

counts of the times, in newspaper exposes, and in the official crime commission reports and other non-governmental reports on social issues. And yet in some sense government still functioned, and the police functioned as a social control force. Among their other duties, they continued to keep an ongoing record of homicides throughout this entire period.

The notorious Levee district, where brothels and saloons were allowed to operate openly in spite of state laws prohibiting gambling and prostitution,²²⁹ was only the most extreme example of flagrant violation of the law sanctioned and allowed by the city, the police and state and federal legal authorities. Blatant defiance of the law, exacerbated by extremes of poverty²³⁰ and financial insecurity which were especially acute in the periodic economic downturns and times of financial panic, contributed to a lack of civic morale.²³¹ Chicago's attitude towards itself was always schizophrenic: No city was more

²²⁹Reckless states.

Prostitution was never quite a legalized or even a tolerated institution in Chicago or in other American cities. It merely had been permitted to exist (in spite of statutory law) during a period when public discussion of it was tabu. [sic.]

Once this tabu was lifted there followed a period in which public discussion of the social evil was carried on with extraordinary freedom and candor. In newspapers, magazines, periodicals, and books, conditions were exposed and described with unusual freedom. The movement reached climax just prior to the closing of the red light district in Chicago.

RECKLESS, *supra* note 171, at 1–3.

²³⁰ The pervasiveness of poverty, and its intractable character, especially in times of economic depression, remained important to all aspects of the civic culture and especially law enforcement:

In Chicago, the need for lodging was so acute [in the decades between the depressions of 1873 and 1893] that the lodgers who could not fit on the “stone corridors” of the police stations were put into the city hall, with the usual newspaper mattresses. The rules at city hall were more lax than at the station house, and there was a constant threat of fire because of smoking.

MONKKONEN, *supra* note 1, at 97 (internal citation omitted).

²³¹ The triumph of the World's Columbian Exposition was followed by severe economic recession:

“With the end of the great Fair somehow the city had crumpled exhausted. Those specters of threatening disaster, unemployment and panic, that had haunted the imagination of its leaders during the summer of 1893 had arrived to take possession. Thousands of idle, starving people prowled the ice-cold streets and slept in the filthy alleys. Violence broke forth. Once more Chicago became the frontier village, unkept and unsafe.” But it is the city's external return to something primitive, its constant doubling back on its self, that finally defines Chicago, the American city that most expressively embodies the conflicting representations of modern life. The prosaic urban grid became the medium that appeared to organize these contradictions . . .

ROSS MILLER, *THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE* 250 (Univ. of Ill. Press 2000) (1990).



given to boosterism and self promotion,²³² or to having its citizens decry it as the worst,²³³ the most corrupt, the most sinful city in the world.²³⁴

Descriptions of destitution and poverty especially at the turn of the century are shocking to anyone accustomed to the assumptions of the Great Society and the New Deal. And these conditions aroused the passions of reformers and Progressives at the time as well.²³⁵

The history of vice and its suppression was not unique to Chi-

²³² The city was called “the windy city” not for its climate, or the ferocious winds off the lake, but because of its boosterism and self congratulation.

²³³ A popular 1912 reformist book began with the proposition, carried through various rhetorical phases that Chicago was the wickedest city in the world. *See* ROBERT O. HARLAND, *THE VICE BONDAGE OF A GREAT CITY, OR THE WICKEDEST CITY IN THE WORLD* (1912). Its facts seem to be taken from the City Council Report of 1911. The cover page describes the tract as an:

Expose of the monstrous Vice Trust. Its Personnel. Graft by the Vice Trust from the Army of Sin for protection. . . . ALSO remedies to cure the Municipal Evil that in one city alone fills the pockets of not more than ten Vice Lords with \$15,000,000, annually, made from the sins of 50,000 unfortunate men and women; an evil that is blasting our nation’s decency and prosperity and is eating into the very vitals of our Republic.

Id. at 1.

²³⁴ Books such as the Harland book were probably widely circulated and are a window on the diction of the day, as well as heightened contemporaneous life stories. Occasionally they include fugitive factual information. *See, e.g.:*

Chicago possesses four ‘redlight’ districts: one on the South side, one on the West side, one on the North side and the Strand of South Chicago. . . . [The South side district] came into existence in 1905 when Mayor Carter H. Harrison, the present [1912] city executive, cleaned out the old Custom House place, Plymouth court and South Clark Street, the nest of vice, bounding the south end of the commercial district. It established a new territory and flourishes as prosperously today as it did in its old haunts. Within the zone described 250 houses of ill fame house the unfortunate women, lure men of all conditions in life, grow rich on sin and on the practice of every form of bestial degeneracy. There are 2,000 enslaved, scarlet women in these infectious prisons! They are of every nation in the world!

Id. at 87–89.

²³⁵ The minister and journalist William T. Stead again sets the scene:

Down this track [the track between the thousands of homeless men sleeping head to toe in rows on the floor of city hall] came reporters, messengers to the fire department and other offices, followed before many nights were over by curious philanthropists, university professors, ministers of religion, and then by the representatives of the Federation of Labor But after a time that narrow pathway was choked up, and even reporters could not elbow their way through the crowd; for the City Hall corridors were very warm; the midnight air was nipping keen, and when all sleeping room was filled men preferred to stand in the warm, close air, rather than shiver in the frost and snow. . . . There they were quiet enough, smoking, sleeping and doing a little talking in an undertone. But for a floating population with the reputation of the bum, the crowd was singularly quiet, patient and well behaved.

STEAD, *supra* note 32, at 28–29.

cago during this period, reform efforts in Chicago were paralleled elsewhere in the United States.²³⁶ And that larger story resonates in Chicago. In Chicago, however, civic reform efforts were especially passionate, serious, but sporadic.²³⁷ The profiteers in charge of illegal enterprises were making too much money to go quietly, and their influence was woven into the political web at every level, not to be cut away by a single Committee or Commission, no matter how distinguished the members or lofty its purpose.²³⁸

Changing racial patterns were part of the story of the Chicago vice districts, as well as part of the overall history of the city.²³⁹ With the large influx of black Americans before during and after World War I, the racial composition of the vice districts changed, from having almost entirely white inmates, or prostitutes, to being almost half black.²⁴⁰ This demographic shift in the character of the brothels of the city was reflected in the racial composition of the criminal justice system.²⁴¹ Segregated housing had always played a role in the city

²³⁶ Part of the hysteria over the anarchist's trial in the Haymarket bombing was the awareness of anarchist's activities in Spain, France, and Russia. See PAUL AVRICH, *THE HAYMARKET TRAGEDY*, 39—67 (1984).

²³⁷ Duis notes,

[E]lection reforms were an abysmal failure in Chicago. Midwestern reformers went through the motions, but the results were minimal. . . . On paper the Illinois enactments were impressive; in reality they never worked. . . . Brawls, bribes, and ballot stuffing were so visible to the public view that the trade papers began to call for saloons to shut their doors on election day so that the proprietors could be free to campaign for pro-liquor candidates. . . . Most political activities in saloons were relatively open and public, but the Grey Wolves, as the crooked elements in Chicago politics were called, planned their strategy in the back room [of the saloon].

DUIS, *supra* note 8, at 131–32.

²³⁸ Duis explains “the saloonkeeper–politician represented a stubborn parochialism that seemed to contravene the efforts of reformers to look to larger metropolitan goals. The bar-keep and his entourage seemed most interested in neighborhood issues and day-to-day survival of customer–constituents, while reformers constantly looked toward the future.” *Id.* at 142.

²³⁹ “In 1914 or 1915—in fact in any of those pre-war or early war time years—there were very few houses of prostitution with colored inmates [prostitutes].” RECKLESS, *supra* note 171, at 21. In the old houses African Americans found work as maids and porters. “That there was any well-developed Negro prostitution, for colored, white or both races, is not consistent with reports of pre-suppression times.” *Id.* at 25.

²⁴⁰ The Committee of Fifteen found that the inmates were exclusively colored in 44% of the resorts (houses of prostitution), whereas in the 1930 Census African Americans accounted for less than 7% of the total population. RECKLESS, *supra* note 171, at 25.

²⁴¹ The big increase was after 1920. “The fast-rising increase after 1920 might be expected in view of the fact that large numbers of Negro women were completing the cycle of immigration from the South already begun by the men in great numbers before 1920, especially during the war period.” RECKLESS, *supra* note 171, at 28 (internal citation omitted).