutes and madams themselves in attempts to understand why these women turned to the sex trade and to try and persuade them to abandon their occupation. In Fort Worth, various groups went into the Acre. In the late nineteenth century, the Union Bethel Mission began visiting prostitutes to "induce the soiled doves to vacate their houses and move elsewhere."[15] In 1903 and 1904, Reverend I. Z. T. Morris went into the Acre to talk to prostitutes and madams to ask them to leave their jobs or, if

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[12]"Annual Report: Berachah Industrial Home For The Redemption of Erring Girls, 1907," AR280, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections, Berachah Home Collection, 13, 19; "About Slum Work," *The Purity Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (August, 1904): 12-14; Register of the Berachah House, 1905-1911, AR280, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections, Berachah Home Collection.
[13]Karbach, "Duchesses," 36; "Record of Berachah," 1916, AR280, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections, Berachah Home Collection
[14]Mrs. Fambrough, *Reminiscences of Fourteen Months Spent In A Rescue Home in the "Red Light" District of San Antonio, Texas and Else, 1910-1911* (Dallas, TX: Smith & Lamar, 1912), 19; 1900 United States Census, Bexar County, Texas, population schedule, San Antonio, Ward 2, p. 129A, dwelling 122, family 148, Mary L. Volino; digital image, Ancestry.com (http://www.ancestry.com: accessed 17 January 2018).
[15]"In the Slums," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, November 1, 1890.

they chose to remain, to give him their children. Morris wanted to get children out of the district and adopted into "good" homes.[16] Neither attempt was terribly successful. San Antonio also had reform groups who ventured into the red-light district to try and proselytize the women there. In the 1910s, some prominent San Antonio citizens formed a Purity League that worked to help prostitutes and rid the city of the sex trade. One important step in the process for them was going into the district and talking to the women, trying to get them to leave voluntarily before turning to more severe options, which included getting the police or local government involved.[17] Some groups even publicized their findings, like J. T. Upchurch in Fort Worth. Upchurch focused an entire issue of his reform publication, *The Purity Journal*, on Fort Worth's Hell's Half-Acre in March 1906 (Figure 4), hoping to bring enough negative attention to it to initiate its abolition. In that issue, Upchurch wrote a lengthy article about the houses of prostitution, providing striking details to titillate and shock the readers into action.[18] While these reformers did some good within the community of the sex trade, they still did not make any real progress in removing the vice district or convincing women to leave their jobs.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the belief that the sex trade was an issue of morality meshed with other progressive ideals concerning health and the creation of a clean society, providing new angles of attack for social activists. The spread of venereal disease became one of the major arguments used by reformers to get vice districts shut down in the early years of the twentieth century. Activists across the United States founded vice commissions to "investigate and combat prostitution" and lobbied local, state, and federal governments to do

[16]"Girl Refuses A Good Home," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 24, 1904; "I.Z.T. Morris Is Trying To Help Children," *For Worth Star-Telegram*, August 26, 1904.
[17]"Ask Names Disorderly Houses Here," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, August 1, 1910; "Purity League Will Now Do Detective Work," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, September 27, 1910.
[18]J. T. Upchurch, "Fort Worth: A Modern Sodom," *The Purity Journal* 2, no. 9 (March 1906): 2-8.

something about urban vice.[19] Many of these organizations decided to use legal solutions to try and fight prostitution. Filing injunctions and abatements— which were the removal or control of a nuisance—became an effective weapon in the hands of reformers. Sometimes even the threat of filing them could be useful. Reform groups first began using Red Light Abatement Laws, as they labeled them, in 1909. Originally, injunctions under common law required the one who filed to have "suffered special damages different from those suffered . . . in common with the public."[20] Thus, the only person who could file an abatement against a disorderly house or a gambling den had to live adjacent to it to fit the requirements. The Red Light Abatement Laws, however, changed who could file to "every citizen within a broadly defined jurisdictional area."

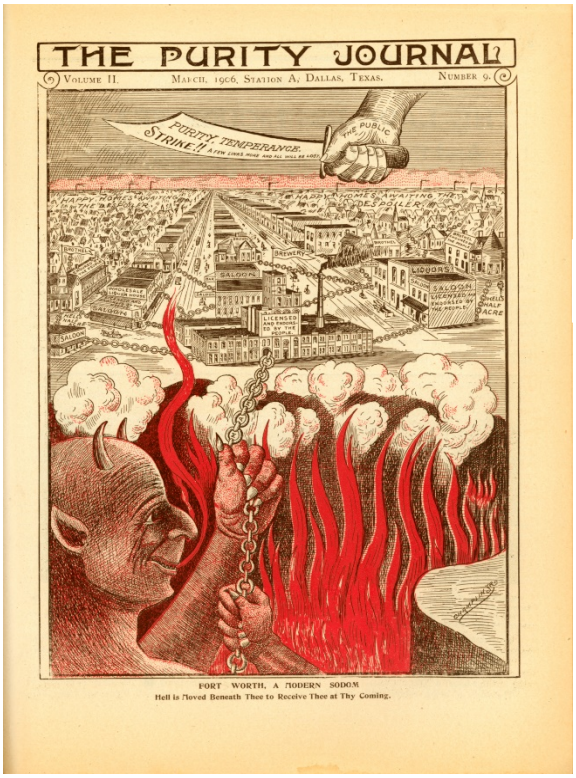

Figure 4: Cover of Upchurch's Hell's Half-Acre issue of *The Purity Journal*

[19]Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 32; David J. Pivar, *The Purity Crusade: Sexual Morality and Social Control, 1868-1900* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 7; David J. Pivar, *Purity and Hygiene: Women, Prostitution, and the "American Plan," 1900-1930* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), xiv, 126; Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 92; John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America, Third Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 183.
[20]Peter C. Hennigan, "Property War: Prostitution, Red-Light Districts, and the Transformation of Public Nuisance Law in the Progressive Era," *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 16, no. 1 (May 2013), 127n16.

State legislatures passed acts throughout the nation making this change. They could now file injunctions on houses of prostitution "through public nuisance law."[21] The shift in who could use injunction and abatement laws stemmed directly from the reformers of the Progressive Era. Anti-vice activists needed a tool to fight against red-light districts and the change in abatement laws offered them exactly what they needed.

Reform organizations in San Antonio and Fort Worth turned to injunctions in the early twentieth century to eradicate the sex trade in both cities. J. Frank Norris, the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, became a virulent and vocal supporter of the anti-prostitution movement. In 1911, as the city government debated officially creating a regulated district, Norris and several of his fellow pastors threatened to file an injunction to stop it from happening. Whether the city councilmen bowed to his threats is unclear, but they did choose not to form a vice reservation. San Antonio saw its fair share of injunctions, as well. The Law Enforcement League, a reform group made up of religious leaders, doctors, and politicians, formed in October 1914 for "the purpose of ridding San Antonio of the trans-San Pedro Creek District."[22] In May 1915, the Law Enforcement League declared war on the red-light district by filing injunctions against "owners and tenants of disorderly resorts."[23] One month later, Dr. M. J. Bliem, the leader of the Law Enforcement League, claimed to the *San Antonio Express* that the injunctions had worked. The League had, according to Bliem, closed down approximately 175 houses. Despite his confidence concerning the success of their campaign, the injunctions had not done much. Nine days later, on June 16, the *San Antonio Express* published a lengthy article reporting that the League was calling on the police and other officials to enforce the laws. If they did their jobs,

[21]Hennigan, "Property War," 127.
[22]"Law League Is Launched," *San Antonio Express*, October 15, 1914.
[23]"Declares War Upon Segregated District," *San Antonio Light*, February 1, 1915.

the League claimed, law enforcement "could 'clean up' the city in a month."[24] Clearly, the plan to rid San Antonio of vice through injunctions had failed. The League would not have needed the police or the sheriff to clean up the city if the injunctions had actually stopped prostitution in any way. In both Fort Worth and San Antonio, reform groups wielded injunctions as weapons but, ultimately, failed to eradicate red-light districts.

The threat of "white slavery" became a significant argument for the eradication of prostitution. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the fear of white slavery turned into a national panic that "hundreds of thousands of [white] women were being captured and sold into prostitution as 'white slaves.'"[25] Anti-prostitution reformers and vice commissions across the United States began to publicize tales of women being forced into "involuntary brothel prostitution" as a weapon against red-light districts.[26] At this point, the only laws concerning movement of people for immoral purposes fell under the Immigration Act of 1907.[27] As the white slavery scare spread throughout the country, the government decided to investigate how useful the Immigration Act was and if they needed a law specifically focused on white slavery. The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, with the backing of the US Department of Commerce and Labor, "conducted a national evaluation on the effectiveness of immigration law

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[24]"Entire District Is Dark," *San Antonio Express*, June 7, 1915; "League Calls On Authorities To Enforce The Law," *San Antonio Express*, June 16, 1915.
[25]Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 112.
[26]Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 75.
[27]Section 3 of the 1907 Immigration Act stated:
That the importation into the United State of any alien woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution, or for any other immoral purpose, is hereby forbidden; and whoever shall, directly or indirectly, import, or attempt to import, into the United States, any alien woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution, or for any other immoral purpose, or whoever shall hold or attempt to hold any alien woman or girl for any such purpose in pursuance of such illegal importation, or whoever shall keep, maintain, control, support, or harbor in any house or other place, for the purpose of prostitution, or for any other immoral purpose, any alien woman or girl, within three years after she shall have entered the United States, shall, in every such case, be deemed guilty of a felony.
See U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, *Immigration Laws and Regulations of July 1, 1907*, 6-7.

in regulating the trafficking of women."[28] The Bureau sent out immigration inspectors throughout the country to visit as many red-light districts as possible to parse out where prostitutes came from to work in the various districts. The Bureau chose Frank Stone, considered "one of the best criminal investigators in the immigration service," as the inspector for Texas.[29] Throughout 1909, Stone traversed the Lone Star State, interviewing madams, prostitutes, pimps, and law enforcement. In both San Antonio and Fort Worth, Stone discovered the shortcomings of the Immigration Act as both cities were full of foreign-born prostitutes, many of them brought there, he believed, by "procurers," people who lured women and girls into working in the sex trade. By the time Stone was investigating, many of these prostitutes had lived in the US for more than three years, the statute of limitations for deportation under the Immigration Act, and, so, nothing could be done to deport them.[30] While there is no way to confirm his findings were accurate, Stone's investigation, and those of other agents throughout the country, supported the arguments that "white slavery" was a problem.

While scholars agree that sexual slaves existed within the sex trade, the numbers presented by progressive crusaders were widely exaggerated. Historian Ruth Rosen argues that white slavery was probably experienced by less than 10 percent of the national population of prostitutes. Progressive Era reformers, though, claimed statistics like sixty thousand girls taken each year by white slavers.[31] The nationwide panic resulted in the federal government passing

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[28]Lilia Raquel Dueñas Rosas, "(De)sexing Prostitution: Sex Work, Reform, and Womanhood in Progressive Texas, 1889-1925" (PhD Diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2012), 98.
[29]Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 182.
[30]Stone to Commissioner-General of Immigration, 7 June 1909, 4-5, box 111, file 52484/8, US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.; Rosas, "(De)sexing Prostitution," 107.
[31]Harriet Burton Laidlaw, "My Little Sister" in *The Survey* 30 (May 3 1913), 202; Mark Thomas Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (1980; repr., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 130.

the White Slave Traffic Act (known as the Mann Act) in 1910. This act made it a felony to cross state lines for the purposes of prostitution, hoping to target those persons transporting women to red-light districts to work in the sex trade.[32] With the campaigns against white slavery, anti-vice reformers in the early twentieth century successfully attacked red-light districts throughout the United States and shut many of them down.

Reformers in San Antonio and Fort Worth latched onto the white slavery movement in the 1900s, using it as yet another reason that the red-light districts should be shut down. In both cities, the crusade against white slavery seemed to be one of the only methods that produced results from the justice system. The Mann Act designated a harsh penalty of multiple years, generally five to ten, in prison for those violating it. The police departments of both Fort Worth and San Antonio began arresting men for violating the Mann Act and judges sentenced them severely.[33] For example, in 1914, Ludie Arnold and M. E. Bondurant, both arrested in Fort Worth, received sentences of ten years in a federal penitentiary for violating the Mann Act, a typical penalty for the crime. They had both driven women from Oklahoma to Fort Worth to work as prostitutes in a clear violation of the Mann Act.[34] Throughout the state, men were arrested and sent to prison for bringing women across state lines for immoral purposes.

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[32]The White Slave Traffic Act, H.R. 12315, 61st Congress (1910).

[33]"White Slavery Case Found, Says Mulkey," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 19, 1910; "Okla. Girl Brought Here, U.S. Complaint," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 21, 1913; "Offers His Fiancée For Sale," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, October 5, 1910; "Have Preliminary Hearing," *San Antonio Light*, April 14, 1913.

[34]"Meek Will Overrule Ludie Arnold's New Trial Motion," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 4, 1914; "Woods Gets Six Years in Pen," *Fort Wort Star-Telegram*, April 10, 1914; "Alleged 'Slaver' Held For Federal Hearing," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 17, 1914; "U.S. Court Sentences 8," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 28, 1914; Case 411, United States v. Ludie Arnold, November 3, 1913, Box 12, U.S. District Court for the Fort Worth Division of the Northern District of Texas, Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685 - 2009, Record Group 21, National Archives at Fort Worth; Case 512, United States v. M. E. Bondurant, November 2, 1914, Box 17, U.S. District Court for the Fort Worth Division of the Northern District of Texas, Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685 - 2009, Record Group 21, National Archives at Fort Worth; Case 547, United States v. Fred Heimer, November 1, 1915, Box 18, U.S. District Court for the Fort Worth Division of the Northern District of Texas, Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685 - 2009, Record Group 21, National Archives at Fort Worth.

Emboldened by the national law and the results from it, reformers used the movement against white slavery to push back against the continued existence of red-light districts. By linking prostitution, the "rescue" of fallen women, and white slavery, reformers felt they presented the strongest argument against vice. Pastor and activist J. T. Upchurch employed that method when he gave a rousing speech about the horrors of white slavery. He concluded by stating what reformers' purpose was: "the redemption of erring girls, the overthrow of White Slavery, the closing of the brothel, and the protection of our homes."[35] If reformers like Upchurch believed they now had the government's support as they waged war against prostitution, they were mistaken. When the federal government passed the Mann Act, it had done so simply to stop "the international trafficking of young women and girls to the United States," not to bring an end to the sex trade.[36] The federal government saw prostitution as a local or state issue and had no desire to insert itself into that debate. Thus, as with all earlier attempts, reformers were unsuccessful in Fort Worth and San Antonio at eradicating prostitution on their own. The removal of red-light districts in either city required assistance, which reformers received in the form of the US Department of War.

World War I and Prostitution

In April 1917, the United States declared war on Germany and entered the Great War. Immediately, the Department of War leapt into action, mobilizing for conflict as fast as possible. On May 18, 1917, Congress issued the Selective Service Act, which authorized the government to raise an army through conscription. This act also contained two sections, 12 and 13, which dealt directly with vice around military bases and camps. Vice, and especially prostitution, could

[35]J.T. Upchurch, "The Unchained Demon" in *The Purity Journal* 9, no. 1 (October 1912), 21.
[36]The White Slave Traffic Act, H.R. 12315, 61st Congress (1910).

be detrimental to a healthy, working military. During a 1916 border conflict in South Texas, the Department of War saw that keeping troops around unregulated vice districts led to drunken soldiers and rampant rates of venereal disease.[37] Thus, control of liquor and prostitution became necessary, so legislators wrote it into the larger act. Section 12 "prohibited the sale of alcohol to soldiers and allowed for the establishment of dry zones around the camps."[38] Section 13 focused on prostitution, ordering the secretary of war to "suppress and prevent the keeping or setting up of houses of ill fame, brothels, or bawdy houses within" five miles of any military camp.[39] The Department of War took these sections very seriously, ordering so-called "white zones" around every single military site. It also offered its military police to municipal governments to aid in the shutting down of vice districts, if necessary. Fort Worth's Hell's Half-Acre found its end in Section 13, while San Antonio's red-light district lasted for twenty-five more years.

The city of Fort Worth had a decision to make in 1917. The city leaders desperately wanted the Army to build one of their military bases in Fort Worth, as "the commercial advantage to the city [would] be tremendous."[40] They knew, however, that because of Section 12 and 13 they would be sacrificing Hell's Half-Acre if the Army chose Fort Worth. For the past forty years, Hell's Half-Acre thrived in the southern half of downtown, allowed to remain in existence partly because of the economic benefits it offered, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1.[41] Still, the Acre had become a nuisance for city officials as reform efforts had only grown stronger in the twentieth century and they received a constant onslaught of criticism from

[37]Raymond B. Fosdick, *Chronicle of a Generation: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper, 1958), 138.
[38]Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 105; Section 12, The Selective Service Act, H.R. 3545, 65th Congress (1917).
[39]Section 13, The Selective Service Act, H.R. 3545, 65th Congress (1917).
[40]"Fort Worth Will Land Army Camp, Citizens Believe," *Fort Worth Record*, May 28, 1917.
[41]"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, July 10, 1878; Harold Rich, *Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown* (Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press, 2014), 5-6.

both reformers and citizens. Thus, in 1917, city leaders made their choice: they would give up the Acre and gain a military camp.

In June 1917, the US government selected Fort Worth as the location of a new military base, Camp Bowie. On August 22, 1917, Camp Bowie opened officially and, within months, over twenty thousand soldiers were living and training there. As the camp was being built and even after it opened, the Acre remained in operation, forcing the military leaders of Camp Bowie to demand its shutdown. The city of Fort Worth acquiesced immediately, not wanting to threaten the "financial gain" Camp Bowie offered.[42] Starting in late 1917 and moving into 1918, Fort Worth's law enforcement and the US military worked together to clear out the district by waging "the most sweeping anti-vice crusade ever put into execution in Texas." According to the *Fort Worth Record*, the city was essentially under martial law, without the official declaration, as "civil guarantees requiring warrants for arrest and for search and seizure" were "virtually suspended." Men and women guilty of prostitution were arrested in great numbers, with more than one hundred formal charges filed in the first few weeks of the clean-up.[43] A month later, the city commission passed Ordinance No. 617, which declared sexually transmitted diseases to be "contagious, infectious, communicable, and dangerous to the public health" and required those

[42]"Fort Worth Named Mobilization Center For National Guard," *Fort Worth Record*, June 12, 1917; "About 5,000 Men Already On Hand At Camp Bowie," *Fort Worth Record*, August 22, 1917; "3 Women Will Be Arraigned Before U.S. Commissioner," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 28, 1917; "Pleads Guilty to Charge of Selling Liquor to Soldiers," *Dallas Morning News*, August 11, 1917; "Four Heavily Fined For Immoral Houses," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 7, 1917; "Public Records," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 12, 1917; "Goldie Scott Accused Again," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 22, 1917; "Pretty Young Widow Tearfully Admits Opening Resort," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 23, 1917; Lonnie J. White, "CAMP BOWIE," Handbook of Texas Online (http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qcc03), accessed February 1, 2018. Uploaded on June 12, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.
[43]"Government: Vice War," *Fort Worth Record*, March 18, 1918.

infected to disclose their condition, making it illegal to knowingly pass along a disease.[44] The main goal of this ordinance was the "protection of the health of the soldiers at Camp Bowie."[45]

In 1918 and 1919, the police and the army arrested "white slavers," madams, and prostitutes until Fort Worth and the US military were both content with the city. In August 1918, the US Federal District Court claimed that cases involving prostitution had been heard in the greatest numbers. Less than three months later, nearly one hundred cases concerning women charged with prostitution were heard in federal court. The newspapers echoed the change in the city. Gone were the weekly columns detailing the uproarious stories of drunkenness, violence, and sexual depravity of Hell's Half-Acre and in their place were articles recounting the daily or weekly arrests of the district's female population. In October 1918, after several months of the removal effort, city and military officials declared Fort Worth "morally clean," claiming it was "cleaner now than ever in its history."[46] Even after the armistice in November 1918, the city trudged on with the clean-up, saying "efforts of Fort Worth to keep the city free from vice . . . have not been relaxed for one moment and will not be."[47] Thus, according to the city, Fort Worth had rid itself of the immoral influence of the prostitute and the madam, the Acre was gone, and

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[44]Ordinance 617, passed by City Council, April 23, 1918 in "Fort Worth City Ordinances," Book G (City Secretary's Office, Fort Worth City Hall).

[45]"City Proposes Far-Reaching Law Against Social Disease," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 30, 1918.

[46]"Vice Raid Nets Four Arrests; All Are Jailed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 21, 1918; "Indictments in Federal Court, Charge Forty With Offenses," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 30, 1918; "Women Jailed When Bonds Not Made," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 14, 1918; "Disorderly House Complaint Is Filed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 22, 1918; "Four Women Accused," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 30, 1918; "11 Women Held to U.S. Grand Jury On Vice Charges," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 7, 1918; "Vice Crusaders Arrest Two Women," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, September 7, 1918; "Widow of Yeggman," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 18, 1918; "County Criminal Court To Reopen Wednesday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 3, 1918; "16 Indicted In U.S. Court on Brothel and Liquor Charges," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 21, 1918; "Two Indicted For Driving Women Around Army Camp," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 24, 1918; "Accused of Taking Girls to Missouri," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 26, 1918; "Four Charged With Prostitution," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 18, 1919; "Fall Session of U.S. Court Is Expected To Be Tame," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August, 25, 1918; "Disposition of Liquor Cases Is Problem For Federal Court," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 3, 1918; [Quotation] "City Morally Clean, Officials' Verdict," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 8, 1918.

[47]"No Letup in City's Anti-Vice Vigil, Mayor Wires Baker," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 14, 1918.

the city was clean. But removal was a process. The city had eradicated Hell's Half-Acre and its many brothels. Prostitution, of course, continued to exist in Fort Worth.[48]

San Antonio's red-light district experienced similar attacks during World War I from reformers and military alike, but it was never forced to close. While there were some restrictions on it during the war, the vice district remained open. Unlike Fort Worth, the city of San Antonio had always been a military center. Fort Sam Houston, the massive army base in the northeast section of town, had been open since 1876, receiving its current name in 1890. Soldiers have been residents of the city since its founding and patrons of the red-light district from the beginning. Thus, the transition into wartime was not as jarring as it was in Fort Worth, which had not experienced a significant military population since 1851. Furthermore, as the military camps were in the northeast quadrant of the city, the five-mile "white zones" did not reach the red-light district, which sat to the southwest. Thus, the vice district, and the women inside it, continued on as it had for the last thirty years.

Many progressive reformers, military officials, and civic leaders believed that the best thing for both the soldiers and the community was shutting down the red-light district. They all understood the dangers of venereal disease, especially for the soldiers who were supposed to be healthy and ready to fight. For San Antonio, specifically, this seemed to be an urgent issue. In a study of training camps in 1918, 288 of 1000 men stationed in San Antonio reported venereal infections, nearly 30 percent.[49] The city government attempted to do something about prostitution when, on June 4, 1917, they adopted a resolution ordering the police department to

[48]*Fort Worth, Texas*, 1910; *Fort Worth, Texas,* 1926; Scale {1:50}, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps," Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas; "Arrest Sheets of Prostitutes," 1934, Genealogy and Local History Collection, Fort Worth Public Library, Fort Worth, Texas.
[49]Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 54.

"close every house of prostitution within the limits of the City of San Antonio."[50] And yet, prostitution continued to exist. One significant reason for this was the lack of law enforcement within the vice district. The police clearly ignored the June 1917 resolution that charged them with the task of cleaning out the brothels. The city commissioners grew so frustrated with the police that, on January 3, 1918 they again adopted a resolution. This one, however, condemned the police department, and the police chief in particular, for dereliction of duty and resolved to begin an investigation into the lack of enforcement.[51] Regardless, the red-light district remained open and the brothels within it ready to service any customer.

Figure 4.1: People entering the Municipal Base Hospital

[50]Meeting of the Commissioners of the City of San Antonio, June 4, 1917, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, Texas.
[51]Meeting of the Commissioners of the City of San Antonio, January 3, 1918, San Antonio Municipal Archives, San Antonio, Texas.

Military officials' frustration with the lack of enforcement grew as the war continued and rates of venereal disease did not slow down. Since it did not seem likely that the city would ever shut down the red-light district, the military began to consider other options. One was the Municipal Base Hospital (Figure 4.1). Located at 322 South Santa Rosa in the center of the red-light district, the hospital offered routine health exams from a city doctor, W. A. King, for prostitutes and madams as well as treatment if they were infected with any sexually transmitted diseases. The hospital also gave these women health certificates "verifying their state of cleanliness."[52] Those who failed the exam? They were quarantined in tents, borrowed from Fort Sam Houston, at the county poor farm (Figure 4.2). In the spring of 1917, the city had quarantined 185 women.[53] The Army understood that it would be nearly impossible to stop

Figure 4.2: Two rows of tents housing 185 infected prostitutes

[52]Rosas, (De)sexing Prostitution," 52; Photograph of People entering the Municipal Base Hospital, box 6, folder 26, Minnie Fisher Cunningham Papers, Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries, https://digital.lib.uh.edu/collection/p15195coll33/item/456.
[53]Photograph of Two rows of fenced army tents loaned by Fort Sam Houston, box 6, folder 26, Minnie Fisher Cunningham Papers, Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries, https://digital.lib.uh.edu/collection/p15195coll33/item/458.

soldiers from visiting the red-light district. Some of the leadership might have even thought to themselves that the district could be beneficial as there existed a "traditional military attitude that men required sex to be good soldiers," which still continued into the Great War.[54] Along with required health examinations of prostitutes, the military also placed "at each exit from the area . . . prophylactic stations where the men . . . were given prophylactic treatment which was supposed to prevent" venereal disease.[55] The prophylactic treatment was extensive:

> Attendants, appointed to each station, administered the treatments. A soldier reporting for the treatment would first urinate. Then, on a specially constructed stool, he would wash his genitals with soap and water followed by bichloride of mercury, while the attendant inspected. The attendant would then inject a solution of protargol into the penis, which the soldier would hold in the urethra for five minutes, then expel. After the injection, calomel ointment would be rubbed on the penis, which would then be wrapped in waxed paper. For the prevention to be effective the soldier could not urinate for four or five hours following the treatment.[56]

Because of the length of time it took, soldiers did not always get their treatment after spending time in the red-light district. During World War I, "between 30 and 40 percent" of soldiers with venereal disease never got the treatment.[57] Even with the surveillance and control of prostitutes and the presence of prophylaxis stations, military officials did not believe this was enough, so the Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA) founded a detention camp in the form of a "farm where the diseased prostitutes would be held in quarantine."[58] The CTCA created the Live Oak Farm in August 1918 to serve this purpose. It was located on the north loop, on the grounds

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[54]Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 54.
[55]Martin Marix Evans, ed., *American Voices of World War I: Primary Source Documents, 1917-1920* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 11; Herbert M. Shelton, "Prevention That Does Not Prevent," in *Dr. Shelton's Hygiene Review* 3, no. 5 (January 1942), 104; Major Carl W. Shaffer, "The Problem of Administering Venereal Prophylaxis in Cities Adjacent to Army Camps," in *The Military Surgeon: Journal of the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States* (1920), 574.
[56]Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 111.
[57]Brandt, *No Magic Bullet*, 111.
[58]George Worthington to Major Wm. F. Snow, 29 June 1918, Decimal 250, 1 San Antonio, Entry 31, Record Group 112, National Archives Building, qtd. in Linda Sharon Janke, "Prisoners of War: Sexuality, Venereal Disease, and Women's Incarceration During World War I," (PhD diss. Binghamton University, 2006), 195.

of the San Antonio Automobile Club, where the San Antonio Airport sits in 2019.[59] Women infected with venereal disease were sent there involuntarily until they received clean bills of health. The most common venereal diseases that infected prostitutes and soldiers were gonorrhea and syphilis. The treatment for gonorrhea was Protargol, a silver proteinate, while syphilis was dealt with using Arsphenamine.[60] The Great War ended on November 11, 1918 and the Department of War demobilized soon after. The stress on venereal disease lessened and the CTCA transferred control of the farm to the city of San Antonio and the Bexar County health officer. It officially shut down on August 1, 1920.[61] Throughout the nineteen months that the United States was a part of the war, the red-light district in San Antonio remained open. The women who lived and worked as prostitutes had to get regular examinations, and some were even sent to Live Oak until they were healthy. But though they might have had their freedoms restricted, they remained in business.

The End of an Era

The Progressive Era reform movements and the First World War caused the shutdown of the majority of red-light districts within the United States, including Hell's Half-Acre in Fort Worth. Several factors combined to ensure to removal of the Acre in 1918. First, it had become a clear nuisance to the city leaders, who had received immense criticism for allowing it to remain open for over forty years. Second, the traditional structure of the red-light district had shifted

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[59]"Auto Club Plans Many Improvements," *San Antonio Light*, April 27, 1913; "City to be Reimbursed," *San Antonio Express*, August 20, 1918; Paula Allen, "San Antonio Women deemed 'wayward' were imprisoned in early 1900s to protect soldiers," *San Antonio Express-News*, September 8, 2018.

[60]A.J. Casselman, "The Diagnosis and Treatment of Syphilis and Gonorrhea" in *Public Health Reports* Vol. 36, no. 16 (April 1921), 854; Nancy M. Wingfield, "The Enemy Within: Regulating Prostitution and Controlling Venereal Disease in Cisleithanian Austria during the Great War" in *Central European History* Vol. 46, no. 3 (September 2013), 573.

[61]Mary Macey Dietzler, *Detention Houses and Reformatories as Protective Social Agencies in the Campaign of the United States Government Against Venereal Diseases* (Washington, D.C.: The United States Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board, 1922), 175.

from many women operating brothels to a few men acting as vice kings, which meant that it offered less economically to the city than it had previously. In the first eight years of the twentieth century, two prominent madams—Dolly Love and Mary Porter—died and two more—Mildred Clifton and Pearl Beebe—relocated to San Antonio and El Paso. At the same time, vice kings expanded their holdings within the Acre. In the 1900s and 1910s, a few men acquired as many leases as possible within the red-light district. Their method of operation worked as follows: "these men secure long term leases on property in the district [on Calhoun and Jones streets] at comparatively small figures, then . . . sublet it to rooming house keepers at enormous figures."[62] These "rooming house keepers" were another term for madams, as both Calhoun and Jones were filled with brothels.[63] Inspector Stone witnessed this while touring Fort Worth in 1909: "[the cribs] rent for $15 per week (without light) or each crib nets a revenue of $780 per annum, these cribs are all owned by one firm, Flemming and Robinson [Lee Fleming and Alexander Roberson, two real estate brokers]."[64] By 1916, the situation worsened as the vice kings purchased more acreage and increased rents significantly. These men held several properties—one, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported, possessed seven—and charged anywhere from $200 to $350 a month—roughly $4,700 to $8,000 in 2019—for women to rent them.[65] By 1917, these men owned the leases of over three-quarters of the brothels and cribs in the Acre. Third, Hell's Half-Acre sat within five miles of Camp Bowie, meaning it violated the white zone, where prostitution was prohibited by the federal government and the military in

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[62]"Police Order Rents Cut In 'Reservation' Or It Closes," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 2, 1916; "Landlords Agree to Police Demand for Reduced Rent," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 3, 1916; "Court Order to Break Up Acre Sought by Jamieson," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 20, 1917.
[63]*Fort Worth, Texas, Sheet 104, Sheet 105,* 1911; Scale {1:50}, "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps," Map Collection, Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas.
[64]Frank R. Stone to Commissioner-General of Immigration, June 7, 1909, box 111, file 52484/8, US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
[65]"Police Order Rents Cut In 'Reservation' Or It Closes," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 2, 1916; "CPI Inflation Calculator," Bureau of Labor Statistics, Databases, Tables & Calculators by Subject. accessed February 1, 2018 http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

1917. While other minor reasons exist, these three represent the most important reasons that the city agreed to shut down the Acre. San Antonio's red-light district, conversely, survived the onslaught of reform movements and military pressure.

Location presumably had much to do with the difference as San Antonio's red-light district did not sit in the middle of downtown, like the Acre did, but was relegated to west of the San Pedro Creek in the southwestern region of the city. The creek had functioned as a line of demarcation, a "social barrier," since the founding of San Antonio.[66] In the city's early days, it separated the Canary Islanders from everyone else. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the creek separated the white population from those of Mexican descent, who lived west of the creek in "a separate quarter of their own, with their own theaters, plazas, shops, and shadowy cantinas."[67] The majority white population of San Antonio, because of their racial and moral prejudices, had few issues with the red-light district being located in the "Mexican district."[68] This area, full of people they deemed "far inferior to Anglo Americans," seemed the most appropriate location for the vice district since much of the white population believed the morals of those who lived there to be "low and debased in every respect."[69] Hell's Half-Acre, conversely, sat in the southern end of Fort Worth's downtown in the middle of the business district. With the railroad depot to its south and the courthouse to its north, the Acre could not be easily avoided, especially by travelers to the city as "the man who rides up Main or Rusk street on his first visit . . . and sees the . . . courtesans flaunting their shamelessness . . . has received an

[66]Federal Writers' Project, *San Antonio: An Authoritative Guide to the City and its Environs* (San Antonio, TX: Clegg Company, 1938), 9.
[67]Peyton, *San Antonio*, 4.
[68]Peyton, *San Antonio*, 147.
[69]An Emigrant, Late of the United States, *Texas in 1840, or the Emigrant's Guide to the New Republic, Being the Result of Observation, Enquiry, and Travels in the Beautiful Country* (New York: William W. Allen, 1840), 226; Texas Writers' Project, *Texas*, 339; An Emigrant, *Texas in 1840*, 227.

impression hard to eradicate."[70] Even though the red-light district offered an economic benefit to the city, the businessmen of Fort Worth did not appreciate its location as it covered "one-fifth of the business lots on Rusk, Main and Houston streets."[71] In 1890, the City Council argued over the future of the Acre with those in favor of removal claiming it was "a nuisance [and] it should be removed from the center of the city."[72] The visibility of Fort Worth's red-light district, then, became a major reason for its eradication. Hell's Half-Acre also did not have the protection of their location, like San Antonio's district did, as the Acre was only a few miles from the military camp.

The other important factor in the differing fates of the two vice districts was the military. By 1900, San Antonio had been a "military center" for decades. Its military bases were permanent, not temporary camps built in response to a war. For example, Fort Sam Houston opened in the 1870s, which meant that soldiers were a consistent customer base for the red-light district since its earliest days. The military and the vice district existed side by side in relative peace, then, in San Antonio for decades before World War I. Fort Worth, conversely, did not have a real military presence in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Thus, the residents of the red-light district never had the opportunity to build relationships with the military to protect themselves when the government granted Fort Worth the right to build a military camp at

[70]"Questions of Locality," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 1, 1890; [Quotation] "The Grand Jury," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 14, 1889.
[71]"Question of Locality," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 1, 1890.
[72]"A Hefty Job," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 24, 1890.

the onset of World War I. Thus, San Antonio survived the war on prostitution in the 1910s while Fort Worth's Acre did not.

A significant result of the nationwide shutdown of red-light districts was the massive growth of streetwalking and pimp-controlled prostitution.[73] When reformers began discussing the eradication of red-light districts, regulationists argued that removal would cause a scattering of vice, instead of it being in one central location.[74] All of the women who worked in brothels and cribs would, presumably, begin streetwalking or find places in respectable neighborhoods to continue plying their trade. Prostitution in no way ended within the city, it simply shifted into other forms. Specifically, pimps—defined as "a man who wholly or in part lives upon the earnings of a girl or woman who practices prostitution"—fully took over the sex trade.[75]

In Fort Worth, the transition from brothels to pimps had already begun well before the shutdown of Hell's Half-Acre while at the same time in San Antonio, madams maintained centrality within the sex trade. Immigration agent Frank Stone noted, in 1909, when he visited Fort Worth that there were fourteen prominent pimps he had run-ins with in the Acre. He claimed they were "well-organized" and that "the women mostly do business in cribs, repairing to hotels at night and sleeping with their macks [another term for pimp] and pimps at the hotels."[76] Conversely, Stone only listed five brothels as being in business. Why had pimps begun to take over the Acre while San Antonio was mostly free of them? As the parties involved left behind no records of their own, parsing out this transition requires speculation. The question of who owned the property within the vice district is a pivotal one in this discussion. In San

[73]Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 98-99.
[74]"A Kick at San Antonio," *San Antonio Daily Light*, January 4, 1890; "The Social Evil," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 4, 1884; "A Red Hot Session," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 21, 1902.
[75]U.S. Senate, *Importing Women for Immoral Purposes*, December 10, 1909, 4n4
[76]Stone to Commissioner-General of Immigration, 21 May 1909, 2-3, box 111, file 52484/8; Stone to Commissioner-General of Immigration, 7 June 1909, 4-5, box 111, file 52484/8, US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Antonio, the majority of the elite madams owned their parlor houses, and often other property as well. In Fort Worth, although some of the madams—like Mary Porter and Dolly Love—did own their brothels, it is possible that others may have just rented their houses of prostitution. Thus, when vice kings began buying up property and then charging exorbitant rents, it could have been a reason for madams to leave Fort Worth. It would also have been more difficult for new madams to come to Fort Worth because they would have had no access to real estate. In the summer of 1909, Pearl Beebe left the Acre to run a parlor house in El Paso while, two years later, Mildred Clifton moved south to San Antonio where she plied her trade for several more years.[77] Fewer madams in the Acre meant that more prostitutes would have been on their own in terms of finding customers. It is not surprising, then, that pimps moved in to take the madams' place within the Acre.

After the shutdown of the red-light district in 1918, the sex trade lived on elsewhere in the city. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported in the early 1920s on multiple arrests of prostitutes who were clearly streetwalkers. Some were arrested "loitering about the Santa Fe depot and railroad yards," while others were picked up on Main and Houston.[78] One article described these women as "walking in dark spots and making eyes at passersby."[79] In 1934, the police reported that from January to June, they had arrested over four hundred women throughout the city of Fort Worth for prostitution.[80] Thus, the anti-vice reformers who worked so

[77]"Is Arrested for Vagrancy," *El Paso Times*, September 1, 1909; "Fire on Broadway," *El Paso Morning Times*, December 28, 1909; "City News," *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, March 2, 1910; *The Blue Book for Visitors, Tourists, and Those Seeking a Good Time While in San Antonio, Texas* (San Antonio: Straight Steer Publishing Co., 1911-1912), 6, 21.
[78]"Campaign Started," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 30, 1920; "All Colors of Rainbow Glows in Police Raid," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 11, 1921.
[79]"Eight Negro Women Taken For Vagrancy," *Fort Worth Star- Telegram*, September 25, 1920; "Campaign Started," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 30, 1920; "All Colors of Rainbow Glows in Police Raid," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 11, 1921; "Girl Prefers Jail to Home on Farm," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 3, 1921.
[80]List of women arrested for prostitution in Fort Worth, January – September 1934, "Soiled Dove" Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Genealogy, Archives & Local History Unit, Fort Worth Public Library.

hard to rid the city of prostitution had failed and, in the process, made life more dangerous for Fort Worth's prostitutes. For the women who ran the brothels within the Acre, their futures are unclear as they left behind no records and few used their real names. Many of them were arrested during the clean-up and prosecuted in federal court for violating the "white zones." Others presumably saw the writing on the wall and relocated to friendlier cities, like San Antonio or Galveston, or to different areas of Fort Worth.

Although prostitution had not been eradicated in Fort Worth, it had been irrevocably altered. The economic, civic, and industry power built up over the last four decades had eroded in the twentieth century and the city's destruction of the red-light district sounded its death knell. No longer were madams in Fort Worth able to use their wealth or political influence to help themselves and others. Furthermore, the female-centered class system and power structure they had created had completely splintered. As the district began to fragment in the 1900s, with the rise of pimps and vice kings, the social system did too, transitioning into one controlled primarily by men. When the brothels shut down and pimps took over, prostitutes and madams no longer had each other to depend on as they were isolated even further by their forced change into streetwalkers or call girls. The center of their social life, the brothel, was gone. Madams had lost their income, civic influence, and power within the industry. Prostitutes had lost their safety net. Reformers and city leaders in Fort Worth viewed the end of the Acre as wholly positive, as their city was now "morally clean."[81] The women of the Acre understood that their lives and livelihoods as they knew them had drastically and irreversibly changed.

Conversely, San Antonio's red-light district survived throughout the 1910s, which kept its female population inside brothels and cribs, and away from pimps. Frank Stone noted during

[81]"City Morally Clean, Officials' Verdict," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 8, 1918.

his visit in San Antonio that pimps were not a significant issue for the women of the district as the brothels were solidly embedded in the district's structure.[82] During the First World War, the women who ran parlor houses kept their heads down and tried not to make waves in order to protect their businesses. Many of the madams, as a way of mollifying the military officials, "permitted no alcohol sales."[83] They also allowed the Army to control their employees in terms of venereal disease as prostitutes were regularly screened and quarantined if they were infected. By acquiescing to the military during wartime, elite madams protected themselves and their industry from eradication and flourished in the post-war 1920s, which one resident described as "luxurious days."[84]

Madams and prostitutes there were able to continue living and working within their social system, because of the survival of San Antonio's vice district. Elite madams continued running their parlor houses as they had before, building their wealth and strengthening their political connections. Dora McNue, for example, continued buying property, expanding her real estate portfolio all over the city. She also added on to her existing brothels on Matamoras Street, building one addition in 1917 and then another in 1929.[85] McNue exemplifies how madams made it through wartime in San Antonio without any real decline in their status or risk of

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[82]Stone to Commissioner-General of Immigration, 8 May 1909, 3, box 111, file 52484/8, US Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
[83]Martin Marix Evans, ed., *American Voices of World War I: Primary Source Documents, 1917-1920* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 11; Joseph H. Labadie, "An Archeological and Historical Assessment of the Vista Verde South Project, San Antonio, Texas" *Archaeological Survey Report*, no. 156 (1987), Center for Archaeological Research, University of Texas at San Antonio, 18.
[84]"Historic Brothels Hearken to day when Prostitution was elegantly 'acceptable'," *San Antonio Light*, April 12, 1982; Jennifer Cain, "For Those Seeking a Good Time while in San Antonio, Texas – The Restrictions and Permissions of Bawdy Houses from 18890-1941" in *Journal of the Life and Culture of San Antonio*, https://www.uiw.edu/sanantonio/prostitution.html; "The Primrose Path," *San Antonio Light*, July 7, 1939.
[85]Deed of Sale, F.M. Hicks to Dora McNew, June 15, 1923, Deed Book, Vol. 733, p. 32, County Clerk's Office, Bexar County, TX; "Building Permits," *San Antonio Express*, January 31, 1917; "Building Permits," *San Antonio Express*, November 8, 1929.

eradication. While Fort Worth's prostitutes were forced into a more isolated life of streetwalking, the women of San Antonio's sex trade continued into the 1920s as if nothing had changed.

Conclusion

As Fort Worth and San Antonio's red-light districts entered the twentieth century, they came under attack from Progressive Era reformers who wanted prostitution eradicated from America's cities. Anti-vice crusades took on a variety of forms. They argued about its immoral nature, shared stories of women forced into sexual slavery, and cited the rampant amount of venereal disease caused by prostitutes. Reformers were unable to get either red-light district shut down simply by their own activism. Instead, they required the authority of the Department of War. After the United States chose to enter the First World War, military officials took it upon themselves to address the issue of soldiers patronizing red-light districts, especially with the amounts of sexually transmitted diseases among the Army. The Department of War prohibited prostitution within five miles of a military base. They also founded hospitals and quarantine farms to ensure that any infected prostitute was not working until she was cured. The entry into World War I led to the end of Hell's Half-Acre in Fort Worth when city leaders chose to build a military base in 1917, which required the shutdown of the district. San Antonio's vice district, conversely, survived the onslaught from the military and reformers. It would continue functioning until the Second World War.

The decline of Fort Worth's red-light district meant that social system created by madams and prostitutes also waned. In the 1900s, vice kings took over much of the Acre, and the role of pimps had expanded dramatically, which combined to shatter the relationships crafted by women who could only depend on one another. When the city shut down the Acre in 1918, these women scattered across the city, some leaving for good. They began to work as streetwalkers or call

girls, controlled by a pimp. Whereas the isolation of the vice district allowed these women to build relationships and a safety net with one another, this dramatic shift in the 1920s meant these women were now even isolated from one another. Madams no longer became wealthy or maintained relationships with city leaders. They also lost their role as caretaker of the women in their brothels. The end of Fort Worth's red-light district meant a distinct shift from brothels to streetwalking, from female-controlled to male.

CONCLUSION

In late 1941, after vigorous urging from the military leadership at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio Police Commissioner P. L. Anderson began a massive cleanup of the city's red-light district until it was finally shut down after over fifty years of existence. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had, on July 11, 1941, signed H.R. 2475, which prohibited "prostitution within such reasonable distance of military and/or naval establishments."[1] Furthermore, the rates of venereal disease among soldiers posted at Fort Sam Houston had risen significantly. Both military and city officials recognized "the repression of prostitution is the cardinal principle" in protecting the thousands of soldiers living there.[2] The presumed answer, then, was a widespread effort to root out the prostitutes, madams, and gamblers who made their living in vice. An end had finally come to the large, infamous red-light district west of the San Pedro Creek.

San Antonio's vice district existed longer than nearly all others within the state of Texas. This shifts in the sex trade, though, in the 1920s and 1930s meant that red-light districts were no longer the best place to find a prostitute. The majority of prostitutes had transitioned to streetwalking or working in bars and cabarets, while being "protected" by a pimp. There was a smaller population of women who worked as call girls, which meant that men called via telephone to set up a "date." Some went to the customer while others had the customer come to them. Regardless, by the advent of the Second World War, much of the sex trade in Texas had become decentralized. With the shutdown of San Antonio's red-light district, the women who had once lived and worked there inside brothels moved into the roles of streetwalker of call girl.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a significant number of women who worked in an illegal industry in Fort Worth and San Antonio wielded economic, civic, and

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[1]The May Act, H.R. 2475, 77th Congress; "Prostitute Ban Signed by F.D.R.," *San Antonio Light*, July 13, 1941.
[2]"Police Vice Drive Praised By Donovan," *San Antonio Light*, December 4, 1941.

industry power in a time when women were fighting for basic rights. Why did madams have the ability to gain this wealth and influence? One reason, presumably, is the illicit trade in which they took part. The professionalization of prostitution in the late nineteenth century meant the women working as prostitutes and madams existed essentially in a separate sphere from "respectable" society. In the first half of the nineteenth century, prostitution was a much more casual occupation as women often moved in and out of the sex trade "when economic difficulties necessitated occasional prostitution."[3] The establishment of red-light districts and the ability to have a "career" as a prostitute or a madam, combined with shifting ideals of women and sexuality, essentially severed these women's connections to the rest of Fort Worth or San Antonio's society.

An argument could be made that madams gained economic, civic, and industry power because they had no real social standing, or place within "respectable" society. They were not viewed as "true women" because of their choice to commercialize their sexuality. Instead, they were "fallen" women, and "outcasts from decent society."[4] Even though they ran businesses and were a part of an industry that provided a significant economic benefit to both Fort Worth and San Antonio, elite madams were completely "othered" by those with social standing and power. This "othering," though, may have given them the ability to obtain money, political connections, and status within their own industry.

As the elite madams began to lose their power in the early decades of the twentieth century, "respectable," or white, middle- and upper-class, women began gaining power of their own. Many of the Progressive Era reform movements were led by women. They founded

[3]Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 70.
[4]'The City: Local Temperance Work," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, March 2, 1887; "A Sad Commentary," *San Antonio Daily Light*, September 2, 1886.

organizations to reform all aspects of society with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union being one of the most powerful. These reform movements politicized the majority of the women involved in them. They began lobbying for change in the political sphere, effectively creating the foundation for much of the work on woman's suffrage. As the female reformers worked on all kinds of issues, they began gaining political power as their methods created results, from the Pure Food and Drug Act to the Eighteenth Amendment, which prohibited the production and sale of alcohol. The clearest evidence of women achieving political power, though, was the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, which granted women's suffrage throughout the United States.[5] As "respectable" women began gaining power, the women in the sex trade had already started losing theirs.

By the advent of the Second World War, the red-light districts in both San Antonio and Fort Worth had been eradicated—the women working as prostitutes and madams scattered, trying to reorient what life looked like now for them. The fortunes of the elite madams and those of "respectable" women had flipped. While the women who owned parlor houses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries owned their own property, curated connections with powerful men, and held the highest position within their own industry, all of that was gone by the 1940s. "Respectable" women, conversely, had gained the right to vote, had made change on a national scale with their reform efforts, and continued to fight for and win more rights, both politically and economically, while prostitutes suffered increasingly severe marginalization.

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[5]Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981); Barbara M. Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York : Basic Books, 1987); Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991; Alison M. Parker, *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Leigh Ann Wheeler, *Against Obscenity: Reform and the Politics of Womanhood in America, 1873-1935* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

The 1870s to the First World War represent a "golden age" of prostitution and red-light districts in the United States, especially west of the Mississippi. This era witnessed massive vice districts grow around the country, filled with sumptuous brothels, beautiful prostitutes, and shrewd madams. Within the boundaries of the red-light district, the elite madams held court. They had money and political power, and they threw their weight around when needed to protect themselves or their businesses. The good times could not last forever, however. As the 1910s arrived, cities began reassessing the vice districts within their borders, with most choosing to shut them down. Fort Worth followed this path, while San Antonio allowed its red-light district to hang around a few more years. Eventually, as prostitution scattered all over either city in sordid hotel rooms or dark corners of cabarets, vice districts shifted from the consciousness into legend. The stories of Mary Porter, Blanche Deerwood, Dolly Love, and Fannie Porter became a piece of the infamous Wild West. The salaciousness of the lore surrounding prostitution wiped out nearly all of the actual story of the lives of the women who lived and worked within the red-light districts of Fort Worth and San Antonio.

This dissertation works to place these women back in their own narrative, telling their story rather than a scandalous legend. This is a narrative of women trying to survive and thrive in a world where they had so few options. These women, using their shrewdness in business and skills with men, managed to own very successful houses of prostitution. That their business was a house of prostitution, and thus illegal and immoral, has overshadowed everything else about it. Still, it does not negate the fact that these parlor houses were profitable and well-run. If examining elite madams solely through the lens of entrepreneurship, they would be considered a success. Thus, this dissertation works to put the focus back on the elite madams. It reconstructs their narrative, detailing their lives and their industry while highlighting the work they did. The

elite madams of Fort Worth and San Antonio had a major impact on both cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They deserve to have their story told.

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VITA

Jessica Michelle Webb was born in Paris, Texas on November 20, 1989 to Claude Wayne Webb, Jr. and Karen Susanne Brandon Webb. She has three sisters, Emily, Caroline, and Katie, and two brothers, Hondo and Jackson. She also has two brothers-in-law, Patrick Martell and Dennis Kelly. She has one nephew, John Dennis Kelly. Webb graduated from Melissa High School in Melissa, Texas in 2008 and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with Honors from Austin College, Sherman, Texas, in 2012, double majoring in History and English. The following fall, Webb moved to Fort Worth, Texas to begin her Master of Arts degree in History at Texas Christian University, which she completed in August 2014. She remained at TCU for her doctoral work.

While studying at Texas Christian University, Webb served as a graduate assistant for United States history, Middle Eastern history, Latin American and World Geography, and in TCU's New Media Writing Studio. She earned a certificate from TCU's Women and Gender Studies program. She is a member of the Southern Association for Women Historians, the Texas State Historical Association, and Phi Alpha Theta.

ABSTRACT

PROSTITUTION AND POWER IN PROGRESSIVE-ERA TEXAS: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE INFLUENCE OF MADAMS IN FORT WORTH AND SAN ANTONIO, 1877-1920

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"Prostitution and Power in Progressive-Era Texas: Entrepreneurship and the Influence of Madams in Fort Worth and San Antonio, 1877-1920," reconstructs the lives and careers of the madams of San Antonio and Fort Worth's red-light districts between 1877 and 1920. It details what it took to become an elite madam, explaining how a parlor house came into existence and what it needed to be successful and profitable. It highlights how madams curated relationships with politicians, law enforcement officers, and businessmen as a way to protect and expand their businesses. Furthermore, it analyzes and explains the social system of the sex trade, stressing the ambiguous nature of the relations between prostitutes and madams. Throughout it all, this project emphasizes the entrepreneurial and commercial characteristics of the madams. By focusing on the women who ran houses of prostitution as businesswomen, this dissertation makes a significant intervention in the historiographies of gender and entrepreneurship and prostitution.