

THEY SOLD THEIR BODIES: PROSTITUTION, ECONOMICS, AND "FALLEN WOMEN"

IN FORT WORTH'S HELL'S HALF ACRE, 1876-1919

by

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Chapter 1: The Women of Hell's Half-Acre and Their Place in Fort Worth's History

"We die hard." The final words of Emmeline Gooden, "She-terror of the Third Ward," before she left Fort Worth's Hell's Half-Acre, encapsulate the life of a prostitute in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹ Women working in Fort Worth's red-light district had difficult existences; their daily lives were dominated by violence, alcohol and drug addiction, poverty, and death. The wild and violent area known as Hell's Half-Acre was located in downtown Fort Worth, near the center of the city. Its roots were in the Chisholm Trail, a famous path used for cattle drives which went through Fort Worth. The Acre, as it was typically called, offered liquor, gambling, and women to the many cowboys who passed through town. Hell's Half-Acre expanded after the arrival of the Texas & Pacific Railroad in 1876, creating the reputation that it still carries today. The red-light district survived until 1917, when the construction of Camp Bowie forced its closure.²

Hell's Half-Acre and the women who lived and worked there occupied an awkward space in Fort Worth because of the conflicting opinions that surrounded red-light districts. Regardless of their size or location in a given city, red-light districts often had far-reaching reputations because of the illicit activities they offered. Saloons and brothels generated great amounts of revenue and it was common for wealthy businessmen to have connections with the district. Even though vice districts represented great economic opportunities for people both inside and outside of them, they were often met with disapproval by the majority of citizens who started reform movements as a way to control or remove the vice. Furthermore, the city benefited from the red-light districts financially since it tended to make money from the fines and court costs that lawbreaking residents of the districts regularly paid and were reluctant to do anything that would

¹"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, January 13, 1890.

²Harold W. Rich, "Beyond Outpost: Fort Worth, 1880-1918" (PhD Diss., Texas Christian University, 2006), 8.

stop the money, like removing the districts. Thus, the red-light districts, like Hell's Half-Acre, and the women who worked and lived in them had a divisive existence.

While red-light districts typically had liquor and gambling, their foundation rested on prostitution. Prostitutes were the backbone of Hell's Half-Acre, and their importance to the economy of the red-light district and Fort Worth as a whole should be highlighted. The history of the prostitutes who lived and worked in the Acre has, for the most part, been obscured behind that of the famous gamblers and outlaws, both typically male, who populated the district. This study has several goals; the first is to place the focus on the women, to write a gendered history of Hell's Half-Acre. It aims to present a more complete history of the Acre's female population than has been done in previous histories, as well as showing what life was like for the women in Hell's Half-Acre. This study is an attempt to tell the story of a group of women whose place in the history of Fort Worth has been overlooked.³

The second goal of this project is to show the economic importance of prostitutes to Fort Worth. There were a number of women in the sex trade who had significant economic power in the city and used it to their advantage. This study argues that even though there were attempts to rid Fort Worth of its red-light district dating back to the 1870s, the Acre was only removed by the city when it had become an economic liability. Essentially, the red-light district, and the women in it, were protected by the city and allowed to exist until they were no longer financially beneficial to Fort Worth. Thus, it was economic factors, not reform, that successfully got rid of Hell's Half-Acre in 1917.

While this study's goal is to amend the histories in order to include these women, it is also trying to change the belief that the Acre was removed in the 1890s, an idea that has been

³I have been able to compile a list of women who worked in Hell's Half-Acre at some point in its forty-year history. An appendix at the back of this work includes the list of every woman I have been able to find who worked as a prostitute or madam.

perpetuated by several histories of Fort Worth. Hell's Half-Acre, and the women there, were resilient. They continued to work and live in the red-light district until they were finally removed in 1917. Though not the major focus of the work, discussions of gender in the Acre will appear throughout this study as a way to add depth and historical context to the history of Fort Worth's red-light district.

This study is divided into three chapters. Chapter one is a historiographical examination of prostitution and reform in the United States. An analysis of the trends in the historiography of the American sex trade is necessary to understand where this work fits and which gaps it aims to fill. In the last two decades, the field of prostitution history has split into two types of history. The first is popular history that tells anecdotes of these women with little historical context or analysis. The second is intersectional scholarly history which grounds these women in theory and historical interpretation. This work is an attempt to merge the two types by making an accessible narrative about the Acre's women while rooting it in theories of gender and economics. The historiography of reform must be discussed because it went hand in hand with prostitution. While the prohibition of alcohol took much of the focus of Progressive reformers, banning the sex trade was an ever-present issue for the reformers in the first decades of the twentieth century. The historiography of reform is important because it will outline the way reformers, and even those who study them, treat prostitutes.

Chapter two focuses entirely on the women of Hell's Half-Acre, detailing their lives in the red-light district throughout its existence. This chapter argues that the separation of the women working in the sex trade from the rest of society due to their designation as "fallen women" was the major cause of the hardships in their lives. Chapter three looks at the many different attempts to shut down Hell's Half-Acre from 1876 to 1917. It also discusses the

district's economic importance to the city of Fort Worth. I argue, in the third chapter, that while reformers battled to remove the red-light district for over forty years, it was economic factors that brought an end to the Acre when Fort Worth chose to build Camp Bowie. These two chapters will combine to tell the story of the women of Hell's Half-Acre while showing their economic importance to the city.

Those who live on the edges of society, however, like prostitutes, often leave no record of their existence; thus, studying these women means being creative about sources. Official records, such as the US Census, city directories, court records, city ordinances, and municipal records, were a valuable source used to trace the women through their lives in Fort Worth. Newspapers offer some of the best evidence to track prostitutes in Hell's Half-Acre. They typically had a crime column that reported on daily arrests and the criminal courts. While they do not give an accurate count of the women who worked and lived in the Acre, they can show the major trends of growth and decline in the red-light district. The *Fort Worth Democrat*, *Fort Worth Gazette*, *Fort Worth Record*, and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* as well as the *Dallas Morning News* have all been used in this work. The final resource in this study were Fort Worth reform groups' records and publications which contain valuable information about the red-light district as a whole and the different reform movements happening in the city.⁴

In a work focused on such a controversial topic, like the sex trade, there must be a discussion of the treatment of these women by the primary sources used like the newspapers and reform publications. Prostitutes were typically referred to by many different nicknames: soiled dove, demimonde, cyprian, bawd, floozy, and nymph du pavé, to name a few. For women

⁴It must be noted that there is one major gap in the sources used in this thesis. I had planned to use the Tarrant County Criminal Minutes for this time period as it is one of the only sources that offers all the criminal court cases in the county. When I did my research, however, it had been removed from public accessibility in order to be preserved and scanned.

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 Hell's Half-Acre as well as using their names whenever possible in an attempt to restore as much identity as possible to the women of the Acre.

To understand how the Acre's prostitutes have been overlooked by city history, an overview of the literature on Fort Worth is necessary. Few works on Fort Worth by professional historians exist, but there are several different local accounts of the city. Most of the early writings were personal memoirs from city leaders.⁵ B. B. Paddock was one of the best-known citizens in Fort Worth; he ran a popular newspaper, the *Fort Worth Democrat*, in the 1880s, which was vehemently anti-Acre, and he held several positions of political importance.⁶ J. C. Terrell was a well-known lawyer and one of the earliest settlers in Fort Worth. Howard Wallace Peak, born in 1856, was considered the first child born in Fort Worth. These men wrote memoirs of their time in the city and all of their accounts ignore the Acre entirely. Paddock also wrote the *History of Texas'* edition on Fort Worth, which was published in 1922. It ran over five hundred pages and yet Paddock only wrote one paragraph on Hell's Half-Acre. The ignoring of the Acre seems normal for these early works since a red-light district would presumably have been embarrassing to these men.

⁵J. C. Terrell, *Reminiscences of the Early Days of Fort Worth* (Fort Worth: Texas Printing Company, 1906); B. B. Paddock, *Early Days in Fort Worth: Much of which I saw and part of which I was* (Fort Worth: Texas Printing Company, 1906); and B. B. Paddock, *History of Texas; Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest Edition* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1922); Howard Wallace Peak, *The Story of Old Fort Worth* (San Antonio: Naylor Co. 1936).

⁶Patricia L. Duncan, "PADDOCK, BUCKLEY BURTON," Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fpa03>), accessed January 21, 2014. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

In 1953, Oliver Knight, a reporter for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, published what is considered the original history of the city, *Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity*.⁷ Knight's book examines Fort Worth from its beginnings up to 1949. He spends two chapters recounting the more audacious tales of the Acre, calling it the "bloody third ward."⁸ The women themselves only get about two paragraphs in Knight's book, however, since most of the space is devoted to the gunslingers and outlaws of the Acre. Knight was also the first to claim that the red-light district was cleaned up in the 1890s, seemingly denying its existence in the early twentieth century. His argument that a "town of gentility and decorum emerged" has found its way into other histories of Fort Worth. Knight's work is damaging because it erases an entire group of people from the history books.

Local historians of Fort Worth have built off Paddock and Knight to continue telling the story of the city. The 1960s, 70s, and 80s saw a few works published on the history of Fort Worth.⁹ Robert K. Taylor's *Fort Worth, 1800 to Now* and Julia Kathryn Garrett's *Fort Worth: A Frontier Triumph* build off Knight's *Fort Worth*, depending heavily on the accounts of early citizens like Paddock and Peak. Thus, their books do not discuss the Acre or the prostitutes at all. Leonard Sander's *How Fort Worth Became the Texasmost City* begins by stating that the book "is not intended as a definitive history." Still, he spends an entire chapter discussing the Acre even though he mentions no women. All the focus is on the men, specifically the lawmen and the outlaws. Janet Schmelzer's *Where the West Begins*, of the four mentioned, has the most

⁷ Oliver Knight, *Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁹ Robert K. Taylor, *Fort Worth, 1800 to Now* (Fort Worth: Star-Telegram, 1963); Julia Kathryn Garrett, *Fort Worth: A Frontier Triumph* (Austin: Encino Press, 1972); Leonard Sanders, *How Fort Worth Became the Texasmost City* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1973); Janet L. Schmelzer, *Where the West Begins, Fort Worth and Tarrant County* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1984).

information on the Acre and its prostitutes. She even details the many reform efforts undertaken and argues that the red-light district lasted well into the twentieth century.

In the last few decades, there has been one name strongly connected with the writing of Fort Worth's history: Richard F. Selcer. Selcer, who received his PhD in history from TCU, has written several books on the history of the city, the police force, and even on the interesting characters who lived in Fort Worth.¹⁰ He also wrote a history of Hell's Half-Acre which will be discussed later. His book, *Fort Worth: a Texas Original!*, is his only general history of the city. He devotes a few pages to the Acre but does not delve too deeply into it, choosing to give the basic facts. Carol E. Roark's *Fort Worth & Tarrant County: A Historical Guide* is interesting because it acts almost as a guidebook for the city while claiming to detail Fort Worth's history. And yet, it ignores the Acre entirely. The most recent history of Fort Worth is Rita Cook's *A Brief History of Fort Worth*, which focuses almost exclusively on the Stockyards. She does, however, manage to talk about Hell's Half-Acre, specifically the gambling and saloons. As with nearly every other history of Fort Worth, the Acre's prostitutes are ignored and overlooked.¹¹

Harold W. Rich, another TCU PhD, is the final author in this brief historiography and that is because his works are a little different than the others. Both of Rich's studies on Fort Worth are not books; they are his master's thesis and PhD dissertation.¹² His thesis, a study of the Fort Worth Police Department in the late nineteenth century, devotes a great amount of space

¹⁰Richard F. Selcer and William B. Potter, *The Fort that Became a City: An Illustrated Reconstruction of Fort Worth, Texas, 1849-1853* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1995); Richard F. Selcer, *Fort Worth: A Texas Original!* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2004); Richard F. Selcer, *Fort Worth Characters* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2009); Richard F. Selcer and Kevin Foster, *Written in Blood: The History of Fort Worth's Fallen Lawmen, Volume 1, 1861-1909* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2010); and Richard F. Selcer and Kevin Foster, *Written in Blood: The History of Fort Worth's Fallen Lawmen, Volume 2, 1910-1928* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2011).

¹¹Carol E. Roark, *Fort Worth & Tarrant County: A Historical Guide* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2003); Rita Cook, *A Brief History of Fort Worth: Cowtown Through The Years* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2011).

¹²Harold W. Rich, "Twenty-Five Years of Struggle and Progress: The Fort Worth Police Department, 1837-1897" (MA thesis, Texas Christian University, 1999); Harold W. Rich, "Beyond Outpost: Fort Worth, 1880-1918" (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 2006).

to the Acre and the women who worked there. His dissertation is a detailed history of Fort Worth from 1880 to 1918, focusing on the economics of the city. Since the Acre generated so much revenue, Rich references both the red-light district and the prostitutes throughout the work. These two histories, out of all of those mentioned, give the most information on the women of the Acre.

An analysis of the trends in the historiography of both the American sex trade and anti-vice reform is needed to understand just where this work fits and which gaps it aims to fill. The historiography of prostitution in the United States is a long, shallow one. Scholarly works about the history of the sex trade have really only been published in significant numbers in the last few decades. Anti-vice reform during the Progressive Era, however, holds a much larger position in US history; and its historiography, which is remarkably bigger and more in depth than the historiography of prostitution, reflects that position. One of the main reasons for the disparity in the two historiographies is the source material available to historians. Reformers were notoriously good record keepers, and groups often had newsletters or newspaper columns; they left a paper trail. Prostitutes, on the other hand, did their best to leave no records, going so far as to use fake names and move around constantly to protect themselves from the law. There is also no stigma attached to reform as there is with sex work; writing a book about reformers in New York City does not carry the same controversial weight as writing about Irish prostitutes in Five Points. Thus, historians have gravitated toward writing the histories of the reformers instead of the histories of the prostitutes. This chapter will examine both historiographies, anti-vice reform and prostitution, to give a foundation to this study as well as explain exactly which gaps it will be filling.

Anti-vice reform, much like prostitution, has been predominantly a woman's domain. Much of the focus of historical works has been on white middle-class women who were thought to be the foundation of the reform movement. Early works, like Ruth Bordin's *Women and Temperance*, published in 1981, are simply attempts to present these women as historical actors. The historiography of anti-vice reform has changed with the larger historical trends. The last few decades have seen a larger focus on minorities in reform efforts as well as the application of theory to the field. The historiography of anti-vice reform is important to this study because these works present, for the most part, the reformers' viewpoint of prostitution, which was a negative one. It is also helpful as background on the reform efforts that happened in Fort Worth.

Starting in the 1980s, historians began writing on the various anti-vice reform movements happening in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As mentioned previously, Ruth Bordin's *Women and Temperance*, published in 1981, is one of the older works in the historiography of anti-vice reform. Bordin's study places women in the center of the temperance movement, specifically the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). She argues that the WCTU held a place of importance for female reformers because "it was the national voice through which women expressed their views."¹³ While Bordin does not address prostitution specifically, her book is included because it was one of the first to put the focus on female reformers. Another first is Barbara M. Hobson's *Uneasy Virtue*, which examines prostitution reform throughout American history. Her book is an attempt to bridge prostitution rights and feminist theory. Hobson, after looking at the last 150 years of prostitution policy, argues that "various groups have used prostitution as a social barometer of anxiety and fear of a

¹³Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), xviii.

changing world."¹⁴ *Uneasy Virtue* utilizes anti-vice reform as a framework to analyze the organization of class and gender in society.

The historiographical focus on female reformers continues in Lori D. Ginzburg's *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, which expanded women's roles in history by arguing that these women shaped American society through the connection of gender roles and "benevolent activism" to the formation of middle-class identity.¹⁵ Ginzburg saw the ideology of female reformers as a major factor in class formation. Robyn Muncy's study, *Creating A Female Dominion in American Reform*, furthers Ginzburg's claims of female ideology by arguing that female reformers were able to create their own "dominion." Women were very effective as long as they were able to control the institutions where they worked, which is why establishments like Jane Addams' Hull House were successful. *Creating A Female Dominion* is a cross-generational examination of female professionalism and reform that gave rise to the "female dominion."¹⁶

The idea of a female space in reform, like Robyn Muncy claims, has become a popular topic in the historiography. Alison M. Parker's *Purifying America* argues that it was the WCTU who shaped the idea of cultural censorship being vital in protecting children. These women were able to use the censorship debate as a way to change society's morals and culture. Leigh Ann Wheeler continues this discussion in her work, *Against Obscenity*, which looks at the clubwomen's attempts to deal with the commercialization of sex. Wheeler argues that female reformers used their dominion to subvert and reinforce the idea that women should be in the domestic sphere, an old debate. The anti-obscenity reformers of *Against Obscenity* were able to

¹⁴Barbara M. Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), ix.

¹⁵Lori D. Ginzburg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 7.

¹⁶Robyn Muncy, *Creating A Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), xii. See Also: Noralee Frankel, *Gender, Class, Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991).

peacefully take over the leadership of the movement and then use that movement to inform discussion of national culture and sexuality.¹⁷

Several works on anti-vice reform focus not on the female reformers, but on the reform itself. David J. Pivar is an authority on the purity movements of the early twentieth century. His 1973 work, *The Purity Crusade*, details the purity movement in its entirety and argues that the reformers were attempting the "construction of new social institution and the transformation of older ones" which included prostitution. The move to regulate the sex trade quickly turned into a moral movement for social purification. Pivar continued his research in *Purity and Hygiene*, which examines how the social purity movement transformed into the social hygiene movement. Essentially, it is a study of how the goal changed from achieving urban morality to closing brothels and containing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Prostitutes, who had once been disgraced women capable of being saved by reformers, were now a societal threat dealt with by the law.¹⁸

The Progressive Era's response to prostitution is another aspect of the historiography of anti-vice reform. Mara L. Keire's *For Business and Pleasure* is a study of vice regulation in the Progressive Era of the United States. She focuses on the many different methodologies that reformers tried across the country. Keire's study is quite useful because it is broad, looking at the entire United States instead of one urban area. Her work can then be applied to localized studies. Another broad history of reform in the Progressive Era is Mark Thomas Connelly's *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era*, which "sets forth an analysis and interpretation

¹⁷ Alison M. Parker, *Purifying America: Women, Cultural Reform, and Pro-Censorship Activism, 1873-1933* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 1; Leigh Ann Wheeler, *Against Obscenity: Reform and the Politics of Womanhood in America, 1873-1935* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 2,8.

¹⁸ David J. Pivar, *Purity Crusade: Sexual Morality and Social Control, 1868-1900* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 5; David J. Pivar, *Purity and Hygiene: Women, Prostitution, and the "American Plan," 1900-1930* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), xi.

of the cluster of ideas, beliefs, emotions, and fears that propelled anti-prostitution in the early 20th century." Connelly argues that prostitution acted as a symbol for a great number of anxieties brought forth by cultural and social changes; it was blamed for all kinds of troubling issues. Thus, the transformation of American society in the Progressive Era caused as much anxiety as the actual red-light districts.¹⁹ Both of these works highlight reform during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, using prostitution as a way to understand American culture.

Prostitution has always been a state and local issue; in 1910, however, Congress passed the White Slave Traffic Act (known as the Mann Act), the first federal law concerning prostitution. White slavery was another term for human trafficking for the purposes of "involuntary brothel prostitution."²⁰ David J. Langum's *Crossing Over the Line*, published in 1994, is the first comprehensive history of the Mann Act. *Crossing Over the Line* is a legal history, which means it does not look at the social or cultural implications of the act, just the legal side. Langum uses the Mann Act as an example of how dangerous it can be to legislate morality which he claims is incompatible with a democratic state's emphasis on civil liberties. While Langum gives no thought to historical context in his book, Brian Donovan spends his entire study looking at American historical constructs in *White Slave Crusades*. Donovan examines the many white slavery claims of the Progressive Era in an attempt to understand how they "performed the ideological work necessary for gender and racial formations." Essentially, Donovan argues that reformers employed the white slave narrative as a way to shape the meaning of race and gender, claiming that "crusades against white slavery helped build racial hierarchies by emphasizing moral and sexual differences between Anglo-Saxons or native-born

¹⁹Mara L. Keire, *For Business and Pleasure: Red-Light Districts and the Regulation of Vice in the United States, 1890-1933* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 3-4; Mark Thomas Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (1980; repr., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 6-7.

²⁰Mara L. Keire, "The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States, 1907-1917," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 35, no. 1 (Autumn, 2001): 7.

whites on one hand and new European immigrants, Chinese and African Americans on the other."²¹

The historiography of anti-vice reform, unlike that of prostitution, is primarily academic with a major focus on women, as well as gender and sexuality, race, and class issues. In the field of prostitution history, however, scholarly works are not the primary type, which makes the historiography of prostitution in the United States difficult to organize because of the different kinds of history it has to include. Dr. William Sanger's *The History of Prostitution*, published in 1858, is the first history of the sex trade in the United States.²² It was over a century, though, before more works were written about American prostitution. When the field of history opened up to women in the 1970s, it allowed prostitution to become a subject of study. The 1980s saw several works published and the field began to focus on two subjects: major cities and the western frontier. This trend has continued to the present day; for instance, two of the most recently published books focus on New Orleans and on the Colorado frontier.²³ These two works are also an example of the current direction of the field which has split into two camps: popular and academic history.

In 1858, Dr. William Sanger published his study, *The History of Prostitution*, after working as the doctor at Blackwell's Island, a penitentiary in New York City. Every day, Sanger treated the prostitutes there, forming his belief that prostitution was a social evil. He surveyed the two thousand women in the prison and used the evidence from his questionnaire as the basis for his book. He saw *The History of Prostitution* as a tool to convince the government to finally ban

²¹David J. Langum, *Crossing over the Line: Legislating Morality and the Mann Act* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 16, [Quotation] 129.

²²William W. Sanger, *The History of Prostitution* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishing Co., 1858).

²³Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013); D. A. Brockett, *Wicked Western Slope: Mayhem, Mischief, and Murder in Colorado* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2012).

the sex trade. Thus, his book was both a history of prostitution and a propaganda piece. Problems abound in Sanger's work, however, with his treatment of the women as victims with little to no agency. According to Sanger, economic destitution was the major reason that most women turned to prostitution; there were some, however, who chose to enter the sex trade because it offered easy access to alcohol or drugs.²⁴ Sanger's book is written from the perspective of a white middle-class man and it shows in the way he talks about these women. They are simply victims who need to be saved, nothing more.

For over a century, Sanger's *The History of Prostitution* was the only work available on the subject of prostitution in the United States. While Sanger continued to edit his book, publishing several editions, there were no new studies done until the 1960s. Vern L. Bullough's *The History of Prostitution*, published in 1964, and Fernando Henriques' *Prostitution and Society*, published in 1966, are general histories of prostitution.²⁵ Neither book delves deeply into prostitution in the United States, choosing instead to deliver facts about the sex trade, like the number of women involved, without engaging with the lives of the actual prostitutes. The women are faceless subjects, instead of real people, treated almost clinically by these two authors. They also both rely heavily on Sanger's work for their discussions of prostitution by focusing on major urban areas, like New York City, although without the slant toward reform and prohibition that Sanger had.

The 1980s saw a dramatic rise in the number of works published about the history of prostitution. This growth was built on two reasons: the development of social history and the significant numbers of women entering the field of history. The majority of the books on prostitution in the 1980s were written by women. Ruth Rosen's *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution*

²⁴William W. Sanger, *The History of Prostitution* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishing Co., 1858), 488-89.

²⁵Vern L. Bullough, *The History of Prostitution* (New York: University Books, 1964); Fernando Henriques, *Prostitution and Society: Europe and the New World* (London: Panther Books, 1966).

in America, 1900-1918 was one of the first.²⁶ Rosen took the historiography of prostitution into a new direction by focusing on the women and not just the sex trade itself as the previous works had. Her study uses prostitution to show how gender and class restricted women's options during the Progressive Era. Rosen argues that women saw prostitution as a means of survival and that the Progressive reaction to it was a response to myths created by reformers about the sex trade.²⁷

Anne M. Butler's *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery*, published in 1985, is the first historical study of prostitution on the western frontier. Butler's aim was to "desensationalize" prostitution by focusing on the economic side of the sex trade and leaving out "moral . . . indictments."²⁸ She also examined the personal relationships of prostitutes with other prostitutes, customers, and their families, which had not been done before. *Daughters of Joy* was also one of the first to study the relationship between prostitutes and law enforcement. The law was often corrupt in their dealings with women in the sex trade, requiring monetary bribes or other forms of payment to avoid imprisonment. Butler used prostitution as a lens through which frontier society could be viewed.

Christine Stansell's *City of Women*, published in 1986, examines prostitution in New York City and is a good example of the studies that focused on urban centers. While Stansell's book is not primarily looking at the sex trade, she spends a significant amount of time on it. *City of Women* is an important work in the historiography because it argues that reform efforts were so popular because prostitution was a direct threat to the patriarchal society. Stansell claims that

²⁶Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

²⁷*Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

²⁸Anne M. Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery; Prostitutes in the American West, 1865-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), xvi-xvii.

women removed themselves from patriarchal control by becoming prostitutes.²⁹ She also discusses the many reasons women entered the sex trade, refuting Sanger's argument that it was either destitution or inclination. Stansell's book is significant to the historiography of prostitution because it brings patriarchy and class into the discussion, which had not been done before.

The division in subject matter in the field of prostitution history continued into the next few decades. The split deepened when the studies of western frontier prostitution began to be done, for the most part, as popular histories while the works on urban prostitution, conversely, have been primarily academic histories. Local histories of prostitutes on the frontier have actually been published for decades. They are typically a collection of anecdotes or vignettes about the women of the red-light districts. Ronald Dean Miller's *Shady Ladies of the West*, Caroline Bancroft's *Six Racy Madams of Colorado*, and Kay Reynolds Blair's *Ladies of the Lamplight* were all published in the 1960s and 70s. They are all local popular histories of red-light districts on the frontier.³⁰

The popular histories of western prostitution persist, with new titles printed every year. They seem to have grown more marketable in the last few decades since these kinds of histories continue to be written in increasing numbers. David C. Bowser's *San Antonio's Old Red Light District: A History* and Donald D. Toms' *Tenderloin Tales*, both published in the 1990s, represent the genre well. They each tell the outlandish stories of life on the Texas and South Dakota frontier involving all the usual characters: cowboys, Native Americans, and prostitutes. Toms' book goes further, however, by attempting to detail the lives of the people on the frontier.

²⁹Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (New York: Knopf Publishing, 1986), 171-72.

³⁰Ronald Dean Miller, *Shady Ladies of the West* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1964); Caroline Bancroft, *Six Racy Madams of Colorado* (Boulder: Johnson Publishing, 1965); and Kay Reynolds Blair, *Ladies of the Lamplight* (Leadville: Timberline Books, 1971). See also *Fille de Joie: The Book of Courtesans, Sporting Girls, Ladies of the Evening, Madams, A Few Occasionals & Some Royal Favorites* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

Instead of retelling all the old tales, Toms tries to convey the idea that the life of a prostitute was not, for the most part, easy or fun. He even discusses sexually transmitted diseases and high rates of suicide.³¹

While these local histories add little to the historiography concerning theory, they do offer up an impressive number of primary sources. These popular histories, especially the ones printed in the last few years, are typically well-researched and could aid an academic historian in finding the necessary sources. These histories are only helpful when it comes to sources, if the author actually footnotes and cites the materials used. There are, however, histories of prostitution that are popular but lack strong sources. Some examples include Michael Rutter's *Upstairs Girls*, Jeremy Agnew's *Brides of the Multitude*, and Sherry A. Monahan's *The Wicked West*. All three authors are looking at prostitution in the American West in the nineteenth century. Even though they are all giving general histories of prostitution in the West, they still offer up some good information about the sex trade. Rutter hardly uses any primary sources, however, choosing to rely totally on secondary sources. Agnew claims that the abundance of young, single men traveling out West led to an acceptance of prostitution. His argument has no support, however, because he failed to cite the relevant sources. Monahan includes a few memoirs and personal accounts but the majority of her book offers no citations.³² These local histories are problematic regarding their sources, which is a common issue for these types of

³¹David C. Bowser, *San Antonio's Old Red Light District: A History, 1890-1941* (San Antonio: Bowman, 1992); Donald D. Toms, *Tenderloin Tales: Prostitution, Gambling, and Opium on the Gold Belt of the Northern Black Hills* (Pierre, SD: State Publishing Company, 1997), 11. See also Anne Seagraves, *Soiled Doves: Prostitution in the Early West* (Hayden, ID: Wesanne Publications, 1994).

³²Michael Rutter, *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West* (Helena, MT: Farcountry Press, 2005); Jeremy Agnew, *Brides of the Multitude: Prostitution in the Old West* (Lake City, CO: Western Reflection Pub. Co., 2008); and Sherry A. Monahan, *The Wicked West: Boozers, Cruisers, Gamblers, and More* (Tucson, AZ: Rio Nuevo Publishers, 2005); Chris Enss, *Pistol Packin' Madams: True Stories of Notorious Women of the Old West* (Guilford, CT: TwoDot, 2006).

works. Most writers of local history are amateur historians, which means they typically do not have the training required to do a well-researched and cited study.

While the majority of local histories lack citations or sources, a few works have a decent amount of research and sources. Jan MacKell's *Brothels, Bordellos, and Bad Girls* and *Red Light Women of the Rocky Mountains* and Lael Morgan's *Wanton West* are prime examples of this.³³ While these books lack any historical interpretation or application of a theoretical framework, they are well-researched and contain an abundance of primary sources. Thus, they have some use from an academic standpoint. MacKell and Morgan's books act as a compilation of sources that could then be employed by a historian who would add theory, interpretation, and context to them. Jan MacKell's *Red Light Women* is the best case of this because she traveled across the Rocky Mountains, going to small towns and local libraries to discover all the sources that she could. Even though these works are well-researched and cited, however, they are still, for the most part, a collection of stories about prostitutes without delving any deeper than surface level. By avoiding discussions of gender, race, economics, or power, these popular histories add to the mythologizing of prostitution on the frontier. For that reason, this side of the historiography has been stagnant for the last several decades; these histories have brought nothing new to the field and instead are just repeating the same formula for different towns, states, and regions.

The non-popular histories of prostitution, conversely, are academic and typically focused on an urban center, like New York City or Chicago. While the popular histories of prostitution tread the same water, the scholarly works have changed with the field, applying current trends to the study of prostitutes. These studies have really only been written in the last decade. One

³³Jan MacKell, *Red Light Women of the Rocky Mountains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); 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); and Penny A. Peterson, *Minneapolis Madams: The Lost History of Prostitution on the Riverfront* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

exception to this is Patricia Cline Cohen's *The Murder of Helen Jewett*, published in 1999. Cohen's book took the infamous murder of a prostitute in 1830s New York City and used it to examine violence against prostitutes and women in general. She then used violence against women as a framework to discuss gender biases in nineteenth-century America.³⁴ Cohen's ability to use prostitution as a way to analyze wider societal issues is typical of the genre. These studies have been able to use the experiences of the women involved to understand the world they lived in which is a definite contrast to the popular histories.

Race, like gender, is one of the major frameworks used to study prostitution. Cynthia Blair's book *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-Of-The-Century Chicago* focuses on the role race played in urban prostitution, arguing that it was one of the only ways for black women to make money. Blair defines black prostitutes as laborers, adding these women to an economic category that they had been excluded from previously. *I've Got to Make My Livin'* views prostitution through the multiple lenses of race, labor, and gender in order to understand the economic struggle of black women in urban areas, and in doing so, connects prostitution in Progressive-era Chicago to a larger context in US history.³⁵

Emily Epstein Landau's *Spectacular Wickedness* is a study of prostitution in New Orleans' infamous red-light district, Storyville. While Landau gives the history of the district and the women who lived and worked there, her book sets itself apart in the historiography because of its intersectionality. Intersectionality, first theorized by Kimberlé Crenshaw, is the study of the intersections of multiple systems of oppression or discrimination, typically race, class, and gender. *Spectacular Wickedness* argues that "Storyville offered a stage for acting out cultural fantasies of white supremacy, patriarchal power, and a renewed version of American manhood

³⁴Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 84-85.

³⁵Cynthia 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).

for the twentieth century."³⁶ Landau uses prostitution in New Orleans as a way to examine the relationship between race and gender in the Deep South. *Spectacular Wickedness* is a great example of the way the historiography is moving, toward academic intersectional histories that use prostitution as a way to understand the larger context.

Over the last few decades, academic works on prostitution in Texas have been written. They are, for the most part, case studies of cities, such as Dallas, Austin, and Waco. David C. Humphrey's "Prostitution and Public Policy in Austin, Texas, 1870–1915," Amy S. Balderach's "A Different Kind of Reservation: Waco's Red-Light District Revisited, 1880-1920," and Gwinnetta Malone's "To Keep Those Red Lights Burning: Dallas' Response To Prostitution, 1874-1913" all focus on the sex trade in specific Texas towns during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³⁷ Like this study, these three works look at both prostitution and the attempts by government and reform groups to control or eliminate the sex trade.

Two works on Hell's Half-Acre belong in the historiography, both written by Richard F. Selcer. He published *Hell's Half-Acre: The Life and Legend of a Red-Light District*, a history of the district from 1876 to 1900, in 1991. In this book, Selcer gives a detailed picture of life in the Acre. *Hell's Half-Acre* belongs on the side of the historiography with the popular local histories; his book is well-researched but offers no larger context, historical interpretation, or theory. It is simply a history of Hell's Half-Acre. It is also not only about the prostitutes. He devotes an entire chapter to the women of the Acre and references them frequently throughout the rest of the book. The focus of *Hell's Half-Acre*, however, is on men. Selcer spends more than two hundred

³⁶Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 1.

³⁷David C. Humphrey, "Prostitution and Public Policy in Austin, Texas, 1870-1915," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 86, no. 4 (April 1983): 473-516; Amy S. Balderach, "A Different Kind of Reservation: Waco's Red-Light District Revisited, 1880-1920," (MA thesis, Baylor University, 2005); Gwinnetta Malone Crowell, "To Keep Those Red Lights Burning: Dallas' Response To Prostitution, 1874-1913," (MA thesis, University of Texas at Arlington, 2010).

pages discussing the city leaders, policemen, gamblers, and outlaws. Selcer's priority is these men, and the women of the Acre suffer for that. Selcer's treatment of the women is problematic as well. While he dedicates some of the book to the Acre's prostitutes, he makes the poor choice of referring to them by a number of different nicknames, such as "soiled dove" and "floozie" which reduces the identity of these women to their occupation.³⁸ He also discounts their importance to Fort Worth's economy. There are also issues of citations in the book; while much of *Hell's Half-Acre* is documented, there are several instances of Selcer making claims with no evidence to back up his statements. He also, when lacking the necessary evidence, employs "a little scholarly imagination and the more complete accounts of similar red-light districts."³⁹ *Hell's Half-Acre* is a book about a red-light district that spotlights the men, forcing the women into the background. Selcer's second work, "Fort Worth and the Fraternity of Strange Women," is an article about Hell's Half-Acre's female population. This article is, for the most part, a rehashing of *Hell's Half-Acre*, looking at the same time frame, using the same sources. In fact, Selcer offers no new insights in this article. While it does focus completely on the women, "the Fraternity of Strange Women" delves no deeper than the surface.⁴⁰

Because this study is attempting to revise *Hell's Half-Acre* and the "Fraternity of Strange Women," there is quite a bit of overlap in my study and Selcer's works. Both examine the red-light district in Fort Worth from its beginnings; Selcer, however, stops at the turn of the century while I continue on until the actual shutdown of the Acre in 1919. Selcer and I share a focus, to a point: the Acre's female population. While we both examine the lives of the women, my study delves much deeper into their lives than his since Selcer spends much of his time looking at other

³⁸Richard F. Selcer, *Hell's Half-Acre: The Life and Legend of a Red-light District* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 1991), 5, 21.

³⁹Ibid, xiii.

⁴⁰Richard F. Selcer, "Fort Worth and the Fraternity of Strange Women," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 96, no. 1 (July 1992): 55-86.

groups in the red-light district. I do, however, tread some of the same paths for sources that Selcer did. We both reference the Fort Worth newspapers extensively as well as the existing court and criminal records. Although there is significant overlap between my work and Selcer's, the deviations between the two are even greater.

Hell's Half-Acre was a part of Fort Worth's history for more than forty years, yet the majority of the city histories have ignored its existence. Those who have told the story of the Acre tend to focus on the male side of Fort Worth's vice, gambling, and liquor, while overlooking the female prostitutes who made up a significant amount of the population. Because of the inherent controversy in their occupation and the lack of records concerning them, sex workers are often forgotten in narratives. One major goal of this study is to fill that gap in Fort Worth's historiography, bringing the women of the Acre to the center of the story. Another is to show the economic importance of prostitutes, making an argument for prostitution to be included in the historiography of women's labor. And the final aim of this work is to demonstrate how it was money, not reform, that closed the Acre.

Chapter 2: The Prostitutes of Hell's Half-Acre

On June 6, 1849, Major Ripley Arnold, of the United States Army, founded Fort Worth on the south side of the Trinity River. What began as a military camp soon grew into a village and by 1870 had become "the major stop on the cattle trail."¹ The seasonal arrival of hundreds of cowboys looking for drinks and good times created the demand for saloons, gambling houses, and brothels which the red-light district known as Hell's Half-Acre quickly supplied. The city of Fort Worth grew even bigger when the Texas & Pacific Railway came in 1876. When Fort Worth expanded, the Acre did as well, from a few city blocks to a sizable portion of downtown. This chapter is an examination of the history of Hell's Half-Acre and its female population throughout its forty years of existence. Underlying the story of the women of the Acre is an analysis of gender and prostitution, how the separation of the women working in the sex trade from the rest of society was the major cause of the hardships in their lives.

It was common in the red-light districts of the late nineteenth century for prostitution to take several forms, and Hell's Half-Acre was no different. Fort Worth had two distinct groups of prostitutes: crib girls and sporting-house girls. The lower and more common level of prostitute was the "crib girl." Cribs, typically the first structures to appear in a red-light district, were one-room shacks that provided fast, cheap service. They were often built in rows, creating the terms "on the row" or "the line." Prostitutes who worked out of cribs were often poor and destitute, "just a step above the lowly streetwalker."² Cribs made up a large portion of the Acre; in 1907, there were over sixty of them throughout downtown. Photos from *The Purity Journal*, a local reform publication, show that Fort Worth cribs were physically connected to saloons and gambling dens, on the main streets and in alleyways. Some crib girls also worked in the dance

¹Oliver Knight, *Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 10, 51.

²Anne M. Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865-90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), xviii.



Figure 1 - 1906 Photograph of a brothel and a row of cribs.³

houses; they danced and drank with men in the houses and then brought them back to their cribs.⁴ Sporting-house girls, unlike prostitutes working in cribs, worked on several levels, from the basic boarding house up to the high-class parlor house. All cribs were, for the most part, the same; sporting-houses or brothels, however, came in various forms. The more common type was the boarding house, also called a "bawdy" house, which was open to all customers. There were also higher quality brothels known as parlor houses. They were "often lavishly furnished," and the women who worked in these houses were younger and prettier than the crib girls. Thus, parlor houses could attract a wealthier clientele.⁵ Prostitutes of all ages worked in Hell's Half-Acre, though the majority were in their teens and twenties. The madams, on the other hand, were typically older, in their thirties, forties, and fifties. In 1900, Madam Dolly Love was thirty-two,

³J. T. Upchurch, "The Lawless Liquor Traffic and the Infamous Traffic in Girls," in *The Purity Journal*, vol. 11, no. 9 (March, 1906), 4.

Courtesy, Berachah Home Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.

⁴"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, November 29, 1878; "Restricted District Is Closed With Injunction," *Fort Worth Record*, March 21, 1917; J. T. Upchurch, "The Lawless Liquor Traffic and the Infamous Traffic in Girls," in *The Purity Journal*, vol. 11, no. 9 (March, 1906): 4-8.

⁵Jan MacKell, *Red Light Women of the Rocky Mountains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), 23; 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; [Quotation] Melissa Hope Ditmore, *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 331.

Mary Porter was fifty-five, Pearl Beebe was thirty-seven, and Mabel Thompson was thirty-one. Conversely, the average age of the women working in their brothels in the same year was twenty-two, with the youngest being fifteen while the oldest was forty-four.⁶

In Hell's Half-Acre, the various locations where prostitutes worked differed in size and style. In 1906, *The Purity Journal* took the only existing photos of the cribs and brothels in Hell's Half-Acre, and while the location or owner of the dwellings are not specified, they still act as a good representation of the Acre's businesses. The cribs in the district were uniform in size and built in rows, connected to saloons and dance houses. The brothels, on the other hand, differed in appearance. One was a large two-story house with a wraparound porch and balconies while another was brick with imposing white columns on either side of the front door and great bay windows. There were also less elegant houses of prostitution like the two-story wooden boarding house which was surrounded by cribs and the brothel located on the second floor of a saloon. These pictures show that prostitutes in Hell's Half-Acre worked in all kinds of places, from mansions to one-room shacks.⁷

⁶1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 1B, lines 84-92; June 1, 1900; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 1A, lines 2-11; June 1, 1900; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 1B, lines 91-96; June 1, 1900; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 1A, lines 13-18; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line];

⁷J. T. Upchurch, "The Lawless Liquor Traffic and the Infamous Traffic in Girls," in *The Purity Journal*, vol. 11, no. 9 (March, 1906): 2-8.



Figure 2 – Three different brothels.⁸

The Acre stretched across four of the city's major streets—Main, Rusk, Calhoun, and Jones—and most of the district's brothels were clustered together over a few blocks. Several of the district's houses of prostitution were located on Rusk and Calhoun between Seventh and Fifteenth streets. There were seven brothels on Rusk between Tenth and Twelfth streets and four brothels on Calhoun between Twelfth and Thirteenth streets. Thus, a majority of Hell's Half-Acre's female population lived in relatively close quarters. While many of the well-known madams of the Acre—Josie Belmont, Dolly Love, Pearl Beebe, Mildred Clifton, Mabel Thompson, and Mary Porter—lived within these blocks, houses of prostitution were also

⁸J. T. Upchurch, "The Lawless Liquor Traffic and the Infamous Traffic in Girls," in *The Purity Journal*, vol. 11, no. 9 (March, 1906), 5-7.

Courtesy, Berachah Home Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.

scattered throughout the rest of the district. It became common for brothels to change owners in the Acre. For example, the house at 1201 Rusk was Jessie Reeve's home from 1885 to 1889 and then Pearl Beebe's from 1901 to 1906. Madams moving brothels was also a regular occurrence in the Acre. Between 1892 and her death in 1902, Dolly Love resided in three different brothels on Rusk and Calhoun Streets. Georgia Finn, like Love, lived in three different brothels from 1907 to 1916. Mary Porter lived at 1116 Rusk for five years, from 1888 to 1893, and then moved down the block to 1106 Rusk for the next seven years.⁹

The major distinction between crib girls and sporting-house girls was the presence of a madam. As the name suggests, the majority of madams were women; while men were the keepers of saloons and gambling dens, women kept the houses of prostitution. A prostitute, simply defined, sold her body, specifically the sexual acts she could do with her body, for money. Madams, on the other hand, were a combination of pimp and landlord. They rented out rooms to prostitutes and then took a share of the prostitutes' earnings. Madams also advertised their wares as a way to bring in business. Quite a few, like Dolly Love and Mildred Clifton, practiced prostitution in their own brothels. Some of the madams started out as prostitutes, like Bessie Cannon, who worked in a brothel in 1900 but owned her own in 1918. Madams, because they were retaining rents and a share of their prostitutes' earnings, were in a position to earn more money than the prostitutes.¹⁰ The number of "girls" varied in each brothel in Hell's Half-

⁹*City Directory of Fort Worth, 1877*, 85; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1885-86*, 76, 85, 191; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1888-89*, 75, 115, 157, 198, 204, 217; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1892-93*, 157, 258; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1894*, 92; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1894-95*, 272; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1895*, 250; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1896-97*, 280; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1899-1900*, 184; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1901-02*, 63, 89, 176, 254; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1905-06*, 79, 457; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1907-08*, 229, 259, 594; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1909-10*, 196, 407, 506; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1911*, 441; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1912-13*, 209; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1914-15*, 206; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1916*, 344, 675. U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

¹⁰Jan MacKell, *Red Light Women*, 23; "Fort Worth," *Dallas Weekly Herald*, November 3, 1881; "11 Women Held To U.S. Grand Jury On Vice Charges," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 7, 1918; "Officials Make General Round-

Acre. In 1900, Mabel Thompson had four women living and working in her brothel, while Mary Porter, Pearl Beebe, and Mildred Clifton all housed and employed five women. In the same year, Dolly Love had seven women residing in her brothel, and working as prostitutes.¹¹

It is nearly impossible to gather an accurate number of women working and living in the Acre. Prostitution is a mobile job; women go where the jobs are. Prostitutes were often ready to drop everything and move on if the law began to harass them. Many women in the Acre came from other places and then moved on when it became necessary. Thus, the population of women in Hell's Half-Acre could change from day to day, making it difficult to keep track of them. Since they already existed on the edges of society, prostitutes found moving to be easy, especially to Fort Worth, which was known to be wide open and lax on police.¹² Hell's Half-Acre had prostitutes from as nearby as Dallas and from as far away as Indian Territory and Mexico.¹³ While the majority of the women moving constantly were prostitutes, madams managed to be mobile as well. It was more difficult for the women running the brothels because they typically had roots, like owning or renting a house. Mildred Clifton, after dealing with legal troubles, left her home on Rusk Street and moved to San Antonio. She continued her business

Up," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, November 8, 1900; "3 Women Will Be Arraigned Before U.S. Commissioner," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 28, 1917; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 1, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 2B, line 79; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; "16 Indicted in U. S. Court on Brothel and Liquor Charges," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 21, 1918.

¹¹1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 1A, lines 13-18; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 1A, lines 2-11; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 1B, lines 91-96; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 4A, lines 42-48; June 4, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 146B, lines 84-92; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line].

¹²"5 Informants In Vice Fight Missing When Cases Called," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 25, 1917; "Indictments in Federal Court Charge Forty With Offenses," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 30, 1918; "U.S. Grand Jury In Final Report Returns Bills Against 20 More," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 31, 1918.

¹³"Woman Found Dead; Man Under Arrest, Denies The Charge," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 5, 1911; "Woman Of Town Takes Acid And Dies," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 2, 1904; "Mexican Girl Who Swam Rio Grande May Be Deported," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August, 18, 1918.

there and, by 1910, had a house with five women living and working there.¹⁴ There were also those who got themselves out of the business when they moved. Pearl Beebe, a well-known madam in the Acre, left Fort Worth for El Paso where she lived as a housewife, leaving the red lights behind.¹⁵

Along with being mobile, prostitutes also changed their names and identities to suit their situation. Working in the sex trade was not typically something to be proud of; thus, many women who became prostitutes changed their names or back stories. It was common for these women to give themselves nicknames, or accept them from someone else, and then use them as their given name. Hell's Half-Acre had its fair share of these with women who called themselves Irish Nell, Dutch Rose, and Midget Boston.¹⁶ Women working in the sex trade changed their identities for a number of reasons; some did it to protect their family's reputation while others did it to hide from their relatives. For example, Velma Belmont changed her name when she came to Fort Worth to distance herself from her abusive family.¹⁷ Others, like Roxy Allen, whose actual name was Ada Kerr, changed their names simply because they did not want their family names connected with prostitution.¹⁸ Madams also took part in changing their names. Some, like Madam Brown, took ambiguous names to shield their actual identities.¹⁹ Whether it was a prostitute or a madam choosing a new name, fluid identities were a major aspect of life in the Acre.

¹⁴1910 United State Federal Census, San Antonio Ward 2, Bexar County, Texas; p. 7B, lines 72-77; April 19, 1910; ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line].

¹⁵"BEA - BEE," *El Paso City Directory*, El Paso, Texas, 1910, page 130, Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line].

¹⁶"The Courts," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, November 4, 1883; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Democrat*, January 4, 1881; "Widow of Yeggman Charged With Violating 'Dope Law' Interstate Traffic Alleged," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 18, 1918.

¹⁷"Young Woman Wants Help," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, October 18, 1900.

¹⁸"Life Is A Burden. Roxy Allen Takes A 'Personally Conducted' Tour Over the Old Reliable Morphine," *Fort Worth Register*, April 8, 1897; "Third Trial Succeeds," *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 1, 1904.

¹⁹"Bruiser Vs. Blackleg," *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 1886.

Women working in the sex trade, while moving around and changing their names, left few written records. While middle- and upper-class women could write journals and letters and join organizations like the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, which recorded their membership, prostitutes had fewer means or opportunities to leave evidence of themselves. Often the only paper trail available to trace the lives of these women is through legal records, like court cases and police arrests. Even these are unreliable since a prostitute could easily give a fake name when being taken to jail. The women of the Acre existed on the outside of society, leaving barely any record of themselves.

Why did these women turn to the sex trade for an occupation? Traditionally, according to the secondary literature, the answer has been economic necessity. Job opportunities were limited for women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, forcing them to turn to prostitution. This was the reason for many of the women in the Acre.²⁰ There were, however, other rationales for working in the sex trade. Some women used it to escape families or abusive spouses, to become independent. There were even those who loved the illicit activities of the Acre and saw prostitution as a way to access them. For the most part, women chose to enter the sex trade; still, there were those who were born or forced into it. Josephine Cannon and Georgia Harris, the daughters of two of the Acre's madams, both became prostitutes.²¹ Overall, one cannot make a blanket statement about why women in Hell's Half-Acre decided to work as prostitutes. Each woman had her reasons.

²⁰"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Democrat*, October 24, 1879; "Woman Found Dead; Man Under Arrest, Denies The Charge," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 5, 1911; "Gleanings From Exchanges," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 23, 1905; "Should Women Work," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 29, 1909; "Criminologist Calls Clean-Up Campaign Plans Impractical," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 25, 1911.

²¹"Fort Worth," *Dallas Weekly Herald*, May 22, 1884; "Young Woman Wants Help," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, October 18, 1900; "A Third Ward Terror," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, March 14, 1887; "Women Jailed When Bonds Not Made," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 14, 1918; "Forced Bride Into Prostitution," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 6, 1919.

Because of the social contamination that came with sex work, women could enter the sex trade but found it next to impossible to escape it. Prostitutes were condemned from the moment they began selling their bodies because of the societal belief that women were "supposed to be pure, pious, domestic, and submissive."²² According to reformers, 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.²³ The life of a prostitute, "so unnatural to pure womanhood," was the opposite of chastity and domesticity; they shamelessly and publicly sold themselves throughout Fort Worth.²⁴ Non-Acre residents, such as city officials, lawmen, and reformers, labeled these women as "immoral" and of "doubtful reputation."²⁵ A chasm existed in society between the prostitutes and madams of Hell's Half-Acre and everyone else in Fort Worth because of the former's designation by the latter as "fallen women."²⁶

The women who worked in Hell's Half-Acre were labeled as *fallen* as a way to "other" them, to make them inferior, morally and socially, to those living outside the district. The term *fallen* was used to signify "a complex of tabooed behaviors and degraded conditions." Its roots were religious as the "condition of fallenness derives from the act of original sin," when Eve went against God's wishes in the Garden of Eden.²⁷ In Fort Worth, it was religiously minded reformers who consistently labeled prostitutes and madams as fallen women; one example among many was Delia Collins, a Woman's Christian Temperance Union reformer, who named

²²Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 62.

²³"Why Girls Fall," in *The Purity Journal*, ed. J. T. Upchurch, Vol. 2, no. 6 (December, 1905): 14; "Laconisms," in *The Purity Journal*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (July, 1905): 11.

²⁴"Why Girls Fall," in *The Purity Journal*, ed. J. T. Upchurch, Vol. 2, no. 6 (December, 1905): 14.

²⁵"Government: Vice War Most Sweeping Ever Waged In Texas," *Fort Worth Record*, March 3, 1918; "Preliminary Trial," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 26, 1884.

²⁶"The City: Local Temperance Work," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, March 2, 1887.

²⁷Amanda Anderson, *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 2-3.

her rescue home, the "Rescue Home for Fallen Women."²⁸ A woman's fall was based solely on her sexual behavior; in Fort Worth, the term *fallen* was reserved for prostitutes and disgraced or seduced girls. Fallen women were made out to be victims with "attenuated autonomy."²⁹

Women, "being the weaker party," were, according to reformers, seduced and tricked into losing their virtue, where their only option, then, was to become a prostitute.³⁰ A woman's reputation was too fragile to withstand the loss of her virginity; "she must drop from her position in life down into the quagmires of humility, shame, disgrace, cast out and forsaken."³¹ Thus, prostitution was one of the only open avenues for women to turn to after they fell.

Working in the sex trade permanently stained women's reputations and condemned them to work as prostitutes for the rest of their lives. Once a woman was disgraced, said reformers, there was no regaining it; as *The Purity Journal* put it: "the pearl will still remain lost."³² While reformers strove to rehabilitate the women of the Acre, it was an uphill battle since "fallen women . . . would be reclaimed if they had the chance. But they have no chance as society is constituted today."³³ Thus, prostitutes, even if they desired to do so, could not leave their work in Hell's Half-Acre. The women in the district were aware of this societal dead-end. Mildred Clifton, a well-known madam, claimed that "once a girl entered the life, she did not believe it possible to effect a lasting reformation, unless some good man married her and placed her in a

²⁸"Localettes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, June 14, 1887; "Fallen Women," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 15, 1888; "A Woman's Home," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 1, 1890; "Two Fallen Women," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, March 20, 1901; "Pastors To Form A Church League; Indorse Home Plan," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 25, 1909; Hattie V. Dayton, "The American Girl," in *The Purity Journal*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (July, 1904): 13; 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.

²⁹Amanda Anderson, *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces*, 2.

³⁰"The Greatest Hebrew War," in *The Purity Journal*, ed. J. T. Upchurch, Vol. 1, no. 6 (December, 1904): 15; "The Lawless Liquor Trade And The Infamous Traffic In Girls," in *The Purity Journal*, Vol. 2, no. 9 (March, 1906): 5-6.

³¹Eva Davis, "How I Was Wrecked And Rescued," in *The Purity Journal*, Vol. 2, no. 11 (May, 1905): 2.

³²"Laconisms," in *The Purity Journal*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (July, 1905): 11.

³³"Social Evil," *Fort Worth Gazette*, January 13, 1895.

good home."³⁴ Thus, in the eyes of a prostitute, marrying a decent man was really her only escape. As will be discussed later on in this chapter, however, respectable men were uninterested in marrying the women of Hell's Half-Acre because of their low reputations. Therefore, the prostitutes and madams of Fort Worth's vice district were, for the most part, unable to escape the life of a sex worker.

Stuck in the sex trade, the women of the Acre experienced a variety of hardships; life as a prostitute in Hell's Half-Acre was not an easy one. The difficulty of these women's lives has been often ignored by the mythologizing of frontier prostitution which contains "only the most fanciful notions of the prostitutes who lived there."³⁵ Because of their occupation, the women of Hell's Half-Acre were consistently in harm's way. Their lives were filled with violence, battles with the law, drug and alcohol addiction, infanticide, and suicide. Working in the sex trade also made it difficult to maintain any personal relationships, especially with spouses or lovers. Children were another complication in the lives of the Acre's female population since pregnancy was a common and often unwanted occurrence in a prostitute's life. Essentially, the hardships in the lives of prostitutes and madams boiled down to the harming of the body, like violence or drug abuse, or the heart, such as the difficulty of personal relationships or suicide. The women of the red-light district dealt with their grim existence knowing they would most likely never be able to escape it.

Working as a prostitute in the Acre meant dealing with violence. There is no evidence that claims outright that women in Hell's Half-Acre faced violence on a regular basis because they were prostitutes. Still, for the district's women, a life filled with violence was

³⁴"Young Woman Wants Help," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, October 18, 1900.

³⁵Anne M. Butler, *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery*, ix.

commonplace.³⁶ Violence came from customers, family members, and even other prostitutes. Fort Worth's newspapers eagerly reported the bloodshed in Hell's Half-Acre. Fighting was just one of the examples reformers used to show how immoral and evil the district, and the women in it, were. For example, the *Daily Democrat*, in 1877, reported "blood has been shed at the dance houses . . . close them out."³⁷ For the reformers, violence was a side effect of the red-light district. For the prostitutes, however, it was tragic reality where many lost their lives to brutal abuse.

The most commonly reported violence was woman on woman. Prostitutes often fought with each other over any number of things. The idea that there was some type of "sisterhood" among these women is far from the truth.³⁸ Much of the fighting between women came from fights over men, presumably male customers. Prostitution was a zero-sum game. If a male customer chose to purchase from one prostitute, it meant the other women would not be receiving any income from him. Thus, prostitution was highly competitive, causing fights between the women.³⁹ Brutality while fighting was not reserved for the male population of the Acre; the prostitutes could be vicious, severely damaging each other. In 1883, Maggie Weaver pulled a knife while quarreling with Kittie Raymond and stabbed her arm, "inflicting a very serious wound . . . severing the artery."⁴⁰ While arguing with Lou Bell, Belle Williams nearly cut off Bell's breast and stabbed her twice, receiving only a scratch herself.⁴¹ Possibly the most

³⁶Mary Murphy, "The Private Lives of Public Women: Prostitution in Butte, Montana, 1878-1917," in *The Women's West*, ed. Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 198; Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 61.

³⁷"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, January 16, 1877.

³⁸Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 41.

³⁹"Another Row," *Fort Worth Democrat*, May 2, 1883; "Soiled Doves Engage In A Fight And One Stabs The Other," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 6, 1883; "Fort Worth Local Record," *Dallas Morning News*, August 17, 1886; "War Against Gambling - Sanguinary Slashes," *Dallas Daily Herald*, May 2, 1885; "Another Row," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, December 26, 1885; "Another Row," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 16, 1887.

⁴⁰"Soiled Doves Engage In A Fight And One Stabs The Other," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 6, 1883.

⁴¹"War Against Gambling - Sanguinary Slashes," *Dallas Daily Herald*, May 2, 1885.

brutal prostitute, however, was Emeline Gooden. Gooden, nicknamed the "she-terror of the Third Ward" by the *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, was an African American prostitute who fought constantly.⁴² Her opponents were other prostitutes, men, and even police officers. The *Gazette* detailed her many fierce battles in the late 1880s which ranged from being stabbed in the breast by a fellow prostitute to slashing a railroad worker with a razor.⁴³

The final type of violence that prostitutes dealt with on a regular basis was at the hands of their intimate partners: their husbands, lovers, and customers. Violence between prostitutes and their customers was typically caused by arguments over price, jealousy, or intoxication. For example, Della Evans was one of a number of prostitutes partying with male customers in 1887 when one of them began to drunkenly argue with her; Evans responded by stabbing him.⁴⁴ While men typically initiated this type of violence, prostitutes were not afraid to fight back. In 1888, Maggie Estes, a prostitute in Gracie Lace's brothel, killed her client, A. F. Truitt, after he assaulted her over a question of payment.⁴⁵ Truitt, a well-known real estate agent in Fort Worth, attacked Estes. She was acting in self-defense, and yet, his death was treated by the public as "a sad and terrible tragedy . . . [where] one of the most prominent young men of Fort Worth met his death under awful circumstances."⁴⁶ Estes' treatment by the newspapers is typical; even though she was a woman, her occupation erased the societal codes of conduct for the way men treated women. Had she not attacked him and he lived, Truitt's violence toward Estes would have gone unnoticed simply because she was a prostitute.

⁴²"Localettes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 29, 1887.

⁴³"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, February 28, 1888; "A Cutting Affray in the Ward," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, December 10, 1888.

⁴⁴"Stabbed By A Woman," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, October 2, 1887.

⁴⁵"Sad and Terrible Tragedy," *Dallas Morning News*, March 13, 1888.

⁴⁶"Push Along, Keep Moving," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, October 24, 1886; "The Excursionists," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, December 15, 1887.

Jealousy was a major factor in violence in the Acre. A man often had a favorite prostitute, one whom he visited more than others, and reacted badly when he could not have her to himself. Men inflicted violence on both their competitors and the women they desired. In November 1884, Rodney Duff and Henry Anderson, rivals for a prostitute's affection, met each other in Josie Belmont's parlor house. Anderson stabbed and killed Duff and then fled.⁴⁷ S. P. Mills, in 1903, entered Mabel Thompson's house, and took hostages, in an attempt to kill Josie, a prostitute he loved. Thompson saved the day when she "coddled and reasoned with Mills until he became mollified . . . and put away the ugly pistol." Mills was then arrested and fined sixty dollars for carrying a pistol.⁴⁸ Brothels saw fighting and bloodshed on a regular basis. One of the Acre's madams, Mildred Clifton, accidentally shot a man outside of her house in 1903. While the newspapers frequently discussed the shooting, and subsequent trial, no one thought it odd that Clifton had a gun or that she shot it.⁴⁹ It was simply another violent episode that happened in Hell's Half-Acre. Clifton was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to four years in the state penitentiary.⁵⁰

Abuse by intimate partners was another constant in the life of a prostitute. A woman's work in the sex trade was a difficult thing for husbands or lovers to deal with, and many of them showed their feelings by beating their women. Bell Fannin, a resident of the Acre in the 1870s, was beaten to death by a supposed lover "for some trivial cause," after giving birth in 1878.⁵¹ Another prostitute, Mary Ross, was savaged, in 1886, at the hands of Oscar Smith, "a colored tough," who knocked her down and kicked her repeatedly, nearly killing her. In 1914, Bessie

⁴⁷"A Reeking Red Record," *Dallas Daily Herald*, November 28, 1884; "Fort Worth Facts," *Dallas Herald*, June 23, 1884.

⁴⁸"Mills Was Fined \$60 And Costs," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 2, 1903.

⁴⁹"Young Man Is Fatally Shot While 'Seeing The Town' A Woman Is Under Arrest," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 23, 1903; "Grand Jury Makes Its Report," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 10, 1904; "A Bunch Of Violets," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 12, 1904.

⁵⁰"In The Courts," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 31, 1904.

⁵¹"The Victim of Human Brutality," *Fort Worth Democrat*, January 11, 1878.

Williams twice accused her husband, Homer Joyce, of assault and recanted her accusation both times.⁵²

Some prostitutes lost their lives at the hands of men. In 1903, Hugh Wilson shot his wife, Gladys, before killing himself in Mabel Thompson's brothel where Gladys worked. Wilson's reasons for killing his wife and not just himself remain unknown but she had just asked for a divorce. Sam Lucas, a bartender in Hell's Half-Acre, beat his wife, who was not a prostitute, before leaving her for Maud Tatum, a prostitute. In 1911, Tatum was found dead. Lucas had beaten and killed her using chloroform.⁵³ Madams were not safe from this type of violence either. Mildred Clifton's husband Dan Blair was arrested for assaulting her multiple times in 1902. Dolly Love suffered domestic abuse at the hands of her lover, Tom Angus, in the 1880s, and again in 1903, by her husband, Thomas Ray.⁵⁴

Why was violence against women so pervasive, and in some cases, accepted as the norm by those inside and outside the district, in the Acre? The women of Hell's Half-Acre existed on the outside of society because of their occupation. While there were no official laws or rules proclaiming that prostitutes were to be treated differently than non-sex workers, the actual treatment of the two groups differed greatly, especially when it came to violence. If two prostitutes beat each other up on the street or a male customer roughed up a prostitute, the incident was treated less seriously than if it had happened to a white, middle-class woman. Outside of the Acre, men who killed or beat women received severe sentences, like the death

⁵²[Quotation] "Fort Worth Local Record," *Dallas Morning News*, August 17, 1886; "Badly Beaten," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 21, 1886; "Bessie Finds Hubby and Policemen Find Bessie Bruised Up," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 19, 1914; "County Jail In Real Peril Now," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 19, 1914.

⁵³"Murder-Suicide in Rooming House," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 28, 1903; "Woman Found Dead; Man Under Arrest, Denies The Charge," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 5, 1911; "Wife of Sam Lucas Sues For A Divorce," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 7, 1913.

⁵⁴"News of the Courts," *Dallas Morning News*, May 7, 1902; "Courthouse Notes," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, May 27, 1902; "Angus and Johnson," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 2, 1889; "Wife Beater Is Punished," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 8, 1903.

penalty or ninety-nine years in prison.⁵⁵ Crimes in Hell's Half-Acre were a much different story. 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.⁵⁶ While violent acts against women in the Acre were treated less seriously than those that happened outside of the vice district, there is no clear evidence that provides a reason for the disparity; whether it was because the women in the district were prostitutes is not clear. What is true, however, is that the women of Hell's Half-Acre were treated differently by city officials, lawmen, the newspapers, and the citizens of Fort Worth; they were not allowed the same justice as the "respectable" women of the city.

Another aspect in the life of a prostitute was substance abuse. Drugs and alcohol could be found all over the Acre, and many of the women there took advantage of having liquor or opiates within their grasp for both profit and pleasure. Many of the nicer brothels provided beer or liquor illegally for their male customers since saloons were the only places allowed to sell alcohol in Fort Worth.⁵⁷ Drinking was not reserved for the males, however, and many of the prostitutes imbibed frequently. They also experimented with opium, typically in the form of morphine, the popular drug of the time, and substance abuse was quite common among the Acre's female population. The first decades of the twentieth century saw a large growth in the opium trade in Fort Worth. The city responded with police raids, which discovered many prostitutes using

⁵⁵"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.

⁵⁶"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.

⁵⁷"Closing Sessions," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, July 20, 1901; "7 Misdemeanor and 15 Felony Indictments," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, September 21, 1913; "Bessie Williams Jailed Again," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 4, 1916.

opium regularly.⁵⁸ Morphine, taken as a recreational drug, was the most popular form of opium; many women in the Acre became addicted to it. Some, like Georgia Harris, took it for pleasure while others, such as Roxy Allen, saw it as the easiest way to kill themselves.⁵⁹ A popular argument that has appeared in both current studies of prostitution and contemporary accounts, like Fort Worth newspapers, is that these women became addicted to alcohol and drugs to escape their tragic lives. The *Daily Gazette* and *Star-Telegram* claimed that the women of the Acre turned to drugs for a "surcease of sorrow" or "despondency."⁶⁰ While there are merits to this argument—life was not easy in Hell's Half-Acre—it is rarely applied to the men of the vice districts. While the prostitutes are viewed as wretched and piteous for using alcohol and drugs, the men of the Acre benefit socially from doing the same things. They were able to assert their masculinity and their social status through their drinking and gambling in the district.⁶¹ These women could easily have enjoyed alcohol and recreational drug use, but because of their position in society, their occupation, and, most importantly, their gender, their decisions had to be seen as tragic and depressing.

Along with violence and substance abuse, another major hardship in the life of a prostitute was the inability to have healthy personal relationships. The women in the Acre had difficulty creating and maintaining families and relationships specifically because of their occupations. As "fallen women," they were set apart from the rest of the citizenry because of the

⁵⁸"Raided A Chinese Dive," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, July 23, 1899; "Police Raids Continue," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 2, 1905; "Cracking A Joint," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 27, 1883; "Police Make Raid on Chinese Resorts," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 27, 1905; "White Woman Caught In Raid On Opium Den," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 25, 1909.

⁵⁹"Life Is A Burden," *Fort Worth Register*, April 8, 1897; "Slashed Man Claims Plot Against Him," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 1, 1915; "Girl, 18, Must Face Charges Of 'Dope' Sale," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, August 20, 1915; "Woman Is Charged With Having Dope," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 22, 1915.

⁶⁰"On The Street," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 4, 1886; "Young Woman Takes Morphine," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 3, 1903.

⁶¹Mary Murphy, "The Private Lives of Public Women," 200; Jacqueline M. Moore, *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier, 1865-1900* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 170-74; "On The Street," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 4, 1886;

contamination that came with prostitution. In 1890 the *Daily Gazette* claimed that it was "a matter of suspicion to see a lady in broad open daylight in that part of the city [Hell's Half-Acre]."⁶² A woman could gain the reputation of a prostitute simply by associating with them. Thus, because of their separated status, most prostitutes could establish friendships only with other prostitutes. As has been previously discussed, however, friendship between prostitutes was difficult because they were all competing for customers. Despite that, these women were bound by the "common misery" of their occupation, which meant they sometimes looked out for one another.⁶³ When Laura Jackson killed herself, her madam, Pearl Beebe, took charge of her one-year-old son. Madam Brown used her wealth and contacts to help one of her young prostitutes find her family and return home. Funerals were one of the most common ways that these women helped out one another. Some of the prostitutes who died in the Acre were not financially stable enough to leave behind money for a funeral. Both prostitutes and madams stepped in and paid for a funeral and a burial plot for the dead woman. Pearl Beebe, who paid for Roxy Allen's funeral, went so far as to allow three other prostitutes to be buried in her own funeral plot in Oakwood Cemetery.⁶⁴ Prostitutes and madams, bound together by their separation from the rest of Fort Worth, could rise above occupational competition to care for their own when needed.

Prostitutes and madams have historically had problematic relationships with their husbands or lovers; the women of Hell's Half-Acre are no exception.⁶⁵ Since prostitutes were already separated socially and geographically from non-Acre residents, their choices of male companions were extremely limited. Because of their lack of options, the prostitutes and madams

⁶²"Question of Locality," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 1, 1890.

⁶³Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 44.

⁶⁴"Woman Of Town Takes Acid And Dies," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 2, 1904; "Fort Worth," *Dallas Weekly Herald*, May 22, 1884; "Life Is A Burden," *Fort Worth Register*, April 8, 1897; "Woman Found Dead; Man Under Arrest, Denies The Charge," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 5, 1911; "Graveyard Tour Will Recall Soiled Doves," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 26, 2007.

⁶⁵Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 26-29; MacKell, *Red Light Women*, 38.

in the district found themselves with men of ill-repute more often than not. While upper and middle-class men might have enjoyed the services of the women of the Acre, they rarely lowered themselves to marry one of the prostitutes. It would have been death for them socially, as it was for Hugh Wilson. Wilson had been one of the "most popular of Fort Worth's young society men," with a family that was "greatly esteemed," and a promising career in banking. He squandered all of that by marrying Dolly Love, a notorious madam in the Acre, in the 1890s. She continued to work in the sex trade and, eventually, they divorced. Wilson attempted to return to his old life in the high society, but "found that the doors were not open for him anymore" and could only find work as a bartender. He ended up marrying another prostitute, Gladys Allen, who he beat regularly. When she asked for a divorce, he killed her and then committed suicide.⁶⁶

Hugh Wilson's life is a perfect example of the contamination that came with being connected to a prostitute. Sex workers were located at the lowest level socially which meant that anyone linked to them was going to be dragged down. This is obvious in the way marriages between prostitutes and middle- or upper-class men were treated by the public. For example, the *Dallas Morning News*, in their Fort Worth column, reported one such marriage: "There is considerable talk over a marriage last night which linked the destinies of a young man who once stood high here and a member of the demimonde."⁶⁷ The words used in the article, like "once stood high," show how his status in Fort Worth's society immediately declined simply because of his marriage to a prostitute. It was common for men to obtain divorces by claiming their wives were practicing prostitution. The *Gazette* reported several cases in the 1880s and 90s, like J. D. Huddleston's or Joseph Odem's, where a divorce was granted for that very reason. Whether these women actually were prostitutes or not is immaterial since they could be condemned on the

⁶⁶"Murder-Suicide In Rooming House," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 28, 1903.

⁶⁷"Fort Worth Notes," *Dallas Morning News*, August 26, 1887.

words of their husbands.⁶⁸ The best example of this is Lucille Kirby. Kirby's husband, W. F. Carpenter, took her "to a house of prostitution and abandoned her." Carpenter then filed for divorce, claiming she was unfaithful to him and worked as a common prostitute. Although Kirby denied his claim, Carpenter was granted the divorce and Kirby was left with nothing but the reputation of a prostitute; thus, she chose to end her life rather than work in the sex trade.⁶⁹

Since men outside of the Acre refused to marry the females of the district, the women who wanted to marry were left with few options. The husbands and lovers of the Acre's sex workers were, for the most part, residents of the district. They worked in the saloons or the gambling dens or some other establishment in Hell's Half-Acre and were, more often than not, frequent law-breakers. Simply put, they were, like the prostitutes, on the lowest level of society and it showed in their lifestyles. While there is not a lot of information on the men who married the women of the Acre, the existing evidence shows that these men were not of the highest caliber.

A few examples illustrate the quality of men who married and had intimate relationships with prostitutes. In the 1880s, one of Dolly Love's paramours, Tom Angus, beat her and murdered a man he thought was a romantic rival. In the 1890s, her first husband, Hugh Wilson, worked as a bartender in the Acre and was arrested for obscene language and for beating one of his employees when he asked for payment. Dolly Love's second husband, Thomas Ray, beat her on her death bed in 1903. Within that same year, Ray was killed in an argument over a dice

⁶⁸"The Courts," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 21, 1883; "From Under The Yoke," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, January 20, 1886; "She Tried To Poison Him," *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 14, 1894; "Four Matrimonial Misfits," *Fort Worth Gazette*, January 1, 1895; "Unhappy Marital Experience," *Fort Worth Gazette*, September 25, 1895

⁶⁹"A Brother's Defense," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, October 8, 1885; "Forget Me, Mamma," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, October 5, 1885; "Fort Worth On Sunday," *Fort Worth On Sunday*, October 5, 1885.

game.⁷⁰ Mildred Clifton also had terrible results when it came to marriage. Her first husband, Dan Blair, was consistently in trouble with the law. Between 1900 and 1903, he was arrested for gambling, theft, disturbing the peace, voter fraud, and aggravated assault. Sam Shrewder, a fellow gambler, murdered Blair in the Stag Saloon in 1903. Clifton's second husband, Frank B. Livingston, was a bartender at one of the more popular Acre bars and was arrested for theft of over fifty dollars in 1914.⁷¹

Other women also dealt with the difficulties of having bad relationships with the law-breaking men of the Acre. Mary Porter, one of the most well-known madams in the district, fell in with Nat Kramer, who had been arrested and fined for gambling multiple times and for riding in public with a prostitute. After Porter died, it came out that she had willed her large estate to Nat Kramer instead of to her family; almost immediately, there were whispers about him forcing her to do it on her death bed.⁷² Bessie Williams, a prostitute who became known for her ability to break out of jail, continued this theme of law breakers as husbands when she married Homer Joyce. Joyce was born into a criminal family and he followed in that vein. At the age of seventeen, he was arrested for the first time for passing a forged instrument. Over the next decade, the police collared Joyce for domestic abuse, assault, selling liquor to soldiers, accessory

⁷⁰"Murder-Suicide In Rooming House," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 28, 1903; "Police Court," *Fort Worth Gazette*, July 20, 1895; "Steeped In His Blood," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, October 17, 1897; "Wife Beater Is Punished," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 8, 1903; "Tom Ray Is Killed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 3, 1903; "Angus and Johnson," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 2, 1889.

⁷¹"Officials Make General Roundup," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, November 8, 1900; "Clearing Dockets," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, July 17, 1901; "City News," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, November 13, 1901; "Fraud At Polls," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, February 17, 1902; "News Of The Courts," *Dallas Morning News*, May 7, 1902; "Courthouse Notes," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, May 27, 1902; "Pistol Bullet Ends Blair's Life," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 22, 1903; "Killed In Saloon," *San Antonio Express*, January 23, 1903; "Zenda Bar," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 21, 1904; "Charged With Theft of \$50," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 23, 1914.

⁷²"Localettes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 29, 1890; "The City Court," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, July 8, 1897; "The Non-Jury Civil Docket," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, September 15, 1899; "Lattimore Says State Is Ready," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 16, 1903; "Fortune Received," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 13, 1905.

to murder, and manslaughter.⁷³ All of these examples support the idea that the women of the Acre, at least those who wanted to marry, had little choice because of their occupation which stigmatized and separated them from the rest of Fort Worth. Respectable marriage was one of the only ways to escape the sex trade, and non-respectable men were, for the most part, the sole choice available to prostitutes. Thus, the one available path to leaving the vice district and the life of a prostitute was, for most of the women, a dead end.

Children were a byproduct of working as a prostitute. Contraception existed in some forms but was not widely available, especially for the poor women in the Acre.⁷⁴ Pregnancy was bad for prostitutes because it forced them to stop working for a while and then it saddled them with the responsibility of providing the child. In all extant records, there is never any discussion of the father. Presumably it would be difficult to parse out the paternity since prostitutes had numerous partners. Still, it seems that there was never any question that it was solely the prostitute's duty to raise the child. Thus, abortion became common in red-light districts. Since it was illegal in most places, women ended up getting back-alley abortions which often ended in their deaths.⁷⁵ No records exist, however, of laws regarding abortions in Fort Worth or of abortions being done in Hell's Half-Acre.

While no accounts of abortion in the Acre exist, evidence of the children of prostitutes and madams can be found as far back as 1878. Children born to women working in the sex trade

⁷³"City News Ticker," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 23, 1914; "Tarrant County Courts," *Dallas Morning News*, October 25, 1910; 1910 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 2, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 4A, line 1; April 18, 1910; ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; "Bessie Finds Hubby And Policemen Find Bessie Bruised Up," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, October 19, 1914; "County Jail In Real Peril Now," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 19, 1914; "Pleads Guilty to Charge of Selling Liquor to Soldiers," *Dallas Morning News*, August 11, 1917; "Man Held Without Bond Following Temple Killing," *Dallas Morning News*, December 13, 1920; "Man Gets Two Year Term," *Dallas Morning News*, March 22, 1922.

⁷⁴Jan MacKell, *Red Light Women*, 33; Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 99.

⁷⁵Mary Murphy, "The Private Lives of Public Women," 197-98; Alexy Simmons, *Red Light Ladies: Settlement Patterns and Material Culture on the Mining Frontier* (Corvallis: Department of Anthropology, Oregon State University, 1989), 34.

did not lead an easy life. They grew up in the various brothels in the Acre. In 1904, Reverend I. Z. T. Morris, a reformer, found twenty to thirty children living in brothels in the Acre with their mothers, who all worked in the sex trade. It was his mission, in the district, to remove these children from the brothels and place them in good homes.⁷⁶ The disorderly houses of the district were not healthy environments for children. They were filled with sex, drugs, alcohol, violence, and death. Moreover, girls who grew up in the sex trade nearly always followed in their mothers' footsteps. They were already contaminated with the stain of prostitution which meant respectability was going to be difficult to obtain.⁷⁷ Bessie Cannon and Dolly Love, two of the Acre's madams, had daughters who entered the sex trade. Cannon's daughter, Josephine, was arrested for prostitution while Love's daughter, Georgia Harris, nearly killed herself after overdosing on morphine.⁷⁸ These two women are good examples of how vicious a cycle it was to be born into prostitution.

There were worse fates that awaited the children of the Acre's female population, however. Infant death and child abandonment were both common in the district due to the lifestyles of the mothers. As has been mentioned, prostitutes had hard lives filled with substance abuse and violence. Children were expensive, another mouth to feed. Some prostitutes turned to the rescue homes in Fort Worth and left their children there to be taken care of and adopted. The Rescue Home for Fallen Women, founded in 1892, the Berachah Home in 1903, and Gregory's Private Sanitarium in 1909 were just the homes specifically for *fallen* women or their children. There were also other places like the Union Gospel Mission and the Industrial Home for

⁷⁶"I. Z. T. Morris Is Trying To Help Children," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 26, 1904.

⁷⁷Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 38-9; MacKell, *Red Light Women*, 34.

⁷⁸"Women Jailed When Bonds Not Made," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 14, 1914; "Life Is A Burden," *Fort Worth Register*, April 8, 1897.

Friendless Boys and Girls which took in any orphaned or homeless children.⁷⁹ Other women simply deserted their children. Laura Jackson killed herself, leaving her one-year-old child to be looked after by her madam. One nameless prostitute wanted nothing to do with her infant so she left it to die of starvation; the same thing happened to Lizzie Cunningham's baby.⁸⁰

While some prostitutes actively decided to abandon their children, others lost their babies in childbirth. Childbirth was difficult enough at the turn of the century without the added stress of life as a prostitute. Since the majority of sex workers in the Acre were poor, they could not afford the necessary medical care. Furthermore, these women typically drank and used drugs. Their bodies were not in the best shape for bearing children which was evident by the infant mortality in the Acre. The rescue homes in Hell's Half-Acre were one of the only places prostitutes could turn for help for childbirth. But even the rescue homes could not prevent the deaths of some of the infants. Premature and stillborn births were the most common cause of death but there were other kinds as well. For example, Willie Harper's baby died due to injury from forceps during birth. While all of these deaths are unfortunate, those that came as a direct result of the mother being a prostitute seem the most terrible. Annie Stafford's baby was born with syphilis and died shortly thereafter. Stafford presumably contracted the sexually transmitted

⁷⁹Ruth 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), 33, 36; "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; "Mrs. T. B. Murtishaw," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 29, 1909.

⁸⁰"Gleanings From Exchanges," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 23, 1905; "Woman of Town Takes Acid and Dies," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 2, 1904; "City News," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, October 18, 1900; Infant of Lizzie Cunningham, death certificate no. 658 (1911), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database <[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_\(FamilySearch_Historical_Records\)>](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records)>)

disease from her work as a prostitute and then passed it on to her child.⁸¹ Losing a baby was yet another aspect of the difficult life that many women in the Acre faced.

In a place full of poverty and violence as Hell's Half-Acre was, death was a common occurrence. While prostitutes and madams died at the hands of men, as has been discussed, there were other causes of death in the Acre. The life of a prostitute could be wearing on the body. Both Helen Forest and Goldie Dixon died from "the wear and tear of . . . living such a life"; in fact, Dixon's heart gave out. Prostitutes had to deal with sexually transmitted diseases as well, sometimes even dying from them. For example, Lois Logan and Pearl Smith both died from syphilis. There were also accidental deaths, like Gertrude Teague, who, at the age of eighteen, died in a fire that broke out in the Shamrock Saloon. Some women lived long lives and died of old age, however, like Mary Porter who died at age seventy-five, in her home on Fifth Street.⁸² Hell's Half-Acre was used to seeing death within its boundaries; however, suicide became the most frequent way that lives ended there.

⁸¹Infants of Helen Cherry, death certificate no. 26260 (1913), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database <[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_\(FamilySearch_Historical_Records\)](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records))>; Infant of Mollie Mason, death certificate no. 55560 (1909), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database <[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_\(FamilySearch_Historical_Records\)](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records))>; Infant of Sallie Mae Wall, death certificate no. 10710 (1924), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database <[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_\(FamilySearch_Historical_Records\)](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records))>; Infant of Willie Harper, death certificate no. 3097 (1924), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database <[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_\(FamilySearch_Historical_Records\)](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records))>; Infant of Annie Stafford, death certificate no. 11945 (1911), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database <[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_\(FamilySearch_Historical_Records\)](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records))>.

⁸²"Died At The Infirmary," *Fort Worth Democrat*, December 28, 1876; "Vital Statistics," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 7, 1904; Goldie Dixon, death certificate no. 53150 (1904), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database <[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_\(FamilySearch_Historical_Records\)](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records))>; Lois Logan, death certificate no. 55275 (1908), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database <[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_\(FamilySearch_Historical_Records\)](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records))>; Pearl Smith, death certificate no. 55422 (1908), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database <[http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_\(FamilySearch_Historical_Records\)](http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records))>; "Two Smother In Morning Blaze," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 7, 1906; "Deaths," *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 1905.

As has been shown throughout this chapter, a prostitute's life was far from easy; many saw suicide as the only escape from the hardships of their existence. In November 1876, the *Daily Standard*, in one of the earliest articles about the Acre, reported on the suicide of a prostitute named Idelia.⁸³ Like many other things that happened in the Acre, suicide was an aspect of life in the district. Hell's Half-Acre, being home to outlaws, drunks, and gunslingers, witnessed death all the time. In the early days of the district, there were gun battles and brawls thanks to the large numbers of cowboys rolling in and out of Fort Worth.⁸⁴ While the majority of male deaths in the Acre happened at the hands of other men, suicide was the most recorded cause of death for prostitutes among the extant sources. It was so common that, in 1880, the *Fort Worth Democrat* claimed that "our city has acquired the title of the city of . . . morphine suicides." Seven years later, not much had changed when the *Fort Worth Daily Gazette* reported that "it's a cold day when the Half-Acre doesn't pan out . . . a morphine experiment by some of its frisky females" which meant that suicides had become so common in the Acre that it was strange when a day passed without a suicide attempt.⁸⁵ Interestingly, prostitutes seem to be the only ones to commit suicide; madams, at least according to the records that remain, never took their own lives. Dolly Love, Mary Porter, Mildred Clifton, Jessie Reeves, and the other well-known brothel keepers of Hell's Half-Acre died from a number of different things; and yet, none of committed, or even attempted, suicide.⁸⁶ Madams' greater stability and prosperity than prostitutes could be one reason for the difference.

⁸³"Another Case by Poisoning - Probably Fatal," *The Daily Standard*, November 28, 1876.

⁸⁴Charles Francis Colcord, *The Autobiography of Charles Francis Colcord, 1859-1934* (Tulsa, OK: C. C. Helmerich, 1970), 46-47; Knight, *Fort Worth*, 60, 89-91.

⁸⁵"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Democrat*, December 7, 1880; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 17, 1887.

⁸⁶Death Certificate for Mary Porter, June 10, 1905, No. 240, City of Fort Worth Bureau of Vital Statistics (Tarrant County Clerk's Office).

Historically, women in the sex trade turned to suicide quite frequently and the female population of Hell's Half-Acre was no different.⁸⁷ The women in the Acre who killed themselves did not leave personal accounts or memoirs or suicide notes, so the specific motivations they had to end their lives are unknown. It is easy to imagine why a woman who worked in a demeaning trade where she was exposed to violence, drugs, alcohol, and venereal diseases would want to end her life. While none of the Acre's women left any note explaining their reasons for suicide, the newspapers reporting the deaths attempted to explain why these women killed themselves. For example, the *Fort Worth Telegram* reported Laura Wallace's suicide, claiming she did it because "her sweetheart disagreed with her," which, the article said, was "woman's custom" to do when a lover left them. Others, like Georgia Harvill, killed themselves because they were "heartbroken." There were also prostitutes who attempted to end their lives after being arrested, like Sadie Pike and Rachael Brown. One young unnamed woman killed herself after being released from jail. One of the most popular reasons that the newspapers gave for suicides was despondency, or, as it would be referred to today, depression.⁸⁸

While the reasons for killing oneself were numerous, the method that the women of Hell's Half-Acre used to end their lives was singular: drug overdose. The weapon of choice was morphine, but carbolic acid and laudanum were popular as well. Pharmacies sold these drugs and anyone could purchase them.⁸⁹ It was common for prostitutes to attempt suicide several times

⁸⁷Different works have argued about the reasons behind the high suicide rates with differing conclusions. Anne M. Butler argued that prostitutes killed themselves to escape their lives since leaving the sex trade was not an option. Conversely, Jan MacKell claimed that "prostitutes who chose suicide did so because of a man." Butler, *Daughters of Joy*, 68; MacKell, *Red Light Women*, 36-37.

⁸⁸"Third Trial Succeeds," *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 1, 1904; "Woman Kills Self with Picture of Suicide in Dress," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 15, 1909; "Refuses Bail In Killing," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 29, 1914; "More Morphine," *Fort Worth Democrat*, November 17, 1883; "Localettes," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 16, 1887; "U.S. Takes Hand in Saving Girl, Caught in Raids Here," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 2, 1919; "Young Woman Takes Morphine," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 3, 1903; "Woman of Town Takes Acid and Dies," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 2, 1904.

⁸⁹"Little Check On Poison Sale," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 31, 1906.

before succeeding. Gertie Williams, Nellie Martel, and Laura Wallace all tried to end their lives on multiple occasions before achieving success.⁹⁰ Some of the women would also create pacts to end their lives together. An article in the *Daily Standard* discussed this trend: "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." It seems that the women of the Acre found confidence in numbers when attempting to end their lives.⁹¹

It is a testament to how difficult life must have been for the female population of Hell's Half-Acre that suicide seemed like the best option for many of them. While prostitution could, in some way, offer independence and freedom for these women, it also imprisoned them in an occupation that society dictated they could never leave. From the beginning, they were labeled "fallen women," which was a stain on their reputation that could not be washed out. Both reformers and city officials named them victims, characterizing them as "soiled doves," women who had been ruined by losing their virtue.⁹² Whether they were helpless victims or not, these women existed in a world where their gender, and, more importantly, their occupation combined in different ways to make them outsiders to society. The marginalization of these women cornered them into lives full of violence, addiction, disease, and death. Patriarchal society did nothing to protect them; and instead, condemned them for their choices while ignoring the men who paid for their services. The double standard between prostitutes and customers was a manifestation of the patriarchal values that dictated society at the turn of the century. This

⁹⁰"On The Street," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 4, 1886; "Third Trial Succeeds," *Fort Worth Telegram*, February 1, 1904;

⁹¹"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;

⁹²"The City: Local Temperance Work," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, March 2, 1887; "Why Girls Fall," in *The Purity Journal*, ed. J. T. Upchurch, Vol. 2, no. 6 (December, 1905): 14; "Laconisms," in *The Purity Journal*, Vol. 2, no. 1 (July, 1905): 11.

hypocrisy is evident in the arrest records which show that men were rarely arrested for being with a prostitute while the women were jailed regularly. The upper- and middle-class men of Fort Worth received no judgment for sleeping with prostitutes while the women of the same social strata could not even walk along the street in the Acre for fear of sullyng their reputations.⁹³ The patriarchal world that both prostitutes and "respectable" women occupied dictated their lives by controlling the behavior of "respectable" women while punishing the prostitutes who tried to live outside the patriarchy's control. Thus, even those who attempted to break free of the patriarchy by working in the sex trade found themselves unable to escape.

While the focus of this work is on the women of Hell's Half-Acre, there needs to be a discussion of the men who purchased their services. The women of Hell's Half-Acre never lacked for customers and they were able to build their economic strength off of these male clients. Men from all walks of life came to the Acre looking for companionship; it is difficult, however, to track them down since newspaper articles were really the only source that named male customers and they typically only printed initials or a surname. Nevertheless, what evidence that exists shows that both rich and poor, married and single men sought evenings with the women of the Acre. Men of all classes and occupations were customers. There were criminals, common laborers, and railroad men, as well as bankers, real estate moguls, government workers, and even religious officials.⁹⁴ For the Acre's entire forty year history, and well after the district was finally removed, women working as prostitutes in Fort Worth never lacked for male clients. The constant stream of paying customers in the Acre helped to make it

⁹³"The Pace That Kills," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 29, 1903; "Saloon Ordinances Faces Contest In Court; Vote 4-2 Becomes Effective Within The Next Ten Days," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 9, 1909; "Letters From The People," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 5, 1913.

⁹⁴"Local Lore," *Dallas Daily Herald*, June 28, 1883; "Fort Worth Facts," *Dallas Herald*, June 23, 1884; "Attempted Blackmail," *Fort Worth Gazette*, July 2, 1891; "The City Court," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, July 8, 1897; "Grand Jury Makes Its Report," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 10, 1904; "Murder-Suicide in Rooming House," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 28, 1903.

an economically viable district as well as allowing several of the women working there to become quite wealthy.

Hell's Half-Acre lasted for over forty years in downtown Fort Worth, watching the city go from frontier cowtown to urban center. One major change since its beginnings in the 1870s was size; by 1917, Hell's Half-Acre, which started as a row of cribs, sprawled throughout downtown Fort Worth with over three hundred women working there in sixty or so brothels. Another significant change in the district was ownership of the brothels. By 1917, Police Commissioner Hugh Jamieson, while attempting to shut down the Acre, claimed that two men, Charles Rotsky and Mack Smith, controlled over 75 percent of the brothels, and they "charge[d] such exorbitant prices" that it was hard for the women to turn a profit while the men turned a profit of nearly 500 percent.⁹⁵ In the early years of the Acre, the women, like Dolly Love and Mary Porter, owned their own brothels; therefore, these new "vice kings" were a key change. Outside of these two major differences, life for a prostitute in 1910 was strikingly similar to life in 1880; they still dealt with violence, substance abuse and addiction, difficulties maintaining personal relationships, unwanted children, and death. They were still separated, through the designation of *fallen*, from the rest of respectable society. Thus, Hell's Half-Acre did change over time but the women inside it did not.

While prostitutes had difficult lives full of hardships, they were still surprisingly important to the city of Fort Worth because of their ability to generate revenue. Despite the extremely difficult conditions of prostitution, however, the women of Hell's Half-Acre were vital to Fort Worth's economy. As the following chapter will show, the red-light district remained a part of the city for over forty years because of its ability to generate revenue for both private

⁹⁵"Restricted District Is Closed With Injunction," *Fort Worth Record*, March 21, 1917; "Vice District to Be Closed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 5, 1917.

businessmen and the city itself while supplying a service for which there was a lot of demand. Thus, while the majority of the historiography discounts the importance of these women, this work gives credit back to them as figures of economic significance.

Chapter 3: The Battle Between Reform and Economics

As Hell's Half-Acre grew larger and more populated in the 1870s, reform movements against the red-light district developed alongside it, beginning a forty-year struggle between the Acre and the reformers. Many citizens of Fort Worth saw the expanding vice district as a blight on the city and began working to rid themselves of it. Their efforts were for naught, however, since the Acre was too important financially to the city of Fort Worth to be removed. This chapter aims to detail the many reform movements that attempted to regulate or shut down Hell's Half-Acre from 1876 to 1919. It also argues that economic factors, not reform, finally forced the closure of the Acre. The red-light district remained in existence regardless of the numerous removal efforts because it was economically beneficial to Fort Worth. It was only when the US military wanted to establish Camp Bowie, which would generate more revenue than the Acre could, in Fort Worth during World War I that the city ultimately closed down the district.

By 1876, the Acre had grown wilder than ever even with the city's many attempts to control it. No laws governed the district during the early years because Fort Worth in the 1850s and 60s was little more than a frontier town. With the news of the railroad coming to Fort Worth, however, the small settlement boomed, beginning its transformation into an actual city, as people began buying land, building homes, and starting businesses there. On March 1, 1873, Fort Worth was officially incorporated as a city. One of the first actions the city council took was to draft ordinances to keep Fort Worth in order.⁹⁶ Three of the first ordinances passed in April 1873 dealt with regulating the Acre and its female population. In fact, nine different ordinances (listed in Table 1) meant to control the prostitutes and madams of the district were written into law during

⁹⁶Oliver Knight, *Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 66-69, 73-74.

Fort Worth City Ordinances	
No. 9 (4/9/1873) No. 213 (12/2/1879)	"An ordinance to define and provide for the punishment of vagrancy." Prostitutes were defined as vagrants; would be fined between five and fifty dollars.
No. 11 (4/9/1873) No. 193 (5/28/1879)	"An ordinance relating to houses of ill-fame and the inmates thereof." Those who worked as keepers or inmates of brothels would be fined between five and fifty dollars.
No. 15 (4/10/1873)	"An ordinance to suppress disorderly houses." Keepers of disorderly houses or dance halls shall be convicted of a misdemeanor and fined between one and fifty dollars.
No. 75 (5/10/1875)	"An ordinance to prohibit certain persons from being found on the streets after nine o'clock at night." Prostitutes were banned from walking the street at night; their punishment was to be fined between five and fifty dollars
No. 92 (12/28/1876)	"An ordinance to prohibit male persons from riding, walking, or promenading in the streets, alley, or other public grounds of this city with any prostitute or woman of ill-fame, commonly denominated whores." The males would be fined between five and fifty dollars.
No. 110 (8/1/1877)	"An ordinance defining dance houses and punishing the keepers thereof." The women who worked at such places were prostitutes; those who kept dance houses would be fined between ten and fifty dollars.
No. 211 (10/4/1879)	"An ordinance prohibiting lewd women or women of bad repute being employed in saloons or other public places as waiters or bar tenders." Prostitutes would be fined between ten and fifty dollars if caught working in a saloon.
No. 620 (9/19/1893)	"An ordinance defining disorderly houses & prescribing a penalty for keeping and maintaining the same within the city limits of Fort Worth." The punishment for keeping a brothel was raised to a fine of two hundred dollars.
No. 101 (6/25/1909) Revised Ordinances	"An ordinance defining and punishing vagrancy." Both prostitutes and their customers were classified as vagrants; the punishment was increased to a fine of up to two hundred dollars.
No. 566 (3/20/1917) Revised Ordinances	"An ordinance regulating the associating together of male persons with prostitutes in public places, defining public places and providing a penalty." Men who violated this ordinance were fined up to two hundred dollars.

Table 1 - Fort Worth City Ordinances

the first six years of the city's existence.⁹⁷ Taken at face value, these laws convey the idea that Fort Worth did not approve of the Acre and wanted to get rid of it. The ordinances, however, were one of the reasons the district was able to survive because the fines paid by those who broke the law became a continual stream of money for the city. Essentially, Fort Worth used the laws to create a "fees and fines" system. Common to frontier red-light districts, the "fees and fines" system was an unofficial agreement between city government and the women of the district. Prostitutes and madams would be arrested and fined regularly, which "amounted to indirect operating licenses."⁹⁸ Thus, the prostitutes and madams of the Acre were able to continue plying their trade and generating revenue while the city benefitted economically as well.

Corruption became a battle cry for the reformers as a justification to shut down the district; furthermore, reformers cited the system of "fines and fees" as corrupt because it kept prostitution in existence while fostering a relationship between law enforcement and the women of Hell's Half-Acre.⁹⁹ The Fort Worth police arresting the Acre's prostitutes was one of the more common levels of association between the two groups. Working in an area specifically meant for alcohol, gambling, and illicit sexual activities, these women drank, fought, bet, and caroused right along with the men of the Acre. Thus, many prostitutes and madams were arrested for an assortment of crimes, like streetwalking, drunk and disorderly conduct, using obscene language,

⁹⁷Ordinances 9, 11 and 15, passed by City Council, April 9-10, 1873, Ordinance 75, passed by City Council, May 10, 1875, Ordinance 92, passed by City Council, December 28, 1876, Ordinance 110, passed by City Council, August 1, 1877, Ordinance 193, passed by City Council, May 28, 1879, Ordinance 211, passed by City Council, October 4, 1879, Ordinance 213, passed by City Council, December 2, 1879 in "Fort Worth City Ordinances," Book A, No. 1, April 5, 1873-No. 298, December 28, 1882 (City Secretary's Office, Fort Worth City Hall); Ordinance 620, passed by City Council, September 19, 1893 in "Fort Worth City Ordinances, Book C (City Secretary's Office, Fort Worth City Hall); Ordinance 101, passed by City Council, June 25, 1909 in "Fort Worth City Ordinances," Book E, No. 866, June 5, 1903-No. 176, July 12, 1910 (City Secretary's Office, Fort Worth City Hall); Ordinance 566, passed by City Council, March 20, 1917 in "Fort Worth City Ordinances," Book G (City Secretary's Office, Fort Worth City Hall).

⁹⁸Joseph W. Snell, *Painted Ladies of the Cowtown Frontier* (Kansas City, MO: Lowell Press, 1965), 5-6.

⁹⁹"Grand Jury Reports," *Fort Worth Gazette*, December 2, 1894.

vagrancy, keeping a disorderly house, and assault.¹⁰⁰ The typical punishment for these crimes was a fine that was quickly paid by the woman, who was then released to continue acting exactly as she had been. The system of fines created a sense of familiarity between the police and the women of the Acre. One policeman, Officer C. M. Johnston, claimed to know "the name of every prostitute on his beat."¹⁰¹ But problems arose when the policemen turned from being somewhat familiar with prostitutes to patronizing the brothels while failing to enforce the laws.

Reformers saw policemen patronizing saloons and brothels in Hell's Half-Acre as a clear sign that corruption had infected Fort Worth. They also alleged that policemen and city officials pocketed the prostitutes' fines instead of giving them to the city. As early as 1876, the *Fort Worth Daily Democrat* accused both the mayor and the marshal of "making regular collection, for themselves," from the businesses of the Acre.¹⁰² In the 1880s, policemen visiting Acre businesses had become so problematic that citizens drafted resolutions to ban policemen from entering brothels unless "on official duty."¹⁰³ In 1890, after being sworn in as mayor, John Peter Smith along with the city council passed new resolutions which would expel any policemen from the force who frequented any Acre businesses.¹⁰⁴

Fort Worth policemen, however, ignored the multiple laws regarding their presence in the district's businesses. In 1893, A. E. Baten, a pastor who worked in the Bethel Mission, accused several policemen of frequenting both saloons and brothels, and they were promptly dismissed

¹⁰⁰For 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.

¹⁰¹"Pitiless: The Excruciating Police Investigation," *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 2, 1895.

¹⁰²"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, December 20, 1876.

¹⁰³"Citizens Meeting," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 2, 1884; "Forbidden Fruit," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, May 8, 1885.

¹⁰⁴"Mayor Smith," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 13, 1890.

from the force. Two years later, the entire police department was under investigation for visiting brothels and pocketing prostitutes' fines after a deficit was discovered in the police accounts. There was not enough proof, however, and the case against the department was dismissed.¹⁰⁵ Policemen even went so far as to vouch for prostitutes and madams who had been arrested. In 1896, J. H. Maddox, the Fort Worth chief of police, wrote on madam Mary Porter's behalf, imploring the city council not to prosecute her for harboring a prostitute who had been ordered to leave the city, claiming they had made a mistake and Porter was innocent of the charges. The city's grand jury reported, in 1904, "when a police officer is placed on the stand, he knows nothing nor sees anything."¹⁰⁶ Mayoral candidate Frank V. Lanham alleged that members of the police department, in 1910, aided madams by testifying in their favor during criminal cases.¹⁰⁷ From the perspective of the reform movement, lawmen patronizing the Acre's saloons and brothels was clear evidence of a corrupt system where "the city is a party to the violation of its own laws."¹⁰⁸

The lack of actual law enforcement in Hell's Half-Acre became a major aspect of the reformers' allegations of corruption in the city government's attempts to keep the Acre in existence. While the city had passed multiple laws concerning the district, they were often disregarded by the inhabitants of the Acre, unenforced by the police, and at times, even reversed by the city. A little over a month after Fort Worth's incorporation as a city in April 1873, the city

¹⁰⁵"Baten's Charges," *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 23, 1893; "Warm, Well Rather Are Mayor Paddock's Comments On Dr. Baten," *Fort Worth Gazette*, March 27, 1893; "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.

¹⁰⁶Letter 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; "Grand Jury Makes Its Report," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 10, 1904.

¹⁰⁷"Lanham Cites Cases To Prove Charges," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 21, 1910.

¹⁰⁸J. T. Upchurch, "The Lawless Liquor Traffic and the Infamous Traffic in Girls," in *The Purity Journal*, vol. 11, no. 9 (March 1906): 7.

council passed ordinances that attempted to control prostitution in the Acre by punishing prostitutes and madams with a fine. However, within six months, the city council, led by Mayor W. P. Burts, repealed several ordinances, including those meant to regulate the vice district. In April 1874, a new city council was elected and within the month, they reinstated the suspended laws.¹⁰⁹ Law reversals regarding the Acre continued to happen, showing the divisiveness surrounding the vice district. In 1876, laws were passed that outlawed businesses in Hell's Half-Acre from working on Sunday; within a few months, they were repealed and then restored. The next year, the city council approved an ordinance prohibiting variety shows from being performed in the Acre since it was common to find both prostitutes and alcohol at such events; it was reversed within the month.¹¹⁰ Even when ordinances were passed, however, it did not matter because the police regularly avoided enforcing the law in Hell's Half-Acre.

Various reform and citizen groups, throughout the Acre's forty-year history, accused the Fort Worth police department of corruption because of the lack of law enforcement taking place in Hell's Half-Acre. Some policemen even went so far as to act as security for saloons and brothels in the Acre instead of doing their duty. In 1877, the *Fort Worth Daily Democrat* claimed that, even after imploring officers to police the district, "these dens of vice and immorality are open night after night, contrary to the law, and sworn officers wink at and permit them to go on, knowingly and willfully."¹¹¹ Less than a decade later, not much had changed when the grand jury

¹⁰⁹ Ordinances 9, 11, and 15, passed by City Council, April 9-10, 1873, Ordinance 44, passed by City Council, October 14, 1873, Ordinance 50, passed by City Council, May 8, 1874, in "Fort Worth City Ordinances," Book A, No. 1, April 5, 1873-No. 298, December 28, 1882 (City Secretary's Office, Fort Worth City Hall).

¹¹⁰ Ordinance 86, passed by City Council, November 28, 1876, Ordinance 89, passed by City Council, December 22, 1876, Ordinance 91, passed by City Council, December 28, 1876 in "Fort Worth City Ordinances," Book A, No. 1, April 5, 1873-No. 298, December 28, 1882 (City Secretary's Office, Fort Worth City Hall); Ordinance 120, passed by City Council, September 2, 1877, Ordinance 123, passed by City Council, September 13, 1877 in "Fort Worth City Ordinances," Book A, No. 1, April 5, 1873-No. 298, December 28, 1882 (City Secretary's Office, Fort Worth City Hall).

¹¹¹ J. T. Upchurch, "The Lawless Liquor Traffic and the Infamous Traffic in Girls," in *The Purity Journal*, vol. 11, no. 9 (March 1906): 7-8; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, February 5, 1877.

reported that "houses of prostitution are running in the city of Fort Worth in defiance of law," before beseeching the city and the police department to "faithfully and impartially without fear or favor, discharge their duties" and arrest those breaking the law.¹¹² As the Acre moved into the twentieth century, the situation had not improved. In 1904, the grand jury, again, issued a report decrying the police department, claiming "willful negligence" by the lawmen who "do not seem to have a just appreciation of their duties and responsibilities."¹¹³ The failure of several official clean-up attempts in the Acre reflected the inaction of the Fort Worth police. In 1883, the city marshal "declared war on 'Hell's Half-Acre'," ordering the prostitutes to "retreat or accept the consequences."¹¹⁴ This effort was an obvious failure since the city tried again in 1909 to clean up the Acre by ordering "objectionable residents . . . to vacate their present abodes."¹¹⁵ This attempt, as with the previous one, did little to change the Acre; and by the next year, reformers were attacking the police department for corruption and brothels were still in business.¹¹⁶

The city disregarded the constant criticisms of reformers concerning corruption in Fort Worth for one very important reason: corruption allowed major economic gain for both the city and residents of Hell's Half-Acre. According to the ordinances passed by the City Council, practicing prostitution, whether through streetwalking or working in a brothel, was prohibited in the city of Fort Worth. And yet, for more than forty years, hundreds of different women working in the sex trade populated Hell's Half-Acre. Thus, the continual existence of prostitutes and madams in Fort Worth proves that the city was, to some extent, corrupt. Residents of the district and the city as a whole benefited from the survival of the district. The vice district, thanks to the

¹¹²"Grand Jury Makes A Report," *Fort Worth Gazette*, December 2, 1894.

¹¹³"Grand Jury Makes Its Report," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 1, 1904.

¹¹⁴"The Town Tattler," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 11, 1883.

¹¹⁵"Statement Tells Of Clean Up Plans," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 25, 1909.

¹¹⁶"Lanham Cites Cases To Prove Charges," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 21, 1910; "In The Courts," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 25, 1910; "In The Courts," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 16, 1910.

cattle drives and the railroad, was immensely popular. The Acre was populated by gambling dens, saloons, and brothels, and "its presence drew trade downtown" to the non-Acre businesses as well.¹¹⁷ Thus, Hell's Half-Acre was a good source of revenue for those who worked in the district, like madams. The Acre's business owners were not, however, the only group to benefit from the vice district; because of the "fees and fines" system in Fort Worth, the city was able to make money off the Acre's female population as well.

The madams in Hell's Half-Acre were able to take advantage of the money-making capabilities inherent in a red-light district, and some of the women, like Mary Porter and Dolly Love, became very wealthy. The Acre, which began as one "cracker box building," had grown to over a dozen blocks by 1886 and employed more than sixty prostitutes in 1900. According to the Fort Worth city directories, there were over a hundred saloons in the city by 1892, with a majority located downtown in the Acre.¹¹⁸ Thus, from its beginnings in the 1870s to the 1900s, business in the vice district was booming and the women of the sex trade were a big part of it. It was typically the madams who became wealthy since they were able to make money off the women living and working in their houses. The prostitutes who worked in brothels would have to pay rent and, sometimes, even give the madams a cut of their earnings. In 1900, Mabel Thompson had four women living and working in her brothel, while Mary Porter, Pearl Beebe, and Mildred Clifton all housed and employed five women. In the same year, Dolly Love had

¹¹⁷"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, July 10, 1878; Harold W. Rich, "Beyond Outpost: Fort Worth, 1880-1918" (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 2006), 8;

¹¹⁸"A Bad District," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 7, 1886; "City Vs. Justice's Courts," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, August 26, 1899; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1892-93*, pages 356-57, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1894*, pages 375-76, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1895*, pages 434-35, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1896-97*, pages 394-95, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1899-1900*, page 261, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1901*, pages 307-08, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1902-03*, pages 361-62, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1904*, pages 478-79, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1905-06*, pages 544-45, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1907-08*, pages 719-21, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1909-10*, pages 631-33, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1914-15*, pages 646-48, Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

seven women residing in her brothel, and working as prostitutes.¹¹⁹ Therefore, these madams were able to bring in revenue just from the women in their brothels. There were other methods that madams used to bring in money in Hell's Half-Acre such as selling liquor in the houses of prostitution. Since it was illegal to sell alcohol outside of licensed saloons, however, madams could be arrested and fined for it, like Mrs. McClannahan in 1901 and Georgia Finn were in 1913.¹²⁰ Some even chose to run other businesses along with their houses of prostitution. Joe Lowe was the proprietor of the Centennial Theatre in 1878 which he also used as a brothel while Mrs. H. L. Stein allowed prostitutes to live and work in the Santa Fe hotel that she ran in 1918.¹²¹ In Hell's Half-Acre, several of the madams became wealthy because of prostitution; thus, according to reformers, their gain was based on corruption.

One way to assess the financial strength of the Acre's madams is by examining their possessions, houses, and land. Brothels varied in size and shape throughout the vice district. The existing photos of Hell's Half-Acre show a variety of different houses of prostitution. One is a sprawling two-story house with a wraparound porch and three balconies. Another is brick with imposing white columns bracketing the front doors while a third is simply the second floor of a saloon.¹²² In 1886, Madame Brown's brothel was described as an "elegant brick mansion in a highly respectable neighborhood in the northern portion of the city," while the *Fort Worth Daily*

¹¹⁹1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 1A, lines 13-18; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 1A, lines 2-11; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 1B, lines 91-96; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 4A, lines 42-48; June 4, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; 1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 146B, lines 84-92; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, *1900 United States Federal Census* [database on-line].

¹²⁰"Closing Sessions," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, July 20, 1901; "7 Misdemeanor and 15 Felony Indictments," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 21, 1913.

¹²¹"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, December 7, 1878; "U.S. Grand Jury Indicts 18; To Continue Week," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 24, 1918.

¹²²J. T. Upchurch, "The Lawless Liquor Traffic and the Infamous Traffic in Girls," in *The Purity Journal*, vol. 11, no. 9 (March, 1906): 5-7.

Gazette claimed, in 1884, that "palatial brick residence[s]" were being constructed throughout the city to be used as brothels.¹²³ While it seems from these two accounts that madams were moving out of the Acre, the majority of women in the sex trade remained in downtown Fort Worth, living and working in the red-light district. Mabel Thompson, in 1909, offered up her brothel at 1109 Rusk to be converted into a rescue home for fallen women and their children and was refused on the basis that it was "too large and expensive"; Mildred Clifton's home at 1111 Calhoun, which had also been offered, was presumably less ostentatious and was chosen instead.¹²⁴ In order to attract a higher quality clientele, madams understood that they could not live in hovels; they needed to show through the presentation of their homes that they had the kind of girls that wealthy men would want to buy. For example, Josie Belmont and Mary Porter both had silver place settings in their brothels. For many of these women, working in the sex trade as madams was a lucrative business, and it showed in their possessions.

The property and capital left behind in the wills of the Acre's madams supports the idea that these women could become wealthy from prostitution. Two prime examples of this are Dolly Love and Mary Porter, both well-known madams in the Acre. After Love died in 1903, her will became the subject of debate because of its value. The estate, which included a half-acre lot in the downtown district, was valued at \$8,000, nearly \$200,000 in today's money. Love's estate was nothing compared to Mary Porter's, however. Porter, an Irish immigrant, was a madam in Fort Worth for eighteen years. Dying at the age of seventy-five, Porter left behind a sizable estate, which included eight lots in downtown Fort Worth and was valued at \$35,000, or around

¹²³"Bruiser vs. Blackleg: A Heavy Fine," *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 1886; "The Social Evil," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 4, 1884.

¹²⁴*City Directory of Fort Worth, 1909-10*, pages 506, Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "No Raids In Acre; Rescue Home in Noted Resort," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 6, 1909; *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1909-10*, pages 140, Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

\$900,000 today.¹²⁵ While Porter and Ray worked in a job despised by much of the citizenry of Fort Worth, they, and other madams in the Acre, were still able to generate enough revenue to be considered rich.

The wealth of the madams in Hell's Half-Acre was also reflected in the amounts they were regularly fined by the city. While the city courts typically fined prostitutes five dollars for working in the Acre, madams received much heavier sentences, presumably because city officials knew they could afford it. In 1881, the city fined Dutch Rose one hundred dollars for keeping a brothel, roughly \$2,500 in present-day currency. Josie Belmont and Jessie Reeves were given the same punishment in 1885 and 1887, both fined one hundred dollars each.¹²⁶ The city fined Mary Porter, a madam in the Acre for eighteen years, often and heavily. She was sentenced to pay one hundred dollars in 1885 and 1887 and two hundred dollars in 1894. Another well-known brothel keeper, Madame Brown, was regularly charged with keeping a disorderly house. Because her brothel was located in a "highly respectable neighborhood," the city of Fort Worth attempted, in 1886, "to drive her from the field by \$100 fines . . . but she would smile at each verdict, settle with the Sheriff and go on doing just as she had before."

¹²⁵"Record of A Day In The Courts," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 18, 1903; "Deaths," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 11, 1905; "In The Courts," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 10, 1905; "In The Courts," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 4, 1905; Tarrant County, Texas, Probate case files, estate no. 2667, Mary Porter (1905); Probate Court Clerk's Office, Tarrant County; "CPI Inflation Calculator," Bureau of Labor Statistics, Databases, Tables & Calculators by Subject. accessed March 8, 2014, http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

¹²⁶"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, January 4, 1881; "CPI Inflation Calculator," Bureau of Labor Statistics, Databases, Tables & Calculators by Subject. accessed March 8, 2014, http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm, Note: while the CPI Calculator only goes back to 1913, the changes in inflation from the 1890s to 1913 were not large so the 1913 figures will be used; "County Court," *Dallas Morning News*, November 12, 1885; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, April 5, 1887; "County Court," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, February 7, 1883.

Throughout her career, she was penalized numerous fines between one hundred and five hundred dollars, exorbitant amounts in the 1880s.¹²⁷

As Fort Worth and the Acre entered the twentieth century, the city raised the typical fine for those keeping brothels within the city limits from one hundred dollars to two hundred; the Acre's madams continued to pay the fines as if nothing had changed. In 1910, four madams, Addie Petty, Georgia Finn, Pauline Robbins, and Mabel Thompson, were all fined two hundred dollars each for keeping a brothel in the Acre. That amount became the standard fine until the closing of the district. Ella Grice, in 1917, was punished with a two hundred dollar fine.¹²⁸ Prostitutes were fined a small amount, such as five dollars, because it was a realistic amount for them to be able to pay. Those who could not pay would be sent to jail instead; thus, the city understood the benefits of making the payments reasonable since the money went into the city's own accounts and they did not want large numbers of prostitutes in the jail. Therefore, the madams of the Acre needed wealth if they were to afford the large fines set on them by the city. The presence of affluent madams in Hell's Half-Acre supports the idea that business in the vice district was booming.

Hell's Half-Acre was important to the city of Fort Worth because it generated a constant stream of revenue for the government through the "fees and fines" system. According to this program, the women of the Acre would be arrested on a regular basis for prostitution and then allowed to pay a small fine, usually five dollars, before being released back to the Acre to continue plying their trade. The system existed in the Acre as early as 1877; the *Fort Worth Daily Democrat* reported that police raids on brothels were becoming more frequent and the

¹²⁷"County Court," *Dallas Morning News*, November 12, 1885; "Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, April 5, 1887; "Victims of Poison," *Dallas Morning News*, August 2, 1894; [Quotation] "Bruiser vs. Blackleg: A Heavy Fine," *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 1886.

¹²⁸"In The Courts," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 25, 1910; "Prosecute Owners Disorderly Flats," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 25, 1910; "Public Records," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 12, 1917.

forty or so prostitutes (a low estimate, as stated by the paper) were all fined \$14.25. These raids were, according to the article, "a source of revenue for the city," a way to supplement the incomes of city officials.¹²⁹

As the Acre grew larger, in the 1890s, the fines system expanded along with it; madams were charged higher amounts, from one hundred dollars to two hundred dollars, and prostitutes were charged more frequently, going from semi-regular arrests to monthly. In 1894, the grand jury 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.¹³⁰ By 1895, prostitutes had become a part of the city's economic system since Fort Worth officials "expected [them] to come up periodically and contribute to the finances of the city."¹³¹ As the Acre moved into the twentieth century, the fines system continued along with it. In 1904, the grand jury, in yet another statement concerning the vice district, discussed the "habit of fining these people regularly . . . thereby deriving a regular source of revenue" from the women of the Acre.¹³² Even though the fines were typically small amounts, like five dollars, there was a large enough number of prostitutes paying them regularly that they became a good source of money for the city. Fort Worth, then, had a strong reason to keep Hell's Half-Acre in existence. Not only did the district act as a "commercial link" for business downtown but it also filled the coffers of the city.¹³³ Hell's Half-Acre, because of its ability to generate revenue for businesses and the city, became a valuable part of Fort Worth;

¹²⁹"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, November 24, 1877.

¹³⁰"Grand Jury Makes A Report," *Fort Worth Gazette*, December 2, 1894.

¹³¹"The Searchlight Turned On," *Fort Worth Gazette*, May 26, 1895.

¹³²"Grand Jury Makes Its Report," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 10, 1904.

¹³³Harold W. Rich, "Beyond Outpost: Fort Worth, 1880-1918" (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 2006), 8.

thus, when reformers commenced lobbying for its removal, it was the beginning of a forty-year struggle that ended with the construction of Camp Bowie and subsequent shut-down of the Acre.

From the 1870s to 1918, there were many attempts to reform the Acre and, for the most part, they paralleled the national anti-vice movements happening throughout the rest of the country. The earliest recorded attempt at reforming the Acre was in 1877 when the *Fort Worth Daily Democrat* began lobbying for the district's removal.¹³⁴ While the American anti-vice reform movement would enjoy its heyday at the turn of the twentieth century, there were earlier attempts at reform as well. One of the more popular ones was the Purity Crusade which began in the late 1860s. The goal of the purity crusade was the purification of society through the imposition of social controls, and the elimination of prostitution was considered an important step in the process. Purity crusaders, the majority being women, believed purity was a denial of sexuality; and thus, prostitution was anathema to them and needed to be outlawed.¹³⁵ They thought that by ending prostitution they "would require of men the same standards of purity previously demanded of woman alone," as well as saving the women who worked in the sex trade.¹³⁶ The members of the purity movement fought consistently with the advocates of regulation, the other major anti-vice movement of the time, because they saw the licensing and legalization of prostitution as "compromise with what was clearly a sin."¹³⁷ Prostitution, according to the purity movement, was immoral and indecent. For the purity crusade, the total abolition of prostitution was the only solution.

¹³⁴"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, January 16, 1877.

¹³⁵Susan Hill Lindley, *You Have Stept Out of Your Place: A History of Women and Religion in America* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 97-98.

¹³⁶David J. Pivar, *The Purity Crusade: Sexual Morality and Social Control, 1868-1900* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), 7.

¹³⁷Lindley, *You Have Stept Out*, 97.

The purity movement found a home in Fort Worth in the 1870s and became the dominant reform movement over the next few decades because of its focus on eradicating red-light districts and prostitution. During the 1870s, 80s, and 90s, there were several attempts by citizens of Fort Worth to remove the Acre. One of the leaders of the abolition and removal plan was B. B. Paddock, the editor of the *Fort Worth Democrat*, who devoted a regular column entitled "Wide Open Town" to discussing the wildness of the vice district. As early as 1877, Paddock called for the end of the district because of the violence in the Acre, stating "blood has been shed at the dance houses Close them out."¹³⁸ The *Democrat* continued to report on the vice district, making sure to detail all the violent and immoral actions happening there. The newspaper claimed, in 1878, that one of the Acre's saloons was "a typical repository of crime, where vice, recklessness, dissipation, and wickedness abound."¹³⁹ Conditions worsened in the Acre because Fort Worth and the district were growing rather quickly but the law enforcement was not. In 1878, there were only five policemen employed by the city of Fort Worth. Thus, "vice and lawlessness were virtually unchecked" in the Acre.¹⁴⁰

As the 1870s came to an end, the social purity movement took off to counter the growing anarchy of Hell's Half-Acre. The district had grown so wild by 1879 that "the official policy, if not practice, towards . . . vice had changed from open acceptance to public opposition."¹⁴¹ The social purity movement was the major public opposition to the red-light district, claiming, in 1883, that open prostitution was a "disgrace to the city," a "social evil."¹⁴² By 1891, there was a social purity committee located in Fort Worth, made up entirely of women, whose primary goal

¹³⁸"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, January 16, 1877.

¹³⁹"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, November 29, 1878.

¹⁴⁰Knight, *Fort Worth*, 112, 114.

¹⁴¹Harold W. Rich, "Twenty-Five Years of Struggle and Progress: The Fort Worth Police Department, 1837-1897" (MA thesis, Texas Christian University, 1999), 58.

¹⁴²"Hell's Half-Acre," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, April 30, 1883; "The Social Evil," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 4, 1884.

was moral reform "for the better protections of little girls" from the evil influences of liquor and prostitution.¹⁴³ The crux of the social purity movement was to remove or abolish any immoral activity, and prostitution quickly became the focus of the campaign. Thus, the citizens who wanted the Acre gone and attempted to achieve the goal of removal by arguing that the inhabitants of the district were "vile and wicked," and that their actions went against "the laws of the state, of morality, and decency" were employing the rhetoric of social purity.¹⁴⁴

The movement for total abolition of prostitution in Fort Worth reached new heights in the 1890s. In the 1870s and 80s, it was the private citizens of Fort Worth who led the reform movements. In the 1890s, the city council and the justice system, including district judges and the grand jury, became an important part of the campaign for the removal of Hell's Half-Acre. The city council, in 1890, debated several times about the removal of the brothels in the vice district. After resolutions shutting down variety theaters were presented in August 1890, councilman George Armstrong argued that "if the variety theaters were going to be legislated out of the business part of the city the entire half-acre . . . should be moved out" since houses of prostitution were much worse than theaters.¹⁴⁵ A week later, the discussion continued when Armstrong put forward a resolution "to prevent any person from hereafter keeping or occupying any house of ill fame, [or] prostitution" which was shelved at the end of the meeting.¹⁴⁶ The resolution was debated for the next month until the council decided not to take any action on it. The justice system in Fort Worth also took part in the attempts to remove the vice district. District Judge W. D. Harris, in 1893, instructed the grand jury of the "necessity of suppressing

¹⁴³"Work Done," *Fort Worth Gazette*, May 27, 1891.

¹⁴⁴"The People's Forum," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 1, 1886.

¹⁴⁵"Mayor Smith," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 13, 1890.

¹⁴⁶"The City Council," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 27, 1890.

houses of prostitution" because their immoral influence were injurious to the community.¹⁴⁷ Judges Harris and S. P. Greene also ordered stricter adherence to the law while the grand jury, in 1894, deplored the current conditions, stating "Hell's Half-Acre must go and will go at once."¹⁴⁸ The motivation behind the movement to remove the vice district was that the Acre was corrupting the city of Fort Worth. The citizens of Fort Worth saw women selling sex as deeply immoral, indecent, and against nature.¹⁴⁹ They could not bear to coexist with such wickedness, claiming "that a little dynamite judiciously applied in Hell's Half-Acre would not be wasted."¹⁵⁰ Thus, the only response they had was to lobby for the outlawing of prostitution and the removal of the red-light district.

The social purity movement in Fort Worth encouraged the creation of rescue homes for "fallen women" which became a major source of reform from the 1890s to the closing of the district. These homes offered refuge for prostitutes, single mothers, or disgraced girls in hopes of "rescuing [them] . . . and leading them to better lives."¹⁵¹ One of the earliest homes constructed to aid the Acre's female population was the Rescue Home for Fallen Women at 912 S. Main Street. The Rescue Home for Fallen Women was founded by Delia Collins, a member of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, who became "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

¹⁴⁷"The Courts," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 12, 1893.

¹⁴⁸"Judge Greene's Court," *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 9, 1894; [Quotation] "Grand Jury Makes A Report," *Fort Worth Gazette*, December 2, 1894.

¹⁴⁹"Fort Worth Moralists," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 23, 1884; "The People's Forum," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 1, 1886; "Mayor Smith," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 13, 1890; "Whys and Wherefores," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, May 11, 1897.

¹⁵⁰"It Is Said," *Fort Worth Democrat*, May 2, 1883.

¹⁵¹"Work of Rescue Homes," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, September 27, 1900.

virtuous examples."¹⁵² The women living at the Rescue Home were trained to be self-sufficient by growing their own food and making their own clothes, which they also sold as a way to bring in money. The name of the Rescue Home changed, in 1894, to the Texas Woman's Industrial Home, and again, in 1896, to the Delia Collins Home, in honor of the founder after her death that same year.¹⁵³

Rescue homes became an important aspect of reform as the Acre entered the twentieth century since they were one of the only places where "fallen women" could go for help and reform. The Delia Collins Home changed to the Woman's Private Rescue Home in 1909 when Cora Murtishaw became the proprietress, moving it to 1364 S. Main Street. Murtishaw was a lifelong social worker, having "been prominent in child rescue work, caring for many foundling babes" when she became the owner of the Rescue Home. After marrying Guy Gregory, Cora Murtishaw Gregory renamed the home the Mrs. Guy W. Gregory's Private Sanitarium in 1925, focusing on providing a home for unwed mothers and their children until it closed down in the 1930s.¹⁵⁴ The other major 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 before deciding to open his own rescue house. He wanted to create a home for unwed mothers where they were "allowed to keep and rear their children," which was far from

¹⁵²Ruth 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.

¹⁵³"Woman's Home Flourishes," *Fort Worth Gazette*, August 24, 1894.

¹⁵⁴*City Directory of Fort Worth, 1909-10*, pages 631-33, *City Directory of Fort Worth, 1914-15*, page 379, Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011; "Mrs. T. B. Murtishaw," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 29, 1909; [Quotation] "Matron of Rescue Home Gets Decree," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 21, 1908; 1910 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 7, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 13A, lines 15-20; April 15, 1910; ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]; 1920 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 7, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 14A, lines 28-32; January 13, 1920; ancestry.com, *1920 United States Federal Census* [database on-line].

the norm for the rescue homes of the time. Relatives, clergy, and reformers submitted applications for prostitutes and seduced girls to enter the home where, if chosen, they entered the home for a year and were allowed to live free of charge. Religion was very important to the Berachah Home, and the Register of the Berachah House noted for every girl who entered or left the House if she was a believer or not. Upchurch, an advocate of social purity, published a monthly periodical entitled *The Purity Journal* in which he reported on the Home, discussed the reform movements in the Acre, and sermonized about the spread of social evils like gambling and prostitution.¹⁵⁵ Still, while rescue homes were helpful for the reform of prostitutes, women working in the sex trade were a minority in these homes. They made up only 25 percent of the Rescue Home for Fallen Women's population. Even fewer were living in the Berachah Home. For example, in the 1916 ledger, there were no records of prostitutes living in the home.¹⁵⁶ Thus, the rescue homes could be helpful in reforming and reintroducing prostitutes to society but only if the women were able to live in the homes.

While the purity crusade was one of the major national reform movements of the 1870s, 80s, and 90s, the regulation of prostitution, liquor, and gambling became the other significant anti-vice reform movement in the United States, finding a place in Fort Worth as well. According to historian Mara L. Keire, the "Gilded-Age reformers broke with previous anti-vice movements and offered reputational segregation as a pragmatic solution to the social and political ills of urban life."¹⁵⁷ The regulationists believed that "the demand for drinking,

¹⁵⁵[Quotation] E. M. Dealy, "Girls Get A New Outlook Here," in *The Purity Crusader* (January, 1921): 2; "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.

¹⁵⁶Karbach, "Duchesses," 36; "Record of Berachah," 1916, AR280, University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections, Berachah Home Collection

¹⁵⁷Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 5.

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."¹⁵⁸ While the abolition side of prostitution reform was focused on social purity, regulationists were more concerned with forming clear boundaries, especially for business-related interests. Urban leaders created vice districts as a way to stop specific groups, such as prostitutes or gamblers, from entering society. Storyville, the notorious red-light district in New Orleans, is one of the best examples of this side of the reform movement. It was created as a reform measure, a way to "better the business prospects of New Orleans, to attract investment and increase tourism" which the New Orleans reformers believed would not have been possible if the large population of prostitutes were allowed to ply their trade all over the city instead of within "clearly demarcated spaces."¹⁵⁹ The districting faction of reform efforts won out and, by 1900, nearly every American city with a population over 100,000 had a red-light district.¹⁶⁰

The regulationist reform movement came to Fort Worth in the 1880s with a campaign to license prostitutes and move them into a reservation. The regulationist movement became popular in Fort Worth because the Acre was located near the center of downtown, in close proximity to the business district. There were no zoning laws in the 1880s and 90s which meant that a madam could construct a brothel anywhere in Fort Worth. Though the majority of brothels were located in the Acre, some could be found elsewhere, like Madame Brown's house in "a highly respectable neighborhood in the northern portion of the city" or like others located "along

¹⁵⁸Ibid, 8.

¹⁵⁹Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 51; Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness*, 3.

¹⁶⁰Mark Thomas Connelly, *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 3.

popular residence streets and among the most quiet homes."¹⁶¹ While the social purity crusade focused on morality, decency, and the purification of society, the regulationist movement, for the most part, was concerned with the financial side of things. The argument followed that if prostitution were allowed to run rampant all over Fort Worth, then "what inducement will there be to prospective property buyers to settle down and live" in the city?¹⁶²

Many of those in support of the regulationist movement compounded the city's economic interests with the relevant issues of morality and decency when campaigning for a vice reservation. Reformers, in the 1880s and 90s, saw reservations as protecting private business interests as well as cleaning up a city's image, arguing that "first impressions are difficult to overcome, and the man who rides up Main or Rusk streets on his first visit . . . and sees the negro courtesans flaunting their shamelessness . . . has received an impression hard to eradicate."¹⁶³ Regulationists understood that it would be almost impossible to eliminate prostitution in Fort Worth and saw reservations as a compromise between removal and open practice.

In the 1890s, the regulationist movement expanded to include supporters in the city council and judiciary branches of Fort Worth. In September 1890, a debate began in the city council meeting over the removal of the red-light district. One solution offered, by Councilman George E. Neis, was to move the Acre, so it could be "colonized in another part of the city."¹⁶⁴ Neis was echoing earlier sentiments of the Fort Worth business community who wanted the Acre removed from downtown. In a 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

¹⁶¹"Bruiser vs. Blackleg: A Heavy Fine," *Dallas Morning News*, June 11, 1886; "Greene," *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 15, 1895.

¹⁶²"The Social Evil," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 4, 1884.

¹⁶³"Questions of Locality," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 1, 1890; [Quotation] "The Grand Jury," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 14, 1889.

¹⁶⁴"A Hefty Job," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 24, 1890.

center could be protected from the vice district.¹⁶⁵ Though the resolution was tabled, the discussion of creating a reservation continued. During a meeting of the forty-eighth district court, Judge S. P. Greene, after criticizing the lack of law enforcement and abundance of prostitution in the city, implored the courts to remove the sex trade "from public view" into a district.¹⁶⁶ The complaints of the city council and the district court made no difference, however, and law enforcement agencies left Hell's Half-Acre alone.

The movement to create a reservation for the Acre's prostitutes continued into the twentieth century. In September 1902, the city council voted to close all the brothels in Fort Worth. At the next council meeting, however, that decision was "rescinded and referred to a committee for further consideration."¹⁶⁷ Prostitution was, according to the council, a "social evil that cannot be blotted out"; and thus, if the brothels were removed, the women would be dispersed throughout the city. Councilman J. F. Henderson suggested "districting these people" as a way of protecting the city from them. He argued that he would "rather have an enemy in the open than to have one lurking in the dark," which made a reservation the best option available.¹⁶⁸ After Henderson's speech, many of the councilmen agreed with him; like all the reform efforts that had come before, however, this one failed and no reservation was created. Attempts to create a vice reservation ended in 1913 when a home rule bill was passed since "a reservation is illegal under present laws and the home rule bill . . . does not permit a city to adopt a local provision in conflict with a state law."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵"A Question of Locality," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 1, 1890.

¹⁶⁶"Greene," *Fort Worth Gazette*, October 15, 1895.

¹⁶⁷"The City Council," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 7, 1902; "A Red Hot Session," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 21, 1902.

¹⁶⁸"A Red Hot Session," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 21, 1902.

¹⁶⁹"New Bill Prohibits A Vice Reservation," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 2, 1913.

The Progressive Era, which spanned from the 1890s to the 1920s, spawned great social change and several different anti-vice reform movements that became a part of the attempts to control Hell's Half-Acre. Moral reform of the country as a whole was a major theme in this era which resulted in Prohibition, the White Slavery Act, the Pure Food and Drug Act, and the creation of professional social work, among others. The social purity and regulationist movements of the Gilded Age transitioned into the social hygiene and white slavery movements of the Progressive Era. In 1910, the United States Congress passed the White-Slave Traffic Act, also known as the Mann Act, which made it a felony to cross state lines for the purposes of prostitution. This law was the result of a national scare in the first decade of the twentieth century that American white women were being forced into "involuntary brothel prostitution."¹⁷⁰

In the early 1900s, the white slavery movement found its way to Fort Worth and became a popular argument for closing Hell's Half-Acre. White slavery was the belief that white women across America were being coerced into prostitution. In 1905, the "plague" of white slavery descended on Fort Worth, and the police department accused fifty men of "living off the earnings of women whom they keep in a condition worse than slavery."¹⁷¹ Hoping to eliminate the threat, the Fort Worth police chief ordered the fifty men to leave town and never return. Law enforcement's attempts to suppress white slavery were apparently for naught since, in 1910, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* claimed the "white slave traffic has gained a foothold in Fort Worth."¹⁷² In June 1910, Congress passed the Mann Act which made it a felony to transport women across state lines for the purposes of prostitution. Starting in 1911, Fort Worth police took advantage of this law and began arresting anyone they could find who could be guilty of

¹⁷⁰Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 14, [Quotation] 75.

¹⁷¹Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1982), 113; [Quotation] "Gleanings From Exchanges," *For Worth Star-Telegram*, April 27, 1905.

¹⁷²"White Slavery Case Found, Says Mulkey," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 12, 1910.

white slavery. These arrests were different than the typical Acre collars because men and women who violated the Mann Act were breaking federal law and, as such, received heavy sentences. While practicing prostitution in Hell's Half-Acre typically meant a five-dollar fine, those found guilty of transporting women across state lines for prostitution could end up in the state penitentiary for years. For example, in 1914, M. E. Bondurant brought two women from Oklahoma to Fort Worth to work as prostitutes and received ten years in prison, a typical sentence for violating the Mann Act.¹⁷³ The authorities believed if the punishments were severe enough, the traffic in women would stop. They were wrong; women continued to come to Fort Worth to work in the Acre years after the Mann Act became law.¹⁷⁴

The social hygiene crusade was another national reform movement in the early 1900s that also became important in Fort Worth. The social hygiene campaign argued for the removal of brothels since that was believed to be a major step in creating a clean society. While social purity was focused on "freeing the prostitute" and saving the woman, social hygiene cared more about closing houses of prostitution and stopping the spread of venereal diseases.¹⁷⁵ Progressive reformers began lobbying for red-light abatement laws which would lessen or remove existing districts. In 1914, supporters of the social hygiene movement created the American Social Hygiene Association as a way to organize nationally instead of on a city-to-city basis as they had been doing. The ASHA campaigned for "the suppression of commercial vice," but their major

¹⁷³"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Democrat*, September 18, 1881; "There Was Little..." *Fort Worth Morning Register*, October 18, 1900; 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.

¹⁷⁴"5 Informants in Vice Fight Missing When Cases Called," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 25, 1917.

¹⁷⁵Pivar, *Purity and Hygiene*, xiv, 126.

focus was "ensuring the country's venereal health."¹⁷⁶ The eradication of brothels seemed to be the most efficient way of achieving their goals. The sex trade had moved from a moral threat to a health hazard.¹⁷⁷

As Fort Worth moved into the twentieth century, reformers continued the fight against Hell's Half-Acre using the old arguments, abolition and reservations, as well as new ones thanks to the Progressive reform movement. Nationally, and in Fort Worth, the social purity movement of the 1880s and 90s transitioned into the social hygiene movement of the 1910s and 20s. While the immorality and indecency of prostitution was still used as a reason for its abolition, disease and crime became more popular justifications in the twentieth century.¹⁷⁸ Although illegal activity in the Acre had always been tolerated by the city, the murder of a police officer in 1909 caused reformers to begin citing the lawlessness of the district as a main reason it needed to be eliminated from Fort Worth. The city commission, in 1909, exclaimed that "crimes must stop" before attempting, yet again, to clean up the district.¹⁷⁹ The cleanup, like all those that came before it, failed and Hell's Half-Acre continued to exist. Social hygiene reformers believed that removing the Acre would eradicate much of the violence, drugs, and disease that plagued Fort Worth.¹⁸⁰

A common thread ran through the reform movements: the idea that Hell's Half-Acre was corrupting, dangerous, and damaging to the city of Fort Worth. The *Fort Worth Daily Democrat* referred to the vice district, in 1883, as a "disgrace" to the city with no "regard for common

¹⁷⁶Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 91-92.

¹⁷⁷Pivar, *Purity and Hygiene*, xv-xvi.

¹⁷⁸"The Pace That Kills," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 29, 1903; "Close of Vice Dens," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 6, 1907.

¹⁷⁹"Charge Hammond With Murder of Slain Officer," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*; [Quotation] "City Commission Agrees to Abolish Acre," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

¹⁸⁰"Move to Close Vice District Foreshadowed by City Survey; 60 Percent of Arrests There," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 4, 1917.

decency."¹⁸¹ One citizen, in 1886, wrote an impassioned letter supporting the abolition movement and described Hell's Half-Acre as a "great and growing evil . . . the very pandemonium of hell itself and the greatest nuisance ever entailed upon a peaceful and respectable community."¹⁸² The corruption of young girls was a major criticism of the vice district and reformers argued that the Acre influenced people to turn to wickedness and indecency. A city judge made his opinion of the district known in 1897, when a prostitute walked free, calling her "the worst type, one of those who do more to lead young girls astray."¹⁸³ Reformers also argued that the red-light district was dangerous, "that licensed vice attracts and is surrounded by more crime than all the rest of the city."¹⁸⁴ *The Purity Journal* also reported, in 1906, that robberies were commonly committed there, even in the daytime.¹⁸⁵ In the eyes of the reformers, Hell's Half-Acre desperately needed to be removed from Fort Worth because it was actively harming the city.

In March 1917, Police Commissioner Hugh Jamieson declared that he was going to close down Hell's Half-Acre in an attempt to eliminate vice in Fort Worth. Before he was police commissioner, Jamieson was an advocate of the vice reservation. While working as head of the police department, however, Jamieson realized after witnessing life in the Acre that removal was necessary. His major motivation for closing the district was to remove the "three or four vice kings, who own or control the greater part of the property in the Acre."¹⁸⁶ *The Fort Worth Record* reported that Charles Rotsky and Max Smith were two of these "kings," and Jamieson

¹⁸¹"Hell's Half-Acre," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, May 14, 1883.

¹⁸²"The People's Forum," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, July 1, 1886.

¹⁸³"Whys and Wherefores," *Fort Worth Morning Register*, May 11, 1897.

¹⁸⁴"Move to Close Vice District Foreshadowed by City Survey; 60 Percent of Arrests There," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 4, 1917.

¹⁸⁵J. T. Upchurch, "The Lawless Liquor Traffic and the Infamous Traffic in Girls," in *The Purity Journal*, vol. 11, no. 9 (March, 1906): 4.

¹⁸⁶"Vice District To Be Closed," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 5, 1917.

served them both with injunctions to ban them from operating their businesses. The *Star-Telegram* alleged that between Rotsky and Smith, the two men employed over one hundred women in Hell's Half-Acre. Backed by the city prosecutor, Jamieson proclaimed that the "Acre will close . . . and not open in Fort Worth again."¹⁸⁷ On March 24, 1917, he began filing injunctions against brothel owners; but, like all the previous attempts at removal, Jamieson's efforts were thwarted by those who still saw Hell's Half-Acre as a money maker. Jamieson's venture was not fully supported by the city commission. Several city commissioners, including R. G. Littlejohn, W. H. Smith, and M. W. Hurdleston, were opposed to the removal plans. Hurdleston stated, "I am for business interests and the prosperity of Fort Worth . . . I am not in harmony with the movement inaugurated today by Commissioner Jamieson."¹⁸⁸ The attempts by Jamieson to finally remove Fort Worth's red-light district failed because of the lack of support; the ambivalence toward Hell's Half-Acre was soon about to change, however, with the opening of Camp Bowie in August 1917.

In June 1917, the US government selected Fort Worth to be the location of a new military base, Camp Bowie.¹⁸⁹ On August 22, 1917, Camp Bowie opened officially and, within months, over twenty thousand soldiers were living and training there.¹⁹⁰ At the same time, the red-light district was still operating in flagrant disregard of Jamieson's efforts to run the prostitutes out of town.¹⁹¹ The presence of the soldiers, however, would soon change that. The Selective Service

¹⁸⁷"Restricted District Is Closed With Injunction," *Fort Worth Record*, March 21, 1917; "Court Order To Break Up Acre Sought By Jamieson," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 20, 1917; "Acre Will Close," *Fort Worth Record*, March 24, 1917.

¹⁸⁸"Restricted District Closed," *Fort Worth Record*, March 21, 1917.

¹⁸⁹"Fort Worth Named Mobilization Center For National Guard," *Fort Worth Record*, June 12, 1917.

¹⁹⁰"About 5,000 Men Already On Hand At Camp Bowie," *Fort Worth Record*, August 22, 1917.

¹⁹¹"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*,

Act of 1917, whose main purpose was to allow conscription to be used to raise an army, also contained two sections which dealt directly with vice around military bases and camps. Section 13 of the SSA ordered the suppression and removal of brothels within five miles of military camps.¹⁹² Thus, when Camp Bowie moved in about three miles west of the Acre's location in downtown Fort Worth, the shutdown of the district seemed the logical conclusion. Fort Worth officials had lobbied for the camp to come to Tarrant County because "it is believed that the commercial advantage to the city will be tremendous if the camp is . . . established here."¹⁹³ Hell's Half-Acre was valuable to Fort Worth because it generated a good amount of revenue for the city. But the city of Fort Worth realized that Camp Bowie offered much more "financial gain" than the Acre could.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, starting in late 1917, Fort Worth and the military combined to clear the district, finally achieving through economic means what reformers had been attempting to do for forty years.

Camp Bowie officials demanded the shutdown of Hell's Half-Acre because of the threat that prostitution held for the soldiers of the base. In November 1917, a committee of Texans claimed that "places of prostitution . . . are maintained and commercialized vice is prevalent . . . combining in direful work and deadly influence on the soldiers."¹⁹⁵ In early 1918, the major general of Camp Bowie, Edwin St. John Greble, made a statement stressing "the importance of enforcing the Federal regulations against houses of ill repute" because of the danger prostitution

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.

¹⁹²John G. Buchanan, "War Legislation Against Alcoholic Liquor and Prostitution," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 9, no. 4 (1919): 520-21.

¹⁹³"Fort Worth Will Land Army Camp, Citizens Believe," *Fort Worth Record*, May 28, 1917.

"Wide Open Town," *Fort Worth Daily Democrat*, November 24, 1877; "Grand Jury Makes A Report," *Fort Worth Gazette*, December 2, 1894; "The Searchlight Turned On," *Fort Worth Gazette*, May 26, 1895; "Grand Jury Makes Its Report," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 10, 1904; Rich, "Beyond Outpost," 8; [Quotation] ¹⁹⁴Lonnie J. White, "CAMP BOWIE," Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/qcc03>), accessed March 10, 2014. Uploaded on June 12, 2010. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

¹⁹⁵"Pros Appeal To President For Dry Zone At War Camps," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 2, 1917.

represented to the army.¹⁹⁶ The major threat of prostitution for Camp Bowie was venereal disease. Soldiers commonly patronized vice districts in great numbers; consequently, sexually transmitted disease remained a major health issue for the armed forces. Thus, the military, during World War I, began targeting prostitutes and red-light districts, labeling them as "disease vectors" and driving them out of areas inhabited by military camps.¹⁹⁷ In Fort Worth, Camp Bowie officials realized the danger of the prostitutes who were living close to the base. The major general claimed, in 1918, that "the disease prostitute is . . . an active menace" and must be driven from Fort Worth for the good of the soldiers.¹⁹⁸

In March 1918, Fort Worth law enforcement and military police combined to wage "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, with "civil guarantees requiring warrants for arrest and for search and seizure" being "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.¹⁹⁹ 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 infected to disclose their condition, making it illegal to knowingly pass along a disease.²⁰⁰ The main goal of this ordinance was the "protection of the health of the soldiers at Camp Bowie."²⁰¹ For the city of Fort Worth and the US Army, the men of the base were much more important

¹⁹⁶"Camp Bowie Authorities To Enforce Moral Laws Against Civilians And Soldiers Alike," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 8, 1918.

¹⁹⁷Keire, *For Business and Pleasure*, 107-8.

¹⁹⁸"Military Officers Expect Citizens To Report Evil Influences In City," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 15, 1918.

¹⁹⁹"Government: Vice War," *Fort Worth Record*, March 18, 1918.

²⁰⁰Ordinance 617, passed by City Council, April 23, 1918 in "Fort Worth City Ordinances," Book G (City Secretary's Office, Fort Worth City Hall).

²⁰¹"City Proposes Far-Reaching Law Against Social Disease," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 30, 1918.

than the women of the Acre. While Commander Greble of Camp Bowie had "the greatest sympathy for [that] class of women," he still demanded their removal.²⁰² There was no discussion of the men's responsibility for the spreading of venereal disease; all the blame was placed on the women. Prostitutes were a population that no one minded getting rid of because of their occupation; they already operated on the edges of proper society, so removing them entirely was not an issue.

Starting in early 1918 and continuing into 1919, the police and the army arrested "white slavers," madams, and prostitutes until Fort Worth and the US military both were content with the city. In August 1918, the US Federal District Court claimed that, in Fort Worth, more cases concerning prostitution had been heard than any other type. 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."²⁰³ Even after

²⁰²"Military Officers Expect Citizens To Report Evil Influences In City," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 15, 1918.

²⁰³"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.

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."²⁰⁴ 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 the city was clean. But removal was a process; and while Hell's Half-Acre may have been removed, women continued to work in the sex trade in Fort Worth for many more years.

Reformers had been trying to remove Hell's Half-Acre for nearly half a century when Camp Bowie moved in and cleared it out in less than two years. The military base "provided the salient factor that finally ended official recognition and acceptance of vice."²⁰⁵ At the very core of the issue, economic factors forced the closure of the red-light district. The military base would be economically stimulating to the city of Fort Worth. Camp Bowie meant new jobs and an influx of people who would begin patronizing businesses all over the city.²⁰⁶ Thus, it was an easy choice for the city council who, in 1917, began lobbying the War Department for a military base. The construction of Camp Bowie, because of federal legislation, would not allow Hell's Half-Acre to remain in existence. After the base was built, Hell's Half-Acre's days were numbered; and, according to the city, by 1919, the district had been completely removed.

²⁰⁴"No Letup in City's Anti-Vice Vigil, Mayor Wires Baker," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 14, 1918.

²⁰⁵Rich, "Beyond Outpost," 239.

²⁰⁶"Fort Worth Will Land Army Camp, Citizens Believe," *Fort Worth Record*, May 28, 1917; "Fort Worth Named Mobilization Center For National Guard," *Fort Worth Record*, June 12, 1917.

Conclusion

If someone were to walk south down Rusk Street, now called Commerce Street, in downtown Fort Worth today, he or she would see no evidence of the wild, violent red-light district that had once sprawled over those blocks. In 1965, the city of Fort Worth bulldozed over the remaining structures to make way for a convention center; all that remains is a plaque to commemorate the once-famous red-light district.¹ While the brothels and saloons are gone, the legend of Hell's Half-Acre lives on in the stories of gun fights, cowboys, and outlaws. The women of the Acre, however, have been relegated to a footnote in the legendary history of the red-light district. Despite the lack of focus on the Acre's female population, they were an important part of the city, and their story should have equal prominence in the histories.

In 1919, the city of Fort Worth believed that it had truly rid itself of its red-light district and the women who had lived and worked there. All the city had done, however, was to remove the houses of prostitution that were located in the Acre. While the geographical district known as Hell's Half-Acre was, for all intents and purposes, gone, women would continue to work as prostitutes in Fort Worth for several more years. The women of Fort Worth mimicked the national trend of transitioning from brothel prostitutes managed by a madam to streetwalkers controlled by pimps. The reformers who worked so hard to eliminate prostitution from the city simply made life more dangerous for the women who continued to work in the sex trade by removing the relative stability and female environment of a brothel and forcing them to work on the street, depending on a male pimp to find them customers.²

Prostitution remained a part of life for the women of Fort Worth decades after the official closure of the red-light district. In 1934, for example, there were 802 arrests for

¹Richard F. Selcer, *Fort Worth: A Texas Original!* (Austin, TX: Texas State Historical Association, 2004), 103.

²Mara L. Keire, *For Business and Pleasure: Red-Light Districts and the Regulation of Vice in the United States, 1890-1933* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 98-99.

prostitution from January to September. While many of the women arrested during 1934 lived downtown where the Acre used to be, there were also plenty of prostitutes who lived outside of downtown. Some, like Audrey Belton, lived in north Fort Worth near the Stockyards while others, like Mrs. M. B. Hill, lived in the far southwest part of the city. Fort Worth had destroyed the red-light district, and, in doing so, scattered prostitutes all over.³ Thus, the removal of Hell's Half-Acre confirmed the fears of those who believed that the elimination of the red-light district would spread vice throughout the city since it did not have its own specific place.

While, geographically, Hell's Half-Acre was gone for good, the center of vice in Fort Worth had simply moved a few miles northwest to Jacksboro Highway. In the 1940s and 50s, Jacksboro Highway was the new home for "gambling, booze, prostitution, and wild times."⁴ For those two decades, the few miles of highway became the best place to find anything illicit, especially gambling and girls. After several violent incidents, however, business dried up and Jacksboro Highway turned back into a simple road.⁵ Even though the highway was shut down, prostitution has remained in existence in Fort Worth. By removing Hell's Half-Acre, the city of Fort Worth eliminated the open practice of prostitution, forcing it to become a hidden, illicit act done in disreputable places.

While centers of vice like the Acre and Jacksboro Highway have ceased to exist, the sex trade is still a part of life in Fort Worth. Newspaper articles continue to report on prostitution. For example, in 2013, a Fort Worth police officer was arrested and charged with having sexual

³List of women arrested for prostitution in Fort Worth, January – September 1934, "Soiled Dove" Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, Fort Worth Public Library Archives.

⁴Sean Chaffin, "Highway to Hell," *Fort Worth, Texas* (January 31, 2013), <<http://fwtx.com/articles/highway-hell>>, Accessed April 22, 2014.

⁵Ann Arnold, *Gamblers & Gangsters: Fort Worth's Jacksboro Highway in the 1940s and 1950s* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1998), 2.

intercourse with a prostitute, something that was commonplace in Hell's Half-Acre.⁶ Thus, even though the Acre has been shut down for nearly a century, prostitution has continued to exist in Fort Worth. While prostitution is famously known as "the world's oldest profession," maybe it deserves a new moniker, at least in Fort Worth, as "the world's most resilient profession."

⁶Tracy Delatte, "Fort Worth Officer Accused of Having Sex with Prostitutes," October 9, 2013, <<http://www.myfoxdfw.com/story/23650356/fort-worth-officer-accused-sex-with-prostitutes>>, Accessed April 22, 2014.

Appendix 1 – List of Women Who Worked in Hell’s Half-Acre

Name	Citation
PROSTITUTES:	
Idelia (Idalia Midwinter or Reed)	"Another Case of Poisoning - Probably Fatal," <i>The Daily Standard</i> , November 28, 1876.
Helen Forest	"Died at the Infirmary," <i>Fort Worth Democrat</i> , December 28, 1876.
Bell Fannin	"The Victim of Human Brutality," <i>Fort Worth Democrat</i> , January 11, 1878.
Jessie Campbell	"Died at the Red Light," <i>Fort Worth Democrat</i> , April 24, 1878.
Sadie Pike	"More Morphine," <i>Fort Worth Democrat</i> , November 17, 1880.
Katy Gammon	"Fort Worth," <i>Dallas Weekly Herald</i> , September 21, 1882.
Emma Bishop	"Recorder’s Court," <i>Fort Worth Daily Democrat</i> , April 30, 1883.
Janie Thompson	"Recorder’s Court," <i>Fort Worth Daily Democrat</i> , April 30, 1883.
Kitty Burch	"Another Row in Hell’s Half-Acre," <i>Fort Worth Daily Democrat</i> , May 2, 1883.
Maggie Weaver	"Soiled Doves Engage in a Fight and One Stabs the Other," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , July 6, 1883.
Susie Haywood	"Cracking A Joint," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , July 27, 1883.
Pearl Stanley	"Recorder's Court," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , September 1, 1883; "Recorder’s Court," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , November 7, 1883; <i>City Directory of Fort Worth, 1885-86</i> , page 85, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.
Stella Clements	"The Courts," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , September 14, 1883.
Mary Sumerville	"The Courts," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , September 14, 1883.
Nellie Rumbold	"The Courts," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , September 14, 1883.
Laura Davis	"The Courts," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , September 14, 1883.
Ora Hamilton	"Recorder’s Court," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , November 7, 1883.
Chas. Raines	"Recorder’s Court," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , November 7, 1883.
Lucy Moore	"Recorder’s Court," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , November 7, 1883.
F. P. Brown (Prostitute who became a Madam)	"The Courts," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , November 8, 1883; <i>City Directory of Fort Worth, 1885-86</i> , page 85, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011;
M. Everheart	"The Courts," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , November 8, 1883.
J. Keeves	"The Courts," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , November 8, 1883.
Mattie Washington	"The Courts," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , November 13, 1883.
Mattie White	"Preliminary Trial," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , August 26, 1884.
Blanche Williams	"The Criminal Calendar," <i>Dallas Daily Herald</i> , April 2, 1885.
Lou Bell	"War Against Gambling — Sanguinary Slashes," <i>Dallas Daily Herald</i> , May 2, 1885.

Belle Williams	"War Against Gambling — Sanguinary Slashes," <i>Dallas Daily Herald</i> , May 2, 1885.
Chassie Ingham	"Fort Worth Local Record," <i>Dallas Morning News</i> , August 17, 1886.
Mary Ross	"Fort Worth Local Record," <i>Dallas Morning News</i> , August 17, 1886.
Gertie Williams	"On The Street," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , September 4, 1886.
Mary Boles	"Called Back," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , March 11, 1887.
Emeline Gooden	"A Third Ward Terror," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , March 14, 1887; "Localettes," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , August 29, 1887; "Half Acre Amusement," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , November 15, 1887; "Wide Open Town," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , February 28, 1888; "Wide Open Town," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , December 6, 1888; "A Cutting Affray in the Ward," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , December 10, 1888; "Wide Open Town," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , January 13, 1890.
Rachael Brown	"Localettes," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , May 16, 1887.
Lula Jackson	"Localettes," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , July 29, 1887.
Della Evans	"Stabbed by a Woman," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , October 2, 1887; <i>City Directory of Fort Worth, 1888-89</i> , page 115, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.
Emma Penn (Mrs. Jim Lewis)	"Committed Suicide," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , January 19, 1888.
Maggie Estes	"Sad and Terrible Tragedy," <i>Dallas Morning News</i> , March 13, 1888; "Maggie Estes Dead," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , September 6, 1889.
Eva Pearl	"The Court of Appeals," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , June 8, 1888.
Mattie Blair	"A Suicide," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , June 16, 1888.
Belle Kelso	"Suicide Craze," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , December 6, 1888; "A Patrol Wagon," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , December 17, 1888; <i>City Directory of Fort Worth, 1888-89</i> , page 157, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.
Rachel Brown	"Suicide Craze," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , December 6, 1888.
Paralee Steele (Or Parlee)	"Suicide Craze," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , December 6, 1888; Parlee Steele, death certificate 55468 (1908), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >.
Laura White	"Fort Worth Local Notes," <i>Dallas Morning News</i> , April 17, 1889; <i>City Directory of Fort Worth, 1888-89</i> , page 217, U.S. City Directories, 1821-1989 [database on-line]. Provo, UT; USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

Jennie Vincent	"An Acre Killing," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , September 22, 1889; "The Con Hines Case," <i>Fort Worth Daily Gazette</i> , September 24, 1889.
Annie Edmonds	"The Tewmey Murder Case," <i>Fort Worth Gazette</i> , May 2, 1894.
Florence McComus	"Money," <i>Fort Worth Gazette</i> , October 5, 1895.
Gertie Beasley	"Late Police News," <i>Fort Worth Morning Register</i> , March 27, 1897.
Roxy Allen (or Ada Kerr)	"Life Is A Burden," <i>Fort Worth Register</i> , April 8, 1897.
Georgia Harris	"Life Is A Burden," <i>Fort Worth Register</i> , April 8, 1897.
Lillie Sales	"The City Court," <i>Fort Worth Morning Register</i> , May 18, 1897.
Helen Fisher	"The County Attorney," <i>Fort Worth Morning Register</i> , July 3, 1897.
Cleo Williams	"There was little," <i>Fort Worth Morning Register</i> , September 27, 1900; "This Cleo's Sayings Somewhat Different," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , August 24, 1903.
Velma Belmont	"Young Woman Wants Help," <i>Fort Worth Morning Register</i> , October 18, 1900.
Pearl Hathaway	"Young Woman Takes Morphine," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 3, 1903.
Gladys Allen Wilson	1900 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 3, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 141A, line 5; June 1, 1900; ancestry.com, 1900 United States Federal Census [database on-line]; "Murder-Suicide in Rooming House," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , September 28, 1903.
Helen Cherry	Infants of Helen Cherry, death certificate no. 26260 (1913), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >.
Nellie Martel (or Addie Halliday)	"Nellie Martelle," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , January 31, 1904; Nellie Martel, death certificate no. 53331 (1904), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >; "Third Trial Succeeds," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , February 1, 1904.
Laura Wallace	"Third Trial Succeeds," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , February 1, 1904; Laura Wallace, death certificate 53496 (1904), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >.
Laura Jackson	"Woman of Town Takes Acid and Dies," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , May 2, 1904; Laura Jackson, death certificate 53257 (1904), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >.

Stella Dalton	"Police News," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , May 14, 1904.
Goldie Dixon	Goldie Dixon, death certificate 53150 (1904), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >; "Vital Statistics," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , December 7, 1904.
Gertrude Teague	Gertrude Teague, death certificate 54371 (1906), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >; "Two Smother in Morning Blaze," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , February 7, 1906.
Annie Davis	"Negro Held Up," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 12, 1906.
Willie Reddley	"Woman Drinks Acid in Room," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , October 20, 1906.
Ms. M. Hodgkinson	Ms. M. Hodgkinson, death certificate 54690 (1907), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >.
Pearl Smith	Pearl Smith, death certificate 55422 (1908), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >.
Lois Logan	Lois Logan, death certificate 55275 (1908), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >.
Mollie Mason	Infant of Mollie Mason, death certificate no. 55560 (1909), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >
Georgia Harvill	Georgia Harvill, death certificate 55790 (1909), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >; "Woman Kills Self with Picture of Suicide in Dress," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , November 15, 1909.
Annie Stafford	Annie Stafford, death certificate no. 11945 (1911), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records) >.

Lizzie Cunningham	Infant of Lizzie Cunningham, death certificate no. 658 (1911), Texas State Board of Health, Texas Deaths Index 1890-1976, Family Search Database < ">http://familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Texas_Death_Records,_1890-1976_(FamilySearch_Historical_Records)> .
Maud Tatum	1910 United State Federal Census, Fort Worth Ward 4, Tarrant County, Texas; p. 2A, line 17; April 18, 1910; ancestry.com, 1910 United States Federal Census [database on-line]; "Woman Found Dead; Man Under Arrest, Denies The Charge," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , December 5, 1911; "Maud Tatum Beaten and Fatally Choked Verdict of Inquest," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , December 7, 1911.
Bessie Williams (Joyce)	"2 Girls Tunnel Through County Jail Wall and Effect Escape," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , November 11, 1912; "Tires of Breaking Out of County Jail," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , April 1, 1913; "Speight Investigates Escape of 7 Women Delivery of Monday Night Furnishes Police Mystery," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , June 24, 1913; "Key Shaped From Spoon Opens Jail Doors for Women," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , June 27, 1913; "Where, Oh Where Is Bessie? She Escapes Eighth Time," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , September 27, 1913; "Bessie Williams Is Buffeted About 'Twixt Two Jails," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , December 8, 1913; "Bessie Williams In Again," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , January 15, 1914; "Bessie Williams Once More Escapes," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , June 11, 1914; "Haven't Caught Woman Who Sawed Jail Bars," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , June 14, 1914; "Well, Well, Well! Bessie Has New Ways to Escape," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , August 17, 1914; "Refuses Bail in Killing," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , August 29, 1914; "Witness Prides Self on Her Jail-Breaking Record," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , October 22, 1914; "County Jail in Real Peril Now," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , November 19, 1914; "In Again, Out Again, Gone Again," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 14, 1915.
Hazel May Wooley	"Man and Wife Charged Under White Slave Act," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , January 16, 1918.
Myrtle Sheperd	"Charge Man With Transporting Wife For Prostitution," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , February 19, 1918.
Mrs. Bess Ford	"Vice Raid Nets Four Arrests; All Are Jailed." <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 21, 1918.
Margaret Glasco	"Vice Raid Nets Four Arrests; All Are Jailed." <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 21, 1918.
Tommie Peters	"Indictments In Federal Court Charge Forty With Offenses," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 30, 1918.
Alice Hoover	"Indictments In Federal Court Charge Forty With Offenses," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 30, 1918.

Ida Smyth	"Indictments In Federal Court Charge Forty With Offenses," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 30, 1918.
Luella Largent	"Indictments In Federal Court Charge Forty With Offenses," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 30, 1918.
Jessie May Brock	"Indictments In Federal Court Charge Forty With Offenses," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 30, 1918.
Ella Bequette	"Indictments In Federal Court Charge Forty With Offenses," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 30, 1918.
May Adell	"Indictments In Federal Court Charge Forty With Offenses," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 30, 1918.
Germena Richards	"Indictments In Federal Court Charge Forty With Offenses," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 30, 1918.
Theresa Prabackey	"U.S. Grand Jury In Final Report Returns Bills Against 20 More," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 31, 1918.
Josephine Cannon	"Women Jailed When Bonds Not Made," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , July 14, 1918.
Ada Meek	"Women Jailed When Bonds Not Made," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , July 14, 1918.
Stella Mannering	"Disorderly House Complaint Is Filed," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , July 22, 1918.
Lucy Hardegee	"Four Women Accused," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , July 30, 1918.
Susan DeCaluwee	"Four Women Accused," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , July 30, 1918.
Hattie Chriswell	"Four Women Accused," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , July 30, 1918.
Anna Lamb	"Four Women Accused," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , July 30, 1918.
Nell Woodward	"Transporting Wife for Prostitution Charged," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , August 30, 1918.
May Thomas	"Vice Crusaders Arrest Two Women," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , September 7, 1918.
Rose Holbrook	"Vice Crusaders Arrest Two Women," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , September 7, 1918.
Mabel Dunlap	"Vice Crusaders Arrest Two Women," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , September 7, 1918.
Frankie Martin	"Widow Of Yeggman Charged With Violating 'Dope Law' Interstate Traffic Alleged," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , September 18, 1918.
Midget Boston	"Widow Of Yeggman Charged With Violating 'Dope Law' Interstate Traffic Alleged," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , September 18, 1918.
Lucile Payne	"Widow Of Yeggman Charged With Violating 'Dope Law' Interstate Traffic Alleged," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , September 18, 1918.
Frances Burke	"Complaints Against Two Women," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , October 3, 1918.
Hattie Wilholte	"Two Indicted for Driving Women Around Army Camp," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , November 24, 1918.

Eva Kellam	"Two Indicted for Driving Women Around Army Camp," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , November 24, 1918.
May Churchill	"Two Indicted for Driving Women Around Army Camp," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , November 24, 1918.
Ella May Holloway	"Accused Of Taking Girls To Missouri," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , November 26, 1918.
Josie Yarbrough	"Accused Of Taking Girls To Missouri," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , November 26, 1918.
Ruth Brown	"Hotel Clerk Held On Morals Charge," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , December 13, 1918.
Virginia Deane	"Hotel Clerk Held On Morals Charge," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , December 13, 1918.
Irene Brown	"Fails to Make Bond," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , February 25, 1919.
Belle Brooks	"Mann Act Charge Follows Hotel Arrest," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , March 9, 1919.
Margarita Gorgallos	"Mexican Girl Who Swam Rio Grande May Be Deported," <i>Fort Worth Star-Telegram</i> , August 18, 1919.
MADAMS:	
Lee Summers	"Wide Open Town," <i>Fort Worth Daily Democrat</i> , February 28, 1879.
Mattie Johnson	"Wide Open Town," <i>Fort Worth Daily Democrat</i> , February 28, 1879.
Dutch Rose	"Wide Open Town," <i>Fort Worth Daily Democrat</i> , January 4, 1881.
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In August 2012, she enrolled in graduate study at Texas Christian University. While working on her Master of Arts degree in History, she held a Graduate Assistantship in 2012-2014 and worked at the Mary Couts Burnet Library at Texas Christian University. She is a member of Phi Alpha Theta, the Texas State Historical Association, and the Southern Historical Association.

ABSTRACT:

THEY SOLD THEIR BODIES: PROSTITUTION, ECONOMICS, AND "FALLEN WOMEN" IN FORT WORTH'S HELL'S HALF ACRE, 1876-1919

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During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Fort Worth was home to a red-light district known as Hell's Half-Acre. While it has been the subject of some local, popular histories, the Acre has yet to be focused on in an academic context. This study aims to rectify that by examining the women who worked as prostitutes as well as the closure of the Acre itself. From 1876 to 1917, Hell's Half-Acre thrived until, finally, the move in of Camp Bowie forced its closure. During this time period, the women working in the Acre were relegated to an outsider status of "fallen" because of their occupation which resulted in a poor standard of living. This study, with its dual focus on the women themselves and the red-light district as a whole, aims to shed light on an era of Fort Worth and argues that the women of the Acre were so financially valuable that they kept the red-light district open until the military camp, in 1917, forced it to shut down.