

ABSTRACT

A Different Kind of Reservation: Waco's Red-Light District Revisited

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Similar to other American cities after the Civil War, Waco, Texas, maintained a large red-light district. Commercialized sex boomed in Waco, as hundreds of itinerant prostitutes lived among working-class minorities, plying their trade in brothels in the Reservation, an area sanctioned specifically for prostitution. In 1889, recognizing both the possible ill effects of vice on the population and an easy means to obtain revenue, policymakers required prostitutes and madams to pay tri-monthly licensing fees to operate in the Reservation. Further, law enforcers frequently arrested bawds, gaining consistent revenue for their municipality. By maintaining a contradictory and inconsistent policy toward the bawdy women of the Reservation, Waco developed a method that was conducive to allowing a prosperous, albeit crime-ridden, sex trade to continue in the community until 1917, when the federal government created an army base, Camp MacArthur, which briefly provided a higher boost to the economy than sexual vice.

A Different Kind of Reservation: Waco's Red-Light District Revisited, 1880-1920

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

Baylor University

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

By

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Waco, Texas

May 2005

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PREFACE

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, many American cities in the East, South, and West had designated places for the operation of brothels. They continued their sponsorship of sexual vice until World War I, receiving considerable profits and boosts to their economies from red-light districts. The extent to which cities profited from the brothel economy varied, but recent microhistories, including Paul Best's work on vice in St. Paul, Minnesota, are beginning to illustrate that a general trend of contradiction existed between cities' official policies and their unofficial regulation of the sex trade to obtain supplementary revenue. Money meant everything in a business that relied on the exchange of sex for cash. Profits and monetary assets influenced most relationships surrounding a community's commercialized sex trade, including bonds between madams and their prostitutes and those between bawds and city law enforcers.

The following work addresses the economic relationship between prostitutes who plied their trade in Waco, Texas, and the community outside of the red-light district. None of the previous works about Waco's Reservation covers the significance of money in maintaining the continuance of the district's operation, at a time when Progressive activism began to filter into the Waco community. The study revisits a topic about Waco that already enjoys three newspaper pieces, two short journal articles, and a master's thesis, but it significantly offers new material and a clearer picture of prostitution in a city that was both Old South and Old West.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One and a half years ago, I arrived at Baylor University with an idea of what I might do for my master's thesis. During my last two years at Westminster College, I had completed survey projects ranging from premarital sex in Victorian England to prostitution during the American Civil War. By my senior year in college, I had found myself playing the part of a disgruntled and seasoned prostitute for the final of my Acting 101 class. The history of sexuality and gender roles always seemed to fascinate me, but I was not sure about the plausibility of doing serious work about my new-found research tastes. A dear professor and friend, Dr. Eugene Sharkey, once called me an iconoclast and urged me to utilize that attribute to study whatever I wanted, even if that meant to take a somewhat deviant path. The last conversation I had with Dr. Sharkey before his sudden passing a month before the start of my first class at Baylor has given me hope when things seemed hopeless, particularly after a near-fatal car accident and the death of my grandmother a month into that fall semester. If he were still among us, I would thank him for his last words to me and for his faith that I could do anything.

After Dr. Sharkey's passing, I arrived on Baylor's campus eager to prove him right and ready to take my chances to do my dream project: a work about prostitution. I went to Michael Toon at Baylor's Texas Collection and asked his advice on any materials the archives had concerning prostitution in Galveston. Mr. Toon had something much better in mind. He told me that Waco once had a fairly large red-light district. A study had already been done about it, but he was convinced more could be written about the

scarlet ladies by the Brazos River. He was right. Mr. Toon's help in giving me the idea for the project and for advising me on initial outlets of research were invaluable. Who knows what my thesis would have been if I had not met with Mr. Toon that fall day.

I also owe my appreciation to other faculty at Baylor. Dr. T. Michael Parrish, my thesis director, went above and beyond in providing me with copious amounts of sources that were pertinent to my secondary literature survey. Further, he urged me last February to send my thesis prospectus to the Texas State Historical Association so that I could present a conference paper at its annual meeting this year, which was a tremendous boost to my experience in the academic world. I also thank Dr. Rebecca Sharpless for being on my committee and for allowing me to periodically visit with her at the Institute for Oral History, where she is director and I am a graduate assistant. Brief chats with her about my thesis were useful, while discussions of the Lady Bears basketball team were a welcome distraction.

I must direct a large amount of gratitude to certain depositories that provided me with useful materials in a helpful and friendly manner. Several visits to the Texas Collection at Baylor University in the beginning of the research process were assisted by Ellen Brown, the collection's archivist. I would also like to thank Judy Shofner at the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum. Judy provided me with one of the most profound quotes of the thesis, the one concerning Olonzo Oden's conversation with Miss Hattie, which appears at the beginning of chapter three. The bulk of my research was at the McLennan County Archives in Waco with Kathy Schwartz and Trudy McGuire, however. I spent a few hours a day for three months doing research at the county archives, digging and discovering. Trudy was incredible in copying the documents that I

needed and was wonderful in getting me acquainted with the archives so that I could freely roam and get any materials that I needed. I particularly enjoyed chatting with both her and Kathy, and I am very indebted for their hard work in providing a home for historical materials that were formerly neglected.

My acknowledgments do not stop with those who were immediately involved in the creation of the following thesis. I would like to thank the ladies at the Institute for Oral History for letting me practice my conference paper with them and for providing me with a wonderful opportunity to work there this year. I am really not sure where I would be without the funds that working at the Institute provided me with, and I believe working there has made me a better writer. Nali Hilderman, my coworker at the Institute and, more importantly, my good friend, provided invaluable tips for the oral histories that I incorporated in my last chapter. She saved me several hours of research, and I owe her a lot of gratitude for that and for her initial edits of my manuscript. I am also grateful for her wonderful friendship during the stressful year of research and writing, and I will always remember the great diversions from my thesis with VSG, *Anne of Green Gables*, and Lady Bears basketball.

On a personal note, other friends and my family have played an important part in helping me to keep some amount of sanity as I attempted to research and write my thesis during my first taste of true independence. My friends, both new and old, have provided me with ample amounts of support. Daily lunches and trips to the Dr. Pepper Museum for floats with Christiana Biggs were a welcome routine. Marie Meyers gave me further emotional support, providing me with certain degrees of tough love and patience that helped me to see that “all of this” was not going to kill me. Her visit to Texas during her

Easter break was not only fun, but a much-needed stress buster. Both my mother and father were great in allowing me to vent my problems to them. My mother took time out of her hectic schedule to visit me twice in Texas and was a wonderful boost to my morale and sanity. My father and I have been through a lot this past year, but I value how “one little accident” can make a daughter truly appreciate a friendship with her father. We’ve been through the trenches together, and one day, hopefully, we’ll feel the better for treading through the ripples in life’s immense pool. Both of my sisters, Lori and Mindy, were patient in allowing me to call them and vent. My brother Ronny was one of the only people who was truly interested in my project. He will always be a true scholar with the sincerest love of learning that I have ever known in a person. Last, I would like to thank my nephew Jacob, who has been the greatest source of joy in my life this past year, aside from the Lady Bears. Jacob, who is ten months old, was the inspiration to finish this thesis so that I could go home to Pennsylvania and play with him. I look forward to telling him about the ladies of Two Street . . . one day.

For Mom and Dad
and
In Memory of Dr. Sharkey

CHAPTER ONE

Let's Talk About Sex: Historiographical Issues of Prostitution and An Innovative Methodological Contribution

Across the Brazos River, linking downtown Waco to its northern and eastern portions, stretches the historic suspension bridge created by the city's residents in the 1870s. While not presently used, save as a walkway and photograph opportunity for curious tourists, the bridge was essential to Waco's economic past. The city was a significant thru-way on the famed cattle drive route of the Chisolm Trail, and Waco's leaders constructed the bridge, a model for the ensuing construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, to ensure easier travel for cattle drivers, instead of ferrying the beeves across the river. Today the historic landmark enjoys a convenient location near Waco's convention center and the local hotels, while also situated a few paces from a pristine walkway along the Brazos that memorializes Vietnam veterans. At the intersection of Washington Street and University Parks Drive, a few yards past the bridge, motorists momentarily halt and proceed through, usually noticing the bridge as a symbol of bygone Texas days. Without a doubt, however, what each driver does not observe or ponder is that a different, less-known history existed in the area.

Once called the Reservation, or Two Street, the area was a red-light district, home to hundreds of prostitutes from the 1870s through the second decade of the twentieth century. Although part of a profession long-viewed as transient who left little behind for historical examination, Waco's bawds and madams practiced prostitution in a city that some claim was the first in Texas and second in the country to legalize the trade in a

contained district.¹ If not legalized, the practice was at least officially recognized in Waco's regulation of it through cyclical arrests, bawdy house registers, and court cases.

This control of illicit activity provides a significant gateway to unlocking the mysterious culture within red-light districts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Economic benefits proved to be the most significant factor that drove most aspects of the bawd life, while also serving as motivation for Waco to maintain its commercialized sex zone in ensuing decades. Money was what mattered, and profits often influenced the bonds between classes of madams and prostitutes, as well as their relationship to law enforcers and local businessmen. Referring to the class of prostitutes as the "lost sisterhood," as these women have often been referred to by historians, implies that a mystical bond existed within the oftentimes ostracized social group of women who sold their bodies for money; however, their relationships often proved to be economic rather than emotional. Protecting one's assets, whether they were monetary resources of landowners, madams, the city of Waco, or prostitutes, dominated behavior involved in the sex trade.

By using databases of justice of the peace records, civil and county court cases, city directories, and census records, the following thesis contributes to the history of prostitution by illuminating what many ignore: the lives of the prostitutes themselves. Further, the study reveals Waco women's criminality by comparing prostitutes' arrests and cases to those of other women in the city of Waco and surrounding areas in McLennan County. After reading the evidence, one might wonder why Waco maintained the immoral district that was wracked by domestic and criminal strife. The only logical

¹See Margaret H. Davis, "Harlots and Hymnals: A Historic Confrontation of Vice and Virtue in Waco, Texas," *Mid-South Folklore* 4, no. 3 (winter 1970): 87-94.

answer rests in the town's fiscal gain; prostitution in Waco, like many other cities in the American West and around the world, was economically productive and therefore irresistible and inevitable.

Prostitution was long established in most, if not all, cultures worldwide. The ancient Greek city of Corinth and Roman Pompeii were hotbeds of illicit activity and buyable sex. The biblical story of Hosea mentions the significance of prostitution in Old Testament culture as it relates a tale of the title character's marriage to a prostitute. Another passage in the Bible concerns the help given by Rahab, a prostitute, to the Israelite spies before their capture of Jericho. Rahab strikes a bargain with the spies: by not informing the residents of Jericho about their impending doom, she saves herself and her family by tying a scarlet rope at her window so the Israelites do not destroy her home.² Thus, while the rest of Jericho dies, the shrewd bargaining of Rahab keeps her and her loved ones alive.³ The story of Rahab reflects the significant and lengthy history of prostitutes' existence in early cultures, the long-held perception of the sly madam, and the notion that even the fallen are redeemable to God, which was motivation of a powerful reform movement that blossomed in the United States at close of the nineteenth century in response to sexual vice: the Progressive movement.

Most literature concerning prostitution during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focuses on the response to commercialized sex by community activists and progressive groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Although Rahab's biblical story relates the reward that the shrewd prostitute reaped after helping the Israelites, cultures holding Christian morals and principles like Progressive

²Josh. 2: 1-24 NIV.

³Josh. 6: 20-25 NIV.

America often struggled with their alternately apathetic and activist policies toward prostitution and often used principles of the Bible as precedent for their disdain toward the practice. In the book of Proverbs, the Bible warns against sexual immorality: “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adultress preys upon your very life.”⁴ Until the Progressive period, however, American society, while steeped in Christian traditions and practices, maintained the belief that because a man’s appetite for sex was insatiable, society needed precautionary measures to prohibit the fairer sex from being ravished at home. Therefore, an assumed successful precaution was sex for hire, ideally contained in a specified, confined area like a red-light district. Modeling the idea after the policies of European cities, American urban leaders believed that their respective red-light districts would lower venereal disease and sexual immorality in mainstream society, but their plans were far from complete success. Certainly, aside from the fact that crime was rampant around many red-light districts and the assaults on human dignity were infinite, Progressives discovered that sexual vice would not be easily contained in a designated area. By the turn of the century these activists gained a considerable amount of political clout as morality-crusading Americans began to feel the polarizing effects of “a new conscience and an ancient evil.”⁵

Unfortunately for the missionaries and activists, the task of decreasing prostitution proved a difficult one. The trade was long integrated into society, overtly embedded in some cities throughout the world while existing within a sexual underworld

⁴Prv. 6: 25-26.

⁵See Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912).

in others. Nevertheless, America did not have an exceptionally long history of the vocation, largely due to its place as a fairly adolescent country compared to others in world culture. Colonial America offered little in the way of the sex trade, largely because of the Puritan religious tradition in New England and sparse population among the planters in the southern colonies. Still, the colonies were not a sterile vacuum of sexual morality by any standards, as the journal of William Byrd, a Virginian planter, testifies with his pursuits among women.⁶ Significantly, though, southern planters often did not need to pay for pleasure; slaves offered plenty of opportunities for white cavaliers, without fees.⁷ By the antebellum period, however, sexual roles changed in both regions, as well as along the frontier.

In the years prior to the Civil War, demographics and American geography shifted the layout of American culture and society. The influx of immigrants into northern cities and astonishing growth of western towns like Chicago and San Francisco resulted from the industrialized groans of the country's pubescent growth spurts. Gold beckoned Forty-niner men, young and old, married and single, to California. Following closely behind these mining camp settlers and city developers were bawds eager to earn a piece of the mother lode. Wherever a western town sprouted up, prostitutes were quick to follow, usually well ahead of wives and children. In describing early settlers of the West, one historian, Ronald Miller, states, "Everyone knew who the first women would be. . . . Those first women proved to be a lively group. Until they were stopped by the

⁶See William Byrd, *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712*, ed. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling (Richmond, Virginia: Dietz Press, 1941).

⁷See Joan R. Gundersen, *To Be Useful to the World: Women in Revolutionary America, 1740-1790* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996) for a brief account of prostitution in colonial times.

crushing onslaught of morality brought on by their more refined sisters, they accomplished much.”⁸

The ranks of American bawds and madams continued to increase during the Civil War. Camp followers and “laundresses” lived close to armies in the field, and both sides’ capital cities teemed with prostitutes servicing lonely soldiers and male civilians. Washington, D.C., not only had several brothels nestled close to the Capitol but also witnessed numerous prostitutes close to General Joseph Hooker’s division on the edge of the city.⁹ With the high degree of paid sexual activity, venereal disease spread among soldiers and became one of the larger causes of military casualties.¹⁰ A green soldier’s chances of contracting syphilis or gonorrhea were almost as high as being wounded by a minie bullet.

Even though red-light districts were dangerous cesspools of disease, the practice thrived through the war, the years of Reconstruction, and throughout the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Westward expansion boomed. Bawds followed the money flow, traveling to mine towns like Deadwood, South Dakota, oil boom towns in Texas, and cattle towns like Waco. Prostitution did not simply exist in the Big Easy and the Big Apple. It existed everywhere: large cities, growing towns, ports, camps, in the most and

⁸Ronald Dean Miller, *Shady Ladies of the West* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press: 1964), 12.

⁹Thomas Lowry, *The Civil War Bawdy Houses of Washington, D.C.* (n.p.p.: Sergeant Kirkland’s Press, 1997).

¹⁰Freeman Bumstead, “The Pathology and Treatment of Venereal Diseases; Including the Results of Recent Investigations Upon the Subject,” in *Military Medical and Surgical Essays Prepared for the United States Sanitary Commission*, ed. William A. Hammond (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1864), 364.

least assuming of localities.¹¹ Even as the trade reached its pinnacle with the highest number of prostitutes and brothels in larger American cities in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, its moral and health hazards began to concern citizens. Cities and boom towns incessantly grappled with their scarlet shadows, their male citizens patronizing a sporting house one day, arresting the bordello's inmates for vagrancy the next.

Aside from the long history that allowed its continuation, prostitution contributed to local economies, a significant reason for local officials' reluctance to terminate their commercialized sex zones. Prostitutes added to an area's revenue, earning money to purchase materials at nearby venues in a way that most women, save for the factory girl and school teacher, could not. In Chicago the per capita income of a prostitute was approximately \$1300 in one year, her income being roughly four times greater than a female factory worker's pay of \$300.¹² Higher income meant higher spending power within the city's economy. Certainly, though, bawds' exclusion from mainstream society prohibited spending money during regular business hours and motivated only periodic and short visits outside of the red-light districts. Salesmen often profited greatly by selling items to these prostitutes at exorbitant prices, staying open late for private visits of prostitutes to their stores or through selling their products during visits to brothels.¹³

Municipal officials also enjoyed a degree of financial gain from bribes, taxes, fees from regulated arrests, sexual tourist money from male travelers' visits to towns'

¹¹Examples are Steubenville, Ohio, home to a large red-light district, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and Omaha, Nebraska.

¹²"Organized Vice As a Vested Interest," *Current Literature*, March 1912, 294, available from APS Online, n.p.

¹³*Ibid.*

brothels, and overt licenses that allowed for sporting houses' operation. Other local "businessmen" generally cashed in on the activity taking place in bordellos as property owners having no qualms about renting houses to women of ill repute for hefty profits. Druggists in Chicago, and likely elsewhere, frequently profited from venereal cure-alls and also sold cocaine and morphine to employees of sporting houses.¹⁴ While the drug industry thrived among drug addicts hoping for some release from their daily drudgery, the liquor business also prospered, and liquor sales in Chicago were estimated at three million dollars. Prostitution as an industry earned Chicago's businessmen at least sixteen million dollars. Property rentals totaled at least half of that sum.¹⁵ As in Chicago, in cities across the country many officials and citizens seemed to have their hands in the cookie jar, reaching for profits from the lucrative business. Shrewd madams and prostitutes shared in some of the monetary treats, but not always; they were frequently victimized. Unfortunately, that was how the cookie crumbled in a society not only dominated by male financial and political power but also one that grimaced at bordellos, even while it smiled at its profits.

Although the sexual underworld continued to flourish during the Victorian period, Progressives began to call for something more than apathy and blind-eye regulation of the trade; they wanted it abolished. Reports of a white slave trade, the commerce of transporting and importing young females for the purpose of sexual solicitation, caused widespread concern in the first few years of the twentieth century. By 1910, activists' lobbying prompted the United States Congress to pass the Mann Act, a law that prohibited the transportation of sexual solicitors between states. Well after the passage of

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., 292.

the Mann Act, however, public concern continued over the trade. Daily newspapers printed sensational accounts of girls sold into prostitution. Some journalists, however, questioned the hysteria surrounding the concern over white slavery, expounding some apprehension over the open dialogue about sexual morality. Concerned over new plays and novellas written about sexual conduct, one journalist wrote, “It has struck ‘sex o’clock’ in America. . . . Vice reports leap into print. Vice commissions meet and gravely attempt to rebuild in a fortnight the social structure of the world.”¹⁶ The writer asked, “Is this overemphasis of sex a symptom of a new moral awakening or is it a sign that the morbidity of the Old World is overtaking the New?”¹⁷ Some questioned the basic truth of white slavery tales, wondering if the practice really existed.¹⁸ Other writers blamed popular opinion and wondered if the public was simply gullible in its adherence to “the vague but sensational accounts of mysterious poisoning and abductions of young girls.”¹⁹ The vocation of sex was a hot topic of discussion, and its existence proved to be a double-edged sword for American cities and towns at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Concern over the “white slave” trade was comparable to the public’s trepidation over venereal disease, at both the national and international levels. Works by social workers like Jane Addams questioned the value of permitting prostitution to continue, while the oil magnate John D. Rockefeller, Jr., formed the Bureau of Social Hygiene to

¹⁶“Sex O’Clock in America,” *Current Opinion*, August 1913, available from APS Online, n.p.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸“Is White Slavery Nothing More Than Myth?” *Current Opinion*, November 1913, APS Online, n.p..

¹⁹“Popular Gullibility as Exhibited in the New White Slavery Hysteria,” *Current Opinion*, February 1914, APS Online, n.p.

study the medical problems of prostitution. The New York Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis offered the city's citizens public discussions on sexual education and hygiene. Several cities, including Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Minneapolis, created vice commissions to study their problems. Many worried about the health of the family, albeit with a racially motivated activism. One contemporary editorial noted, "We have got to remove this evil, or this country will not be ruled by the race that is now here. The family life of the white race is at stake in its purity, in its healthfulness and in its fertility."²⁰ Certainly, venereal disease did not exist in a vacuum among those practicing sexual vice, and entire households often suffered as a result from a husband's sojourn in brothels. There was no surprise, however, that concern over venereal disease and family health coincided with a rise in credibility among physicians' ranks, because during that period, medicine became more professionalized and gained respectability.²¹ Doctors' organizations like the American Medical Association (AMA) and state medical societies published studies concerning the ill effects of prostitution and venereal disease. With the aid of the country's physicians, moralists gained further political lobbying power, but another contribution to their cause was an additional contemporary concern: prohibition of alcohol.

At the turn of the twentieth century, prohibition was already one of the most significant public issues. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the goal of outlawing the liquor business increased in political and social importance. The alcohol

²⁰"New Methods of Grappling with the Social Evil," *Current Opinion*, April 1913, APS Online, 308.

²¹For trends in professionalization of medicine see James C. Mohr, *Abortion in America: The Origins and Evolution of National Policy, 1800-1900* (New York: Oxford UP, 1978).

industry frequently profited in the parlors of bordellos, as their inmates often sold liquor in large quantities to their customers. Consequently, a madam's sex earnings often depended on her ability to provide alcohol to her customers. The more inebriated a customer was, the more likely he would pay higher than the minimum fee. Clients' good times, which often relied on the ice-breaking afforded by alcohol consumption, would bring a more secure income to an establishment from these satisfied returning customers and regulars. A new social conscience, however, viewed the marriage between prostitution and potent potables with disdain and called for "[t]he necessity of divorcing the saloon and the social evil."²² By separating the two lucrative businesses, social moralists expected that sexual promiscuity and inebriation could not survive on their own. At the least, petty and felonious crimes surrounding both elements would decrease.

Progressive activists, enjoying a significant amount of political clout, still failed to completely eradicate regulated red-light districts, even during the movement's zenith. In fact, the question of segregating vice in a designated area continued to polarize American policy-makers. One side rejected abolition and propounded keeping districts, arguing for the long-embedded belief that a confined area, regularly inspected by physicians, would contain disease and immorality. By closing the districts altogether, the social evil would spread and permeate a community. On the contrary, abolitionists argued that some cities' success in closing their districts provided evidence that healthy and moral effects would result from ending toleration of brothels.²³

²²"New Methods," *Current Opinion*, 309.

²³*Ibid.*

The debate continued, but the red-light districts' swan song proved to be the anticipation of the United States' involvement in World War I in 1917, when an abolitionist-sympathizing Secretary of War Newton Baker pressured cities with still-existing districts that wanted to benefit from newly created military bases. The threat of venereal disease was a real one, and Uncle Sam would not tolerate its able-bodied soldiers living near commercialized sex zones. The federal government offered an ultimatum: either shut them down or the economic benefits of a new military base would be enjoyed by cities with no designated red-light districts. Cities hurried to appease the military and officially dimmed their red lights. Prostitution, while no longer flourishing, continued, but without the enigmatic sanction of local governments' regulation or endorsement of it.

Prostitution in the central Texas city often mirrored what occurred in other regions. In the nineteenth century, Waco was a fast-growing city, but the boom was not confined simply to respectable citizens. Available records show that more than two hundred prostitutes came and went between 1889 and 1895, not to mention the remaining years of Two Street's operation.²⁴ Crime and venereal disease among prostitutes were vital challenges in Waco, and the city attempted to contain these problems in a restricted zone, like so many other places around the country. Waco also received a large amount of revenue from allowing sexual solicitation to continue year after year. Lawmakers assumed that allowing Two Street to remain open would prevent rowdy behavior from entering more respectable areas, and they collected on the monetary benefits afforded them by claiming to be so socially conscious. Still, similar to other places, when the U.S.

²⁴Bawdy House Register, 1889-1895 (Waco, Texas), Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Army created Camp MacArthur near the city, Waco eagerly closed down the district to reap the camp's economic prosperity. Certainly, the prostitutes were not entirely discouraged from plying their vocation, because arrests of prostitutes, both independent workers and brothel inmates, continued for years afterward.

Waco was not completely similar to what occurred at the national level, however. At least for a brief period, Waco legalized its district. Prostitutes were issued licenses and required to pass regular health examinations. In the initial years when Waco endorsed its red-light district, from 1889 through 1895, Mayor Champe McCulloch personally signed the bawdy house register for each month, his signature appearing near the total amount of money collected in license fees for each month.²⁵ Certainly, commercialized sex was official, and the mayor was eager to reap the city's reward for allowing it to continue. A study of this dynamic relationship is important.

Most of the secondary literature concentrating on prostitution at the national level focuses on the relationship between commercial sex and reformers. Compared to prostitutes, morality groups left more documentation for posterity to study. Two important histories typify the significance of middle-class feminists and other Progressive reformers. *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition*, by Barbara Meil Hobson, is an excellent example of illustrating the significance of feminists in the reform movement.²⁶ Hobson discusses the elements surrounding prostitution's political issues.²⁷ She explores the political developments of

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue: The Politics of Prostitution and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1987).

²⁷Ibid., 4.

prostitution in the antebellum period, the Progressive Era, and in more recent times, addressing the issue of feminist reformers' bitter reactions to, and active protests against, prostitution throughout its history.²⁸ In her history she argues that these American feminists, including purity and temperance organizations and suffragettes, lacked the political power and "economic empowerment" to alter public policy toward prostitution.²⁹ Ruth Rosen's *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in American, 1900-1915* also describes the significance of feminism in approaching Progressive Era prostitution scholarship.³⁰ Rosen believes that prostitution in the Progressive Era represented larger issues, such as women's rights, as well as the economic exploitation of women. Her work not only reflects women's issues, but also reveals the period's class issues, as some women adopted careers as prostitutes due to economic necessity.³¹ Like Hobson, Rosen discusses the significance of women reformers and their various activist strategies as distinct from their male counterparts, condemning prostitution because of its exploitative nature. Rosen's approach reflects the problematic nature of prostitution study, as she uses a very flexible methodology, drawing on historical, sociological, and anthropological perspectives to construct her arguments.³²

Although the work of Hobson and Rosen are useful to researchers of prostitution, they reflect a tendency to focus on reformers in cities in the East. While literature on the

²⁸Ibid., 6-7.

²⁹Ibid., 5.

³⁰Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1915* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

³¹Ibid., xiii.

³²Ibid., xvi.

national relationship between reformers and prostitutes is useful for any local study of the phenomenon, studies of prostitution in the Old West are focused on knowing the typical life of the frontier scarlet lady. On a broader, regional level, most work either reflects prostitution in the eastern region, specifically New York City,³³ or the rowdy life and times of bawdy women in the West. Works on the culture of the West certainly have relevance to a study on Texas prostitution. Unfortunately, as in other cases, this regional literature reveals little regarding the activities and culture of Texas prostitutes. Waco's prostitution is not even a footnote. Moreover, the work concerning western, and even Texan, infamous women lacks any kind of references to sources and is mythological and hearsay, anecdotal at best.³⁴

The "historical" studies of one writer, Jay Moynahan, epitomizes work that, while interesting and colorful, offers no documented evidence of his conclusions about prostitutes in the Old West. In recent years, Moynahan has published smaller books of bawd stories and offers an informative glance into their scarlet culture. One publication is a dictionary of terms used by prostitutes and is very useful in bridging the linguistic gap of long-silenced historical participants.³⁵ He also has published works on the culinary arts of brothels, as well as favorite bawd poems and songs.³⁶ Moynahan's

³³See Marilyn Wood Hill, *Their Sister's Keepers: Prostitution in New York City, 1830-1870* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), and Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992).

³⁴The best examples of these literary feats are David Bowser, *West of the Creek: Murder, Mayhem and Vice in Old San Antonio* (San Antonio: Maverick Publishing, 2003), and J. Lee Butts, *Texas Bad Girls: Hussies, Harlots and Horse Thieves* (n.p.p.: Republic of Texas Press, 2001).

³⁵Jay Moynahan, *Talkin' About Sportin' Women: A Dictionary of Terms Related to Prostitution on the American Frontier*. Sportin' Women Series (Spokane, Wash.: Chickadee Pub., 2002).

³⁶*Ibid.*, *Culinary Delights from the Red Lights: Recipes from the Bordellos and Backstreets of the Frontier West* (Spokane, Wash.: Chickadee Pub., 1999), and *Poems of the Soiled Doves: Poetry and Verse*

entertaining pieces illuminate an important aspect ignored by many: red-light district culture. However, his exclusion of citations leaves a scholar wondering about the sources of his information, while his anecdotal narratives contribute to romantic notions of bawd culture instead of correctly dismantling it under historical scrutiny.

Anna Seagraves' work, *Soiled Doves: Prostitution in the Early West*, also exemplifies the standard of most works concerning the West, using prostitution to describe the culture of early western life and sharing stories of the most famous *infamous* women.³⁷ Similar to the anecdotal tales woven by Ronald Miller in his *Shady Ladies of the West*, published in the early 1960s, Seagraves recognizes the role of the prostitute in settling the early West.³⁸ Further, she argues that historians offer little credit to the economic contributions of prostitution in the early West, for madams were very successful entrepreneurs who added a significant amount of commerce to their respective cities or towns.³⁹ Seagraves describes lives of typical prostitutes and explains that their financial successes and reputations often resulted from their positions in the social strata within their trade: madams, courtesans, and streetwalkers, among others.⁴⁰ For the majority of the book, however, Seagraves remains primarily descriptive, eschewing documentation and historical analysis while barely mentioning Texas prostitution.

Related to Prostitution on the American Frontier, Sportin' Women Series (Spokane, Wash.: Chickadee, 2002).

³⁷ Anna Seagraves, *Soiled Doves: Prostitution in the Early West* (Hayden, Idaho: Wesanne Publications, 1994), xix. See also Ronald Dean Miller, *Shady Ladies*.

³⁸ Anna Seagraves, *Soiled Doves*, xviii.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 24-30.

Certainly, the broad scope of Seagraves's work inhibited her from closely studying any region or state for that matter.

Compared to other states, Texas has a unique history, but its systems of prostitution were not necessarily extraordinary to sexual vice in other American cities of the West, Deep South, or East. A few microhistories of local prostitution in Texas reveal a growing trend by looking at the occurrence of commercialized sex in a specific city or town. Some popular culture works, however, do focus on infamous Texas women, relating the legendary exploits of famous madams and other women outlaws.⁴¹ Other works, though few in number, depict the stories of sexual vice in Texas cities. As a whole, the scholarship that examines specific Texas localities does not mention the significance of other Texas cities' red-light districts. Nevertheless, they do provide an opportunity for anyone studying a specific Texas town to make comparisons and contrasts between famous madams and bawdy districts in different cities. Some have produced scholarship worthy of mention, and in order to better understand general Texas historiography and the arguments in the following chapters, one must discuss works of other cities' prostitution.

In her master's thesis, "Free Rein: Galveston Island's Alcohol, Gambling, and Prostitution Era, 1839-1957," Jean M. Brown writes of Galveston's place in infamy with its open toleration of three illegal vices: alcohol, gambling, and prostitution.⁴² Brown explains that Galveston, with its accessible harbor, was an important crossroads for travelers and sailors. Resulting from the influx of people, saloons sprang up throughout

⁴¹J. Lee Butts, *Texas Bad Girls*.

⁴²Jean M. Brown, "Free Rein: Galveston Island's Alcohol, Gambling, and Prostitution Era, 1839-1957" (Master's thesis, Lamar University, August 1998), 1.

the city, providing a fertile atmosphere for illicit behavior.⁴³ These activities in “Sin City,” Brown argues, continued under the care of the Mafia until their official prohibition by the state’s attorney general in 1957.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, Brown reveals nothing about other Texas cities’ commercialized sex.

Other studies of Texas cities have recently appeared, however. Some scholarly works concern bawdy activity in Fort Worth, El Paso, and Austin, among others.⁴⁵ While expounding upon the myth of Edna’s Chicken Ranch in La Grange, Texas, one work describes the significance in studying Texas prostitution. The author infers that writers need to concentrate on regional areas, since the “New York hooker has as much in common with a Texas whore as she has with a Carmelite nun.”⁴⁶ Unfortunately, little work has been done comparing prostitution in cities within a defined region of the United States. Texas prostitution proves further problematic, given that Texas reflects characteristics of two regions: South and West. The only work that briefly incorporates a comparison of various Texas cities, in fact, is a journal publication by David C. Humphrey, who provides a summary of the attitudes toward prostitution in various Texas regions from the 1830s through the 1960s.⁴⁷ Still, even Humphrey’s ambitious

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., 129.

⁴⁵See Richard F. Selcer, “Fort Worth and the Fraternity of Strange Women,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 96, no. 1 (1992): 54-86, Ann R. Gabbert, “Prostitution and Moral Reform in the Borderlands: El Paso, 1890-1920,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 4 (2003): 575-604, and David C. Humphrey, “Prostitution and Public Policy in Austin, Texas, 1870-1915,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 86 (April 1983): 473-516.

⁴⁶Jan Hutson, *The True Story of the Best Little Whorehouse in Texas: The Chicken Ranch* (San Diego: A. S. Barnes, 1982), 15.

⁴⁷David C. Humphrey, “Prostitution in Texas: From the 1830s to the 1960s,” *East Texas Historical Journal* 33, no. 1 (1995): 27-43.

undertaking lacks the amount of detail necessary to understand regulated sexual vice in a specific city like Waco. While some of his generalizations provide trends of policymaking and Texas cities' overall economic motivations in maintaining their red-light districts, Humphrey does not provide the amount of information necessary to understand one particular locality. Perhaps that is why microhistories within specific states such as Texas have become so numerous. Further, some Texas cities simply cannot be part of larger generalizations because of their existence between intra-state regional borders.

Along with other, older cities in Texas, Waco was a city that contained both Old South and Old West characteristics during the time of its prostitution. By the late nineteenth century until the early twentieth, cotton was still king in Waco and the crown prince was cattle, yet the “rough and tumble” life of the cattle boomtown often coexisted with the refined and conservative society of the South. Churches flourished while several colleges nurtured the future minds of Texas. Still, the refined, genteel citizenry also shared darker levels of racial hatred seen in most other southern states. In fact, until after 1916 thousands of respectable Waco citizens grew accustomed to and watched several lynchings in the town square.⁴⁸ While presenting a picture of progress and gentility, Waco could neither escape the South's penchant for racial discrimination nor could it come to terms with the influx of itinerants looking for better economic opportunities, both legitimately and illegitimately.

The economies of cotton and cattle, while relevant to understanding Waco, were not the only trades contributing to Waco's commerce. For decades, the world's “oldest

⁴⁸See William D. Carrigan, *The Making of a Lynching Culture: Violence and Vigilantism in Central Texas, 1836-1916* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

profession” not only existed, but flourished in a city known for its religious moral conservatism. But contrary to its religious heritage, Waco, or “Six-shooter Junction” as it was called for its sometimes violent reputation, shared many characteristics with the colorful histories of other Texas cities. Most of the state’s largest cities contained red-light districts: Austin’s Guy Town, El Paso’s Utah Street, Fort Worth’s Hell’s Half Acre, Galveston’s Post Office Street, and San Antonio’s The District, among others. Waco’s district was called Two Street because of the street bordering the Reservation to its south and west. Further, most of the brothels were located specifically on Second Street. Next to Hell’s Half Acre and the District, Two Street was the state’s most infamous in its sixth-largest city.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, excluding a thesis, two short articles by local scholars, and a few shorter newspaper pieces, little has been written about Waco’s prostitution. No published work exists about Waco’s red-light district comparable to those written about bawdy areas of El Paso, Fort Worth, and San Antonio, and none of the smaller Waco works offers any kind of enlightenment on the prostitutes’ lives and their criminal activity compared to crimes of other Waco women.

Some scholars, not all historians, have published various articles about Waco’s Two Street. These articles, primarily for the enlightenment of newspaper-reading laymen, focus on various anecdotes of Two Street. One, written by Baylor professor Bob Darden, titled “Best Legal Whorehouses in Texas,” briefly describes Waco’s red-light district. Darden presents some interesting anecdotes, while describing some of the major,

⁴⁹Kent Biffle, “Waco Was 1st To Reserve Areas For Brothels,” *Dallas Morning News*, November 30, 1997, Home Final Edition, Texas & Southwest Section, 45A.

accessible facts about Two Street.⁵⁰ Another article, published by Kent Biffle in the *Dallas Morning News*, brings to light other anecdotes about an old timer who witnessed some activities at a Waco brothel in the early 1900s,⁵¹ while an earlier article by the same journalist relates similar stories about Two Street.⁵² Neither of the articles thoroughly addresses the lives of the prostitutes or specific occurrences of the community's regulation of Two Street, except in the form of subversive humor regarding Waco's reputation throughout the state as being overly conservative. Basically, the information relayed in all three articles primarily originates from an earlier article written by Margaret H. Davis.

Davis, a former English professor at Baylor University, became the first scholar of Waco's prostitution, publishing an article in 1970, titled "Harlots and Hymnals: A Historic Confrontation of Vice and Virtue in Waco, Texas." Davis writes that Waco, while having a reputation as the "Buckle of the Bible Belt," or the "Athens of Texas," maintained an unknown history of legalized prostitution.⁵³ In her brief article Davis addresses both the Reservation and public policy. In the closing paragraphs she briefly discusses the relationship between the community and Two Street, describing the support many citizens gave toward a legalized, confined vice district. At the same time, however, Davis states that support for the Reservation existed in a constant state of flux, as

⁵⁰Bob Darden, "Best Legal Whorehouses in Texas," *Dallas Times Herald*, May 27, 1984, 18-22, 32.

⁵¹Kent Biffle, "Waco Was 1st to Reserve Area."

⁵²Ibid., "Unbuckled Bible Belt: Waco's Old Red-Light Area," *Dallas Morning News*, September 7, 1986, 45A.

⁵³Margaret Davis, "Harlots and Hymnals."

passions sometimes flared among the populace, urging the closure of Two Street.⁵⁴

Davis's article is a good guide for doing the initial stages of research, but its brevity prohibits any kind of in-depth discussion of Two Street culture, criminology, and economics.

The only substantial work that encompasses a study of Waco from a historian's perspective is Aimee Harris Johnson's master's thesis at Baylor in 1990.⁵⁵ "Prostitution in Waco, 1889-1917" utilizes specific ordinances, both at the state and national levels, to trace the development of Waco's fitful toleration toward prostitution. In particular, she discusses two local court cases involving murder, giving a large portion of her thesis a legal perspective. For the remainder, Johnson superficially describes the culture of Two Street, in effect, repeating information already presented in Davis's article. She also recalls what most already know about the sometimes sketchy study of prostitution: prostitutes left little evidence behind them to reveal much about their lifestyles. While she does briefly explore the community's reaction to Two Street's activities, Johnson provides little analysis of available evidence concerning prostitution's regulation. One simply must take her word that the practice was legal and slightly regulated.

Ellen Brown, archivist at the Texas Collection at Baylor, has also published an article concerning prostitution in Waco.⁵⁶ Brown addresses an element that both Johnson and Davis ignore: the significance of church groups in the toleration of vice. Although the previous writers mention Waco's state-wide honor of being the "buckle of the Bible

⁵⁴Ibid., 92.

⁵⁵Aimee Harris Johnson, "Prostitution in Waco, 1889-1917," (master's thesis, Baylor University, 1990).

⁵⁶Ellen Kuniyuki Brown, "Saints and Sinners: Waco Baptists and 'Women's Work,'" *The Journal of Texas Baptist History* 18 (1998): 27-41.

Belt,” they do not offer a discussion of the response of local churches toward the blazing red lights down by the Brazos River. Brown, however, approaches the issue of Waco’s strong Baptist tradition and its women’s groups with their apparent ignorance of sexual issues. Explaining that Waco’s First Baptist Church provides little evidence that the denomination acknowledged the Reservation’s existence, Brown contends that Baptist women chose not to speak out against the Reservation and had an attitude of benign neglect. Certainly, her work is useful in understanding church groups’ reaction to their community’s the Reservation district. Still, like the other works on Waco’s prostitution, the article offers no understanding of the “other” group of women: the prostitutes themselves.

As previously mentioned, one reason for the lack of study concerning the prostitutes’ activity is that the field of prostitution remains difficult to research. Prostitutes often drifted between cities and towns, leaving few traces. Even the few memoirs of bawds from other cities that are in existence do not necessarily reveal the true feelings and activities of prostitutes, as some progressive activists wrote fake memoirs to further their political agendas at the height of the Progressive Era.⁵⁷ With few valid documents available, the picture of American prostitutes remains sketchy at best.

Fortunately, the study of Waco’s prostitution, a topic yet to be honored with a monographic publication, offers a unique opportunity. The city openly regulated prostitution, continuing to pass ordinances that further restricted the boundaries and practices of those living on Two Street. Waco’s leaders required each prostitute to pass monthly physical exams to prevent the spread of venereal disease, a rampant and

⁵⁷Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue*, 3.

dangerous affliction plaguing American cities. Every three months a bawd was required to pay fees for a license to ply her trade in the Reservation. Madams usually paid their inmates' fees, but they also had to register their bawdy houses and pay more fees for each room. Finally, no prostitute could leave the Reservation, and if caught, as often happened, the city court fined her for vagrancy, a common euphemism for prostitution.⁵⁸ This information, however, has already appeared in most of the works concerning Two Street. Still, with determination and a considerable amount of time, a historian can uncover and analyze much relevant information, as the following pages will demonstrate.

This thesis offers a different perspective compared to other scholarship on Waco and previous works that cover a broader scope of events. This work focuses on the prostitutes' lives and how they concerned a larger economic motivation on the part of the city. A new development has taken place in illuminating these prostitutes' activities that was denied previous scholars of Waco. New methodologies certainly can provide new perspectives, but when documents that were never studied by a scholar's predecessors become accessible to researchers, such a discovery warrants new discussion. In 1998, county records were consolidated into one building in the McLennan County Archives. Before that time, the oldest city and county court records were unorganized and stored in a dark, inaccessible room on the top floor of a building near the county courthouse. For the first time, the records used in the following chapters offer an opportunity for historical analysis that was impossible in previous years. These documents shaped the multi-pronged methodology of this thesis.

⁵⁸Margaret H. Davis, "Harlots and Hymnals."

This introductory chapter has attempted to show that the study of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American prostitution is a large field saddled with many cultural issues and frequently encounters some problems in the social history of prostitutes. Documentation can sometimes be littered with holes and dead ends, so other research venues must be found to bridge gaps. The county archives in Waco were no different in that some of the records are incomplete because of years of neglect before the creation of the archives. Volumes of important years are lost, possibly buried in some landfill in the county. As with any study of prostitutes, a researcher simply cannot maintain one particular source base or methodology, and the study of Waco does not refute that notion.

The following chapter, “Waco Undressed: The Women of Two Street,” attempts to focus on the female inmates of the Reservation’s bawdy houses. Using civil court cases filed by the prostitutes themselves, the chapter describes elements of the lives of the district’s residents, providing insights into their treatment of each other in their alleged “lost sisterhood.” One of the most useful sources for the chapter, however, was Waco’s bawdy house register, an official city list of prostitutes and madams from 1889 to 1895 and a unique contribution to any study of prostitution. The register indicates the date, occupation of the woman, the license’s expiration, and amount paid each month over a period of roughly five years.⁵⁹ Throughout the register’s official use, more than two hundred prostitutes repeatedly registered with the city. The list of these prostitutes was a starting point in researching Two Street, a step preceding a perusal of the city’s directories and the county’s census records covering the register’s inclusive years up until

⁵⁹Bawdy House Register, 1889-1895.

the year that the Reservation closed. Thus, the sources allowed for a fair determination of the demographic composition and basic arrangement of brothels.

“If You Can’t Stop It, Regulate It: Waco’s Response to Sexual Vice,” chapter three, discusses the criminology of Two Street’s residences. Comparing Waco to other regional and Texas cities, the chapter first briefly describes their communities’ responses to commercialized sex. Most significant, however, the chapter provides commentary and analysis of prostitutes’ arrests and court cases, both at the city and county levels. Chapter three briefly compares prostitutes’ arrests with other women’s criminality throughout the city and county during specific periods, demonstrating that the city continued to reap economic benefits from periodic arrests and ensuing court fees.

The final chapter, “Greenbacks Replace Red Lights: The Consequences of Camp MacArthur,” describes the closing of Two Street as a result of the opening of the army base in Waco. Using oral histories of Waco residents from the Texas Collection at Baylor, the chapter argues that the economic benefits brought by the camp overshadowed previous economic motivations that kept the red-light district in operation. Justice of the peace records were used to illustrate the amount of revenue the city received from the red-light district. Oral histories aided in illustrating the economic improvement in the city brought by Camp MacArthur. Waco city directories provided evidence to discuss the demographic changes of the occupants of North Second Street after the district’s closure. Chapter four also notes Two Street’s legacy and presents suggestions for further research, noting that other studies need to cover other aspects of prostitution in Waco, an area that represents, in microcosm, the state of commercialized sex during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

CHAPTER TWO

Waco Undressed: The Women of Two Street

I wish I were a fantastic bitch,
I'd never be poor, I'd always be rich.
I'd work in a house with a little red light,
Sleep all day, work all night.

Traditional verse in Jay Moynahan, *Poems of the Soiled Doves*

Perceptions of bawdy women vary. In modern times, divergent views prevail. One hears of the crack whores that dwell among the dregs of society, but one also encounters colorful, entrepreneurial Heidi Fleisses whose secrets could alter the lives of rich businessmen, politicians, celebrities, or anyone with the financial capabilities to afford the services of high-end call girls like Ms. Fleiss. Modern perceptions of the nineteenth century hooker can be somewhat skewed by popular culture. Any movie enthusiast who watches *Gone With the Wind* observes a legitimate upper-class heroine who frequently behaves exactly as her name implies, in a scarlet manner. Contrary to Scarlett O'Hara, one observes Belle, the southern madam with a heart of gold who supports Rhett Butler through good and very bad times. Many frontier prostitutes are further portrayed as adventurous and mischievous, although their crimes are played down with a degree of tongue-in-cheek humor that renders them almost forgivable. The actions of the fallen woman do seem pardonable, as our post-women's rights movement culture seeks out those women who did more through history than just tend the stove. Movies and other areas of popular culture are testaments to this new movement to find women's

roles in history. Unfortunately, they often mix points of fact and fiction, presenting some problematic elements to the serious researcher.

Popular culture's imagery can sometimes blur the lens of hindsight, adding to myths and tall tales about the red-light ladies of frontier towns or booming cities during nineteenth-century America. Texas certainly is no exception; the state maintains its own mythic tales about prostitutes and madams. Sarah Borginnis, measuring six feet and two inches and known by the men who fought in the Mexican-American War as "The Great Western," traveled as a laundress and cook with her husband, an officer in the United States army, to Fort Brown, near Corpus Christi on the Rio Grande border between Mexico and Texas. While there, she served as a nurse during battle. Legend maintains Borginnis's rallying of American troops during various battles, dressing wounds, retrieving casualties, and reloading weapons. Her rambunctious and courageous attributes showed when she threatened to kill a soldier who had stated that the Americans would lose the battle. Consequently, she proposed to cross the Rio Grande herself and "whip the enemy with a pair of tongs."¹ Significantly, Borginnis was also a famous Texas madam, opening a bordello to serve American soldiers in Saltillo and, later, brothels in El Paso and Arizona.²

Texas history abounds with other stories of spitfire and courageous, albeit loose, women. Tillie Howard was an owner of a bordello in El Paso during the early 1890s who had a reputation as being a "respectable, sensitive, compassionate madam."³ She left El

¹Ruthe Weingarten, ed., *Finder's Guide to the Texas Women: A Celebration of History Exhibit Archives* (Denton, Texas: Texas Woman's University Library, 1984), 22.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 94.

Paso to run a brothel in Johannesburg, South Africa, and later returned to Texas with a fortune in African diamonds, establishing a lavish sporting house and donating munificently to local churches.⁴ Hattie Valdez was another madam, in Austin during later decades. Valdez was the proprietress of Hattie's Place, a brothel in the capital city from 1930 to 1960, and her most frequent regulars were said to be Texas legislators. Unique for the study of prostitution, Valdez wrote a diary for two weeks while serving a jail sentence in 1955. Similar to Tillie Howard, the Austin madam generously donated funds to charities and churches, and when she died, Valdez left the majority of her estate to her daughter, a Sister of the Holy Cross.⁵

While such madams exuded both typical and exceptional characteristics of American sporting house proprietresses, Pamela Mann has the most significant place in Texas legend. Traveling from Louisiana to Texas in 1834, Mann established residence in San Felipe with her third husband and two sons in 1836. She opened a boarding house at Washington on the Brazos for the delegates of the Texas Constitutional Convention in 1836, and legend contends that Sam Houston, Texas revolutionary leader and the Republic's first president, borrowed Mann's yoke of oxen to pull his hefty cannon, telling Mann he was traveling to meet the Mexican army near Nacogdoches. When Houston's army turned and marched in the opposite direction, Mann rushed to meet Houston and forced the commander to return her oxen by the persuasive powers of her gun.⁶ Mann was later one of the town of Houston's first settlers, opening the Mansion Hotel, "part

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 191.

⁶Ibid., 130.

hostel, part gambling joint, part bawdy house.”⁷ After the death of her husband, however, Mann was convicted of forgery and sentenced to hang in 1839. On grounds of her acts of patriotism and her status as an early settler, her jury petitioned the Republic’s president for clemency, which he granted, and the colorful madam later died a wealthy woman.⁸

Legends thrive in Texas, including those myths and tales about colorful and adventurous bawdy women. Waco had its own legendary, Mollie Adams, an infamous madam at the height of its prostitution, although she is mostly forgotten in social circles and personal recollections outside of the Historic Waco Foundation. In fact, her portrait, painted in New York City in 1900, is stored in a rear part of one of Waco’s historic mansions, the former home of C. C. McCulloch.⁹ Ironically, McCulloch was Waco’s mayor who started the regulation of sexual vice through the city’s issuance of bawd and brothel licenses in 1889.¹⁰ The name of Mollie Adams remained synonymous with Waco’s scarlet days of commercialized sex:

Oh, yes. I remember old Mollie Adams on Second Street—they used to call it Two Street—assignation houses, the red-light district. . . . She was the madam. . . . On coming to town in the morning, I used to have to come right through there . . . and I used to have to drive through there to get to the Square, you see.¹¹

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Bruce Lipscomb, interview with author, September 23, 2004, Historic Waco Foundation’s McCulloch House, Waco, Texas.

¹⁰McCulloch’s signature appears in Waco’s Bawdy Register, 1889-1890.

¹¹Oscar Emil Hessdoerfer, interview by Gary W. Hull, transcript, Waco, Texas, September 22-October 1, 1982, Texas Collection, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 46.

Adams was known throughout Waco and was said to be a beautiful woman.¹² Her portrait depicts a healthy, robust woman with dark, curly hair collected under white lace. She was indeed financially successful in being able to travel to New York and have her portrait painted and also because, with the city's permission, Adams occasionally hired public hacks to take her brothel's inmates on a picnic outside of Waco.¹³ Still, even with success Adams was part of a sexual underworld that was shunned by more "upstanding" citizenry.

On a specific occasion, Anna Mae Warner, a Waco woman who had been a young woman in the early twentieth century, recalled an amusing incident concerning Adams and Kate Cleveland, another Waco madam. Taking refuge from a storm at a livery stable, Warner's future husband drew the curtains of his carriage's cab, hiding its occupants. Her presence unknown to the workers of the stable that Sunday afternoon, Anna Mae Warner listened to the names of Waco men who needed to be picked up by hired hacks at Kitty Cleveland's and other brothels.¹⁴ She remembered her amusement, saying, "We left him [owner of the livery stable] hollering out names. (laughter) It was really comical, and we laughed. We laughed all the way to West Station about finding out who was going down to Mollie Adams's."¹⁵ Warner's story confirms Waco's attitude toward Two Street, because as the district continued to operate, its activities were clearly ill-suited for discussion among Waco's women, even as their husbands discreetly partook

¹² Anna Mae Bell Warner, interview by Lawanda Ball, February 16, 1976, Waco, Texas, The Texas Collection, 18.

¹³ Margaret Davis, "Harlots and Hymnals," 91.

¹⁴ Anna Mae Warner, interview, 17.

¹⁵ Ibid., 18.

in them on their days of rest. Further, unlike the weekly closures of other Waco businesses, activity at Waco's sporting houses evidently did not cease on Sunday. At least in Adams's establishment, the Sabbath was neither for religious devotion nor personal reflection; it was a day for work.

Adams's local infamy, compared to other madams and prostitutes, was likely the result of her longevity as a Waco resident. She was born in Ohio in 1869.¹⁶ Adams's life before her long sojourn in Waco is unknown. The reason for her arrival in that city is also a mystery, but she remained in Waco from at least the mid-1880s until her death in 1944.¹⁷ Portions of Adams's history in Waco can be traced in the city directories of the period. By 1886 her residence in Waco appears in the city directory as 130 Bridge Street, between First Street and the Square. During this period, Adams, age seventeen, did not operate her own bawdy house. Her employer is unknown, but in that year, she lived with two other bawds, Dot Daggett and Maggie May, both Caucasian.¹⁸ By 1890, Adams was employed by Stella Nolan at 116 North First Street, near the Brazos River.¹⁹ The bawdy register indicates that Nolan was the owner of Waco's largest brothel, entertaining customers in a nine-room house,²⁰ and only two of Nolan's inmates, May Townsend and Ella Fisher, were registered with the city.²¹

¹⁶1900 U.S. Federal Census, McLennan County, Waco, microfilm, Waco Public Library, Waco, Texas.

¹⁷Margaret Davis, "Harlots and Hymnals," 91.

¹⁸Waco City Directory, 1886-87, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

¹⁹Ibid., 1890-91.

²⁰Bawdy House Register, August 1889.

²¹Waco City Directory, 1890-91, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

Adams's entrepreneurial progress can further be traced in the bawdy register. As stated previously, she first appears during the initial years as simply a prostitute, but as the years progressed, she eventually acquired a brothel of her own.²² The initial indication of her evolution was in November 1891, when she, then age twenty-two, was listed as owning a bawdy house with three rooms.²³ Evidently, a year after her employment at Nolan's bordello, Adams was financially capable of running her own establishment. Two years later in April 1893, Adams moved to a different location and doubled the size of her house, paying the city a fee for a seven-room establishment.²⁴ By then, the madam had moved her sporting house to 126 North First Street, on the corner of Washington, and had registered two of her inmates, Maggie Alexander and Myrtle Jones. A similar occurrence happened with other madams' registration records, although these successful entrepreneurs were few in number.

The structural stipulations for Mollie Adams's brothel illustrate the typical design of a successful bordello in Waco by 1910. By then, Adams had again moved her establishment, this time to 408 North Second Street.²⁵ The house was specially built for Adams and designed by Scott & Pearson, a leading architectural firm in Waco. One portion of the specifications reveals that Adams had the latest technological devices installed in her new house: indoor plumbing, complete with additional toiletry services

²²Bawdy House Register, September 1889-June 1891.

²³Ibid, November 1891.

²⁴Ibid, April 1893.

²⁵Waco City Directory, 1911, microfilm. Waco Public Library.

for the men, and electrical wiring.²⁶ Each room was connected to a bell system. The placing of bells in each room probably allowed for more convenience and discretion since customers were sometimes married Wacoans. The specifications also show that the house had two parlors, a dance hall, a bar near the fireplace in the dance hall, and several bedrooms.²⁷ For an uninformed reader, the plans might cause suspicion as to why a single woman needed so many rooms designed for mass entertainment. What the plans do reveal is that, by 1910, Mollie Adams had become a success in her adopted town of Waco.

The architectural specification of Adams's new house illustrates another aspect of prostitution's existence in Waco. The firm that designed Adams's bordello was one of the most well established in Waco. Milton W. Scott designed some of the most notable buildings in the city, including the Artesian Manufacturing and Bottling Company, which currently houses the Dr. Pepper Museum in Waco. Ironically, four years before creating the structural specifications of one of Waco's most infamous bordellos, Scott had designed a monument of Christian faith, First Baptist Church. Scott's skills as an architect and his respectable reputation in Waco allowed him to design some of the community's most famous landmarks. His reputation, however, did not prevent him from offering his services to women of ill-repute. Waco's businessmen evidently were sometimes not concerned with the source of their profits.

While Adams's business flourished and contributed to other Waco businesses, her establishment was not the only bordello operating during the height of Waco's

²⁶Scott & Pearson, "Specifications of a Two-Story Frame Residence for Miss Mollie Adams, Waco, Texas," 17 January 1910. Texas Collection Baylor University, Adams (Mollie) Item 3C410, 3.

²⁷Ibid, 8-9.

prostitution era in the late nineteenth century. In fact, other madams, unknown to any recollection of the city's bawdy history, achieved similar, if not more, success at their pinnacles. The 1890s were a booming time for prostitution throughout the western region of the country, and Waco illustrates the climate of the United States to contain sexual vice with its creation of the bawdy register in that decade. As with Mollie Adams, one can trace the progress of other bawdy enterprises in Waco during that time. In 1886 the available documentation indicates that at least three madams, who registered with the city three years later, operated brothels. Edna Elmore employed at least two women, Alice Edwards and Ella Fisher, at 106 Jackson, on the corner of South First Street. At 130 Bridge, on the corner of South First and the Square, three registered prostitutes plied their trade, but whether they shared their income with a madam or pimp, a less common practice, is unknown. Stella Nolan kept her house at 130 Jackson, while at 642 North Second Street Eva Thompson employed her ladies of ill-repute.²⁸ Although they were within a general area, the brothels certainly were not confined or concentrated specifically on Two Street within the Reservation. In fact, the only house operating on North Second Street was that of Eva Thompson. In the following decades, however, public policy would alter the locations of brothels in Waco.

During the years of the city's documented official policy toward bawdy women, specifically with its register from August 1889 to 1895, one notices the degree of fluidity in other madams' successes and failures. In August 1889, Stella Nolan paid the city \$28.95 to operate a nine-room sporting house, at the standard fee of \$3.15 for each

²⁸Waco City Directory. 1886-87.

room.²⁹ Nolan continued to pay that amount, along with \$2.50 for her own prostitute license, every three months until May 5, 1890, when she opened another room with her booming business.³⁰ By August 5 of the same year, Nolan paid a fee for only eight rooms, but by February 5, 1891, she was again paying the ten-room fee.³¹ This pattern continued every three months, as the madam paid fees for nine rooms in one cycle and fees for ten or eight the next. By August 21, 1891, Nolan either added a smaller house of three sporting rooms to her business holdings or she expanded her original establishment.³² In either case, the early 1890s proved highly successful for the madam, evident in her payment of requisite city fees and her lengthy operation in Waco until 1916.³³ She continued to pay the separate fees for the three-room and ten-room bawdy houses until at least February 1895, the last documented case of her payments.³⁴ The city, in turn, enjoyed a considerable profit from the fees.

During the period from 1889 to 1895, various women developed their roles as Waco's madams. In November 1889, Hattie Tyree paid a \$25.20 fee to operate an eight-room bawdy house.³⁵ Located at 101 Washington,³⁶ her business continued to grow as she later paid a \$34.65 fee every three months to operate an eleven-room house. In

²⁹Bawdy House Register, August 5, 1889.

³⁰Ibid., May 5, 1890.

³¹Ibid., February 5, 1891.

³²Ibid., August 21, 1891.

³³Waco City Directory, 1916, 103, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

³⁴Bawdy House Register, February 21, 1895.

³⁵Ibid., November 18, 1889.

³⁶Waco City Directory, 1890-91.

financial terms, Tyree was the most successful madam listed in the register, but she was also probably the most infamous. A murder occurred in August 1890, at her establishment, and a trial soon followed. Lilly Murphy, a twenty-five-year-old married mother of two and sister of Tyree, had resided as a prostitute at her sister's brothel but was removed because of her penchant for disruption. Jealous of her boyfriend's infatuation with Eva Clinton, a twenty-year-old bawd at Tyree's house, Murphy threatened to kill Clinton. When she finally forced a confrontation after several days of threats, a scuffle ensued resulting in Murphy's death from a stab wound received by Clinton, who had grabbed Murphy's penknife that was initially used by Murphy to threaten Clinton.³⁷ The negative attention afforded to this crime of passion, which was tried in Waco and received public attention, likely diffused Tyree's popularity. While the event brought negative attention to the Reservation, the jury acquitted Clinton for Murphy's murder. Two years after the incident, Tyree left Waco and closed her sporting house, disappearing from the bawdy register after May 18, 1892.³⁸

Madam Tyree's story exemplifies various aspects of the Reservation's social conditions. First, her disappearance from Waco's register illustrates how madams' successes ebbed and flowed with the tides of public apathy or social concern. Second, marital bonds and responsible parenthood were elements that bawds found difficulty to uphold. Last, the Reservation was a profitable but dangerous place to operate. Prostitution was a business, but brothels' inmates and customers often could not suppress violence resulting from jealous passions and flaming tempers; sex was a risky business

³⁷Aimee Harris Johnson, 52.

³⁸Bawdy House Register, 1892-1895.

that sometimes involved emotional attachment. Still, Waco continued to allow the area to remain, and the district provided profits to other women choosing careers as brothel-keepers.

Although not legendary or infamous, several other bawds profited from their entrepreneurial roles as madams. Josie Bennett initially registered with the city in 1889 as a prostitute at Hattie Tyree's brothel.³⁹ By May 1890, she was running a nine-room sporting house on the northeast corner of Washington and North First Street.⁴⁰ Ella Miller's origins or previous employers are unknown. She began her nine-room business by 1892, however, gaining another room within a few months.⁴¹ Similar to Nolan, by the last year of the register, Miller was paying fees for six-room and three-room bawdy house licenses. However, the madam likely paid her fees in increments since the total of rooms was the same as previous months. Significantly, Miller remained in Waco until after the termination of the bawdy register in December 1895.⁴²

In the years after the register, 1896 through 1917, other women continued in the prostitute business. Grace Summers initially appeared in the register in 1889 as an inmate of Josie Bennett's house. She continued to pay the fee for a prostitute's license in the following years until May 1895, when Summers paid \$15.75 for a five-room bawdy house license and \$9.45 for a three-room house. She likely ran an eight-room house, paying in increments during the same month and continuing the pattern until the end of

³⁹Waco City Directory, 1890-91.

⁴⁰Bawdy House Register, May 27, 1890. For address see Waco City Directory, 1892-93.

⁴¹Bawdy House Register, February 1893.

⁴²Ibid., November 5, 1895.

the register.⁴³ Summers's success appeared late compared to other women of similar ilk during the early 1890s, but she remained in Waco, servicing the male community until much later.

Other women who appeared later in the register or remained prostitutes through the record's duration also pursued careers as madams in later decades. Exactly what the duration of her life as a prostitute and when her transition to madam was is uncertain, but by the early 1900s, Kate Cleveland, alias Kate Coleman, who had appeared in the last year of the bawdy register, fostered a reputation similar to that of Mollie Adams.⁴⁴ Other women like Winnie Clark, Madge Middleton, Josie Tweedy, and Belle Pence also claimed their place as madams in Waco's sexual underworld, while Stella Nolan and Mollie Adams continued to operate their long-running businesses. By 1911, one year after Congress passed the Mann Act in an attempt to reduce prostitution's grip on American society, at least twenty-six Caucasian women oversaw sporting houses of various sizes on North Second Street alone.⁴⁵ Five years later, the number had increased by three. In 1917, however, the Reservation's red light was extinguished and the district was no longer open for business.

Other madams had maintained businesses in the years before the latter successes of the above madams and their predecessors, yet their achievements were on a smaller level that contributed to their inability to prosper into the following century. Mary Foster owned a brothel of unknown size on 125 Washington in January 1891, but her profits and

⁴³Ibid., November 1889-November 1895.

⁴⁴Anna May Warner, interview, 18.

⁴⁵Waco City Directory, 1911, 22.

longevity are also uncertain because of her listing as “gone” in the register by November 1890.⁴⁶ Willie Logan owned a six-room brothel by 1893, paying a tri-monthly fee of twenty dollars.⁴⁷ The latter’s establishment remained in operation at least until February 1895, but the house was operating four rooms instead of the earlier six.⁴⁸ Ella Fisher’s bawdy life was underway by 1886 at Edna Elmore’s bordello at 106 Jackson, on the corner of South First Street, but by 1890 she was working for another madam, Stella Nolan, at 116 North First Street.⁴⁹ In the following years, however, Fisher began to pay the requisite city fees for a two-room, and later a three-room, sporting establishment.⁵⁰ Neither Logan nor Fisher continued to keep brothels in Waco during the following decades.

Fisher’s career illustrates two important aspects of the life of a madam. Brothel-keepers often began at the level of common prostitute, living under the rule and tutelage of another madam. After a few years of plying her trade and contributing to the financial intake of the bordello, the prostitute either replaced the former madam as overseer of the house or departed, starting her own business elsewhere. Further, the small size of Fisher’s house indicates that she was either an aging prostitute, who was replaced by a younger woman at the original madam’s bordello and who had to operate independently in a smaller house or alley crib, or she was a legitimate madam who was never able to

⁴⁶For address see Waco City Directory, 1890-91. See also Bawdy House Register 11 January 1891.

⁴⁷Bawdy House Register, 14 November 1893.

⁴⁸Ibid., February 14, 1895.

⁴⁹Waco City Directory, 1886-1891.

⁵⁰Bawdy House Register, November 21, 1891-August 8, 1895.

achieve the amount of business growth that her peers did at the height of bawdy activity in Waco. In the case of the latter possibility, Fisher's situation demonstrates that although some madams' brothels gained in size and financial intake, they frequently did not. On the other hand, Fisher shows that a relationship between madam and prostitute did not always evince unerring loyalty in an alleged "lost sisterhood." In fact, business was business on Two Street, and sometimes the wheels of commerce needed to be greased with the intervention of Waco's own civil law system.

A case involving Mollie Adams and one of her former inmates, Pearl Miller, exemplifies the businesslike relationship between madam and prostitute. Miller, a prostitute from Alabama, arrived in Waco in 1893 and was employed by Adams at her brothel for five months. Shortly after her arrival, Miller became ill and Adams paid the doctor's fees for her inmate's recovery. Adams claimed that Miller gave her a pair of diamond earrings as security for what she owed the madam in rent and doctors' fees. Not staying in Waco and not knowing where her final destination would be, Miller left her trunk with Adams under the belief that her former employer would send it to her within four days after receiving communication from her. After three days, Miller arrived in Houston and sent for her trunk, but Adams refused to send it unless Miller forwarded her \$186. Stating that she had owed Adams five dollars but "not a cent more," Miller filed suit for her trunk and earrings, both having a value of \$233.90, which is a present-day amount comparable to about \$5000.⁵¹ Within a year, however, Adams had won.⁵²

⁵¹John McCusker, "Comparing the Purchasing Power of Money in the United States (or Colonies) from 1665 to Any Other Year Including the Present," Economic History Services, 2004, November 3, 2004 <http://eh.net/hmit/ppowersusd/>.

⁵²*Pearl Miller v. Mollie Adams*, case 3366, Civil Case Records, McLennan County Archives, Waco, Texas.

The case between Miller and Adams reveals various aspects of the bawdy life. Clearly, Miller's migratory patterns support the long-held conclusion that prostitutes were transient, repeatedly moving between towns, as she resided in three different cities within six months, eventually ending her travels in Galveston. On her doctor's bill, Miller's illness is termed a "specific disease," while the physician deposed that her "account is not such an one as can be further itemized as it was a specific disease and it is not customary to keep full record of the attention necessary in such a case."⁵³ His comments compel one to conclude that she likely suffered from venereal disease, a conclusion further supported by the fact that another doctor treated her after her recovery from the first incident. The doctors' care for Miller shows that at least some of Waco's physicians treated prostitutes and profited from it, and although madams were prepared to seek medical care for their employees, they were not willing to provide the fringe benefits of free medical attention. They certainly protected their assets even if that meant withholding one of their bawds from working.

A perusal of the contents of the trunk, which are mentioned in Miller's deposition, offers a glimpse into bawd culture. Some articles are unassuming and give little clues as to Miller's profession: one large white hat, one small pink hat, one woolen dress with velvet trimming, one tan cashmere dress, one blazer suit, one tan cloak, one blue silk sash, and one silk necktie. Other elements of Miller's clothing appear slightly stereotypical of the garments of prostitutes: "one crepe dechine" [*sic*] dress with silk trimming, a black silk dress with black velvet trimming, a red cashmere dress, six lawn "chimese," [*sic*] six lawn dresses, and red satin slippers. Miller also owned six

⁵³Ibid.

nightgowns. Significantly, the trunk contained two family photographs. Although transient and “fallen,” ladies of the night evidently did not forget about their ties with relatives.⁵⁴ Perhaps they acknowledged that while they shared a common career bond with other brothel inmates, they were not family. On the contrary, their relationships were built around sexual solicitation and a shared identity on the outskirts of society. As the case between Miller and Adams shows, the bond between madam and bordello inmate only went as far as securing one’s own financial assets.

Some tales do exist of bawds’ uniting to pay for another inmate’s funeral or emergency expenses. A camaraderie likely existed among prostitutes. Nevertheless, the relationship characterized by Adams and Miller was not exceptional. A similar incident occurred between another madam, Ella Miller, and her former inmate, Loraine Friedman, in October 1897. Before arriving in Waco, Friedman had been working for a madam in Alabama and owed her \$42 in board; the madam had been holding Friedman’s trunk as security for the debt. Receiving communication from the Friedman, which included her desire to live in Waco, Ella Miller paid the prostitute’s balance and the cost of her train ticket to Waco. Miller, the defendant in the case, claimed that Friedman left Miller’s brothel shortly after arriving in Waco but entrusted her trunk to the Waco madam as security for her debt. Friedman then stole her trunk from Miller’s house, but the latter recovered the trunk after obtaining a warrant from the city. Still, the final ruling of the case, brought to the city court by Friedman, held in favor of the prostitute, and the justice

⁵⁴Ibid.

of the peace ruled that Miller return the trunk or its equivalent value of \$65.80 to the plaintiff.⁵⁵

Curiously enough, Friedman's suit reveals an aspect that is worthy of note. She had attempted to use Miller's proprietorship of a brothel for her own litigation purposes. The bawd's attorneys argued that the Texas legislature did not have the authority under federal law to grant Waco the ability to allocate licenses for brothels and prostitutes. Also, the city's ordinance that placed an occupation tax on brothel keepers and their prostitutes was not constitutional and was, therefore, moot. While she refuted Miller's claims that she had pawned her trunk to the madam as collateral for her debt, Friedman additionally claimed that, given the unconstitutionality of Waco's occupation tax and bawdy licenses, "if any contract for board or money advanced ever existed . . . the same was an illegal and immoral one, and void."⁵⁶

Ironically, Friedman, a prostitute, had attempted to use the justice system to diminish Miller's claims. Significantly, the state of Texas gave Waco the authority to license its prostitutes and sporting houses. During the period, prostitution was evidently a state and local issue, although Friedman's attorneys argued for its unconstitutionality at the federal level. By the state's allowing it to license prostitution, Waco consequently gained financially through its occupation taxes of the brothels. Still, the case's decision in favor of the plaintiff causes one to wonder if Waco jurymen reflected the community's aversion to an immoral practice.

⁵⁵*Lorraine Friedman v. Ella Miller*, case 4362, Civil Case Records, McLennan County Archives.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

As in the case of Pearl Miller and Mollie Adams, *Friedman v. Miller* also offers clues to prostitute social history. Notably, the contents of the trunk present a more detailed perspective of the social aspects of red-light culture. Friedman's apparel included one yellow silk waist, a red and black street dress, and one black silk waist. Other possessions were a brass picture frame, a dress suit, one bicycle skirt, a hat, one clock, a powder dish, two wrappers, bed clothes, and a baby bonnet.⁵⁷ While the bicycle skirt hints that sexual service was not the only activity in a prostitute's life, the baby bonnet implies that Friedman was sentimental or had a child, which was a typical aspect of bawd culture; pregnancy and childbirth were natural effect in a business based on sexual promiscuity. Exactly what happened to Friedman's child is unknown, but few prostitutes' transient existence allowed for accommodating the needs of their offspring. No wonder, then, that the trunk did not contain further evidence of a doting mother.

The case between Friedman and Miller not only offers clues to bawd culture with the trunk's contents, but it also illustrates the migratory patterns of prostitutes and their sometimes destitute existence. Friedman moved from Alabama to Waco, but she could not accomplish the move until Miller had paid a debt owed to her madam in Alabama. Evidently, the suit between Friedman and Miller was not the first time that the trunk was detained for collateral because of a debt. Further, Friedman relied chiefly on Miller to extract her from a difficult situation in Alabama, yet she found herself in further debt after her arrival at the brothel in Waco. Certainly, the career prostitute's life was more ephemeral than that of a madam. Yet, one cannot conclude that Friedman's situation was typical either, for transience did not necessarily result from financial woes. The case

⁵⁷Ibid.

between Pearl Miller and Mollie Adams clarifies that point. After all, some bawds, while transitory, had valuable possessions similar to Miller's diamond earrings.

The fates of some madams, who enjoyed far greater financial success and stability than prostitutes, were also occasionally threatened, however. One civil case illustrates problems between madams and the individuals who owned the houses where their businesses were operating. In May 1893, W. R. Orman, a real estate owner living on South Fourth Street,⁵⁸ brought suit against both Josie Bennett and Ada Davenport. At the time of the suit, Bennett was still a resident of McLennan County, but Davenport had left Waco and moved to Fort Worth in Tarrant County. They owed Orman \$395.83 in rent, which he hoped to recover through the court system. Orman had constructed a house in the Reservation on the corner of Brazos Alley and Washington specifically for Bennett to rent. By contractual agreement, Bennett was committed to paying \$125 a month for one year, from May 1, 1892, to April 30, 1893. In January 1893, Bennett sold her lease to Davenport, who agreed to pay the rent. On March 27, the sporting house burned down, but Orman claimed that the two women owed him almost four hundred dollars in rent and had held their furniture, destroyed by the fire, as security for the debt. By August, 1894, the county court decided in favor of Orman and ruled that Davenport and Bennett, respectively, pay the plaintiff \$395 with 6 percent interest and \$200.⁵⁹

Two details of the case are noteworthy in the suit between Orman and the two madams. First, as in the previous cases, Davenport's residence during the process of the case represents the itinerant characteristic of a prostitute's and, in Davenport's situation, a

⁵⁸Waco City Directory, 1894-95, 220, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

⁵⁹*W.R. Orman v. Josie Bennett, et al.*, case 3151, Civil Case Records, McLennan County Archives.

madam's lifestyle. Within a year, Davenport had relocated to Fort Worth, which had its own successful red-light district. Certainly, the fire was likely an important reason for her departure from Waco, as well as her debt, but one might conclude that bawdy women moved to available work. Both Fort Worth and Galveston were cities very amiable to their trade. One wonders what kind of network prostitutes might have had throughout the state of Texas, as they traveled to different cities looking for work.

Second, Orman had built the house specifically for Bennett's renting it. One might deduce that Orman saw the profits involved in a promiscuous business and constructed the building for that particular purpose or that he entertained some kind of other business agreement or personal amicability with Bennett. In either situation, Orman prepared to make a handsome profit with a high lease, which would be approximately \$2670 a month in present times.⁶⁰ By 1893, Bennett was running a large brothel and probably making a considerable amount of money to afford the rent. With such a rate, madams like Bennett and Davenport were either successful enough to pay the rent or they likely found themselves in civil court explaining their debt.

Orman v. Bennett was not the only dispute between a landlord and a bawdy lessee. Another case also shows the downside of debt in a madam's business. In May 1895, W. E. Dupree, owner of Agricultural Implements, Vehicles, and Grain on North Bridge Street and resident of South Fourth Street,⁶¹ rented a house, located at 110 North First Street, to Viola Burton. Although knowing that Burton was a prostitute, according to Dupree's court petition, and would use the house for sporting purposes, Dupree leased

⁶⁰John McCusker, "The Purchasing Power of Money."

⁶¹Waco City Directory, 1894-95.

the house to the madam for fifty dollars a month in May, June, and July and later for seventy-five dollars a month. In April 1895, Thomas Goggan & Bro. sold Burton an Emerson upright piano, stool, and scarf for \$350, the fee of which would be paid in monthly increments of ten dollars. By October, Burton owed Dupree \$122 in past rent and had only paid \$40 to Goggan & Bro. for the piano. In the city court, the piano was seized by a distress warrant, and Dupree's landlord's lien was granted superiority over the agreement between Goggan and Burton. When the case arrived in the county court two years later, Dupree wanted his \$122 settlement along with \$75, declaring that Goggan & Bro. were *in pari delicto*, in equal fault, for the contractual problems with Burton. The county court confirmed the verdict of the lower court and decided in favor of Dupree, ruling that Burton pay him \$197 with 6 percent interest and that his landlord's lien entitled him to the possession of the piano.⁶²

The Dupree suit offers a significant development in understanding Waco's policy toward prostitution in 1897. The bawdy register ended by 1895, but by 1897 the practice of regulating prostitution continued in Waco. The court noted,

[t]he house rented by Dupree to Viola Burton is in what is commonly known as the "Reservation" of the City of Waco; that is to say, in that part of the city specially set apart by the ordinances of said city of Waco where prostitutes are licensed to live and carry on their vocation, and that said Viola Burton was duly licensed under the ordinances of said City of Waco to carry on and to conduct a bawdy house on said premises, and the said house was one of the licensed bawdy houses.⁶³

If any doubt existed as to the city's open regulation of sexual solicitors, the passage in the Burton case erases it. The court further cited the specific Waco ordinance upon which its

⁶²W. E. Dupree v. Viola Burton, et al., case 9575, Civil Case Records, McLennan County Archives.

⁶³Ibid.

members based their ruling: "Said city shall have authority, among other things, to restrain, punish, regulate and control, license and locate all houses of prostitution or assignation, and keepers and inmates thereof, and to provide a system of inspection . . . for the preservation of the public health."⁶⁴ The Waco community apparently strove to control sexual vice and limit the bad effects of venereal disease, safeguarding the public's health by containing and inspecting prostitutes. Still, Wacoans continued to profit from the sex industry in the Reservation, the boundaries of which were clearly more rigid by 1897.

The following year continued to see revenue provided to the city from court cases and additional profits to property owners who rented buildings to brothel keepers. J. C. Birkhead, head salesman at W. E. Dupree and whose father owned Waco Cider Extract,⁶⁵ had rented a house on 110 North First Street, a property formerly disputed in the above case against Viola Burton, to Madge Middleton. The house, situated at the intersection between North First and an alley between Bridge and Washington Streets, was leased to Middleton on a month-to-month basis for fifty dollars a month. Birkhead knowingly rented the house to Middleton for illicit purposes, believing that the practice was legal within the Reservation's boundaries. Birkhead claimed that he later believed that her use of the house was for an immoral and unlawful purpose and wished to terminate Middleton's agreement. Not wanting to follow Birkhead's written demand to leave the house, Middleton refused, so the owner brought a suit for forcible detainer to the city court, which ruled that Middleton was not wrong. Birkhead then appealed to the county level, suing for the furnishings inside the house, which he had also rented to the madam,

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Waco City Directory, 1896-97, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

and finally won his case. Middleton, however, also appealed that decision to the county court in January 1899, a few months after the county court's initial decision.

Unfortunately, whether or not Middleton won the second appeal is not known due to the case's incomplete records.⁶⁶

Birkhead's appeal to the county court in September 1898 offers further clues to the interior of a Waco madam's brothel. Valued at \$936.75, \$20,614.50 in today's economy,⁶⁷ the property included: a conversation chair, a leather couch, a cloth couch, eight parlor chairs, seven rugs, a willow settee, three rocking chairs, nine dining chairs, one hat rack, a side board, five wardrobes, five dressers, six wash stands, six beds, twelve pairs of lace curtains, twenty-one window shades, two parlor carpets, one back parlor carpet, two hall carpets, five bedroom carpets, eight pillow shams, five china pitchers and bowls, eight slop basins, five chamber pots, five soap stands, five toothbrush holders, and a few other articles. From the number of wardrobes and beds, one can deduce that five inmates lived in the brothel. The list further describes what was possibly Middleton's bedroom: one white maple bedroom suite, consisting of a bedstead, dresser, washstand, and wardrobe. The eight slop basins specify that the madam often had company, a number high enough to need eight spittoons. Further, the other furniture evidences that the brothel was moderate in size, having six bedrooms and a front and back parlor, the front used for entertainment purposes.

While Birkhead's appeal presents key aspects of a moderately sized brothel's interior, Middleton's later appeal illustrates how biased elements of a community could

⁶⁶*J. C. Birkhead v. Madge Middleton*, case 4493, Civil Case Records, McLennan County Archives.

⁶⁷John McCusker, "The Purchasing Power of Money."

be represented through the court system. Middleton claimed that the decision was contrary to the law because both she and Birkhead were *in pari delictu* since he rented her a house knowing that the building would be used for the purpose of prostitution, a violation of state law. Further, in its judgment, the court had ruled that Middleton pay Birkhead fifty dollars each month that she continued residing at the dwelling. But the madam's attorneys noted that an area real estate agent had testified that the practical value of the property, if used "for legitimate purposes," was fifteen dollars a month. Consequently, the court gave an incorrect ruling in demanding that Middleton pay the fifty dollars. The reasons for the court's ruling in favor of a higher sum, deemed impractical and unfair by a real estate agent, are unknown, yet the fact that they did order Middleton to pay the higher rent possibly indicates that some biased ruling existed in favor of Birkhead. Whether or not the court maintained some prejudice against the madam, Birkhead evidently further profited for his trouble with Middleton.

During prostitution's height in the 1890s, Waco citizens who rented property to brothel keepers in the Reservation clearly profited from the sex business. Real estate appeared to change owners rather quickly, as 110 North First Street was owned by Dupree but later rented to Middleton by a new landlord who was Dupree's employee, J. C. Birkhead, a year after Dupree's squabble with Burton. Madams frequently moved, possibly due the high rates of their rent fees. Some madams, however, reaped the same benefits that men like Dupree and Birkhead enjoyed, as they owned their dwellings. Some owned more than one property and opted to lease the extra house to other madams. Occasionally, the owning madam found herself in the same situation as the above-

mentioned businessmen, bringing suit against another in her profession who owed her money for the rented property.

A case between two madams illustrates that Waco's male citizens were not the only property owners of houses in the Reservation who profited from prostitution. In 1912, Mollie Adams, then residing and operating a house at 408 North Second Street,⁶⁸ rented her house at 404 North Second Street to Belle Pence, also a resident of Two Street. Pence fell behind on her rent, which was fifteen dollars a week, \$1128.53 in modern currency, but refused to vacate the premises. Claiming that Pence was forcibly detaining her property, Adams took her suit to the county court in 1915. As a result, the jury ordered that Pence return the plaintiff's property and pay her twenty-five dollars, with 6 percent interest. Both Adams and Pence were unsatisfied with the court's ruling, however. Adams contended that the defendant owed her \$225, which was more than the sum ordered by the court. On the other hand, Pence appealed the decision, saying that Adams had leased the house to Pence knowing that her lessee was using the property solely for prostitution and would be using a portion of her profits from "immoral and illegal purposes" to maintain her business and pay her rent.⁶⁹ In other words, Pence argued that Adams's suit attempted "to enforce a contract that is contrary to public policy, illegal and unlawful and should not have recognition" from the county court. After the last appeal in 1915, however, the McLennan County court sustained the previous rulings in favor of Adams.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Waco City Directory, 1911-12, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

⁶⁹*Mollie Adams v. Belle Pence*, case 8343, Civil Case Records, McLennan County Archives.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

Adams's suit against Pence reveals various key aspects concerning Two Street. First, the language of Pence's defense, with her contention that Adams knowingly rented the house for illegal and immoral purposes, infers that by 1914, the community was beginning to ponder the illegality of the Reservation's activity. Illicit activity in long-running brothels like the house run by Mollie Adams certainly continued, even if Waco was not openly regulating it and its community was stressing its immorality and illegality. Still, the case was decided in favor of Adams, causing one to conclude that Pence's claim of immorality was seen by the court as somewhat hypocritical or was not taken seriously. Second, madams continued to hone their entrepreneurial skills in 1915, two years before Waco closed Two Street. Madams, although successful, were sometimes victimized by the economic system of real estate businessmen, but the Adams case shows that madams could also profit from the commerce of other madams. Last, although confined to Two Street's boundaries in Waco's sexual underworld, madams could use the justice system to protect their assets and regain property. Respect and recognition for loose women was uncommon outside of the red-light district, but the benefits of the judicial process, although sometimes biased, were still obtainable.

Another incident enforces the notion that Waco's madams followed Adams in joining public policy making, to a small degree. In the early 1890s, Meyer Adams peddled goods around the district and lived at 327 North Second Street, in the heart of the Reservation.⁷¹ By 1907, Adams wanted to open a retail beer store at 413 North Second. Following legal procedures and receiving the permit from the comptroller of public accounts in Austin, Adams applied for a malt license in Waco. To be a licensed dealer,

⁷¹Waco City Directory, 1892-93, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

though, the former peddler needed to obtain the signatures of homeowners in the block or square where his store would be, since the majority of the area was residential instead of commercial. He found no objections from the block's residents, and they signed his petition for the license as follows: Mollie Adams, Annie Vickers, Anna Tucker, Florence Young, Anna Wood, Ella Miller, Maude Riley, Grace Summers, Katie Cleveland, Liza Jones, and Ophelia Vickers.⁷²

Nevertheless, one Waco citizen did object. Pat Neff, the McLennan County attorney and future governor of Texas, and later president of Baylor University, filed an *ex parte* with the county court during its July term in 1907. He protested the petition's facts and insisted on attaining "strict proof" of the legality of Adams's petition.⁷³ The outcome of Neff's complaint against Meyer Adams remains unknown due to incomplete records. Still, his objections to the license procurement reveal a significant trend in the ideological convictions of progressivism: the belief that liquor and lewd behavior often coalesced into immoral and illegal actions. Neff particularly objected to the petition's facts, yet those who signed it were clearly house owners in the retailer's proposed location. To conjecture about Neff's reason for objecting to the allocation of a liquor license to Adams, one simply needs to comprehend the identities of those on the petition list; they were all madams overseeing brothels in Adams's area. Certainly, their motives in supporting the creation of another outlet to purchase alcoholic potables for their brothels provoked the madams to offer their signatures. Neff likely did not relish an opportunity for additional lewd or rowdy behavior around and beyond the Reservation

⁷²*M. Adams, ex parte*, case 5951, Civil Case Records, McLennan County Archives.

⁷³*Ibid.*

committed by or against the more respectable citizens of Waco. Considering the climate of the country during the era of prohibitionist activism and the growing power of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, one finds Neff's reservation unexceptional. Yet, one also questions whether Neff would have harbored as many doubts and objections if Adams had petitioned for a retail establishment in a different area of Waco, farther from the social pollution of Two Street.

Madams' lives and influence in the community apparently varied. They enjoyed high profits and were capable of buying and owning their business property or renting real estate at considerably high rates. On the other hand, the civil court cases indicate that madams' successes fluctuated and their relationships with private owners who leased the property to them were not uniformly or invariably positive. They also reveal that a cold business-like connection between madams and their employed prostitutes sometimes led to negative outcomes; a sisterhood did not always exist among Waco's lost women. Nevertheless, many of Waco's loose women shared a career that they either chose or were compelled to enter as a result of social factors.

The demographic facts of Two Street indicate that many prostitutes were indeed transient, migrating to Waco from various areas and likely leaving to go to other localities in the state and beyond. In 1870, the only prostitute listed in the federal census was Margaret Burger, a nineteen-year-old mulatto from Alabama.⁷⁴ Burger was living alone but near possible relatives, Maria and Sarah Burger, the former a black woman of sixty-four who kept house. Although the Alabama woman was the only prostitute officially listed in the census, one must assume that other bawds resided in Waco at the

⁷⁴1870 U.S. Federal Census, McLennan County, Waco, June 23, 1870, 14, microfilm, Waco Public Library, Waco, Texas.

time. Perhaps they maintained prostitution as a secondary outlet for earning money, choosing to be registered as laundresses, servants, or as “keeping house,” which were the usual occupation listings for women in Waco during the period. Job variety was nonexistent for women, yet they had begun to mobilize in the job market, however slightly, by Burger’s appearance in the census. In the 1860 census, nearly all working women were listed as domestics.⁷⁵

By 1880, more women living on North Second and Third Streets were registered as prostitutes by the census taker, showing a rise in public acknowledgment of the practice, while also indicating an influx of women from other areas. Bawds hailed from several states: Indiana (1), Illinois (1), Pennsylvania (1), Missouri (2), Texas (4), Virginia (1), Arkansas (3), Louisiana (3), Georgia (2), Mississippi (1), and California (1). They also emigrated from foreign countries such as Germany and Ireland. Most were listed as “white” in race, and the prostitutes usually ranged in age between their late teens to middle twenties.⁷⁶ On North Second Street, twenty-six year-old Cora McMahon was a “mistress” of a boarding house that contained her son of nine years, a black porter, his mulatto wife, and their daughter and son. McMahon also was charged with five other dependents, all of whom were prostitutes aged eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-three, and twenty-seven.⁷⁷ Also on North Second Street, twenty-six-year-old mulatto Hildy Brown operated a hotel where two prostitutes, one a twenty-two-year-old white woman and the other a twenty-six-year-old black female, resided with a mulatto cook and a black

⁷⁵ 1860 Federal Census, McLennan County, Waco, microfilm collection, Waco Public Library.

⁷⁶ 1880 Federal Census, McLennan County, Waco, June 1-3, 1880, online, Ancestry.com, 12. January 2005, <http://www.ancestry.com>.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, June 1, 1880, 4.

laborer.⁷⁸ Other prostitutes varied slightly in age from nineteen to their middle twenties, and as of 1880, none was over thirty or younger than eighteen, at least among those registered by the census.

The age trends of the prostitutes in 1880 shows the typical maturity of prostitutes in the late nineteenth century. On average, as many studies on the subject conclude, few stayed in the business longer than their middle twenties, and many began prostituting before age eighteen. Other young girls were forced into the profession through unwanted pregnancies resulting from an adolescent seduction or rape. A number entered prostitution because of economic circumstances that a philandering husband or widowhood brought. Many also continued to struggle with related problems, such as an alcoholism or abuse. The majority, however, joined the ranks of the lost sisters simply because the money was better than working in those jobs considered more respectable and suitable for women at the time: factory girl, schoolteacher, or domestic. A few did choose these traditional roles but also decided to supplement their incomes with sexual solicitation. Whatever their reasons for entering at various ages, most prostitutes, madams excluded, remained in the business for six years at the most. During that time, few resided in the same city, let alone the same brothel. Some left the business for a period but returned for various reasons. A select few became madams and continued to operate in the same city for the majority of their lives, as in the case of Mollie Adams. Others eventually married, started homes for fallen women, or spent the remainder of their aged career still plying their trade in small shanties. Some committed suicide.

Other prostitutes of various ages, who registered with the 1880 census, lived also on North Third Street, indicating that prostitutes were not quite restricted to Two Street

⁷⁸Ibid., June 2, 1880, 9.

either by popular choice of business location or by the city's public policy. During the period of heavy regulation from the 1890s through 1917, the Reservation's inmates were generally confined to the boundaries between Jefferson, Washington, and Second Street. When the women needed to purchase items, hired hacks took the bawds to stores where the owner either kept the store open past normal hours or brought the items out to a woman, who remained in the confines of a carriage.⁷⁹

Nine years before Waco began its control of prostitution in 1889, the boundaries were more flexible. On North Third Street, fifty-five-year-old Tildy Brown, a black female from Louisiana, kept a house where her daughter Farris, a thirty-two-year-old mulatto, operated as a prostitute. On the same street, Stella Heartridg, a white female of twenty-one, and Jennie Dean, a white twenty-nine-year-old, also had chosen a bawd career, and both appear as prostitutes in the census. Another white prostitute of twenty-five, Minnie Anderson, boarded with Joe and Georgia Faulkner, a married couple of twenty-nine.⁸⁰ North Third Street also contained a larger brothel, the only household listed in the 1880 census as a bawdy house. There, Mary Davis, a sixty-year-old white woman originally from Georgia, employed and boarded six women as prostitutes, one of whom was from Germany and another from Ireland. These last two were the only non-native Americans among Waco prostitutes listed in the censuses of 1860, 1870, and 1880. All of the women were between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five.⁸¹

⁷⁹Margaret Davis, 91.

⁸⁰1880 U.S. Federal Census, McLennan County, Waco., June 3, 1880, 9.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 10.

The 1880 census reveals more than the general age patterns and locations of the prostitutes, however. Bawds were not the only individuals residing in the Reservation's environs at that time. As was true with Hildy Brown's hotel-brothel, sporting girls lived and mingled with laborers and other members of the working class. Well diggers, farm hands, boot blacks, carpenters, and painters were a few of the occupations chosen by men who lived with their families among the scarlet women. Some men were gamblers who boarded with households located within the general area of Two Street.⁸² This ilk of men had plenty of opportunities to try their luck in the saloons and back alleys that flanked the Reservation, so their choices of residence reveal no significant surprise. Workers also lived close to their jobs, and the blocks around what became the Reservation abounded with businesses. In fact, the red-light district was less than a block from Waco's public square, and some houses of ill-repute were even located across the street from the suspension bridge, an area which enjoyed a bustle of activity from the commercial benefits of passers-by on the Chisolm Trail.⁸³ While Waco's red-light district was legally and morally ostracized from the community by its confinement in the reserved area, it was by no means entirely separated economically or residentially. Most of the other residents in the Reservation, though, experienced their own sense of separation. The location there of several working class families likely resulted in part from race and not by choice, since most of the neighborhood's residents who were not prostitutes were black or mulatto.⁸⁴

⁸²Ibid., June 1-3, 1880.

⁸³Digital Sanborn Maps, Waco, Texas, 1889, UMI database, August 12, 2004
<http://bearcat.baylor.edu/>.

⁸⁴1880 U.S. Federal Census, McLennan County. Waco, June 1-3, 1880.

From the 1860s through the 1880s, the Reservation witnessed an interesting blend of interracial mingling. In his study of Los Angeles interracial relationships between prostitutes, Mark Wild has argued that prostitutes' social standing in the sex industry in Los Angeles from 1880 to 1940 allowed for greater integration between races, both in customer-bawd and bawd-bawd affiliation.⁸⁵ Waco's Two Street in the Reservation was similar in the sense that the district contained mostly blacks, both bawds and working class folk and their families, living in the same area as white prostitutes. As mentioned earlier, the first prostitute to be recorded in the Federal Census was a mulatto from Alabama, Margaret Burger. However, prostitutes in later decades were primarily whites living next to, with, or near black residents. In 1880, Lucy West, a twenty-two-year-old white prostitute, boarded with Hildy Brown and Alice Franks, both mulattos living on Two Street. On the same street, Kate Collins, also a mulatto, boarded with a black farmhand and his family.⁸⁶ Although the majority of prostitutes were either mulatto or white and lived among black laborers, members of other races resided in the area, including Minnie Perry, a nineteen-year-old Native American from the Indian territory, who lived with Thomas Heart, a white clerk, also nineteen, from Louisiana.⁸⁷ Perry and Heart violated the racial norms of the late nineteenth century, but they were not the only ones living around the Reservation who showed interracial compatibility.

Significantly, the dynamics of interracial relationships are further revealed in the 1880 census. Tildy Brown, a fifty-five-year-old black woman from Louisiana, previously

⁸⁵Mark Wild, "Red Light Kaleidoscope: Prostitution and Ethnoracial Relations in Los Angeles, 1880-1940," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 6 (2002): 720-42.

⁸⁶1880 U.S. Federal Census, McLennan County, Waco, June 2, 1880, 9.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 6.

mentioned, lived with her thirty-two-year-old daughter Farris on North Third Street. Farris was a mulatto born in Louisiana, indicating that Tildy had been impregnated by a white male when she was twenty-three. Brown had likely been a slave living in the Deep South during its pre-Civil War years, and her situation reveals a typical aspect of interracial mixing. White males did utilize the services of black prostitutes or slaves. However, few black males would dare to approach a white bawd, particularly considering the polarized racial culture of the South.

One case indicates that exceptions existed and some did dare to cross racial barriers. Martha Benton, a twenty-six year old white prostitute from Arkansas, lived with her prostitute sister, her one-year-old white daughter, and her six-year-old son, who was a mulatto born in Texas. While Benton's origins appear on the record, that of her son's father do not, possibly because her relationship with him was a brief affair or business transaction. The ethnicity of Brown's daughter and Benton's son indicate that some prostitutes in Waco were not simply living near or among members of different races but also were involved in interracial sexual encounters, either with paying customers or in affairs outside the brothel.

The Reservation's population continued to expand over the following decade, and at least two hundred prostitutes plied their sexual trade in Two Street's environs between 1889 and 1895. Many likely reflected trends in prostitutes' characteristics throughout the country. Unfortunately, the census records for 1890, a crucial year since Waco began to regulate its commercialized sex during that period, no longer exist because of their destruction by fire in the building where they were stored in Washington, D.C.

By 1900, the area around Two Street differed slightly in demographic composition to that seen twenty years before. Along North Second and First Streets, the majority of residents remained black laborers and their families. However, most of the blacks in 1880 had hailed from southern states other than Texas, whereas in 1900 the majority of these racial compatriots were native Texans, although their familial roots did extend backward to states in the Deep South. Another aspect that was slightly different in 1900 from the previous census survey was that black husbands in the Reservation were not the only individuals in the household who worked, at least according to the census taker. By the 1900 census their wives were listed by the census taker as working as washwomen or laundresses, while a few took up jobs as cooks and chambermaids.⁸⁸ Work outside of their own domestic sphere, though, was limited by racial and gender stereotypes, and even though a portion of the workforce shifted in favor of black females, this was not the only change that had occurred in the Reservation during the twenty-year period from 1880 to 1900.

Although the area maintained similarities in its black minority population, the Reservation's non-prostitute population reflected significantly more changes in demographics at the turn of the twentieth century. Confirming national trends of immigration patterns, the vicinity around Two Street had experienced a moderate influx of Southern and Eastern Europeans, as well as some from the Middle East, by 1900. A Syrian family and an Italian family resided on North Third Street, the latter of which boarded a thirty-two-year-old male also from Syria.⁸⁹ Two Jewish families, also from

⁸⁸1900 U.S. Federal Census, McLennan County, Waco, Texas, June 13-15, 1900.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, June 13, 1900.

Syria, lived on North Second and North First Streets, while one Syrian on North First provided board to two Syrian males.⁹⁰ Similar to the area's blacks, a large portion of these immigrants belonged to the working class. While one Syrian worked as a salesman at a dry goods store, many of the other immigrants peddled dry goods and food items like chicken and fish.⁹¹

The presence of other ethnic groups and the continuation of a black laboring class demonstrates that the red-light district continued to include working class families among the working girls of Two Street, who populated the Reservation in far greater numbers in 1900 than they had in 1880. By the turn of the century, the scarlet women were confined to the area around North Second and North First Streets, although the majority of residents on both thoroughfares were African-American laborers and their families. On Washington Street, one of the lanes bordering the district, Sallie Wiley and Ella Miller operated brothels, while two other women worked independently, likely in cribs, or one-room shacks rented specifically for the sex trade.⁹² No prostitutes living on Second Street were noted by the census taker, and the majority were located on First Street, closer to the Brazos River. Winnie Clark and Mollie Adams, listed as married, continued to operate their sporting houses, both with seven inmates. Ray Douglas, a thirty-three-year-old white female from Kentucky, established a bawdy house in the same vicinity, as well. Seven other bawds worked out of two saloons owned by Will Humphries and George Walker.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., June 13, 1900.

Women selling sex, however, were not confined to the employment of saloons and brothels. Although the brothel and saloons were the primary locations for sexual solicitation, several women worked out of smaller venues, likely cribs. Three women who registered with the census drew business to their own residences and did not work out of brothels. Seven black prostitutes, mostly from Texas, also lived autonomously. Others bawds outside of the brothel's walls did not live alone, however. For example, Rose Lablanch and Lizzie Hernandez were listed in the census as business partners of Mexican origin who operated independently on North First Street, while one thirty-two-year-old white prostitute lived in Barron's Alley with her lover, a carpenter of twenty-six.⁹³ One black prostitute, Irene Burkes, operated alone and boarded with five other non-prostitutes at the house of a black barber.⁹⁴

Altogether, sixty-two women were recorded as prostitutes or inmates in the census of 1900. Because of the women's transient migratory patterns, however, their exact number is likely impossible to deduce. Still, the census offers a significant portion of that unknown number and illustrates the very transience that has been so problematic in historical scholarship of prostitutes. Women continued to hail from various states and countries: Illinois, Tennessee, Texas, Kansas, New York, Missouri, Indiana, Vermont, Mississippi, Arkansas, Montana, Colorado, Ohio, Virginia, South Dakota, Georgia, Ireland, Kentucky, and West Virginia. States of origin were more variant than twenty years earlier, while the trends of both racial and demographic dynamics appear consistent

⁹³Ibid., June 14, 1900.

⁹⁴Ibid., June 15, 1900.

throughout the censuses of 1880 and 1900, yet clearly with a number of natural changes in population and immigration influxes.

The tendencies existing around the red-light district in 1880 and 1900 continued to 1910, the year in which the last census was taken before the Reservation closed in 1917. Building on the previous decade, more immigrants continued to settle in areas near or next to Two Street. North Third Street, once home to some of Waco's loose women, now housed immigrants from Russia and Germany as well as Romania and Austria. Waco's red-light district was evidently experiencing immigration patterns that occurred at the regional and national level. Nevertheless, a unique ethnic element, distinctive to Texas, was also beginning to present itself: Mexican immigration. What was barely existent in the previous federal survey was now hard to ignore as Mexican residents began to outnumber other ethnicities and, significantly, the black population. In fact, the number of black residents was far fewer than in previous decades, as they began to populate the East Waco area across the Brazos River, while the population of white immigrants, white Americans, and Mexicans living in and close to the red-light district continued to rise.⁹⁵

While racial and ethnic composition shifted slightly among non-prostitutes in the Reservation, the bawdy women's situation also changed. The previous decade showed that prostitutes gradually left North Third Street but continued to live on North First and in nearby alleys. But by 1910, scarlet ladies were confined to that thoroughfare with which the Reservation had become synonymous: Two Street, or North Second. Maude Riley had the largest business during that year, with eight women. Mollie Adams

⁹⁵1910 U.S. Federal Census, McLennan County, Waco, Texas, April 20-21, 1910

continued to serve the sexual needs of the male community with the aid of her six inmates, one of whom was her sister Rosa. Lula Rice and Sallie Gray ran five-women bordellos. Josie Tweedy ran a four-inmate establishment, while Katy Schwartz, a thirty-year-old from Russia, oversaw the same, but with three inmates. Della Smith, Irene Riley, Isabella Thomas, and Myrtle Harris all operated slightly smaller brothels with two inmates each. Three women were not employed by a madam, however, and they solicited sex independently from the larger operations. Overall, fifty-seven women who had registered with the census were operating in the smaller confines of North Second Street.⁹⁶

The declining numbers of prostitutes and the smaller area of operation reflect how some changes had occurred on Two Street. Certain aspects remained the same, like the longevity of Mollie Adams and the diversity of prostitutes, who continued to migrate to Waco from many states and countries, and their transience appears as a constant throughout Two Street's history. Nevertheless, significant evidence of racial segregation is the fact that absolutely no black or mulatto prostitute registered in the Reservation. Although some outliers must have existed in the census, changes had clearly occurred from 1880 to 1910, as racial barriers had apparently permeated throughout even the moral outcasts of society. The shrinking landscape of the district also illustrates that the Waco community was starting to decrease prostitution's influence, even while it allowed its continuance.

⁹⁶Ibid., April 21, 1910.

CHAPTER THREE

If You Can't Stop It, Regulate It: Waco's Response to Sexual Vice

I asked her if she didn't think she'd be punished by being in the sporting house business. She rose from her chair, walked to the window, pulled back the heavy red curtains and looked out [T]hen she turned and looked deeply into my eyes and said, in the queerest voice, "Punished? Alonzo Oden, I know Hell."

Alonzo Van Oden, *Texas Ranger's Diary & Scrapbook*

Alonzo Oden, a Texas Ranger, wrote of this conversation while working in the Company D Frontier Battalion in the early 1890s. One night he visited a brothel in El Paso, where he had been charmed by the proprietor, Miss Hattie. He found Miss Hattie to be witty and intelligent, easy to communicate with. Nonetheless, Oden also found that, while successful in her business, Hattie appeared melancholic when asked about being punished for working in the sex industry.¹ Her business, while profitable, was also part of a culture rife with crime, abuse, death, social ostracism, and uncertainty concerning public regulation and police reprisals. Although profitable to certain businesses and tolerated by policymakers of the community, red-light districts had many detrimental effects upon the local population. Consequently, fearing the results of the closures of their red-light districts, whether from loss of revenue or increased crime and disease among the larger community, governing members and citizens attempted a balance of

¹Alonzo Van Oden, *Texas Ranger's Diary & Scrapbook*. Ed. Ann Jensen (Dallas: Kaleidograph Press, 1936), 22.

arrests and fines even while they reaped profits and revenue from their red-light districts' operations.² Waco was no exception.

Throughout the state's history, most cities and towns in Texas grappled with both the ill effects and advantages of maintaining red-light districts within their communities, instituting both official and unofficial policies toward them. One of the earliest records of arrests concerning prostitution occurred under Spanish rule in the area around San Antonio. The women were Hispanic, but Anglo prostitutes joined them by the 1830s, during the Texas independence movement and the antebellum period. Prostitutes' numbers in Texas communities remained marginal until the influx of American migrants into the state after the Civil War. From that period to the first decade of the twentieth century, the trade grew rapidly in nearly all Texas communities, from urban centers to frontier outposts and boom towns, reflecting a trend that not only occurred in the Lone Star State but in towns and cities throughout the United States. In fact, the most populated municipalities all had designated sections for brothels spanning several blocks.³

In dealing with the social, health, and moral problems of prostitution, most Texas cities followed general trends in policing the scarlet-tinged shadows of their more lawful reputations. Conveniently located in red-light zones, adjacent to centers of commerce and transportation stations, bawds served a motley group of customers from various

²See Paul Best, *Controlling Vice: Regulating Brothel Prostitution in St. Paul, 1865-1883* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1998), and Barbara Smith Corrales, "Prurience, Prostitution, and Progressive Improvements: The Crowley Connection, 1909-1918," *Louisiana History* 45 (winter 2004): 37-70.

³David C. Humphrey, "Prostitution," *Handbook of Texas Online*, July 23, 2002, February 20, 2004, <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/print/PP/jbp1.html>.

socio-economic classes and races.⁴ Thriving in a hushed, rarely-discussed-in-polite-company kind of atmosphere, prostitution was deeply embedded in the Texas cities by the turn of the twentieth century, and city officials found some difficulty in executing steps to eradicate the practice within their municipalities. Even after several cities passed statutes that officially abolished the trade within their limits, law enforcers remained less than enthusiastic about regularly detaining prostitutes for selling their bodies to a supportive, and sometimes prominent and powerful, customer base. In exchange for remaining in a confined area and paying periodic arrest fees and fines, prostitutes continued operating in their areas, even while official laws prohibited it. Significantly, law enforcers and powerful community members “also had a keen appreciation of the hefty fines and rents prostitutes paid and the legions of male consumers they lured to town.”⁵ Even when Progressive ministers and women’s groups wanted more reform between 1911 and 1915, successfully shutting down districts in Dallas, Amarillo, and Austin, they experienced resistance from lawmakers, policemen, and politicians in other cities wanting to keep the vice districts for fear of the circulation of prostitution and the spread of crime into the rest of the community. Officials also wished to keep the flow of revenue from arrests coming into their annual budgets. In fact, many of the districts, including Waco’s, were not legally closed until the United States secretary of war ordered them shut down in 1917. Still, after the seedier areas of towns experienced an increase in prostitute arrests during that year, commercialized sex continued.⁶

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

Compared to those of other Texas cities, Waco's policies were sometimes unexceptional and sometimes extraordinary. Like that in other cities dealing with commercialized sex, Waco's law enforcement concerning sexual solicitation was sporadic and apathetic, but by 1889, the Central Texas city started something different, as it began to regulate the practice under strict guidelines: tri-monthly licensing fees for prostitute and bawdy house licenses, regular medical examinations, and restricted boundaries within the Reservation. Waco was not the only Texas municipality to legalize prostitution within a restricted zone, as cities like El Paso, Houston, and Dallas also attempted to contain the evil in a specific area while allowing it to remain a part of the commercial activity of their cities.⁷

Waco, however, experienced the one of longest sponsorships, both officially and unofficially, of prostitution. Although the practice was basically legalized through licensing within a designated area by 1889, some intermittent arrests of bawds continued to occur. After the city appeared to discontinue its policy of legalization in 1895 with the disappearance of the bawdy house register, either from moralist pressure or from better economic gains through arrests, prostitution still persisted until 1917. During the early twentieth century until Two Street's official closure, police regularly collected revenue from periodic raids of brothels and singular arrests of prostitutes. Basically accepting its existence and the easy profits that came from episodic prosecutions of bawds, Waco maintained a contradictory and inconsistent policy in dealing with its red-light district.

Literally existing next to Waco's more noted past of cattle and cotton, signified by the suspension bridge across the Brazos River, Two Street was a cesspool of sexual exploitation and criminal activity. All romantic notions of "the bawd with a big heart"

⁷Ibid.

and the dapper, itinerant gambler in red-light saloons cast aside, the Reservation symbolized Waco at its lowest, an embarrassment to its clean-cut image. Given the rising racial prejudice and segregation in the South, the cohabitation of prostitutes with minority families indicates that the city initially attempted to confine everything that did not fit society's moral or racial code into a specific, defined area. By the late nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century, Waco was experiencing the effects of the country's moral-cleansing climate. As shown by the censuses, when more whites, both native and immigrant, populated neighborhoods adjacent to the Reservation, demographics altered. Mexicans and white laborers replaced black workers who were squeezed out of the Reservation's surrounding streets, while prostitutes were increasingly confined to North Second Street. The assortment of ethnicities, races, immigrants into Texas from other American regions, and the moral polarization between prostitutes and non-prostitutes, all living in one area, combined to create a climate of frequent tension and crime.

County court records beginning in 1885 reveal criminal behavior among the female population of McLennan County. Although the records are incomplete, they illustrate a sample of female criminal behavior between 1885 and 1890. A total of 122 cases reached the county court in the five-year period. Although smaller in number than male offenses, some of the women's crimes included eleven cases involving theft, twelve assault indictments, three carrying weapons, eleven gambling charges, which included cards and craps, one grave desecration, and nineteen charges of adultery.⁸

⁸McLennan County Court Records, 1885-1890. cases 2073-5318, McLennan County Archives, Waco, Texas.

Out of all the county court cases involving women between 1885 and 1890, the majority of arrests concerned instances of prostitution and vagrancy. Because vagrancy was a popular euphemism for prostitution, one may surmise that most, if not all, of the women arrested for vagrancy were bawds. Of course, women were not the only ones arrested for vagrancy, yet male detainees were far fewer than females.⁹ Although thirteen women were convicted of vagrancy in the county court during that period, thirty-one other cases involved arrests and fines against women specifically running disorderly houses, several of whom were repeat offenders. Two brothel keepers, however, were convicted of both vagrancy and keeping disorderly houses. Some of the defendants later appeared in the bawdy register, including Lilly Roper (alias Lilly Yard), Edna Elmore, Fannie Estes (the only black madam that was listed in the register), Eva Thompson, and Stella Nolan. The majority of these charges concerning brothels actually occurred in 1888, a year before the city started its regulation of sexual vice through the bawdy register.¹⁰ One wonders if Waco leaders sought to regulate an element that was growing among the residents of the Reservation and chose to guard the rest of the community, or if they anticipated lucrative investment opportunities for tax purposes and private real estate investments. Regardless of the city's motivation, its policy was not always consistent.

At least officially, Waco appeared to show an aversion to the sex industry that proliferated by the Brazos. The county's language for women charged with operating disorderly houses in the years 1885 through 1890 remained basically the same, stating

⁹*City of Waco v. Pawnee Bill*, Justice Criminal Records, vol. 8. 1903, McLennan County Archives.

¹⁰McLennan County Court Records, 1885-1890.

that a defendant did “keep a disorderly house the said house being then and there kept for prostitution and the same being a place where prostitutes are permitted to resort and reside for the purpose of plying their vocation.”¹¹ At the county level, the language muddles the impression of the legality of prostitution in Waco, as one case document reveals that running a brothel was “an offense against the Penal laws of the State of Texas.”¹² Yet, clearly the city was overtly endorsing the activities taking place in its brothels, which is proved by its regulation of prostitutes through doctors’ examinations and bawdy licenses. A city that regulated the activities of the Reservation certainly had no intention to banish prostitutes from the city limits. Thus, while Waco’s judicial system often sought to comply with Texas statutes, its actual practice frequently conflicted with the highest echelons of legality.¹³

While county records do not exist for the later years of the bawdy register and into 1904, justice of the peace records from 1901 through 1903 illustrate how the city dealt with its prostitutes. Compared to other Waco women, charged with crimes like public fights, drunkenness, assault and battery, disturbing the peace, and cursing, Waco’s scarlet ladies suffered the highest percentage of arrests. Out of 288 arrests of Waco women in precinct one, which was the area of the Reservation, 264 of the cases concerned vagrancy over the course of two years. Other cases relating to prostitution

¹¹*State of Texas v. Emma Adams*, case 5227, June 1890, McLennan County Court Records.

¹²*State of Texas v. Nellie Moore*, case 5281, August 22, 1890, McLennan County Court Records.

¹³For a brief listing of local and state statutes concerning prostitution, see Aimee Harris Johnson, “Prostitution in Waco,” appendix.

consisted of arrests of five women, including the previously mentioned madam, Ella Miller, who were charged with hiring vagrants.¹⁴

The arrests of prostitutes from the 1901 to 1903 period occasionally followed clear patterns. Initially, charges of vagrancy were frequently reported in small groupings of a few women at a time. For example, two women, Katie Miller and Kate Cleveland, were reported as vagrants on October 12, 1901, while thirteen other women were arrested two months later for the same crime. The number of filed reports primarily varied between groups of two to five in the first year. Initially, the next year followed suit, but by August 11, Waco policemen were arresting women on charges of vagrancy en masse.

Around December 18, eleven women were indicted for vagrancy, but a far greater number soon followed on February 26, 1903, with the arrests of thirty-one women, including Mollie Adams, for the same crime. Clearly, police had raided Two Street to discourage sexual immorality, but they also gained revenue through fines and fees. Since the average fee that included a compulsory one dollar fine for prosecution of vagrancy by the justice of the peace was \$12.90, the city earned about \$400 on that day alone, equivalent to more than \$8,000 in today's economy.¹⁵ Compared to other male crimes like gambling, one of which included a man referred to as "Crack Shot" who was fined ten dollars, the fine for vagrancy was a trivial amount of money,¹⁶ yet women were arrested for vagrancy often more consistently than men for petty crimes.¹⁷ Law enforcers were not simply randomly arresting the vagrants for moral and legal purposes;

¹⁴Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 7, 1901-1903, McLennan County Archives.

¹⁵John McCusker, "Comparing the Purchasing Power of Money."

¹⁶*City of Waco v. Crack Shot*, Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 7, 512.

¹⁷Justice Criminal Docket, vols. 7-19.

they also stood to receive revenue from the sex trade. One possible reason for the dramatic increase in arrests on that particular date, however, could be that in the beginning of the year, the office of justice of the peace passed from Judge Davis to Judge Minor Moore. Whatever the reasons for the periodic raids, though, the arrests continued in the ensuing years, their persistence indicating that police officers were not simply executing their duties as law enforcers of Waco's very ambiguous statutes concerning prostitution.

While the majority of criminal cases against women living in the first precinct were for vagrancy or for petty crimes like "loud, vociferous and obscene language,"¹⁸ a few women committed more serious offenses in 1903. Their number certainly does not parallel with the men, who were arrested on a variety of crimes from assault to murder and rape, yet women perpetrated enough crimes for Minor Moore to set high bail bonds. Between June and October 1903 alone, five cases appeared before the justice of the peace concerning "theft from the person," which dictated a bond of \$400 for four of the cases and \$500 for a woman who was a repeat offender.¹⁹ One woman was charged with robbery, while another was charged with assault with an intent to murder, both of whom paid a \$300 bail bond. Of the accused women, at least three had been registered as prostitutes in the bawdy register during the previous decade. Not surprisingly, the city used two bawds as witnesses against Ella Russell, a woman arrested for theft.²⁰ The trend was not extraordinary because of the proximity of the women to each other and the

¹⁸*City of Waco v. Ella Russell*, Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 8, June 2, 1903, McLennan County archives.

¹⁹Justice Criminal Docket, 1903, McLennan County Archives.

²⁰*City of Waco v. Ella Russell*, October 21, 1903, 4.

likelihood of their witnessing a crime. Similar to the civil case records, at least part of the “lost sisterhood” bond espoused by Progressive reformers was exaggerated,²¹ at least with Waco’s prostitutes. Because of financial and criminal circumstances, any bond between lost women was frequently impossible.

The prosecution practices against females that were set in the early part of 1903 continued under Minor Moore’s tenure as justice of the peace. Throughout the remainder of 1903 until the end of 1904, Moore oversaw 246 cases against Waco’s females. All but forty-six of the cases, which comprised familiar charges like theft and disturbing the peace, involved vagrancy. In those 246 cases, the cyclical characteristics of prosecution becomes obvious. On June 2, 1903, Waco policemen arrested thirty women for vagrancy, while on September 1, they arrested a group of twenty-one female vagrants. November 29 continued the trend with twenty-seven scarlet ladies arrested, and at the end of February 1904, the same number appeared before Judge Moore. Twenty-four women were charged on June 4, 1904, and the trend continued until August 8, when police arrested twenty-five for vagrancy.²² In the period between 1903 and 1904, Waco’s law enforcers evidently regulated the sexual solicitation occurring in their community. Arrests appeared to be executed on a bi-monthly or tri-monthly basis. The average number of arrests in each cycle was twenty-five. One wonders about the city’s purpose in regularly detaining that average number of women.

Various factors likely motivated city law enforcers to begin episodic arrests of the Reservation’s scarlet women. First, while existing records do not state the location where the apprehensions occurred, one might conjecture that the police arrested some of the

²¹Ruth Rosen, *Lost Sisterhood*, xiv.

²²Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 8, May 1903-December 1904.

women who strayed outside the confined boundaries of the Reservation to search for customers. Second, Waco was also beginning to experience some of the effects of progressive morality. As noted in the introductory chapter, in the first years of the twentieth century, progressives continued to gain political power and attempted to alter official policies toward prostitution. Specifically, moralists informed citizens about the dangers of “white slavery,” and by the early twentieth century, rumors of young women being sold into sexual slavery abounded throughout the United States, and many citizens called for government action. Waco’s officials likely attempted to placate some of the moral fervor that radiated into Waco from the national level. By periodically arresting prostitutes, enforcers provided an impression that the local government was at least making strides to eradicate the practice even while they continued to allow the activities in the Reservation to continue. Periodically arresting bawds did not signal the complete suppression of prostitution with an authoritative closure of the red-light district. In fact, during that period, the city charged only one woman, Pearl Tucker, for running a disorderly house, fining her two hundred dollars for the offense.²³ Still, other brothels continued operating and abounded on Two Street. Evidently, police attempts at constricting the sex trade on Two Street remained half-hearted.

One other factor possibly contributed to the arrest cycles. Law enforcers likely rounded up prostitutes in brothels within the boundaries of Two Street for either political or monetary purposes. Many of the women who were regularly arrested in the one-year period were well-known madams: Mollie Adams, Irene Burks, Kate Cleveland, Josie

²³*City of Waco v. Pearl Tucker*, October 3, 1903, Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 8, 174.

Tweedy, and others.²⁴ No matter how successful a madam might be, she was certainly not immune from the pressure of local law enforcers. Given this reality, one might also deduce that since the bawdy register no longer existed, the city developed a way to make periodic arrests of prostitutes who operated their businesses within the previously sanctioned area of Two Street. Earlier during the register's use, the city had demanded that prostitutes register for a license costing \$2.50 and for a bawdy license costing \$3.15 every three months. By cyclically arresting both madams and bawds every two to three months, Waco extracted a similar annual rate of revenue from its scarlet citizens in 1903 as it had a decade earlier.

Although the city continued to prosecute the crimes of its women between 1905 and 1907, the characteristics of the crimes differed from the previous two years. The number of crimes was comparatively smaller than before, this period witnessing 115 arrests. The variety of cases remained similar to the preceding period: cursing, public fights, disturbing the peace, and assault and battery. One reason for the smaller number of detainments, however, rested in the fact that fewer vagrants appeared on the criminal docket, unlike the two hundred vagrants of the previous volume. For the remainder of his term as justice of the peace, which lasted until September 1906, Minor Moore did not charge as many women with vagrancy, nor did the police arrest groups of women every two to three months. The only large number of vagrants during the remainder of Moore's office was a group of eleven women who were arrested between July 27 and August 2, 1905, but even that number covered a period of several days instead of one particular

²⁴Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 8.

date.²⁵ Perhaps concerns over white slavery and progressive pressure dissipated for a brief interval, allowing for less attention to be paid to the ladies of Two Street.

By September 1906, however, Tom Dilworth was trying cases as justice of the peace, and with this new justice of the peace, some attitudes toward prostitutes regressed to the policy of 1903. On December 6, Dilworth charged twenty-five women with prostitution and collected \$12.90 from each woman, including a one-dollar fine and fees for prosecuting her case.²⁶ On that single day, the city of Waco obtained a total of \$322.50 in revenue from prostitutes, an equivalent of more than \$6,500 in today's economy.²⁷ Later that month, on December 30, the city arrested eight women for prostitution and vagrancy, charging each \$14.60. For each guilty verdict, the office of county attorney Pat Neff received \$5.10, and the remainder of the money was divided among the rest of the city's pertinent offices.²⁸

Sometimes the city arrested prostitutes on more serious charges than the occasional or periodic vagrancy offenses. On October 4, 1906, Josie Tweedy filed a complaint against Katie Miller. On the same day, police arrested Miller on charges of threatening to kill Tweedy. Judge Dilworth ruled that a serious threat existed and ordered Miller to post a \$300 bond and to promise "that she will keep the peace towards the said Josie Tweedy . . . and towards all others for one year from the date of such bond."²⁹ If she failed to pay the amount, Miller would be jailed for one year. Miller, however,

²⁵Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 9, January 1905-January 1907, McLennan County Archives.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 6 December 1906.

²⁷John McCusker, "The Purchasing Power of Money."

²⁸Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 9, December 30, 1906.

²⁹*The State of Texas v. Katie Miller*, October 4, 1906, Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 9, 426.

appealed on the basis of a violation of *habeas corpus* and was acquitted four days later. The dispute between Miller and Tweedy further reveals that relationships between bawds on Two Street were frequently tarnished by violence or the threat of it. Threatening murder was obviously a crime to be taken seriously, but vagrancy was still the most popular prosecution for the city to impose on its scarlet population.

Before Dilworth's term as justice of the peace, city law enforcers had not charged women specifically with prostitution, instead choosing the vague term "vagrancy." Even though the majority of the cases involved prostitutes, whose names match those in the bawdy register, not all vagrants were prostitutes and not all prostitutes were charged with vagrancy; some committed other crimes. At least during Dilworth's initial term, however, the charge of prostitution had become specific, either by his personal choice or to reflect increasing social and moral outrage. Nevertheless, not all prostitutes in the Reservation were arrested. Dilworth's specific charge of prostitution reflected the continuing inconsistencies in Waco's policy toward its red-light district.

Whether the city Waco continued its policy of occasional arrests in the Reservation during the following few years is unknown; the records are missing. The criminal dockets for the city dating from 1907 to 1911 are lost. Fortunately, records of a small fraction of the cases for that period exist at the county level. These county court records offer some insights into the arrests in at least a portion of the cases. Between 1906 and 1911, the county prosecuted four cases concerning women charged with keeping disorderly houses, while two prostitutes were charged with vagrancy. One of the women, Mildred McKinney, had been operating a brothel outside of Two Street on

Austin Avenue.³⁰ Illustrating the dangerous nature of the Reservation, Fannie Estes, a black madam who had been operating as a prostitute in Waco since the late 1880s and was now living on the corner of North Second and Jefferson, was arrested for carrying a pistol but was acquitted by the county court. Estes had claimed that she had felt that her life was threatened by another bawd, and the court ruled in her favor.³¹

While not charged with operating a brothel or carrying a weapon, another madam, Winnie Clark, was charged three times for serving alcohol in her establishment. On November 30, 1907, police arrested Clark for serving one gallon of malt liquor and a quart of beer to J. C. White without a license.³² Almost four months later, the madam still had not obtained a liquor license and was arrested on two counts of serving alcohol. This time the charge concerned her selling two bottles of beer to minors.³³ Clark's courtroom appearances represent the effects of an interesting national trend evident in the Waco community: prohibition. As discussed in chapter one, during this period, a tendency to connect alcohol consumption with sexual promiscuity and residual crime began to spread in American communities. Remove one and the other would surely not last much longer. Clark's cases exemplify the initial influence of this prohibitionist activism, which continued to appear in other cases in the ensuing years.

In 1911 the trend to arrest madams who were selling alcohol in their establishments continued at a slightly higher rate. On May 29 police arrested ten women,

³⁰*State of Texas v. Mildred McKinney*, case 17314, December 16, 1908, McLennan County Court Records, McLennan County Archives.

³¹*State of Texas v. Fannie Estes*, September 14, 1910, case 18108.

³²*State of Texas v. Winnie Clark*, September 30, 1907, case 16776.

³³*Ibid.*, January 23, 1908, cases 16915-16916.

Mollie Adams, Della Smith, Myrtle Smith, Carrie Mayfield, Stella Nolan, Annie Harris, Millie Watson, Mamie Evans, Winnie Clark, and Annie May King, charging them with “selling alcoholic liquors.”³⁴ The justice of the peace, D. A. Walker, ruled that each woman should pay the city \$13.45 in fees, and county attorney Pat Neff continued to receive \$5.10 for every guilty verdict.³⁵ While some of the madams had not been operating their businesses as long as Adams and Nolan, law enforcers were clearly unimpressed by longevity or reputation, as all defendants paid equally for the prosecution of their case. Notably, this wave of action would be the last recorded attempt by the city court of Waco to enforce policies that reflected the national trends of connecting prohibition and anti-prostitution efforts.

Even though prohibitionist charges against prostitutes ceased at the city court level, the county court had begun to stem the amount of alcohol being served in Two Street by 1912. In July and August of that year, twenty women on Two Street were arrested for selling alcohol in brothels. The majority had been arrested in June, and police detained the remainder in July, but all of the cases were not finalized until 1913. Each woman was required to pay \$200 in bond money for her release, making a total of \$4,000.³⁶ The county thus made the modern equivalent of almost \$74,000 in bond money alone from one crime during those two specific dates, many times not returned since several bawds did not appear for trial and opted to pay the fines.³⁷ One might conclude that if prohibitionist influences had begun to alter county and city policy, arresting

³⁴Justice Criminal Docket, May 29, 1911, vol. 14, McLennan County Archives.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶County Court Records, July 3-August 20, 1913, McLennan County Archives.

³⁷John McCusker, “The Purchasing Power of Money.”

madams who served alcohol was not extraordinary; however, the only male citizen arrested for selling alcohol during that period was Meyer Adams, the dealer who had applied for a liquor license to open a malt retail shop in the Reservation and who had obtained the signatures of the area's homeowners, all madams, for his petition. In this instance, Adams had been charged with selling alcohol to loose women. No record exists of other males' arrests for selling alcohol, however. Apparently, prohibitionist activism was a significant tool for the county to increase its revenue from red-light arrests, if not to eradicate it ultimately.

One criminal case from the cluster of madams arrested in 1912 involved the infamous Mollie Adams, and it signified explicit attempts by Waco officials to divorce sexual vice and alcohol. McLennan County accused Adams of selling liquor to the court's two witnesses, and two months later the county court was prosecuting the madam. In his charge to the jury, county court judge W. D. Taylor asserted that the statute concerning alcohol in a bordello read:

[A]ny person whether the owner, lessee, manager, housekeeper, proprietor, servant . . . or any person who sell, give away or drink, or permit to be sold, given away or drunk any spirituous or vinous malt liquors . . . in any bawdy house, disorderly house or assignation house, shall be guilty of misdemeanor.³⁸

To allow for the clearest definition of what the law considered a bawdy house, Judge Taylor also stated that the county ordinances stipulated that a bawdy house was a location in which prostitutes lived and operated their trade. Consequently, the judge in turn provided the definition of "prostitute" as defined by local statutes: "a female who makes a business of selling the use of her person indiscriminately to [the] male sex for the

³⁸*State of Texas v. Mollie Adams*, July 3, 1913, case 19715, County Court Records, McLennan County Archives.

purpose of elicit [*sic*] intercourse.”³⁹ Likely wishing for the jury to understand its duties, Taylor emphasized that its members should determine that Adams’s guilt had to be considered beyond a reasonable doubt and that if the two witnesses knowingly imbibed the alcoholic drinks provided at Adams’s brothel without a reason to prove her crime, they were accomplices. If so, the evidence given by the witnesses would be inadmissible in court unless supplemented by further proof. Whatever its opinion of the witnesses’ actions, the jury found Adams not guilty. Apparently, a madam’s guilt in court was not always guaranteed. Her acquittal from a jury of peers also indicates that the entire community did not completely agree with moralists’ calls for prohibition. Further, although police arrested Adams for selling alcohol in her bordello, yet she was not charged with being a madam and a prostitute. Evidently, the city and county were ultimately not willing to pressure the red ladies into leaving the area by constantly charging them with petty crimes, although they continued to obtain money in fines and fees from sporadic seizures.

In addition to policing Two Street for prohibitionist purposes, Waco also appeared to endeavor to control prostitution at the city level through increased arrests between 1911 and 1912, up from the period between 1905 to 1907. As stated earlier, some of the women from Precinct One who had been tried in the city were fined for selling liquor in brothels. But prohibitionists were not the only advocates of the steady regulation of sexual vice in Waco. The United States Congress had passed the Mann Act in 1910, which prohibited the transportation of women for the purposes of prostitution across state lines. Concerns over white slavery had influenced the creation of the bill, concerns that

³⁹Ibid.

eventually filtered down into the Waco community. In one case, John Dixon, a policeman, had arrested an adolescent named Minnie Dean, at most fifteen years old, on charges of vagrancy. In Dixon's deposition, he explained that Dean "was a female child under the age of sixteen years who knowingly associates with vicious and immoral persons and who knowingly visits houses of ill repute."⁴⁰ Apparently Dean had been living in "destitute circumstances" and was "dependent upon the public for support," so the assistant county attorney presented her as a neglected child and asked the court to rule in a way that addressed her best welfare.⁴¹ Other similar cases appeared before the county court, as Waco officials briefly attempted to stop what they perceived as the sexual slavery of young girls. Still, the Reservation continued to operate.

While policemen attempted to curb the initiation of female minors into a world of sexual vice, they also continued to arrest other scarlet women between 1911 and 1912, the majority of crimes being vagrancy. Also in this period prostitutes were charged with a related crime: disturbing the peace. From a total of 150 cases, 80 women committed vagrancy and 43 were arrested for disturbing the peace. The remaining cases were comparatively less varied than in earlier periods, most involving either public fights or drunkenness. Police arrested one woman, Ada Parker, on charges of public intoxication. Appearing before Justice of the Peace Dan Ford, she was ordered to pay a \$1.00 fine along with \$15.30 in prosecution fees. Due to her inability to pay, she was jailed but later escaped.⁴² Colorful women were obviously not confined to the red lights of Two Street.

⁴⁰*State of Texas v. Minnie Dean*, May 16, 1912, case 18932, County Court Records, McLennan County Archives.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴² *State of Texas vs. Ada Parker*, case 9646, Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 14, 446.

While the previous city record depicted many women charged with prostitution instead of its euphemistic cousin vagrancy, the 1911-1912 record showed a return to vagrancy charges. Effie Powell was the only woman in the city court specifically charged with running a brothel. The justice of the peace ordered Powell to pay a fine of \$25 in addition to fees, a total of \$45.95. Clearly, Powell was not the only woman running a bordello in Waco. Many other madams continued their businesses unmolested, at least in the sense of their being charged solely for operating their establishments. Yet the city chose to maintain its selectivity in prosecuting its scarlet ladies.

McLennan County continued its duplicitous policy concerning loose women with its indictment of one other woman on charges of running a brothel in June of 1912. Mrs. E. M. Swan ran an establishment called the Franklin Flats, a place located at 411 1/2 Franklin Avenue that was listed as having “furnished rooms” in the city directory the previous year.⁴³ While the Franklin Flats were clearly out of the Reservation, police arrested Swan on charges of vagrancy because the city believed that the building was used for purposes of prostitution. In his charge to the jury, County Judge Tom McCullough informed its members about the locality’s official stance concerning prostitution, stating, “Our statute provides that a keeper of a house of prostitution is a vagrant, and upon conviction therefore shall be fined in any sum not to exceed two hundred dollars.”⁴⁴ McCullough further noted that if Swan oversaw such an establishment and knew “that lewd women or women of bad reputation for chastity

⁴³Waco City Directory, 1911-12.

⁴⁴*State of Texas v. Miss E. M. Swan*, case 18975, McLennan County Court Records.

procured rooms therein,” she would be found guilty and fined the required amount.⁴⁵ Consequently, the jury convicted Swan on charges of vagrancy and fined her \$100, although her attorneys later appealed for a new trial. The case’s ultimate outcome remains unknown.

During Swan’s trial in county court, for which a portion of the transcript survives, various witnesses testified, and their statements offer some clues to red-light culture. Originally in her deposition to county attorney John McNamara in the office of Hollis Barron, one of Mrs. Swan’s boarders stated that she had “gone to bed with men at the Franklin Flats.”⁴⁶ While testifying in county court, however, the woman changed her story, claiming she never performed a sexual act during the two weeks she boarded with Swan. This prompted county attorney McNamara to chastise her for the contradiction in hopes of swaying the jury’s opinion:

What got into your head since you had this conversation here with me, in which you admitted that you did go to bed with men in Miss Swann’s [*sic*] Flats and now, when you are on the stand here—how much are you getting, to get up here and swear this. . . . When I know a woman—when I heard her say things, and then get on the stand and say that she did not say it—I haven’t got any more respect for her than I have a man who is lying.⁴⁷

Certainly, the witness could have been threatened or bribed into changing her testimony. Although Swan’s attorneys objected, McNamara’s reprimand of the inconsistent witness likely influenced the jury’s decision because other witnesses for the defendant, including

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., Bill of Exceptions, no. 1.

⁴⁷Ibid.

her landlord and her laundry deliveryman, also testified that they had never seen any form of bawdy behavior.⁴⁸

Although the defendant's witnesses swore that they were ignorant of illicit behavior at Swan's house, certain evidence indicates that she was undoubtedly running a brothel or at least a seamy hotel. One of the defendant's witnesses, the laundryman, stated that he had visited the Flats sometimes as much as twice a day, delivering laundry.⁴⁹ One wonders why he had to perform his duties so frequently. Did he ferry clean linens back and forth to Swan's establishment? Even if Swan ran a boarding house, one wonders about the kind of hotel that changes its linens twice a day. Apparently, the contradictory testimony of McNamara's previously mentioned female witness was not the only double-sided statement given on the witness stand. Lies in trial testimony, however, were not the only hypocrisies in Waco; the city's policy toward its prostitution was contradictory.

The witness subpoenas show a list of all single women, scattered in different locations: Edna Sharp in Hillsboro, Sadie Ward, who was first in Fort Worth and later found in Wichita Falls, and Billie Gregory and Maud Wallace. Both Gregory and Wallace were located at the most obvious place, North Second Street.⁵⁰ True to the itinerancy of the bawdy profession, Sadie Ward resided in two places that had substantial red-light districts, while the last two clearly lived on Two Street. While Swan denied running a bordello, one finds that the evidence of the county's subpoena contradicts her defense. The effects of the case were likely bad for Swan's business, as she was not

⁴⁸Ibid., Bill of Exceptions, no. 2-3.

⁴⁹Ibid., Bill of Exceptions, 3.

⁵⁰Ibid., Subpoenas, August 1-November 16, 1912.

listed in the city directory the following year. Maud Wallace remained in Waco, however, this time at 323 North Second Street.⁵¹

A comparison between Swan's and Mollie Adams's cases reinforces the notion that Waco maintained double standards in prosecuting illicit activity within its red-light district. Police arrested Adams for selling liquor at her sporting house. Because the charge was selling alcohol at a brothel, law enforcers fully knew that Adams was a madam running a bordello. Still, she was only charged with the crime concerning alcohol. Considering Swan's conviction, one might deduce that both crimes were equally offensive in the local law, yet Adams was charged with selling liquor and Swan was charged with vagrancy for operating a brothel. Assuredly, Adams was also guilty of Swan's crime, while Swan also probably sold alcohol in her house. Law enforcers were either unwittingly inconsistent or they consciously chose to arrest prostitutes and madams on varying charges to keep the illicit businesses in the Reservation operating for the fiscal and moral benefits of the city and county.

The following two-years, between 1913 and 1914, showed a decrease in the amount of female crimes, either from a laxity on the part of Waco authorities or from an actual decrease in offenses. As in the previous two years, prostitutes were charged either with disturbing the peace or vagrancy. Although a few other women were arrested for public drunkenness, out of eighty-nine crimes charged against women, the city arrested twenty-five vagrants and fifty-one for disturbing the peace. Not all females arrested for vagrancy were prostitutes, yet a significant number did belong to the bawdy trade,

⁵¹Waco City Directory, 1913.

including women like Neta Guy and Baby Doll.⁵² Given the fewer arrests, one might conclude Waco had finally resigned to the presence of Two Street or that the effects of periodic arrests had prompted the prostitutes to move on to better opportunities in other towns. Statistics from the 1914-1915 volume of the criminal dockets, however, indicates the contrary. Although not exorbitantly high, between 1914 and 1915, crime among females rose slightly. As in previous years, women committed similar offenses, and the number of prostitute-related acts remained a majority out of one hundred twenty-five arrests of women. Forty-one were vagrants, while sixty-seven disturbed the peace.⁵³ Clearly, Waco was still grappling with its sporting house quandary.

⁵²Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 16, 1913-1914, McLennan County Archives.

⁵³Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 17, 1914-1915, McLennan County Archives.

CHAPTER FOUR

Greenbacks Replace Red Lights: The Consequences of Camp MacArthur

Nineteen seventeen was a pivotal year in altering policy toward prostitution in Waco. Concerned with the effects of venereal disease on soldiers stationed near towns with brothels, Secretary of War Newton Baker ordered cities seeking to attract military camps and bases to shut down their red-light districts. Cities that already had bases were encouraged to follow suit. Because of it wanted the benefits of Camp MacArthur, an army base in Waco, the city obeyed Baker's ultimatum. To illustrate its readiness to end the sexual promiscuity taking place in brothels on Two Street, law enforcers continued their arrests of prostitutes. Between 1916 and 1918, 102 women were arrested for vagrancy, while 54 women were arrested for disturbing the peace. As in previous periodic round-ups of bawds, police had reported a majority of these cases on January 20 and February 24, and compared to the two years before, the records indicate an increase in arrests. The only other female crimes recorded during that time were ten cases of intoxication and two assault charges. Therefore, the ratio of prostitute-related charges to other crimes was notably higher.¹ Still, one must wonder why the rate of prostitute arrests was not more. Why did the police not arrest more bawds on a regular basis to discourage their continued presence in the city limits? If Waco had clearly begun to obey Baker's orders to close its red-light district, should not more regular arrests with steeper fines have taken place?

¹Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 19, 1916-1918, McLennan County Archives.

Waco's arrest of 102 women over the course of two years seems a half-hearted effort to eradicate the sex trade in the city. Prostitutes had either cleared out of the red-light district by that time, leaving few to arrest, or Waco's arrests continued to be less for moral or political purposes and more for an occasional, supplementary source of revenue. Given the amount of money made in arrests and court cases throughout the previous decades, along with the licensing fees from the years 1889 to 1895, prostitution had long proven an important source of income for the city of Waco. The fiscal motivations of the city prevented it from completely abolishing prostitution, although violent crimes and misdemeanors regularly occurred within the Reservation. Venereal disease was also a problem, yet the Reservation continued to operate openly. Sexually transmitted diseases alone might have been sufficient reason for removing prostitution from Waco city limits. Waco's arrests were clearly patterned to regulate prostitution, not to banish it from the city; the economic advantages were too significant, far outweighing health and moral issues. The only way Waco would close the Reservation was if a better source of revenue arrived, and by 1917 it had: Camp MacArthur.

Although often extremely profitable, life in Waco's Reservation was just as frequently uncertain. Prostitutes committed petty, and sometimes serious, crimes, while many of the other inhabitants of the Reservation's environs lived sleazy lifestyles. Murders were common, suicides occurred, and drugs and alcohol were a way of life for some.² Still, profits could be reaped by many involved in the bawdy life, but profits were most consistently accrued by those individuals not involved directly in the trade or by a few successful madams. Money appeared to be the glue that bound scarlet ladies to each other and to property owners from whom madams rented their houses. Given the

²For a brief description see Aimee Harris Johnson, "Prostitution in Waco."

frequency of criminal and civil cases involving the “lost sisterhood,” along with confrontations and lawsuits between bawds and private citizens, one might wonder how the red-light district enjoyed so much longevity in Waco. One needs only to understand the economic supplementation that the Reservation and its effects on the surrounding businesses provided for the city’s treasury, however, to understand why Two Street’s inhabitants were not encouraged to leave Waco permanently until 1917.

During the years that Waco regulated its prostitution through the registry of licenses between 1889 and 1895, the city made a sizable profit from the fees collected for prostitute and bawdy house permits. The city received various sums of money each month from prostitute licenses and a few bawdy house licenses, while the total amounts of each fluctuated. A large portion of the money came from the bawdy house licenses, since some madams paid up to thirty dollars every three months to operate their brothels, and bawdy house licenses were more expensive than the prostitute licenses. Every three months, Waco received more revenue than in other monthly periods because the majority of prostitutes registered with the city during its introductory month in August of 1889 and continued to pay the requisite fees every three months for the duration of the register. During each of those months, the city earned between \$175 and \$200. During other months, the total number of prostitute and bawdy licenses ranged between \$30 and \$75, not huge sums of money.³ Although the city made more money in some months than in others and never raked in huge sums, it continued to collect funds from a steady source of supplementary income for Waco’s budget.

Even though the monthly sums of revenue that Waco earned from the registration of bawds in the Reservation varied significantly, the yearly totals often amounted to

³Bawdy House Register, 1889-1895.

similar amounts. In 1889, the year that Waco began its register in August, the lowest total was collected, amounting to \$419.79, which would be more than \$8,000 in today's economy, in only five months.⁴ The following year, reflected a complete year of revenue, totaling \$1,257.35 (modern day: more than \$25,000). In 1891, prostitutes paid the city \$1,253.65 (today: more than \$25,000), and in the next they provided Waco with a slightly lower sum of \$997.25 (today: more than \$20,000). In 1893, Waco's revenue returned to the usual average with \$1,254 (modern economy: more than \$25,000) in license fees, while the following year proved even more productive for the city with \$1,428.95 (today: more than \$30,000). During the remainder of the licensing era, Waco's revenue decreased slightly to \$1,103.60 (today: more than \$25,000).⁵

The yearly revenue that Waco received from licensing its prostitutes reveal various aspects of the city's relationship to its sexual vice during the early 1890s. The city clearly received a steady flow of money from the Reservation. Although the total amount of funds was not exorbitant, the licensing fees each year certainly provided the city with supplementary funds for its budget. Each year, the city averaged \$1,215.80, which in today's economic system would average more than \$25,000. While certainly not a huge part of Waco's economic infrastructure, the average amount reveals that prostitution was a reliable and constant means for boosting the economy, however slightly. Further, the average shows that, at least during that specific six-year period, Waco provided opportunities for a steady group of women working as prostitutes. While some arrived in Waco, worked briefly, and then left, others quickly filled their place in

⁴For totals in 1889 see Bawdy House Register, and for modern equivalency see John McCusker, "The Purchasing Power of Money."

⁵For all years, see Bawdy House Register, 1889-1895, and for the modern terms of money see McCusker, "The Purchasing Power of Money."

the ranks of women on Two Street. In extraordinary cases, many remained in Waco for longer periods of time than their usual sojourns in other cities. Waco's frequent apathetic policy motivated them to stay, even while the city received financial benefits from the periodic and random arrest system regarding its prostitutes.

While motivated to share the sex trade's profits through licensing, the city also gained further revenue from the arrests of bawds in later years. Some periods, of course, were more productive than others. As discussed in the previous chapter, during the period before Waco started to demand that its prostitutes register with the city and pay tri-monthly fees, several prostitutes were charged in county court for running brothels. Each occurrence warranted at least a one hundred-dollar bond fee, which many women resulted in paying. In 1888, McLennan County received at least \$2,550 in bond fees alone from the brothel charges. That amount does not include the fees that the city collected in fines for vagrancy. During the following year, the total recorded showed that Waco collected far less in three cases concerning women running brothels, one of them involving Stella Nolan, who had to pay \$200, instead of the usual \$100.⁶ The large decrease in bond fees collected occurred in 1889, the year that the city started the bawdy register, which thus decreased its arrests of madams. Waco continued to arrest many more prostitutes in the ensuing years, however, obtaining a steady flow of revenue.

Arrests occurred on a frequent and periodic basis during the early twentieth century. Between 1901 and 1903 alone, 264 arrests of prostitutes provided the city with at least \$3,405.06 in revenue from vagrancy cases.⁷ As stated before, 1903 through 1904

⁶County Court Records, 1885-1890, McLennan County Archives.

⁷Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 7, McLennan County Archives.

showed trends in periodic arrests and provided regular funds for city officials, totaling \$2,580 in collected fines and fees.⁸ In the following two-year period, Waco officials collected less revenue with a total of at least \$812.70.⁹ By 1911 through 1912, Waco resumed a steady income from its bawds, and law enforcers collected a total of \$1,256.25 for prostitute-related crimes like vagrancy, liquor in brothels, and brothel-keeping, although the amount was not as large as in earlier years.¹⁰ Between 1913 and 1914, law enforcers collected \$312.20 from vagrancy cases and also made an additional \$730.60 in cases of disturbing the peace, which also became synonymous with prostitute-related cases during that period.¹¹

Even though the cases did not produce a large portion of the city's income, the money from arrests, similar to the funds from the bawdy register, provided the city with a constant and reliable source of revenue for its leaders' salaries and law enforcers' fees, and it provided money for smaller infrastructural improvements. One must note that the money from license fees and arrests was not the only source of funds that stemmed from the sexual trade in Waco. The brothels certainly brought money to the city from sexual tourists, or men from surrounding areas who came to Waco specifically to partake in the pleasures of Two Street. Further, each madam had to pay occupation taxes for each inmate to the city while operating her brothel. Within close proximity to the business areas and the public square of Waco, women living on Two Street also contributed to the local economy by purchasing products from shop owners and renting their houses from

⁸Ibid., vol. 8.

⁹Ibid., vol. 9.

¹⁰Ibid., vol. 14.

¹¹Ibid., vol. 16.

property owners in the city. Essentially, Waco's bawds contributed to the city's economic system as private citizens did, but in a way that differed because of the city's regulatory measures, which warranted the payment of license fees, special taxes, and regular arrest fines. Prostitution was indeed an integral part of the area's economy and therefore proved difficult to outlaw, even under pressure.

Not everyone was pleased with the way that Waco's leaders handled the money-making affairs of Two Street. J.T. Upchurch, a Progressive missionary who opened a home for "sinning women" in Dallas, published his opinions of Waco's regulation of sexual vice in a collection of sermons and lectures concerning the broader topic of Texas prostitution. He specifically attacked Waco's regulation of prostitution. *Traps for Girls and Those Who Set Them: An Address to Men Only* was Upchurch's main published account, and served as an example of the activities and opinions of Progressive reformers. In their attempts to abolish the social evils of the period, including prostitution, reformers often attempted to sway public opinion through accounts of the down-trodden "fallen women" of the age. Upchurch's work espoused moral backlash upon communities similar to Waco that allowed the sex trade to persist for the sake of monetary gains.¹²

Upchurch had considerable knowledge of Waco's system of sexual vice. In fact, his original mission for fallen women was located in Waco before he moved it to Dallas. In at least one of his lectures, Upchurch mentioned Waco in particular. He stated, very sarcastically,

Waco is the most honorable of them all [Texas cities with vice districts], for she boldly proclaims through her duly elected officials, that her citizens believe in and

¹²J. T. Upchurch, *Traps for Girls and Those Who Set Them: An Address to Men Only* (Arlington, Texas: The Purity Publishing Co., 1908), Texas Collection, Baylor University.

practice prostitution. She wants money to build sidewalks from the slums to her churches, and is going to have it, if she has to prostitute her daughters to get it.¹³

Upchurch had lived in Waco during the height of the city's regulatory policy toward Two Street. Although he was a reformer whose moral convictions and activism motivated his verbosity, the former Waco resident recognized a significant rationale for prostitution's persistence within city limits as a regulated business, both officially and unofficially. Revenues and profits were too great for the city not to allow prostitution's continuation, and Upchurch, among other reformers and ordinary citizens alike, recognized it. A simple morality crusade could not compete with economic gain.

Upchurch not only voiced his concern about the morals of a city that eagerly profited from prostitution but also presented his opinion on the issue of health. He argued that some of the doctor's monthly examinations for all women practicing the sex trade on Two Street were a hoax designed to lure prostitutes' customers into a false feeling of safety. He stated,

To my mind, the most revoltingly dishonorable part of her [Waco] brutish proceedings is the pretended "examination" business . . . Now, says Waco to the Add-Ran and Baylor students, and other young men of the city: "Come on, boys; visit my harlots; have a good time and I promise to protect you from being 'caught' by contracting any contagious diseases."¹⁴

Upchurch emphatically argued that such examinations and guarantees of health were "an abominable lie, and a trick of the devil."¹⁵ The issue of venereal disease was, of course, exceptionally important during the period when Upchurch published his sermons.

Waco's use of doctors' examinations for its scarlet ladies indicates that some concern

¹³Ibid., 22.

¹⁴Ibid, 23.

¹⁵Ibid.

was placed on attempting to contain commercialized sex in an area where the city could consciously strive to decrease cases of venereal disease. In so doing, the city provided a false sense of security, even though it was clearly concerned about sexually transmitted diseases. Still, Waco's leaders were not concerned enough to increase efforts to eliminate the threat all together. Again, one might argue that revenues and profits added some comfort to the city's policymakers, enough to outweigh the real threat of disease.

Upchurch was not the only person, or the last for that matter, to criticize the city's contradictory policy toward prostitution. William C. Brann, literary mentor to O. Henry and polarizing social critic living in Waco after 1894, also sarcastically chastised the city for its apparent hypocrisy of allowing sexual vice to continue within the city's limits one decade earlier than Upchurch. In his newsletter, *The Iconoclast*, Brann openly criticized various aspects of Waco's culture, including its permissiveness concerning prostitution. The brunt of his attacks fell on Baylor University, a conservative Baptist institution of higher learning that would soon become the world's largest Baptist university. Brann reserved some of his most scathing remarks for the community's policy of regulating prostitution. He argued that a hypocrisy existed when citizens ostracized fallen women, although other more "up-standing" females married for purposes of obtaining wealth and financial security. Refuting the argument that a city like Waco needed regulated prostitution to control its effects on society, Brann asserted, "I cannot agree with those utilitarians who profess to regard prostitution as a 'necessary evil' . . . I do not believe that Almighty God decreed that one-half the women of this world should be sacrificed upon the unclean altar of Lust that the others might be saved."¹⁶ Instead of accepting the

¹⁶William Cowper Brann, *The Iconoclast*, vol. 1, E-book (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Library, 1996, NetLibrary, 2000), 189.

profession as a necessary evil, Brann wanted his fellow citizens to ask, “What is it that is railroading so large a portion of the young women to Hell?”¹⁷ Such words were not as polarizing as his other social commentary, and Brann’s most shocking criticisms concerned other social issues of the period. He was not afraid to elaborate on the glaring contradictions between the Reservation and respected institutions such as Baylor University.¹⁸

Waco’s citizens did not take Brann’s comments lightly, and his remarks outraged a few enough to want to kill him, although not over the issue of prostitution. Brann himself fell victim of the passions inflicted by his pen, when a group of Baylor students kidnapped him on one occasion and proceeded to march him to a tree in the center of the campus in order to lynch him. Fortunately, Brann was saved from the mob by Baylor’s president, but passions about his writing flared again shortly after the incident. As a result, Brann was shot and killed by a Waco resident in 1898. So displeased were some of the populace with his social commentary that one citizen shot a minute portion off Brann’s tombstone, which had his profile carved into it. Although his death was not the result of Waco’s acceptance of the sex trade, the reaction to Brann’s general commentary revealed that Waco was not eager to partake in a critical dialogue of its shady policies. City leaders and residents apparently created an atmosphere that was amiable to apathy and not receptive to individuals advocating change, whether they were moral reformers or social critics. They maintained the policy until economic gains from a newly created army base outweighed the benefits of upholding the tradition of prostitution.

¹⁷Ibid., 190.

¹⁸Ibid., vol. 10, 69.

During the first year of Camp MacArthur's presence in Waco, the city proudly described it in its 1917-18 city directory. Because of "the titanic struggle against German imperialism and autocracy," the camp was one of the thirty-two throughout the country that trained men for service in World War I.¹⁹ In two thousand buildings covering nine thousand acres, forty-five thousand soldiers from the Michigan and Wisconsin National Guard were housed and trained in preparation for their eventual service in the European theater during World War I. Near Camp MacArthur, another three thousand men were trained at an airfield.²⁰ The directory proclaimed that the camp was not only "a constant source of interest to spectators," but it also evoked intense feelings of patriotism.²¹

Patriotism proved not to be the only element of Waco's enthusiasm over the camp. The county's population had doubled because of the camp's construction. Families of soldiers came to live near their husbands and fathers, while Waco experienced an influx of relatives visiting their soldier family members before the eventual call for combat. Waco was indeed bustling and strove to create an infrastructure that could accommodate the massive increase in population. The city directory noted:

This radical change, occurring almost overnight, has taxed the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the citizenship, but it has been admirably met. Waco has provided ample facilities for caring for the people within their gates. New businesses have been started, buildings erected, improvements made.²²

The rush of people to Waco brought a welcome increase in revenue for the city as well as incredible profits for local businesses: "Waco is enjoying an era of unprecedented

¹⁹Waco City Directory, 1917-18, 21, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., 22.

²²Ibid.

prosperity. Her marts teem, her social centers, always active, are busy welcoming newcomers, and her civic life continues with the new impetus born of augmented responsibilities.”²³ The city’s leaders and businesses were ecstatic with the arrival of Camp MacArthur.

Recollections of Waco citizens concerning the period of Camp MacArthur’s existence in Waco verify the city’s economic gain. In 1982, Oscar Hessdoerfer, a local store owner, remembered the atmosphere in and around Waco:

Waco was a thriving place, I’ll tell you. You could go downtown at night, and there were so many soldiers . . . downtown and business was wonderful. It helped us, of course. We had a lot of soldiers . . . young folks that took apartments and rooms in our neighborhood, you see, and that was good pay, too, because they had a salary coming, and they knew what they were going to do, and we did a whale of a business.²⁴

Before Camp MacArthur was constructed, Hessdoerfer recalled that his business had been extremely slow.²⁵ Yet, when the army base arrived, there was a dramatic change in profits. He also noted that others in Waco supplemented their income in jobs that accommodated the flow of traffic between the base and the town. He explained, “I had a friend that run . . . an automobile service between MacArthur and Waco town here. . . . [H]e’d go out and get them and carry them in from MacArthur and then take them back and he made a wonderful fringe benefit that way.”²⁶ Evidently, countless Waco residents profited from the camp’s presence.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Oscar Emil Hessdoerfer, interview, 38.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

In 1983, Joseph Alexander, Jr. remembered a similar increase in business earnings, yet his experience was somewhat different. Before the camp arrived in Waco, Alexander worked at the county clerk's office, but after the base's creation, he opened a café that also sold candy and dry goods near MacArthur. The situation went well for the store owner until one morning when he was greeted by an officer from the military police. The MP stated that his orders were to prohibit soldiers from entering Alexander's place of business, although the reason was unknown to him. Needing to know why, Alexander went to see the officer in charge of Camp MacArthur.²⁷ When asked why he closed the café to soldiers, the officer informed Alexander, "Well, Mr. Alexander, I'll tell you. I don't like to, but you want to know. The chamber of commerce of Waco requested that we close all those places of business in order to force them to buy their stuff in Waco."²⁸ Apparently Waco's leaders wielded large amounts of influence, even with the governing powers of the base. To provide more profits for local venues within the city from the economic input of the camp's soldiers, Alexander's café had to lose support from MacArthur's governing officers, and the city found little resistance from them.

Some citizens welcomed the soldiers for reasons other than profits, however. Many viewed the inhabitants of the new camp with a patriotic curiosity and therefore opened their homes to the soldiers with invitations of true hospitality. In 1975, Adrienne Wilkes Olenbush recalled that as a young married woman whose husband was on the frontlines in Europe, she stayed at her parents' house in Waco during World War I and

²⁷Joseph White Alexander, Jr., interview by Jaclyn Jeffrey and Roger N. Conger, transcript, June 2-November 1, 1983, Waco, Texas, Texas Collection, Baylor University, 4.

²⁸Ibid., 5.

witnessed her mother's hospitality toward visiting soldiers. A few soldiers joined the Wilkes family for their Christmas meal, and the event proved to be the norm throughout Waco's citizenry, as "[p]ractically everybody had two or three [soldiers] that they just practically adopted."²⁹ Olenbush emphasized that "people had them in their homes and made good friends."³⁰ She also explained that Waco's female population embraced the newcomers, because women like her younger sister were "knee-deep with men out at Camp MacArthur," enjoying the dating opportunities afforded by the sudden increase in numbers among the male sex.³¹ Certainly other motives played into the community's acceptance of the camp's residents.

Although many of Waco's residents provided unconditional hospitality to the soldiery of Camp MacArthur, Olenbush, like Hessdoerfer, still noted the importance of the base to the local economy. Wilkes remembered the changes taking place:

Oh! Business was simply terrific! The Christmas of 1917 was the big one But they [the soldiers] were here by the thousands and their families came to Texas. [B]ecause the town was absolutely flooded with mothers and fathers whose sons were getting ready to go . . . they literally sold out everything in the stores. You could sell anything . . . everything on earth.³²

Olenbush recounted the increase in business for the city's merchants even while she explained the emotional and patriotic significance that the camp had for the people of Waco. However, shortly after the economic euphoria that MacArthur created in 1917, the misery of the flu epidemic followed in 1918. From the winter of that year to the early

²⁹ Adrienne Wilkes Olenbush, interview by Susie Monaghan, transcript, October 21-November 7, 1975, Waco, Texas, Texas Collection, Baylor University, 127.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 128.

³² Ibid., 142.

spring of 1919, Olenbush noted that Waco's population experienced huge losses, along with the soldiers stationed on the base. During the epidemic, Spanish flu struck down hundreds in the area and sickened many, including Olenbush. She recalled that younger doctors left Waco, leaving only the older generation of doctors to take care of the sick; "it was a terrific time for the medical practice."³³ As doctors fled, few social gatherings took place. Certainly, even while the city enjoyed the economic benefits of the camp's opening, its citizens also suffered, as "coffins went out from Waco."³⁴ During this period, "everything stopped,"³⁵ and Waco was unable to enjoy the full economic benefits it had gained by shutting down its red-light district.

Excluding the epidemic of Spanish influenza, Waco's prosperity was still evident. Clearly, the city had gained economically by obeying Secretary Newton Baker's ultimatum to shut down the district, at least officially. The effects of Two Street's closure were not initially apparent during Camp MacArthur's first year in Waco in 1917. But within a year, evidence that Waco was serious in wanting to keep the camp nearby showed in the city directory; prostitutes began to leave the red-light district. Waco had created an atmosphere that was not fruitful for the prostitutes, and the effects of influenza upon the customer base likely provided further motivation for the scarlet ladies' departure. Thus soldiers struck down from the 1918 flu epidemic were not the only people "leaving" Waco. Prostitutes from the Reservation began to migrate to other parts of the city or permanently leave Waco for other venues during the same year. The vacancies left by their exodus created a residential vacuum that within two years was

³³Ibid., 134.

³⁴Ibid., 132.

³⁵Ibid., 133.

filled by another, newer demographic: Hispanics. To trace the fundamental changes in the racial composition of the former red-light district during Two Street's swan song, one needs only to recognize the current of change in the Reservation during its last five years of existence as a commercialized sex zone, as reflected in the street listings of Waco's city directories.

In the years before the closure of Two Street, the area around the red-light district had already begun to experience the effects of Hispanic immigration. In 1913 North First Street, once a significant thoroughfare for many brothels, had seen a growth in Mexican population. Out of twenty-three residences listed in the street directory between Washington and Jefferson Streets, eleven were Hispanic households, ten were black, and three were white.³⁶ In the same block on North Second Street, the ratio of prostitutes to minorities was far greater. Twenty-two brothels were owned by white women and seven operated by black madams. Across from Washington Street, near the public square, several black and Hispanic Waco citizens operated commercial businesses like a livery, drugstore, doctor's office, and restaurants, one being owned by Ysabel Rodriguez.³⁷ Across Jefferson Street, to the west of the Reservation, the homes of approximately twenty black residents, mixed with vacant buildings, bordered the red-light district.³⁸ Although pockets of minority businesses and homes were adjacent to Two Street, the area within the designated zone was still clearly dominated demographically by white prostitutes in 1913.

³⁶Waco City Directory, 1913, 16, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

³⁷Ibid., 30.

³⁸Ibid., 31.

Within six years, however, the racial components of the Reservation changed dramatically. In 1916, the year before the district closed, demographics of home owners listed in the street directory for North Second remained constant compared to the previous three years. Madams operating brothels still represented the largest majority, as women like Winnie Clark, Stella Nolan, and Mollie Adams, along with newer generations of brothel owners, continued to operate.³⁹ Across Jefferson Street, in the block north of the Reservation, the same number of black residents owned property as had three years before. Several vacant buildings, however, began to appear in the directory during that time, but the number was not as high as they would be in the ensuing years.⁴⁰

In the 1917-18 city directory, residences appeared to remain as they had in earlier years, yet some things were changing. Even after Waco officially “closed” the Reservation, prostitutes continued to remain listed at the majority of addresses on North Second Street. In the block between Washington and Jefferson, twenty madams continued to rent buildings for their businesses, while six women, including the infamous Mollie Adams, remained in the residences they privately owned.⁴¹ On the other hand, minute elements began to indicate that the situation was about to change. Several Hispanics, their destination unknown, moved out of the North First Street addresses, leaving vacant lots.⁴² Although their whereabouts remain a mystery, some likelihood exists of their location in the Reservation by 1919.

³⁹Waco City Directory, 1916, 102, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

⁴⁰Ibid., 103.

⁴¹Waco City Directory, 1917-18, 105-06.

⁴²Ibid., 86.

By 1919, vacancies on North First Street were not the only empty buildings in the area around Two Street. Although the immediate effects of Waco's abolition of the Reservation were not apparent with the listing of several madams in the street directory, two years after the Reservation was ordered to close, the landscape began to alter. In the block of North Second Street that had been the home of so many different prostitutes over the course of over four decades, vacancies took the place of sexual businesses. The directory listed sixteen buildings as vacant, properties that had been occupied during the previous year. Two bawds remained, who had owned properties instead of renting them like the majority of madams.⁴³ Mollie Adams, of course, was one of these, and she continued to stay in Waco, albeit in a different residence, throughout the rest of her life.⁴⁴ Of the other lots formerly occupied by prostitutes, five Hispanic males now rented them. The two remaining consisted of the Mexican Presbyterian Mission and Baptist Mexican Mission, operated by Emil Garcia and Justo Luna, respectively. In the block to the west of the former red-light district, a considerable number of the residents were black, yet ten residences were now rented by Mexicans, while various empty buildings also continued to exist as they had in previous years. Therefore, even though the area around Two Street did not experience immediate results in the removal of prostitutes, most of the scarlet ladies vacated within a year.

With the emigration of prostitutes from the red-light district, the buildings that once housed them were soon used by another group that was growing in numbers among the Waco populace. According to the directory of 1921-22, the presence of Mexican Americans in the area, formerly a haven for sexual solicitors, was no longer marginal;

⁴³Waco City Directory, 1919, 549, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

⁴⁴Margaret Davis, "Harlots and Hymnals," 91.

Latinos had become the majority. Lots that were vacant from the exodus of prostitutes in 1918 now housed Mexican residents. They were the only residents living on North Second Street between Washington and Jefferson. Mixed into the residences, which were largely rented properties, a Hispanic grocer served the block's families, and the Mrs. Caroline Miller Mexican School educated their children. Across Jefferson, several blacks had remained, but by 1921, the Mexican population clearly held the majority. Between the two blocks, two former madams remained: Mollie Adams at her own property at 414 North Second near the corner of Jefferson and Madge Middleton at her rented property on the same street, though in the block west of Adams's place.⁴⁵ Clearly, Two Street became Waco's Mexican barrio, and Adams and Middleton remained living in their former "official" brothels because they had no other alternative but to live among Waco's minorities in a racially prejudiced region.

Although the prostitutes' exodus from the red-light district two years after Camp MacArthur arrived in Waco was evident in the city directory, prostitution did not end. Prostitutes did not live in a concentrated area that the city could easily police and regulate. One resident recalled the effects of shutting down the red-light district and the result of moral crusaders' activism in outlawing the sale of alcoholic beverages: "[L]iquor went out here about the time the camp come here They closed all that. They closed up the red light district here and tried to purify the community and I think if anything it made it worse than it ever was."⁴⁶ Prostitution no longer existed in one concentrated area, making the ability to contain and control it far more difficult.

⁴⁵Waco City Directory, 1921-22, 632, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

⁴⁶Francis L. Pittillo, interview by Thomas Charlton, transcript, August 6-26, 1974, Waco, Texas, Texas Collection, Baylor University, 37.

Although heavily regulated in the prohibition era of the 1920s, both liquor and loose women remained in Waco, albeit on a smaller scale, and the secret popularity of both allowed them to continue even in a municipality known for its religious conservatism.

“Jerusalem on the Brazos,” as Texans from other cities still refer to Waco, certainly was not without its faults, yet some city law enforcers attempted to police both liquor consumption and prostitution during the 1920s. Like prostitution cases of previous decades, the sale of liquor was regulated in the same manner that sexual vice had been. In an oral history interview, former city court judge D. Y. McDaniel recalled that people in possession of alcoholic drinks, mostly small restaurant owners and the like, were arrested after raids each weekend and were charged with vagrancy instead of violations of federal and state liquor laws. McDaniel noticed after some time that several repeat offenders appeared each week. Consequently, he discovered that the regular raids and ensuing arrests were the city’s way of regulating alcohol: “they were licensing people to sell liquor is what it amounted to. . . . What they’d do, they’d set a bond and they’d forfeit the bond. . . . And I decided that that was a rich field for under-the-table operations.”⁴⁷ Defendants pled guilty and the police decided the level of guilt and set the bond, which often was twenty-five or fifty dollars, leaving ample opportunities for bribes. McDaniel decided to demand that the city no longer handle cases involving the liquor law, since the federal district judge in Waco could rule on offenses of the federal prohibition law. The city commission, however, harbored some resentment, and members approached Judge McDaniel about his refusal to hear the cases, stating to him that the regulation of liquor

⁴⁷Douthit Young McDaniel, interview by Thomas Charlton, transcript, May 15-June 24 1975, Waco, Texas, Texas Collection, Baylor University, 205.

sales meant between \$18,000 and \$20,000 in supplementary revenue for the city.

McDaniel still refused.⁴⁸

McDaniel further noted the similarities of Waco's policies toward prohibition and prostitution. Regarding the liquor policies of the city, the city judge stated, "It was like prostitution, which was a state offense as well as a city offense. We had a lot of prostitution, and they did the same thing."⁴⁹ While the city charged offenders in both prostitution and illegal liquor sales, Waco received a steady income from policing lawbreakers on a regular basis in the city sector rather than losing money and penalizing them in higher levels of the judiciary. McDaniel noted, though, that the city eventually tried harder to expel prostitutes from the city during the 1920s, once the district had been closed for several years.

Under the guidance of night chief of police W. J. McDonald, law enforcers strove to create a hostile atmosphere for the continuation of prostitutes' business. Since the Reservation no longer confined the bawds to a designated area, Waco's police apprehended female sexual solicitors working individually at tourist motels and similar places. Believing that the community could not reform its loose women, McDonald attempted to penalize the prostitutes regularly to persuade them to leave the city, charging each twenty-five dollars with every frequent arrest. By detaining the bawds every few days over the course of two or three weeks, McDonald created an atmosphere that proved unprofitable for the ladies of the night, and they soon moved on to other communities. Judge McDaniel had wished that Sheriff McDonald's effectiveness in policing loose

⁴⁸Ibid., 206.

⁴⁹Ibid., 207.

women would have been shared by others who had prosecuted the liquor laws.⁵⁰ Still, even with McDonald's efforts, prostitution remained a social problem for Waco, although on a much smaller scale.

As with most moderately sized cities in the United States, Waco could not completely eradicate sexual vice from the city limits. Some cities maintained larger areas of generalized prostitution, although unofficially. In fact, prostitution found welcoming receptions during the bootleg era of prohibition. Al Capone had operated in the alcohol and prostitution business in Chicago during the 1920s, while the birth of jazz was nurtured in the New Orleans brothels of Storyville. World War II-era America also saw a continuance of recruits among the scarlet ladies who serviced troops. Texas cities and towns were no different. The most notorious, Galveston, embraced the profits of a sexual underworld that including illegal alcohol sales and mafia dealings. That city's mayor openly proclaimed that the elements were inherently a part of his community's culture and thus did little to restrain their occurrence until Texas Rangers eventually shut operations down in the 1950s. Prostitution, even when not supported by the local governments—and most were not—prospered in Texas well into the 1970s. Edna's Chicken Ranch epitomized how deeply embedded the world's oldest profession was in Texas culture, and most American cities for that matter.

Waco, of course, was no exception; the city remains like any entity of its size, grappling with a social problem that was once seen as a necessity. The trade did not stop with the closure of the Reservation, but continued on a smaller scale among individual sex workers. Today, streetwalkers and crack house hookers continue to operate in the sleaziest areas of Waco. Many common hookers visit local missions and soup kitchens

⁵⁰Ibid., 208.

looking for food, and locals talk about the women who ply their trade under the bridges of the city and in northern parts of Waco. At the right location, one can glimpse a business exchange at a so-called crack house as random cars pull up to a specific residence, a brief exchange of conversation is made, and one of the women jumps in the car to drive to a location to sell herself to the newly-met passenger.⁵¹ In May of 2004, a Waco police sting operation arrested more than twenty johns, men who pay prostitutes for sex. To penalize the men and shame them of their crime, the police posted the pictures of several arrested johns on their Web site. Clearly, prostitution still exists to some degree in the community.

Not a romantic profession during Waco's early settlement and into the twentieth century, prostitution is evidently even less acceptable in modern-day Waco. Yet the business still continues. Unlike the years when women like Mollie Adams and other bawds gained profits from prostitution, common hookers in modern Waco turn tricks for meager sums in order to make money for their drug addictions. Twenty dollars is a normal "going rate" for a prostitute's efforts with the johns; any small amount contributes to their drug habits. The identities of their children's fathers remain unknown, and their offspring often spend a majority of their childhoods in foster homes because of the bad environment created for them by their mothers.⁵² Yes, the sex trade continues in Waco and continues in communities throughout the United States and the world. Some cities like Amsterdam, with its window bawds, regulate prostitution in ways similar to the strategy that Waco had adopted in the early 1890s, while other localities view the sexual

⁵¹Julia Howard (social worker), conversation with author at a friend's home in Waco, Texas, November 10, 2005.

⁵²Melissa Rhoderick (worker for Waco social services) . conversation with author at her home in Waco, Texas, February 4, 2005.

underworld with fear and moral distrust, especially with the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Yet the sexual underworld continues to thrive.

A discussion of the continuance of the sex trade past the Reservation's closure in Waco introduces different aspects of prostitution, worthy of further research. So much information exists on a national scope concerning prostitution during the Progressive era, and several studies have already focused on the impact of reformists nationally and their effects in eastern cities. An innovative study could show the impact of the professionalization of medicine on the contemporary perception of prostitution. During the late nineteenth century, professional medical organizations at the state and national level began to publish significant research on health ailments, venereal disease being one of them. An interesting study would trace the effects of their publications and activism in creating social change in communities' red-light districts. Another study of more recent history could also trace the effects of the introduction of HIV/AIDS in establishing different perceptions and legal policies toward sexual promiscuity during the 1980s.

Other studies concerning community reaction could enhance the field of the history of prostitution. The works of moralist activists provide the most documented accounts of American society's reactions to prostitution. An appealing study could compare the reactions of various communities' citizens regarding their red-light districts. A wealth of resources often exist within cities' newspaper columns and would prove easily accessible for the beginning stages of research. Regarding Texas cities, one could compare the policies and reactions of Waco to specific municipalities state-wide, including port cities along the gulf, border towns, oil boom towns, cattle towns, the capital, and the localities closer to the Deep South in East Texas.

Work still remains for studying prostitution in Waco, as well. The scope and direction of the current project prohibited the subject matter from venturing into other areas. As stated previously, Waco has a reputation throughout the state as being religiously conservative. J. T. Upchurch's first Methodist mission home for fallen women was located in Waco. An important study still needs to cover the reactions, activism, and apathy of the various churches in Waco. In order to fully understand the dynamic of the city law enforcers, the church community, and the prostitutes, one must also study the records of the churches and the city's various newspapers. Perhaps some groups were active in trying to alter policy while others remained apathetic, not wanting to discuss the sex trade that was so closely in their midst. The fact that Waco's tradition of religious denominations, most of which were Baptist, coexisted in a city that was also known as "Six-Shooter Junction," which had one of the largest and one of the only openly regulated red-light districts in the state, is worthy of serious study.

The lives of the prostitutes themselves can also be explored further. Although a daunting task, one could attempt to trace some of the prostitutes' migratory patterns in census materials, specifically when local backlashes or natural elements provoked their departures to greener pastures. Also, in comparing Waco to other Texas cities, one can use the civil and criminal court cases to find differing legal disputes between prostitutes and other bawds or madams, along with their problems with private citizens, among different cities or regions. One can also study the Sanborn maps, or fire insurance plans of buildings within the red-light district, to compare the materials and structural differences of different brothels, providing supplementary information for a social history of Two Street. Further, tax records would also contribute to the social history of the

area's bawds, showing the amounts of property tax and the increments of occupational taxes that each madam paid to the city. The study of prostitution in many past eras can be somewhat tricky with few sources available, yet pieces of the puzzle do exist to provide further understanding of the social history of prostitutes during the nineteenth century. One needs only to search various avenues like city maps, court cases, arrest records, tax records, and then adopt various methodologies to analyze them.

Other avenues of research originating from the study of Waco's red-light district remain to be discussed, though they do not necessarily reflect prostitution. In fact, the issue of prostitution reflects how its citizens grappled with changing racial compositions and other demographic elements during the post-Reconstruction period. In the early twentieth century, the city's residents were also practicing the racial segregation of most southern localities; lynchings of blacks occasionally happened and meetings of the Ku Klux Klan frequently occurred. Many of the arrests concerning female crime in 1911 were of women who were listed as "colored" in the city directory. Although clearly listed as employed in legitimate jobs, they were arrested on vagrancy charges.⁵³ One might study the racial underpinnings in Waco during the early twentieth century and further attempt to understand the criminology of not only racial minorities but also charges concerning females throughout Waco.

Waco's prostitution does not need necessarily to be confined to a historical study of the period during its Two Street days of regulation. A significant project could assess the changes in generalized vice and prostitution within the community throughout the twentieth century up to the current time. How did historical events, health concerns,

⁵³Concerning the charges, see Justice Criminal Docket, vol. 14, and for the racial composition see the Waco City Directory, 1911, microfilm, Waco Public Library.

racial and social movements of the middle of the century, and other developments affect the productivity of the sexual business within Waco? How did those elements alter law enforcement attitudes and prosecution of the crime? One would need to interview prostitutes and social workers involved in the crime, which might prove dangerous but rewarding in understanding the drastic change that resulted from a basically legalized red-light district that attracted many to the business, motivated primarily for the purposes of providing funds for drug habits. While some elements have not changed, including unwanted pregnancies, drug involvement, and petty crimes, much obviously has altered within the profession during modern times. One wonders if cities like Waco will ever remove prostitution completely from their communities. As long as social and economic marginality exists, however, the world's oldest profession will continue, but the trade has long since experienced its swan song in legitimately contributing to local economies in the United States. Today, women clearly enjoy careers that were not available in previous centuries and do not need to join the ranks of soiled doves. Thus, the memory of the likes of Mollie Adams and her scarlet cohorts barely exists and remains a whisper, but a whisper audible enough to reveal that a darker side of Waco once coexisted with the obvious past of cotton, cattle, churches, Baylor, and the suspension bridge.

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